

Health and Safety  
September, 2003

## **C. 1. CHAPERONES / RETREAT FACILITATORS**

All retreat facilitators and chaperones must complete the 'Virtus' Program, ***Protecting God's Children***, before they are permitted to chaperone any event. This program requires that adults have PA Child Abuse History and a Criminal Record Check every three years, an interview, sign the "Volunteer Code of Conduct," and provide two references.

Chaperones / Retreat Facilitators should accompany young people on retreats and trips of any kind in a ratio of 7 children / youth to 1 adult.

Chaperones / Retreat Facilitators should never share the same sleeping space (bed, sleeping bag, etc.) as children / youth.

At least two adults who have attended the ***Protecting God's Children Program*** must be present at all times.

Two chaperones should be scheduled to remain awake during the night on overnight retreats for the health and safety of both chaperones and youth.

Parishes are required to follow the policies listed above, in addition to any policies required by retreat or other facilities.

## **C. 2. COMMUNICABLE DISEASES**

Communicable diseases are safety concerns for catechetical leaders, catechists, volunteers, children / youth and their parents. Parish staff must be concerned about the safety for all those who are active in parish programming.

### **Responsibility and Confidentiality**

Everyone has privacy rights. Medical information is confidential and only parents of minors have a legal right to this information.

If a parent releases information regarding a communicable disease to the DRE / Sacramental Prep Coordinator, / Youth Minister, the child's / youth's dignity should be maintained by respecting the confidentiality of this information. The number of personnel who are aware of the condition should be kept to the minimum necessary to assure proper care and supervision of the infected child / youth. At the same time the safety and good health of other children / youth, catechists, youth ministers, and support staff in religious education programs is to be provided.

No information about any infected individual may be released publicly.

### **Admission to Programs**

The parents or guardians of an infected child / youth attending a religious education / youth ministry / sacramental prep program are responsible for securing such regular medical evaluations that permit a reliable assessment of any change in their child's / youth's condition which might affect attendance. Parents or guardians should authorize the release of these evaluations to the appropriate administrator. Their failure to secure such regular medical evaluations to authorize the release of the results will jeopardize the child's / youth's continued enrollment.

### **Placement**

First consideration should be given to placing the infected child / youth in the regular setting. Precautions should be taken to avoid having the child / youth infect others or become infected with diseases transmitted by fellow children / youth or others connected with the program.

A child / youth infected with a communicable disease and unable to attend religious education / youth ministry / sacramental prep programming shall be assisted by the DRE / Sacramental Prep Coordinator / Youth Minister in securing alternative instruction.

## **C. 2. DISCIPLINE: Administration and Child / Youth Responsibilities**

The parish religious education program is one place where the beliefs of the Catholic faith of children / youth is taught (informed) and the Christian way of life formed. It is imperative, therefore, that the environment for this teaching is hospitable, caring, and safe. Both catechists and children / youth are expected by their behavior to follow the example of Jesus and ensure each person's right to be treated with dignity and respect. There are administrator and children / youth responsibilities and rights that ensure a safe environment and make learning possible.

### **Administrative responsibilities**

- ? Write and implement a clear and consistent discipline policy for religious education / youth ministry / sacramental prep process that ensures the dignity and respect of catechetical staff and children / youth and provides a safe environment.
- ? Advise parents / guardians and catechetical staff of the written policy
- ? Enforce the written policy and inform the pastor and parents / guardians when disciplinary action has been taken
- ? Continue the religious education of a child / youth if they must be removed from a religious education / youth ministry program, possibly by home schooling
- ? Ensure that all adults and children / youth behave in accordance with civil law where applicable
- ? Maintain privacy and confidentiality for catechetical staff and children / youth

### **Child / Youth responsibilities**

- ? Show respect for the catechetical staff and other students
- ? Treat parish and personal property with respect
- ? Be present only in the designated areas of the building
- ? Use an appropriate voice and display actions in a manner appropriate for learning
- ? Behave in accordance with civil law where applicable

## **C. 4. DRUGS, ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO**

The use and / or possession of illegal drugs, alcoholic beverages, tobacco, mood-altering substances, look-alike drugs, drug related paraphernalia or the abuse of prescription drugs on parish property or while attending or participating in any parish sponsored activity (Confirmation Retreats) is forbidden and considered a major disciplinary infraction.

Being under the influence of illegal drugs, alcoholic beverages or mood-altering substances on parish property or at a parish-sponsored activity (Confirmation Retreats) is likewise forbidden and considered a major disciplinary infraction.

After taking into consideration all circumstances, the pastor and the DRE / CRE / Youth Minister may suspend or dismiss a child / youth from any or all parish catechetical, youth ministry activities for these major disciplinary infractions.

The selling or supplying of illegal drugs, alcoholic beverages, mood-altering substances, drug related paraphernalia, is an extremely serious situation which is to be reported to the parents / guardian of the child / youth and ordinarily law enforcement officials.

### **PROCEDURE**

- ? Confiscate the substance and / or paraphernalia and document the incident. Include who confiscated the substance / materials, what was confiscated, if known ,the child / youth's name and the name of other people who were involved
- ? Contact the parents
- ? Contact the police
- ? Consider recommending to the parent that the child / youth be referred to Catholic Social Services or Family and Youth Services

\*NOTE: Refer to the Search and Seizure Policy, page DP-10

## **C. 5. FIRST AID CARE OF CHILDREN /YOUTH**

We are familiar with the saying, “sometimes accidents happen.” When they occur it is the responsibility of the catechist, catechetical leader and youth minister to respond with the first treatment, or minor first aid to children / youth in need.

### **PROCEDURE**

- ? Immediate care should be given at the moment an accident is reported
- ? Notify the young person’s parent / guardian or emergency card designee as soon as possible. (If the parent / guardian cannot be immediately contacted and you consider the incident serious, call 911.
- ? Report incident to the parish office immediately, who in turn can notify the diocesan person who records and investigates accidents.

## **C. 6. SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY**

Providing a safe environment for all parish programs is essential for the well being of all as well as providing an environment conducive to education and formation in faith. With reasonable care, safe environments can be provided for catechists, volunteers and children / youth. Parish policy should include the following:

- ? Any employee or volunteer participating in children / youth programming is to complete the requirements for diocesan training for the *Protecting God’s Children Program* before assuming any responsibilities
- ? People not participating in a program or activity should not have access to children /youth
- ? Designate who may pick up and drop off children / youth and the appropriate locations
- ? Monitor all buildings and programs
- ? Catechists, volunteers and children / youth should be familiar with the location of exits and fire extinguishers
- ? An annual fire drill
- ? Each building that is used for programming should have at least two exits

## **C. 7. SEARCH AND SEIZURE**

To ensure the safety of catechetical personnel and children / youth and to provide guidance for parish programs, catechetical leaders / sacramental prep coordinators / youth ministers should develop a parish policy for searching students and / or seizing possessions if the child / youth is suspected of possessing an illegal or dangerous item.

### **PROCEDURE**

- ? Lockers and desks are considered parish property and as co-tenants personnel reserve the right to search them at any time without notice.
- ? “While constitutional protections do not apply, religious education programs and their personnel can be subjected to tort suits of assault and battery and / or invasion of privacy if a student is harmed because of an unreasonable search. Carefully developed policies and procedures should guide any search and seizure; a common sense ‘balancing test’ should be applied in each case.” (1)
- ? In cases where a young person is suspected to be carrying a dangerous or illegal item on their person, the catechist, catechetical leader, or youth minister should ask the young person for it. If they refuse, the young person should be asked to empty all pockets, bags, purses, etc. (If at all possible, the person conducting the search should ask that another adult be present.) If the child / youth continues to refuse to cooperate, they should be informed that the police will be contacted.
- ? Contact the parents and pastor

1. Religious Education and the Law: A Handbook for Parish Catechetical Leaders by Mary Angela Shaughnessy, SCN.

## **C. 8. WEAPONS OR THREATS OF VIOLENCE**

In order to ensure a safe and Christian environment, the possession of any weapon on parish property or at any parish-related activity (Confirmation Retreat) is forbidden. The local police will be contacted immediately when a child / youth has used or threatens to use any weapon or implement in a menacing manner against another person or will not surrender the weapon.

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, discipline would normally follow. Any child / youth in possession of any weapon or threatening violence on another person would be immediately suspended from all parish catechetical activities / Confirmation Retreats / youth ministry activities. If, in the judgment of the pastor and DRE / Confirmation Coordinator/ Youth Minister, there are no extenuating circumstances (medication, retardation, etc.) the child / youth would be expelled from any or all parish catechetical /sacramental prep /and youth ministry activities for the remainder of the year following an appropriate investigation. It is then the responsibility of the parent to home school the child / youth (follow home schooling guidelines). Judgments about readmitting the child / youth to the religious education program for the following year would be made at the discretion of the pastor.

### **PROCEDURE**

- ? Notify the pastor
- ? Notify the police
- ? Notify the parents of the perpetrator of the alleged incident
- ? Notify the parents of any children / youth involved in the incident
- ? Report the details to the parish office noting dates, times, those involved and what transpired. These records must be kept until the child / youth graduates. The parish office should report the incident to the diocesan person who investigates incidents for insurance purposes.





## D. HOME SCHOOLING

Parents who home school their children usually fall into two categories: those who teach their children all academic and religious subjects and those whose children's schedules conflict with the schedule of the parish religious education / youth ministry program.

“Because they gave life to their children, parents have the most serious obligation and right to educate them. It is therefore primarily the responsibility of Christian parents to ensure the Christian education of their children in accordance with the teaching of the Church.” (**Canon 226 #1**) It is the parents' right, therefore, to educate their children. The parish has the responsibility to support them, provide parents the necessary education to enable them to adequately form and teach the faith to their children, call them to accountability and ensure communal faith formation at the parish for the family.

### PROCEDURE

- ? Parents should use materials on the preferred list of texts provided by the Religious Education Office. It may be helpful if they are the same texts used by the parish education program.
- ? A copy of the appropriate grade of the Curriculum for Religious Education is to be provided for each child.
- ? Wherever family participation is expected in the parish program, home schooled families are also expected to participate. All retreats, service and communal prayer experiences, as outlined in the Religious Education curriculum and required by the parish, should be attended by those home schooled
- ? Parents are to be called to accountability. Parents and their children should meet with the DRE / CRE / Youth Minister every 4-6 weeks. At this time, work can be checked and questions answered
- ? Parish programs that test children and youth should also test those who are homeschooled
- ? “In a special way, the parish priest is to ensure, in accordance with the norms laid down by the Diocesan Bishop, that:  
  
Children are properly prepared for First Confession and First Holy Communion, and for the Sacrament of Confirmation, by means of catechetical formation over an appropriate period of time. Children, after having made their First Holy Communion, are given a richer and deeper catechetical formation.” (**Canon 777 # 2-3**)
- ? According to Diocesan Directives, sacramental preparation for Baptism, First Eucharist, Confirmation and First Reconciliation is to be family centered and parish based. (Directive #4) **Whatever the parish requires for preparation for the sacraments is expected of those who are home schooled**
- ? Families who home school have access to media resources at the diocesan and parish resource center

