

Newsletter

THIS ISSUE

- Answers to Frequently Asked Questions regarding Safe Environment Education



Dear Friends and Colleagues,

It has been more than six years since the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops developed and approved the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* (<http://www.usccb.org/ocyp/charter.shtml>). Since the implementation of the Charter in 2002, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee has educated more than 35,000 adults to detect and respond to the warning signs of sexual abuse.

The safe environment program, Safeguarding All of God's Family, has many components. In this newsletter we will share some of the most frequently asked questions about the safe environment program of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. For some of you this information will be

new, for others it will serve as a reminder of the importance of safe environment in our faith community. In either case, we thank you for your commitment and dedication to creating and maintaining safe and healthy environments for our children and youth.

Office for Sexual Abuse Prevention and Response Services

SAFEGUARDING ALL OF GOD'S FAMILY FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is Safeguarding All of God's Family?

All efforts and programs in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee that relate to protecting God's children and creating a safe environment come under the umbrella of *Safeguarding All of God's Family*.

As a faith-filled people, we respect and value each and every individual, as we are created in the image and likeness of God. This is why the *Safeguarding All of God's Family* program has been established. The Archdiocese of Milwaukee is committed to creating a safe environment where all of God's family – children, their parents and relatives, parish and school personnel, volunteers, clergy and archdiocesan central office personnel – will be able to work, live, and play in an environment where healthy and responsible relationships prevail.

Why do I have to participate in this program?

The *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* requires that dioceses/eparchies establish "safe environment" programs. Article 12 of the Charter states:

"Dioceses/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."

Our children are precious, and all adults need to better understand the injustice of sexual abuse in society. There is a need for creating a greater awareness about this problem. *Safeguarding All of God's Family* is the program of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee dedicated to creating awareness and understanding of abuse of children and youth.

What is the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*?

The *Charter* is a comprehensive set of norms established by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in June 2002 that addresses allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy. The *Charter* also includes guidelines for reconciliation, healing, accountability and prevention of future acts of abuse.

Do you really think this program will make a difference?

Absolutely. This program offers an opportunity for all of God's family to increase our awareness and knowledge of child sexual abuse in order to prevent any child from suffering this trauma, whether from school or Church personnel, family member or other person. Statistics show that most abuse occurs by a person known to the victim. Participating in this program will help all who work with children be more attuned to the warning signs of abuse and identify ways to respond. Awareness is the first step in understanding our responsibilities as members of God's family to our children and young people.



Who must participate?

All those who share their many talents and treasures within the Church atmosphere, paying particular attention to those whose ministry calls them to demonstrate their gifts through work with children and youth.

Child sexual abuse is a widespread, societal problem. The more people who are educated to recognize the warning signs of abuse, the safer our children are. The *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* requires the Church to educate both adults and children to prevent child sexual abuse. This is not because the Church thinks all adults are a problem; but because the solution to child sexual abuse depends on caring adults bring aware and knowing what to do.

A copy of this Newsletter can be found on the Archdiocese of Milwaukee website www.archmil.org/safeguarding under the heading, Resources.

The following must join the Archdiocese of Milwaukee's mission to *Safeguard All of God's Family*:

- All diocesan priests and deacons (active or retired) in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.
- All priests who are members of religious communities and extern priests (priests from other dioceses) who minister within the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.
- Women religious and religious brothers working in the Archdiocese, its parishes or schools.
- Seminarians and those enrolled in the Diaconate Formation Program or Lay Formation Program.
- All paid personnel, whether employed in areas of ministry or other kinds of services provided by the Archdiocese, its parishes, schools or other agencies.
- All volunteers who enter into ministry involving regular contact with children and young people.

What determines "regular contact" with children?

"Regular contact" can be defined as follows:

- Any individual who works, volunteers, or has contact with minors within the Archdiocese of Milwaukee's parishes, schools or institutions **more than once a semester**.
- Any individual who goes on a field trip (or any outing away from the parish, school or institution) with minors from any parish, school or institution within the Archdiocese of Milwaukee **even once a year**.



For more information on the Archdiocese of Milwaukee's safe environment policies and procedures, please visit www.archmil.org/safeguarding.


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