



Shepherding God's Children

Providing a safe environment for youth by promoting education and awareness of child sexual abuse | Winter 2016

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Upcoming Background Check Collection

All Parish/School Safe Environment Coordinators received an email on December 20th, asking them to submit a spreadsheet with all of the background checks their parish and/or school has performed on employees and volunteers between July 1st, 2016 and December 31st, 2016. Coordinators are not expected to recheck any employees or volunteers. Rather, the Safe Environment Office would like to review the lists of background checks that were performed during the first half of the current audit year.

Background check spreadsheets are due to be emailed to Michelle Pickert, Safe Environment Coordinator, at pickertm@catholicdioceseofwichita.org by Tuesday, January 31st.

What should you do if a child discloses abuse to you?

Even though we know that one in five girls and one in ten boys will be sexually abused before they turn 18, it can be a surprising experience when a child tells you about his/her abuse. Use the following steps as a guide to make sure you react appropriately to any child who chooses to disclose his/her abuse to you.

- **Stay calm.** Though you might experience feelings of shock and anger, it is important that you remain calm in front of the child. Seeing your strong emotions may overwhelm the child and cause him/her to be wary of sharing additional information.
- **Listen carefully to the child.** Sit on the child's level and give him/her your full attention so that he/she knows you're taking him/her seriously. Be careful when asking clarifying questions; asking a child for specific details about the situation may overwhelm and confuse him/her. Once the situation is reported to the civil authorities, a trained professional will speak with the child and gather details about the abuse in a way that feels non-threatening to the child.
- **Believe what the child tells you.** Studies show that less than 5% of children lie about being abused. Most children do not tell anyone about their abuse; it is crucial that you believe a child when he/she does have the courage to speak up.
- **Reassure the child and explain that you will help to keep him/her safe.** Tell the child that he/she was very brave to tell you what happened and that the abuse is not his/her fault. Explain that you will report the abuse to someone who will be able to help and that you will do everything in your power to keep the child safe.
- **Report the abuse right away.** Call 911 if the child is in immediate danger. Report all allegations and suspicions of child abuse or neglect to the Kansas Department for Children and Families at 1-800-922-5330. If the alleged abuser is a clergy member, religious, diocesan employee, or diocesan volunteer, contact Therese Seiler, Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator, at 316-269-3945. Sources: www.virtus.org, www.nspcc.org.uk, www.stopitnow.org



18 Year-Olds and VIRTUS

As a reminder, it is diocesan policy that all employees 18 years and older must attend VIRTUS prior to beginning their work. All volunteers 18 years and older who have “regular contact” with youth must attend a VIRTUS session prior to volunteering. “Regular contact” is defined as contact with minors more than once per calendar year, or even just once when the activity includes driving, an overnight stay, restroom and/or locker room supervision, or the absence of adult supervision.

This requirement also applies to 18 year-old high school students who volunteer with minors, attend youth group (CYM/CYO) where minors are present, and participate in overnight trips with their schools or parishes. Because of this, there are many 16 and 17 year-old students who attend VIRTUS sessions in anticipation of their 18th birthdays. It is permissible for minors to attend VIRTUS sessions. However, we do recommend that minors attend sessions with a parent or other adult.

Upcoming VIRTUS Sessions:

SUNDAY, JANUARY 8
Holy Cross, Hutchinson
2 pm to 5 pm
Session conducted in Spanish

SUNDAY, JANUARY 8
St. Peter, Schulte
5 pm to 8 pm

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11
Holy Cross, Hutchinson
6 pm to 9 pm

SUNDAY, JANUARY 15
Church of the Magdalen, Wichita
2 pm to 5 pm

MONDAY, JANUARY 16
St. Catherine of Siena, Wichita
6:30 pm to 9:30 pm

SATURDAY, JANUARY 21
St. Francis of Assisi, Wichita
9 am to 12 pm

SATURDAY, JANUARY 21
St. Joseph, McPherson
Call Steve Burghart at
620-242-4158 for times

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 8
Holy Cross, Hutchinson
6 pm to 9 pm

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Wichita
6:30 pm to 9:30 pm

**Participants should
pre-register at www.virtus.org.**

Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors

In 2014, Pope Francis appointed 17 men and women to the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors. Comprised of lay, religious, and clergy from around the world, the purpose of the Commission is to act as an advisory body to the Holy Father on policies and educational programs for the protection of youth and vulnerable adults. The Commission’s tasks are to evaluate the programs and policies that are currently being used and to offer suggestions for new initiatives. Visit www.protectionofminors.va to view the Commission’s new website and learn more about their ongoing efforts.



Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors

VIRTUS Online Bulletins

Parish Safe Environment Coordinators are encouraged to run the VIRTUS Training Bulletin Reports for their locations and follow up with all employees who are two or more bulletins out of date. This process should be done on a quarterly basis to ensure that employees and parishes are in compliance with the diocesan Safe Environment policy. Parish Coordinators may contact Michelle Pickert at 316-440-1731 with any questions about accessing the Training Bulletin Report on VIRTUS.org.

Safe Environment Best Practices

Many of our diocesan parishes and schools are going above and beyond to create and maintain safe environments for youth. We would like to begin sharing some of these Best Practices with you and we encourage you to implement the following procedures at your diocesan location, if you have not done so already. Look for more Best Practices in future issues of the Shepherding God's Children newsletter.

- **Restrict internet access for minors.** It is recommended that Wi-Fi access be limited or made unavailable on buses, in hotel rooms, and at other locations where youth are participating in lock-ins, field trips, and overnight school, parish, or diocesan trips.
- **Run background checks on minors.** Though diocesan volunteers are not required to attend a VIRTUS session until they are 18 years old, it is recommended that locations run background checks on all volunteers 14 years and older, when they will be volunteering with youth. Minors as young as 14 who have been convicted of sex offenses and other crimes are often listed on public offender websites, including the National Sex Offender Public Website (www.nsopw.gov).

Please contact Michelle Pickert, Diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator, with any questions or to share your location's Best Practices.

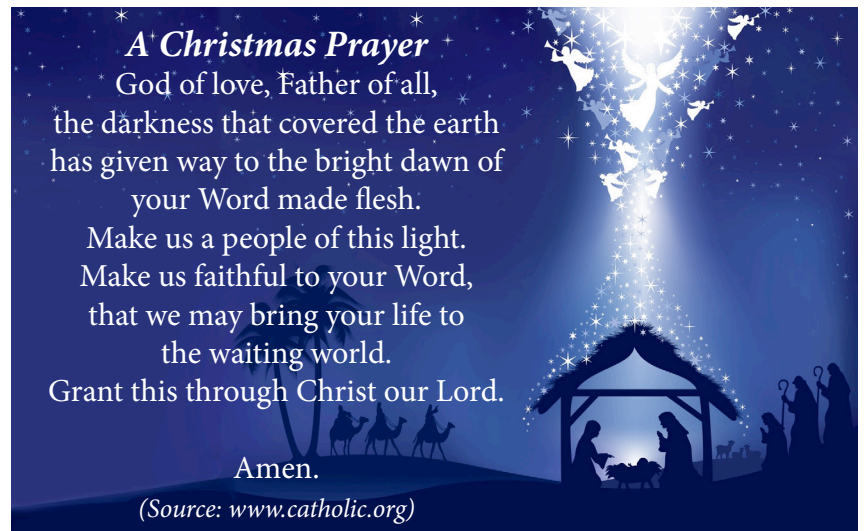
VIRTUS Facilitator Contact Information

In an effort to provide excellent customer service to individuals who attend VIRTUS sessions, we recommend that VIRTUS Facilitators enter their name and phone number in the "Contact Name" and "Contact Number" fields when scheduling a new session on VIRTUS.org. It would be helpful for participants to be able to contact the Facilitator for directions or other questions on the day of the session.

Have you visited our Protection of Youth webpage?

The Protection of Youth webpage includes links to important diocesan Safe Environment policies and documents, as well as information on reporting allegations and suspicions of abuse to the Kansas Department for Children and Families and the Catholic Diocese of Wichita.

Click [here](#) to view the webpage. You may also access the page at www.catholicdioceseofwichita.org. Under "Links and Resources," select "Protection of Youth."



Visit the Diocesan Protection of Youth webpage:
www.CatholicDioceseOfWichita.org/links-a-resources/protection-of-youth

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