

October 20, 2009

Dear Parish Safe Environment Staff,

I would like to personally thank you for your service to the People of God in the Diocese of Madison as both a facilitator for the "*Protecting God's Children Program*" by Virtus and as the Parish Safe Environment Coordinator for your parish community. Your hard work and dedication contribute greatly to the success of the Safe Environment program.

The Diocese of Madison has successfully completed the 2009 USCCB Audit on the Implementation of the Charter for the "*Protection of Children and Youth*". I again, would like to thank you for your steadfast work and your persistence in collecting the required information from your volunteers and employees to make the 2009 audit successful.

Already we are looking ahead to next year – making certain that the elements of the Charter are being implemented in an effective and timely manner. The Gavin Group, an independent audit company will be doing an on-site audit of our safe environment policies and procedures in June of 2010 to ensure that we are in compliance with the Charter for the "*Protection of Children and Young People*". You can help us by sending in the report forms in a timely manner so we can be proactive in the collection of data for the upcoming on-site Audit. Report forms include:

- Children's Program Report Forms for schools and parish catechetical programs "*Valuing God's Gifts in Ourselves and Others*". (Diocesan Curriculum)
- Priest letter to Bishop Morlino affirming that all educational programs about ways to make and maintain a safe environment for children and young people will be offered for the people of the parish in the year spanning July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010. (Forms were given out at Chula Vista or were mailed to the priest on October 6th)
- Compliance Detail Reports which are updated and sent into the Office of Safe Environment. (Background checks, Statement of Receipts and Agreement forms, and the Virtus Sign-in sheets.)
- Sign-in sheets for Virtus "*Protecting God's Children*" sessions for adults and for parents. The sign-in sheets for the sessions should be mailed to the Office of Safe Environment the day after the session. Without the sheets the individuals will not receive credit for taking the class. The volunteers will continue to be placed as inactive on your Compliance Detail Reports and will not be able to volunteer in the parish or school.

The Safe Environment curriculum for children and youth for the diocese, "*Valuing God's Gift in Ourselves and Others*," is to be taught every year in each parish catechetical program and each Catholic School in the Diocese. Bishop Morlino has proclaimed Safe Environment week as November 1-7, 2009 and the program should be held in that week. Every parish and school in the Diocese received a complete copy of the program in 2006. The curriculum is also posted on the Safe Environment webpage.

The offering of these lessons is **not** optional. Parents are to be notified via the parent letters provided, when the class will take place. If parents choose not to have their child participate in the Safe Environment training, they are to be offered Safe Environment training materials and will need to sign an opt-out form which is to be filed in your parish safe environment records. If the parent will not sign such a form, a notation of this should be made in a record maintained by the parish.

When the lesson has been presented, a Children's Program Report Form needs to be completed and sent to the Office of Safe Environment for tracking and audit purposes. A copy of the report form is included with this email and can also be found on the Safe Environment webpage at www.madisondiocese.org.

The **Parent Statistics Form** no longer needs to be completed by parishes. However, educational materials to assist parents in speaking to their own children about safe environment issues are to be **offered** to all parents each year. This can be done in several ways:

- Hold a Virtus "*Protecting God's Children for Parents*" session in your parish. Note: This is different from the session for adult volunteers.
- Provide a packet of materials for parents to use at home with their children. These materials can be found on the Safe Environment webpage.
- Inform parents of websites that they can visit to learn valuable tips on child safety. Websites such as the *National Center of Missing and Exploited Children* and *McGruff's Safe Kids*.
- Communicate safe environment issues with parents through newsletters and parish bulletin inserts.

The important element is to support parents in keeping their children safe by giving them tools to work with. Parishes should keep a record each year of the materials sent out to parents, in their parish files.

Newly hired Principals, DREs, CREs, AREs, Youth Ministers, and Directors of Day Care are required to complete Virtus Facilitator training even if they will not facilitate sessions personally. This is because of their need to field questions and to facilitate programs involving children following the Diocesan Safe Environment requirements. If you have never attended a Virtus awareness session and are not registered in the Virtus system, you will need to attend an awareness session for adults prior to the facilitator's training.

If your job position requires you to take the Virtus Facilitator training, please call Cheri Neddersen at (608) 821-3133 so she can organize the next training session.

If you are a new Safe Environment Coordinator and would like some one-on-one training, please call me at (608) 821-3016. I'm aware of the difficulties that come with a new job position and I would like to help make the transition a positive experience.

Every facilitator and parish Safe Environment coordinator has been given a Diocesan e-mail account. In addition, all of you have access to the Safe Environment webpage where all current and relevant information, forms, processes and policies are posted. I encourage you to visit the webpage on a regular basis, so you can stay informed of new postings and have access to all of the updated report forms.

Unfortunately, some Safe Environment coordinators are still using the old report forms. After October, any old forms that are turned into the office of Safe Environment will be returned to the parish for the correct forms. If you have any questions regarding how to access the updated report forms please call Cheri Neddersen at (608) 821-3133 or email her at cheryl.neddersen@straphael.org.

It is imperative that the parishes maintain diligence in their Safe Environment efforts. New volunteers as well as new hires need to receive the necessary training, policy and code book, and undergo background checks. The Office of Safe Environment thanks all who have generously given their time and energy to make this process and program successful. Your efforts are making a difference to the children and their parents in our Diocese. Please keep your efforts going to establish safe, nurturing environments for all of our most vulnerable.

May God bless you and your loved ones,

Cheryl R. Splinter
Director of the Office of Safe Environment

Program Report Form
Children's Curriculum for Safe Environment
Safe Environment Week November 1 – 7, 2009
Academic Year July 2009- June 2010

Name of Parish(s): _____ City: _____

Name of Person filing Report: _____

Title/Position: _____ Phone: _____

Report is for: _____ Parish Catechetical Program _____ Parish School

Grade	Number of students enrolled	Number of students present	Date presented
Kindergarten			
1 st Grade			
2 nd Grade			
3 rd Grade			
4 th Grade			
5 th Grade			
6 th Grade			
7 th Grade			
8 th Grade			
9 th Grade			
10 th Grade			
Total			

Report form may be downloaded from the Diocese of Madison website on the Safe Environment webpage and filled out electronically. That saved document may be sent as an attachment to: ose@straphael.org

For submission of hard copies of this completed report:

Mail to: Office of Safe Environment
 Attn: Cheri Nedderson
 Diocese of Madison
 P.O. Box 44983
 Madison, WI 53744-4983

Fax to: 608-821-3013