

SAFE ENVIRONMENT STRUCTURE AND DEFINITIONS

Minor:

A “Minor” is any person under 18 years of age (per Code of Canon Law #1395) who participates in a program or programs under the authority of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Amarillo. A minor may also be referred to as a “child” or “young person”.

Vulnerable Person/Adult:

Any person 18 years of age or older who, in a state of a clinically diagnosed infirmity, physical or mental deficiency, or deprivation of personal liberty which, in fact, limits their ability to understand or to want or otherwise resist an offence.

Adult Minor:

An “Adult Minor” is a teenager who is 18 years old up to their 20th Birthday.

Sexual Abuse:

Sexual abuse is any form of sexual misconduct, molestation, or exploitation of a minor or vulnerable adult by which an adult uses another as an object of sexual gratification.

Sexual abuse is forcing someone, by violence or threat, or through abuse of authority, to perform or submit to sexual acts. Allegations of criminal sexual abuse (See Appendix “L” –

Texas Penal Code-Title 5, Chapter 21, 22) require the notification of appropriate civil authorities.

Sexual abuse may also include credible evidence of behaviors that are in violation of Catholic Morality, “Amarillo Diocese’s Safe Environment Policy”, “Code of Cannon Law (1395)”, “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People”, and/or the Sixth Commandment as delineated in the “Catechism of the Catholic Church”, etc. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the Diocesan Bishop, with the advice of the Diocesan Charter Review Board, to determine the gravity of the alleged act.

Child Abuse:

Any form of infliction of injury to the detriment of a child’s physical, mental, moral, spiritual, or emotional wellbeing.

Child Pornography:

Child pornography pertains to owning, making, distributing, sharing, or viewing any film, video, photograph, electronic or computer-generated images of an individual(s), under the age of 18, who is nude, or engaging in sexually explicit activities, whether real or simulated, and any representation of sexual organs of minor for sexual purposes. See Appendix F

Church Personnel:

“Church Personnel” shall mean all persons, (clergy, religious and laity) who are employed by, under contract of employment with, or volunteer in any Diocesan Institution or Parish that provides ministry to children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults. “Teenage Church Personnel” are those teenagers 14 up to 18 years of age who are left alone in an “unsupervised” ministry to children. Such personnel will be required to undergo the full screening and training process.

See Appendix A, B, F, G, I, J, and K.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:

The “United States Conference of Catholic Bishops” (“USCCB”) developed and approved the revised *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* at its June 2018 General Meeting. Each Diocesan Bishop will oversee its implementation in their respective diocese.

Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People:

The “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People” (“Charter”) provides an outline of practical and pastoral steps to develop a safe environment within the Church for children and young people and of preventing sexual abuse of minors.

Bishop of Amarillo:

The “Bishop of Amarillo”, through his appointed Safe Environment Personnel, is accountable for the full compliance of the USCCB “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People”.

Vicar General:

The “Vicar General”, with the assistance of the Director, will ensure the efficient operation of the Safe Environment Program and serve as liaison between the Bishop and the Charter Review Board, and all Safe Environment components.

Diocesan Charter Review Board:

The “Diocesan Charter Review Board” will serve as a confidential consultative body to the Bishop. The majority of its members are to be laypersons not in the employ of the diocese. This Board will advise the bishop in his assessment of allegations of sexual abuse of minors and in his determination of a cleric’s suitability for ministry. It is regularly to review diocesan policies and procedures for dealing with sexual abuse and related matters. {Charter Article 2}

Diocesan Attorney:

The “Diocesan Attorney” will serve as legal consultant for any and all issues as they pertain to Safe Environment/Sexual Abuse issues, in conjunction with the Review Board, Bishop and his designee, Investigator, the Safe Environment Office, Victim Assistance, etc.

Victim Assistance Coordinator:

The “Victim Assistance Coordinator” will be available to reach out to victims/survivors and their families to assist them in healing and reconciliation. This service may include provision of counseling, spiritual assistance, support groups, and other social services agreed upon by the victim and diocese.

This office shall be independent from but in union with all other components of the Diocesan Safe Environment Program. See Charter Article 1.

Investigator of Allegations:

The “Investigator” will review all allegations and accusations of sexual misconduct. Such allegations will be taken seriously and will be thoroughly investigated in accord with the norms set forth in this document. The Vicar General and/or the Vicar of Clergy with approval of the Charter Review Board and Bishop, will oversee, appoint, and direct the Investigator. Do to the sensitivity of “Diocesan Confidential Archived Files” it is recognized that extreme caution must be exercised in their accessibility; however, the Diocesan Investigator must be granted access to particular file(s) on an “on-need basis” as the situation warrants. See Charter Articles 2, 4, 5, Code of Canon Law canons 489, 490, &1719.

Institution:

“Institution” shall mean all parishes, Catholic schools, diocesan offices, Bishop DeFalco Retreat Center, other retreat facilities, programs, agencies, Catholic Charities of the Texas Panhandle, civil corporations, and organizations whose ecclesiastical superior is the Bishop of Amarillo.

It is the obligation of every “Institution” in the Diocese of Amarillo to ensure that all Church Personnel, whose position or duties place them in contact with minors, vulnerable adults, etc. comply fully with the Safe Environment of this policy.

Those institutions that provide ministry to minors must ensure that they receive Safe Environment Training before or during the month of October, each year; and catch-up training for those who missed previously scheduled training sessions. All minors must receive safe environment training every year! See Appendix C & D.

Institution Administrator:

The “Administrator” is the pastor, principal, or agency head of an Institution. This person is ultimately responsible for ensuring that all Church Personnel have complied with the Safe Environment Requirements, all children have received Safe Environment Training, and for accurate records relevant to the program’s operation are maintained and forwarded in a timely manner to the Safe Environment Office. See Appendix A – K.

Institution VIRTUS Local Coordinator (Administrator):

The Virtus Local Coordinator (Administrator) may be the Institution Administrator and/or his designee such as the DRE or assistant principal, assistant agency head, etc., to actually oversee the Safe Environment Program at an Institution. See Charter Article 12 and Appendix G, H, & K.

Institution VIRTUS Adult Safe Environment Facilitator:

Each Institution should have (or access to) an “VIRTUS Adult Safe Environment Facilitator”. The Adult Facilitator shall be trained and certified by the Director and/or the designee. He/she will be able to offer Safe Environment Training to Church Personnel as well as assisting those who require assistance registering on the VIRTUS website. See Charter Article 12, 13 and Appendix A, B, D, G, H, I, J, & K.

Institution Children & Youth Safe Environment Trainers:

The Church Personnel who are further approved by the Administrator (Pastor, Principal) may train Children and Youth during regularly scheduled Faith Formation Classes and/or as needed. See Charter Article 12, Appendix H.

Safe Environment Month - October:

The Month of October has been designated “Safe Environment Month”. As such the bulk of Safe Environment Training of Minors must be conducted before or during the month of October and reported to the Diocesan Safe Environment Office no later than November 15th. It should be noted that catch-up Safe Environment Training should be conducted as needed for those newly enrolled or who have missed regularly scheduled training. See Appendix H