



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

DIOCESE OF BUFFALO
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April 20, 2011

RE: Safe Environment Policies in the Diocese of Buffalo

My Dear Friends in Christ:

It has come to my attention through annual audits of the Safe Environment program that I may need to provide clarification on a few topics so that we may remain in full compliance with our policies for the protection of youth.

Each year, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops conducts an audit of our diocese to determine whether we are in compliance with The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People (the Charter). Additionally, we are audited on compliance with locally established policies that relate to the Charter.

The policies implemented in 2003 were carefully developed and are reviewed annually. The policies should be considered as directives to all Catholic elementary and high schools as well as all parishes in the diocese. I wish to provide clarification on several points:

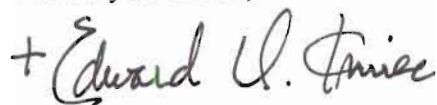
1. Direct on-site supervision is required for each individual who has not fully completed the initial screening requirements which include a completed application, a signed Code of Conduct, reference checking, criminal background check and Safe Environment Training. Until these aspects are completed, an individual may not work with youth unless they are under the direct supervision of an individual who has met and maintains compliance with the Safe Environment standards. Note that anyone who regularly works with youth, including volunteers, is bound by the policy and must complete the training and screening requirements. Persons who are not in compliance with these standards must be directly monitored at all times or removed from youth ministry.
2. Criminal Background Checks. A standard was developed by the diocese that is considered to be the appropriate level of diligence for our volunteers and employees. The diocese performs the background checks to ensure uniformity and accountability. Individual schools, parishes and institutions must adhere to this standard by submitting the requests for criminal background checks to the diocese for execution.

3. Safe Environment training is provided through the Protecting God's Children Program™ and implemented by the Safe Environment Office. The training is required for all adults who have achieved the age of 18 and who have regular contact with youth. Persons who have received Safe Environment training through another diocese or through a religious order may request to have their training evaluated by the Diocese of Buffalo in lieu of the Protecting God's Children Workshop™. Furthermore, ongoing training in the form of training bulletins and periodic re-certification is required.
4. Reference checking is required and must be conducted locally by the entity responsible for recruiting and screening employees and volunteers. In the screening process it is important to determine whether the individual has the competencies to complete the assigned job and whether there are any concerns with this individual working around youth. The reference needs to know that the individual may be alone working with youth and should be given an opportunity to express their concerns.
5. Our diocese implemented a Code of Conduct which is required for anyone who has regular contact with youth. All parishes, schools and institutions are required to use the Diocese of Buffalo Code of Conduct.
6. For all youth enrolled in a Catholic school or religious education programs, annual Safe Environment training is required. Additionally, it is necessary to report to the diocese the counts of those trained, opted-out or absent, following the procedures outlined by the Office of Lifelong Faith Formation and the Safe Environment Office.
7. Reports of child sexual abuse by an employee or volunteer of a Catholic institution should be made to Mary Ann Deibel-Braun, our Victim Assistance Coordinator. Her phone number is (716) 895-3010 and calls can be placed confidentially.

You will be receiving information soon regarding the 2011 Safe Environment Audit. It is my expectation that all parishes, elementary schools and high schools adhere to these policies. I ask that you work to ensure that we are in full compliance with these requirements at all times and be alert to the annual reporting requirements which will be delineated shortly.

May God bless you for all that you have done and continue to do to create and maintain a safe environment for our children.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Edward U. Kmiec". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Rev. Edward U. Kmiec
Bishop of Buffalo