

Safe Environment Procedures

Name of Parish / School / Program

Location

Date of implementation

Section 1: Introduction

In accordance with the Diocese of Grand Island Child Protection Policy (Section 5.2), “Each parish, school, and child or youth program shall have and publicize a basic procedure for the individualized implementation of safe environment programming and communication regarding concerns, issues, or incidents related to the protection of children.”

Procedures outlined in this plan follow directly from the USCCB Charter for Protection of Children and Young People (USCCB Charter), the Diocese of Grand Island Child Protection Policy (CPP) and / or the Diocese of Grand Island Code of Pastoral Conduct (CPC).

This Plan is adopted by _____ to meet or exceed the
[PARISH NAME/LOCATION]
minimum requirements recommended by the Diocese of Grand Island for an effective plan to prevent the abuse or mistreatment of children and youth.

Parish Contact Information:

Address:

Phone:

Fax:

Email:

Safe Environment Coordinator:

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Mobile Phone:

Fax:

Email:

Additional Parish Contacts:

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Mobile Phone:

Fax:

Email:

Section II: Safe Environment Coordinator

Description:

The Parish Safe Environment Coordinator serves as the primary contact person for communication with the Office of Child Protection. Safe Environment Coordinator responsibilities include implementing Safe Environment Programming in their parish, school, or program; submitting data regarding implementation of mandated programs to the Diocese of Grand Island Child Protection Office, attending Safe Environment Coordinator Training, and maintaining communication with the Diocesan Office of Child Protection.

Responsibilities:

The Safe Environment Coordinator implements safe environment programming through:

1. Requesting and documenting background screening of all staff and all volunteers who have regular contact with children and youth.
2. Training all volunteers and staff who have regular contact with children and youth in Safe Environment Principles.
3. Maintaining personnel files for all volunteers and staff who have regular contact with children and youth.
4. Assisting religious educators and other program volunteers in providing education to children and youth regarding abuse prevention and right relationships.
5. Documenting implementation of abuse prevention / right relationship education programs for children and youth.
6. Participating in evaluation procedures mandated by the Diocesan Child Protection Office and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The Safe Environment Coordinator is appointed by the _____
[Pastor / Administrator / Program Director]

and is under their direct supervision. Consultation, guidance, professional support, and training are provided to the Safe Environment Coordinator by the Diocesan Office of Child Protection.

Additional Duties / Description for Safe Environment Coordinator in this parish:

Section III: Record System

The parish will employ the following record system:

1. A **personnel file** will be maintained for each employee and volunteer. (CPP section 9.21) The file will contain:
 - a. Completed Volunteer or Employment Application
 - b. Returned Reference Letters or Forms (CPP, section 6.2)
 - c. Code of Pastoral Conduct (signed annually)
 - d. Signed Copy of Background Questionnaire / Acknowledgement of Receipt (CPP section 5.14). Original shall be submitted to the Chancery Office, P.O. Box 1531, Grand Island, NE 68802, with the original background authorization form.
 - e. Documentation of Safe Environment Training (e.g. copy of completed post-training review, training date listed in file, etc.) *If only training date is listed, documentation of attendance should be maintained in a separate sign-in sheet for each training offered.
2. The files of each employee and volunteer are considered privileged information. They will be maintained in locked cabinets with access limited to the pastor, any administrative personnel designated by the pastor, and the compliance representative. These files will also be made available to appropriate diocesan personnel who are delegated by the Ordinary to audit the parish. (CPC section III-6).
3. **Incident reports**, Completed **Child Abuse Reporting Packets**, and **Feedback Forms** will be maintained in a file organized by year of occurrence. (CPP sections 8.2, 9.14)
4. A **sign-in sheet** will be maintained for each education session conducted by the parish. The sign-in sheet will include the name of the speaker, the subject, the duration of the program and its location. Each attendee will print his or her name and designate his or her role in the parish. If post-training review sheet is completed by the employee or volunteer following the educational session, it will be placed in the personnel file referenced above. (CPP section 9.22)
5. A spreadsheet will be maintained for all employees and volunteers by the Diocese of Grand Island Child Protection Office. (CPP sections 9.11, 9.15) A list of **active volunteers and completed training dates** will be submitted to the Diocese annually and updated regularly.
6. The parish will also construct and maintain each academic year a list of students in religious education, youth group and the like. The **number of students enrolled in programs and the number of students in attendance for Child / Youth Education Sessions** shall be submitted to the Diocesan Office of Child Protection at least annually. (CPP section 9.22)
7. In the event that a student's parents expressly refuse safe environment education for their child, an **opt-out form** shall be retained and filed by year of refusal.
8. Each volunteer staff person shall receive a copy of the **Volunteer Policy Summary Sheet** and a copy of the **Diocesan Child Protection Policy** shall be kept in a location accessible to all volunteers, staff, and parishioners. (CPP, Section 5)

9. **Additional Records** maintained by this parish include:

Section IV: New Volunteers and Employees

Level of Responsibility

The type of screening and orientation offered to staff and volunteers is dependent on their role classification. Roles may be classified as having high responsibility for others (Category 1) or as having low responsibility for others (Category 2).

Category 1: High Responsibility. These categories of volunteers / employees are classified as high responsibility/risk because they have **regular contact** with, **independent access** to, or **influence** over minors. This access may be due to the specific **nature of the ministry or service** or because of the **general prominence of the role**. In addition, some roles are classified as high responsibility / risk for other reasons, including but not limited to authority to handle money, secure documents or transport others (e.g. catechists, youth ministry, classroom aide, substitute catechists, etc.)

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_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Category 2: Low Responsibility. The following categories of volunteers are classified as roles of low responsibility, because they involve no contact with children and youth, one time contact in a supervised setting, service only in isolation from parishioners (e.g. record keeping), or service only in public settings (e.g. lector, Eucharistic minister).

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Screening

Each new employee or volunteer entered into ministry or service in the parish will have gone through a systematic process of screening appropriate to the responsibility / risk associated with the position he or she is to occupy. (USCCB Charter, Article 13; CPP, section 6)

1. **All employees / staff** are required to provide references and complete a criminal history screen, regardless of role responsibility category. (CPP, sections 6.1, 6.2)
2. All **Category 1**: high responsibility **volunteers** are required to provide references and complete a criminal history screen.
3. **All employees and required volunteers** will complete an **application** and provide **references**. Applications are maintained and references are screened by the parish. (CPP, section 6.2)
4. **All employees and required volunteers** will complete **Diocesan Background Authorization and Background Questionnaire forms**. These forms will be submitted to the Diocesan Child Protection Office, located at the Chancery Office of the Diocese of Grand Island (P.O. Box 1531, Grand Island, NE 68802-1531), where criminal history screens will be completed. (CPP, section 6.1)
5. Volunteers who are minors will complete an application and references. It is generally not possible to conduct a criminal history screen on a minor. The record is usually sealed by the courts.
6. **Additional screening procedures** utilized in this parish:

Orientation / Safe Environment Training

If the individual is accepted for ministry or service, pending successful completion of the criminal history background check; they will be provided an orientation, including Initial Safe Environment Training. (USCCB Charter, Article 12; CPP section 4.11)

1. **All Category 1**: High Responsibility **employees and volunteers** are required to complete Safe Environment Training.
2. Initial **Safe Environment Training** consists of the following elements:
 - a. The individual participates in Initial **Safe Environment Training** developed by the Diocese of Grand Island.
 - b. The **Code of Pastoral Conduct** and the **Volunteer Policy Summary Sheet** are presented in writing and they are elaborated in an oral presentation.
 - c. The employee or volunteer is asked to sign the **Code of Pastoral Conduct** (USCCB Charter, Article 6; CPP, section 8; CPC). This signed form is placed in the personnel file.

3. **Volunteers engaged to serve on an irregular basis** will be adequately prepared as to the **procedures of the parish to mitigate risk** during the activity in which they are involved and will be **actively supervised** during the time of their service.
4. **Volunteers who are minors at the time of service** will be educated in the rules for Adult / Child Interactions, adequately prepared as to the **procedures of the parish to mitigate risk** during the activity in which they are involved, and **actively supervised** during the time of their service. (CPP, section 4.23)
5. **Additional Orientation** offered in this parish:

SECTION V- Established Volunteers and Employees

Renewal of Criminal History Screen

Each employee and each volunteer required to undergo a criminal history screen (all employees and Category 1 Volunteers) must have that screen renewed.

1. In the case of most individuals, **renewal is required every three years**. In the case of employees who hold a state license or certification for their current position (e.g. certified teachers in a Catholic School, etc.), renewal may be completed every five years.
2. Each affected employee and volunteer will be notified at the beginning of the year in which he or she must renew the criminal history screen.
3. Failure to submit the necessary material for this renewal by the end of the academic year will result in automatic suspension until the material is submitted.
4. Notification of renewal and/ or suspension for failure to renew will follow the following procedure:

Continuing Education

Continuing education will be offered to keep volunteers and staff abreast of new information related to the protection of children and youth. (CPP, section 4.12)

1. Continuing education shall be provided to all Category 1 volunteers and employees.
2. Continuing education topics will be provided by the Diocese of Grand Island on an annual basis.
3. Additional continuing education will be offered by the parish as needed.
4. In this parish, continuing education will be provided through the following format / schedule:

Code of Conduct

All employees and Category 1 volunteers are required to review and sign the **Code of Pastoral Conduct** annually. A copy of the signature page shall be maintained in the individual's personnel file. (USCCB Charter, Article 6; CPP, section 8; CPC)

SECTION VI – Safe Environment Strategies

Adequate Supervision of Children and Youth

Children and Youth are to be supervised at all times during Parish youth events and while under the care of Parish personnel. Volunteers / employees are to avoid situations in which they are isolated with children / youth and are to utilize a team approach in supervision and decision making regarding children / youth. (CPP, section 8; CPC, sections III-3, IV) To ensure the adequate supervision of children and youth, the following procedures are followed:

1. Employees / Volunteers will avoid situations in which they are alone with children / youth.

2. An appropriate staff / youth ratio will be maintained at all activities and events. Male and female chaperones will be provided for all events involving both boys and girls. (e.g. at least one adult for every 10 young people)

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

Acknowledging the power differential in Adult / Child Relationships

Recognizing that there is an innate power differential in adult / child relationships that is intensified when adults serve in positions of power and authority with children and youth, the following guidelines will be employed (CPC, III-7, IV):

1. Volunteers / Employees will neither give nor receive gifts from children / youth without prior approval of their immediate supervisor.
2. Volunteers / employees will make every effort to avoid threatening or coercive behaviors / actions with regard to children and youth.
3. Rules / expectations and consequences will be communicated clearly, both verbally and in print.
4. Every effort will be made to reinforce the positive behavior of children and youth. When necessary, logical consequences will be enforced in response to violations of rules or instances of inappropriate behavior. Consequences will be enforced consistently.
5. Volunteers / Employees will make efforts to avoid dual role relationships with children and youth.
6. _____

Maintaining Appropriate Boundaries

Volunteers and staff will maintain appropriate personal and professional boundaries. (CPP section 8.34; CPC III-3, IV)

1. Volunteers / employees will respect physical boundaries identified by children / youth.
2. Physical contact that may be misinterpreted / misconstrued shall be avoided.
3. Volunteers and Employees will not expose children and youth to inappropriate media.
4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

Promoting Open Communication

Volunteers and staff will encourage an environment of open communication. (CPP, section 8.33; CPC III-3, IV)

1. Children / Youth and parents shall be encouraged to communicate concerns and provide feedback.
2. Reported concerns shall be met with empathy and concern and an active plan to address concerns will be identified.

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

SECTION VII – Educating Children and Youth / Informing Parents

(USCCB Charter, Article 12) “Education will be provided for children in grades Kindergarten through 12th grade. Information will be prepared in age appropriate and sequential format and presented in Catholic schools, religious education, youth ministry, and other programs organized under the responsibility of the diocese. Standard educational components will be embedded and included in curricula and in the environment of all child services offered in the name of the Church,” (CPP, section 4.21) Educational opportunities and resources will be provided to parents and families of children participating in services offered in the name of the Church. (CPP, section 4.22)

Child / Youth Education

1. The diocesan developed “Know the Rules for Adult / Child Interactions” single session curriculum will be utilized during the first session of each religious education, sacrament preparation, and parish sponsored youth program.
2. Curriculum component resources will be integrated into existing curriculum to reinforce right relationships and personal safety concepts.
3. Number of children / youth in attendance at “Know the Rules” sessions will be reported to the Diocesan Child Protection Office within 30 days of completion of “Know the Rules” sessions. (CPP, section 9.22)
4. Parents will be given the right of refusal of this education for their children. Refusal forms (**opt-out forms**), completed by the parents or by the person to whom the refusal was given orally, will be maintained at the parish. Those parents who refuse such education for their children will be given educational material with which to educate their own children.
5. Additional efforts to educate children and youth in personal safety / right relationships / abuse prevention will be reported to the Diocesan Office of Child Protection for inclusion in the “additional actions” section of the USCCB audit.
6. Additional child / youth education efforts in this parish:

Parent Information

1. Information for parents will be provided in the form of posters and bulletin inserts.
2. Parents will be encouraged to participate in Initial Safe Environment Training and annual Continuing Education for volunteers and employees.
3. Sign-in sheets will be maintained for parent educational programs and the number of parents in attendance for any offered programs will be reported to the Diocesan Office of Child Protection on an annual basis. (CPP, section 9.22)
7. Additional efforts to educate / inform parents in the identification and prevention of abuse will be reported to the Diocesan Office of Child Protection for inclusion in the “additional actions” section of the USCCB audit.
8. Additional parent education / information efforts in this parish:

SECTION VIII – Code of Pastoral Conduct

Code of Conduct

All employees and Category 1 volunteers are required to follow a specific code of conduct with regard to their service with children and youth. Volunteers and employees review and sign the diocesan Code of Pastoral Conduct annually. (USCCB Charter, Article 6; CPP, section 8, CPC)

Code of Conduct Violations

In the event that a volunteer or employee is unable to follow the code of conduct, or if a volunteer or employee has witnessed behavior in another volunteer / employee that is inconsistent with the code of conduct, they are to complete an incident report. The incident report is to be provided to the immediate supervisor and filed at the parish. (CPP, section 8.2)

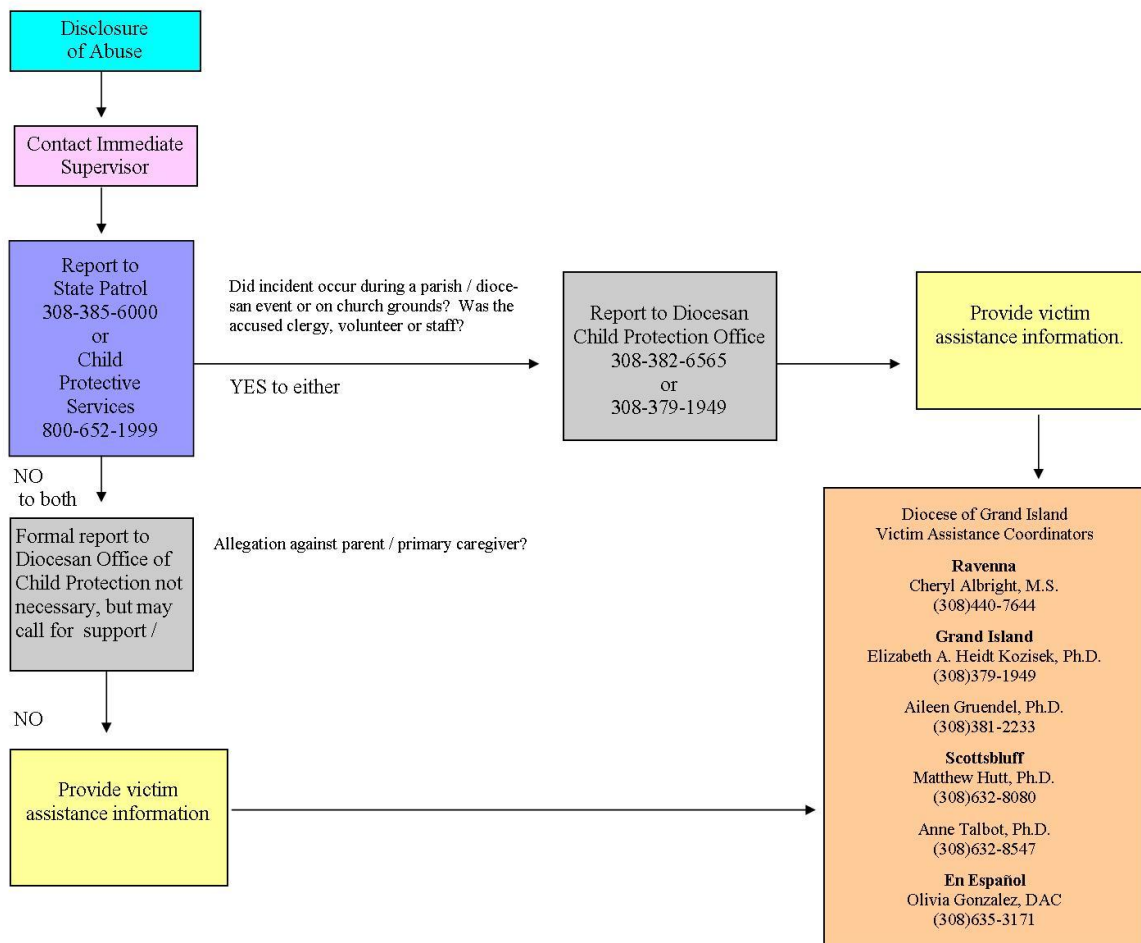
Code of conduct violations will be reviewed by the immediate supervisor. In most cases, the incident will be discussed with the individual to problem solve ways to avoid such incidents in the future. Monitoring will be provided and disciplinary action taken if necessary, depending on the nature of the violation.

Responsible Parties

The following individuals are responsible for addressing code of conduct violations in this parish (e.g. Pastor, Safe Environment Coordinator, etc.):

SECTION IX- Response to Signs of Sexual Abuse

1. Any cleric, consecrated religious, employee or volunteer of the parish is expected to report reasonable suspicion of abuse of any minor, consistent with the mandated reporting law of the State of Nebraska. (USCCB Charter, Article 4; CPP, sections 3, 7; CPC III-8, IV)
2. The dual reporting protocol is recommended, in which reports are made both to local law enforcement (by calling 9-1-1) and to Child Protective services (800-652-1999). The latter call is especially important if a parent, guardian or other family member is the suspected perpetrator of abuse.
3. When abuse is witnessed, or disclosed to an employee or volunteer, the Disclosures of Abuse Reporting Tree, provided by the Diocese of Grand Island Child Protection Office will be followed.



SECTION X- Use of Techonology

1. Any use of computing facilities of the parish for unlawful action will, when discovered, be reported to law enforcement. The parish will fully cooperate with authorities to provide any information necessary.
2. All computing facilities of the parish are subject to unannounced audits and will be audited whenever there is a change in the regular user of a particular computer.
3. Any individual user of parish computing facilities is expected to establish password protected access to his or her computer or, in the case of a shared computer, a password protected individual user profile.
4. Communications with children and youth via technology (e.g. cell phone, email, etc) shall follow the same guidelines as face to face interactions with youth. Developing personal / social relationships with children / youth via social networking sites is discouraged, as is the development of social relationships with children / youth outside the parish setting.
5. Additional procedures regarding use of technology:

SECTION XI – Evaluation

1. The parish will report annually to the Diocesan Child Protection Office. The report will include information necessary to document the implementation of the education and screening components of the prevention plan. (CPP, section 9)
2. Additional information may be requested by the relevant diocesan offices, as necessary to meet the expectations of the audits sponsored by the USCCB. (CPP section 9.3)
3. The parish will maintain records as outlined in Section II and referenced throughout the plan. These records will be available to persons delegated by the Ordinary to audit on-site the performance of the parish with respect to the Safe Environment Program. (CPP, section 9.2)
4. The parish will participate in efforts to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of Safe Environment Programming through completing evaluation surveys, administering pre and post training measures, etc. (CPP, section 9.4)