

Summary of USCCB Safe Environment Requirements

From Office for Child & Youth Protection Website (as of June, 2006):

WHAT IS REQUIRED FOR SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMS: The *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* requires that dioceses/eparchies establish "safe environment" programs. Article 12 of the *Charter* states:

Diocese/eparchies will establish "safe environment" programs. They will cooperate with parents, civil authorities, educators, and community organizations to provide education and training for children, youth, parents, ministers, educators, and others about ways to make and maintain a safe environment for children. Dioceses/eparchies will make clear to clergy and members of the community the standards of conduct for clergy and other persons in positions of trust with regard to sexual abuse.

HOW LONG WE MUST CONDUCT SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMS: Due to the dynamic nature of parish life and personnel turnover, safe environment programs must be incorporated into the long-term mission of dioceses/eparchies.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAMS: Children in parish religious education programs should receive the same basic information as those who attend Catholic schools. Some programs may have to be modified for parish religious education programs due to time constraints.

If religious education students receive personal safety training as part of their regular school curriculum, the diocese, after reviewing the public school curriculum and finding that it meets the standards of the diocese, may choose not to provide additional safe environment training to the religious education students. If, however, diocesan personnel believe that the public school curriculum is not sufficient or in need of some supplementation, the diocese should do so.

It is incumbent upon diocesan personnel that all children under their care have received safe environment training which meets the standards of the diocesan safe environment training.

ACCEPTANCE OF PUBLIC SCHOOL EQUIVALENT PROGRAMS: A diocese/eparchy can utilize a community or public-school based program, as long as the program includes the information outlined above and reaches the pertinent audiences.

REACHING PARENTS: It may be difficult to ensure all parents in a parish are adequately informed about the issue of child abuse. To reach as many parents as possible, attempts should be made to provide various types instruction. Multiple delivery methods could include formal training sessions led by experienced child-safety professionals, independent reading material, videos, or information posted on the diocesan web-site.

From Memo to all Bishops from Teresa M. Kettlekamp, Executive Director, OCYP, September 9, 2005

Under the *Charter*, arch/diocese/eparchies must do all of the following:

- Establish age-appropriate safe environment training for children
- Once established, this training must be offered to the children
- The arch/diocese eparchy must provide the training
- There must be documentation for accountability purposes to ensure training has taken place.

PROGRAMS MUST BE PROVIDED IN SCHOOLS, PARISHES, NOT JUST AT HOME:

An arch/diocese's/ eparchy's safe environment program cannot consist only of providing a pamphlet or brochure to a child and/or parent, and asking that it be reviewed with the child. This is not considered "training" as required for compliance with Article 12 of the Charter, even if a parent certification is made... any such training programs for children which are totally left to the parents and are not conducted as part of a school or religious education program, curriculum or classroom work and overseen by the arch/diocese/eparchy will not satisfy the requirements of Article 12 of the Charter.

ACCEPTANCE OF PUBLIC SCHOOL PROGRAMMING: If, after reviewing the public school curriculum an arch/diocese/eparchy may choose not to provide additional safe environment training to the public school religion students. If, however, arch/diocesan/eparchial personnel believe that the public school curriculum is not sufficient, or need of some supplementation, the arch/diocese/eparchy diocese should do so.

PARENT'S OPTION TO DECLINE INSTRUCTION: a parent can refuse to allow their child to participate in the arch/diocesan/eparchial instruction, but this must be done on a case-by-case basis, and four conditions must be met. These conditions are:

- Arch/diocesan/eparchial training must be offered to the child.
- Arch/diocesan/eparchial safe environment materials must be provided to the parents for the safe environment training of their child.
- The parent must specifically state in writing (1) that the safe environment training was offered to their child, (2) that they refused to allow their child to participate in this training, and (3) that they have received safe environment training materials for their child.
- This document must be maintained by the arch/diocese/eparchy to ensure full accountability concerning the safe environment training of every child.

TRAINING OF PARENTS: The only group for which training is optional is the parents. Though parents are encouraged to attend safe environment training and a program must be established for them, they are not required to attend. The only audited item along the lines of safe environment training for parents would be whether or not a safe environment program has been established for parents; not whether they attend.

THE CONTENT OF CHILD TRAINING: It is not sex education training. The mandate is for safe environment training which includes age appropriate material pertaining to personal safety including information about improper touching, relationships, and how to deal with uncomfortable situations. It clearly emphasizes reporting such incidents to parents, teachers, and others in authority.