



Diocese of Grand Island

Child Protection Policy pertaining to:

Child / Youth Volunteers

The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People

In 2002, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops set forth the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People in response to the crisis of sexual abuse of children and young people by some deacons, priests and bishops in the Roman Catholic Church of the United States. The Charter, which was revised in 2005, outlines the Church's commitment both to the healing of those victimized by abuse and the prevention of abuse through ensuring a safe environment for children and youth. Articles 12 and 13 of the Charter pertain to providing safe environments for our children and youth.

Article 12

Dioceses are to maintain **safe environment programs** which the diocesan bishop deems to be in accord with Catholic moral principles. They are to be conducted cooperatively with parents, civil authorities, educators, and community organizations to provide **education and training for children, youth, parents, ministers, educators, volunteers** and others about ways to make and maintain a safe environment for children and young people. Dioceses are to make clear to clergy and all members of the community the **standards of conduct** for clergy and other persons in positions of trust with regard to children.

Article 13

Dioceses are to evaluate the background of all priests and deacons who are engaged in ecclesiastical ministry in the diocese and of all diocesan and parish / school or other paid personnel and volunteers whose duties include ongoing, unsupervised contact with minors. Specifically, they are to utilize the resources of law enforcement and other community agencies. In addition, they are to employ adequate screening and evaluative techniques in deciding the fitness of candidates for ordination.

“The assumption is not that all child / youth volunteers are ‘would be perpetrators,’ but that all ‘could be protectors’ of a child if provided with the proper tools.”

Education and Training

4.1 Safe Environment Training

4.11 Training shall be required for all personnel of the Diocese who have contact with children at the time they enter service in the name of the Church.

4.12 Personnel will participate in initial training and annual continuing education.

4.2 Preventative Education

4.21 Education will be provided for children and youth. Educational components will be embedded and included in the curricula and environment of all child services offered in the name of the Church.

4.22 Educational opportunities and resources will be provided to parents and families of children participating in services offered in the name of the Church.

4.23 Educational opportunities and resources will be provided to youth volunteers assisting in Church activities and programs for children.

4.24 Educational opportunities and resources will be made available to Catholic communities.

Contact and Conduct with Children / Youth

8.1 All personnel and youth volunteers will be expected to adhere to a standard code of conduct which they have agreed to in writing.

8.2 Personnel will document incidents when the code of conduct has not been followed.

8.3 The code of conduct shall include, but not be limited to the following:

8.31 Personnel will avoid meeting with children in isolation.

8.32 A team approach will be utilized in decision-making and when working with children.

8.33 Personnel will encourage an environment of open communication.

8.34 Personnel will maintain appropriate personal and professional boundaries.

8.35 Personnel will not have contact with children while under the influence of alcohol or other substances.

Background Screening

6.1 All prospective personnel of the Diocese over age 19, who will have regular contact with children in the name of the church, at the time of being offered a position, shall receive an explanation and the appropriate forms for a criminal background check.

6.2 All prospective personnel of the Diocese shall submit, as part of the normal screening, interview, and hiring process; references for their character, work history, and performance.

6.3 Results of the criminal background check shall be communicated to the pastor, the school administrator, or the immediate supervisor of the position in question. Irregularities, incomplete information, or concerns affecting the decision to hire shall be resolved with the prospective personnel by the pastor, school administrator, or the immediate supervisor of the position in question. Information will be kept confidential and secure.

6.4 The Chancellor of the Diocese shall be informed of the resolution of the irregularity prior to the action of hiring or eliminating the prospective personnel from the hiring process or volunteer service.

Child Protection Policy for Reporting Abuse

Article 4

Dioceses are to report an allegation of sexual abuse of a person who is a minor to the public authorities. Dioceses are to comply with all applicable civil laws with respect to the reporting of allegations of sexual abuse of minors to civil authorities and cooperate in their investigation in accord with the law in question.

Dioceses are to cooperate with public authorities about reporting cases even when the person is no longer a minor. In every instance, dioceses are to advise victims of their right to make a report to public authorities and support this right.

Nebraska Mandated Reporting Law

3.5 In accord with Nebraska law, any personnel who have reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subject to abuse or neglect, or observes a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances which reasonably would result in abuse or neglect, shall report such incident or cause a report to be made to the proper law enforcement agency or to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

Reporting Allegations

After adhering to the pertinent state and local laws:

7.11 A verbal report of the incident shall be made immediately to the appropriate staff person as determined by each Diocesan or parish entity and shall be followed by a written report with a copy to the Diocesan Bishop or his designate.

7.12 The Diocesan Bishop shall notify the Diocesan Review Board.

7.13 If an allegation of past abuse is reported when the victim is no longer a minor, the alleged victim shall be informed of his / her right to make a report to law enforcement and a Victim Assistance Coordinator.

Legal Definitions

Abuse or neglect means knowingly, intentionally, or negligently causing or permitting a child to be:

- (a) Placed in a situation that endangers his / her life or physical or mental health;
- (b) Cruelly confined or cruelly punished;
- (c) Deprived of necessary food, clothing, shelter, or care;
- (d) Left unattended in a motor vehicle if such minor child is six years of age or younger;
- (e) Sexually abused; or
- (f) Sexually exploited by allowing, encouraging, or forcing such person to solicit for or engage in prostitution, debauchery, public indecency, or obscene or pornographic photography, films, or depictions;

