



Promise to Protect Pledge to Heal

**Diocese of Trenton
Office of Child and Youth Protection
Reference Guide**

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The Diocese of Trenton is committed to the initiatives outlined in the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People in regard to the reporting and investigation of sexual abuse allegations involving minors.

If you have been sexually abused as a minor by a member of the clergy or anyone representing the Catholic Church or if you know of someone who was abused, you can report that abuse through the diocesan Abuse Hotline at 1-888-296-2965 or via email at abuseline@dioceseoftrenton.org. The diocese has a Victim Assistance Coordinator who is available to obtain support for your needs and to help you make a formal complaint of abuse.

The diocese encourages anyone with an allegation to also report that abuse to his or her local law enforcement agency. The diocese reports all allegations received to the appropriate county prosecutor's office.

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Safe Environment Coordinators

Find a complete listing of Safe Environment Coordinators by parish at www.dioceseoftrenton.org

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Purpose

This booklet is intended to provide a reference to the policies and programs of the Diocese of Trenton Office of Child and Youth Protection. Within these pages you will find a brief summary of the many policies and directives put into place by the diocese for the sole purpose of preventing abuse. Many ongoing abuse-avoidance training classes are referenced here as well. It is hoped that the contents of this booklet will provide the reader with an understanding of the efforts that are made to keep the children and youth of the diocese safe from abuse.

The Diocese of Trenton has published this booklet to help the public gain an understanding of the high expectations of employee and volunteer conduct, the reporting mandates for any potentially inappropriate behavior, the investigation process for allegations of child abuse/misconduct and the Diocese of Trenton's zero-tolerance policy.

Any questions regarding the contents of this booklet or child protection issues within the Diocese of Trenton should be directed to Margaret R. Dziminski, Child Protection Coordinator at **609-403-7170** or email at childprotection@dioceseoftrenton.org. Any complaints of abuse should be directed to the Abuse Hotline at **1-888-296-2965** or via email at abuseline@dioceseoftrenton.org.

What Guides Our Mission to Protect?

In 2004, the Diocese of Trenton created the Office of Child and Youth Protection Services in order to fulfill the diocesan mission to create a safe environment for the children and youth in our parishes and Catholic schools. The Office of Child and Youth Protection Services administers abuse prevention programs including background checks and safe environment training. The Office is home to the Diocesan Abuse Response Officer, the coordinator who procures pastoral care for persons reporting sexual abuse as minors by clergy or other church personnel and the diocesan liaison to the various county prosecutor offices.

Essential Norms for Diocesan Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons.¹

In 2002, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) promulgated a set of norms to ensure that each diocese in the United States has procedures in place to respond promptly to all allegations of sexual abuse of minors. The norms were revised in 2006. These Essential Norms describe the minimum requirements for diocesan policies and procedures that deal with abuse.

The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People²

The various diocesan abuse prevention/child protection programs are sanctioned by the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, a comprehensive set of mandates established by the USCCB in June 2002 for addressing allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy. Also included within the Articles of the *Charter* are requirements for promoting reconciliation, healing, accountability and prevention of future acts of abuse. The following is a summary of the manner in which the Diocese of Trenton fulfills the requirements of the *Charter*.

To Promote Healing and Reconciliation with Victims/Survivors of Sexual Abuse of Minors

Articles 1 through 3 of the *Charter* pertain specifically to the measures that must be taken to fulfill this requirement. To that end, the diocese:

- 1) Continues its outreach to every person who has been the victim of sexual abuse as a minor by anyone in church service, whether the abuse was recent or occurred many years in the past. Diocesan officials will listen to every victim who comes forward.
- 2) Has policies and procedures in place to facilitate prompt response to any allegation where there is reason to believe that sexual abuse of a minor has occurred.

¹ *Promise to Protect Pledge to Heal*, revised June 2011, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

² *Promise to Protect Pledge to Heal*, revised June 2011, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The Office of Child and Youth Protection develops and maintains policies and guidelines intended to provide mandates and guidance for the safekeeping of the children and young people who are served by the various parishes within the diocese. A compilation of these policies is contained in **The Office of Child and Youth Protection Policy Binder** that is distributed to each parish and kept by the Safe Environment Coordinator or the pastor's designee. These policies concentrate on the various aspects of keeping our children safe and our employees and volunteers focused on conforming their behavior to acceptable standards as well as keeping a watchful eye on the interaction between children and other adults.

These policies include:

- **Responding to Complaints of Sexual Abuse**
- **Safe Environment & Standards of Conduct Policy**
- **Criminal History Background Checks**
- **Worker/Tradesman Policy – Catholic School Property**

The full text of the policies can be viewed at www.dioceseoftrenton.org.

In addition, the Ministry of Catechesis & Evangelization enforces policies that are designed to give protection in non-abuse situations.

- 3) Has a Victim Assistance Coordinator to facilitate the immediate pastoral care of persons who report having been sexually abused as minors by clergy or other church personnel. The name and contact information for the Victim Assistance Coordinator can be found on the inside front cover of this booklet.
- 4) Has a review board that functions as a confidential consultative body to the Bishop. A majority of this board is comprised of laypersons. The board reviews allegations of abuse and consults with the Bishop.

To Guarantee an Effective Response to Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors

Articles 4 through 7 pertain to procedural requirements. To comply with these obligations, the diocese:

- 1) Reports any allegation of sexual abuse of a person who is a minor to the public authorities;
- 2) Complies with all applicable laws with respect to reporting allegations of sexual abuse of minors to civil authorities;
- 3) Cooperates in the investigation;
- 4) Cooperates with public authorities about reporting cases even when the person is no longer a minor;
- 5) Advises victims of their right to make a report to public authorities and supports this right;

- 6) Mandates that a priest or deacon found to have committed even a single act of sexual abuse of a minor
 - Will be permanently removed from ministry and may be dismissed from the clerical state and
 - Will be offered therapeutic professional assistance both for the purpose of prevention and for his own healing and well being.
 - Will not continue in ministry.
- 7) Has published clear standards of ministerial behavior and appropriate boundaries for clergy, paid personnel and volunteers in positions of trust who have regular contact with children and young people. The Diocese of Trenton's Pastoral Code of Conduct can be found at <http://portal.dioceseoftrenton.org/document.doc?id=30>.
- 8) Has pledged, through its Bishops, to be open and transparent in communicating with the public about sexual abuse of minors by clergy while considering the privacy and the reputation of those involved.

To Ensure the Accountability of the Procedures

Articles 8 through 11 require that the USCCB undertake certain measures to hold those responsible for child protection accountable for compliance. To that end, on a continuing basis the Executive Director and staff of the Office of Child and Youth Protection evaluate existing child protection policies and programs to ensure proper measures are in place to help keep children safe from abuse. New and revised policies and/or instructional guidelines are issued when needed.

Through the efforts of the Office's Child Protection Coordinator, internal compliance audits are conducted throughout the year to ensure that criminal background checks, ID cards, mandatory VIRTUS training and other child protection policies are being followed.

Every year, auditors designated by the USCCB conduct an audit of child abuse reporting in accordance with the *Charter*. Every three years, these auditors conduct a comprehensive audit of child safety reporting, policies, practices and compliance and a report is issued. Since the adoption of the *Charter*, the diocese has passed every audit conducted by the USCCB and has consistently been found to be in compliance with the Articles of the *Charter*. These audit reports can be reviewed at <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/reports-and-research.cfm>.

To Protect the Faithful in the Future

Articles 12 through 17 mandate that the diocese take certain proactive measures. To fulfill these requirements, the diocese:

- 1) Has established and seeks to maintain "safe environment" programs in accordance with Catholic moral principles. This is accomplished by using both designated personnel in each parish and through a series of training programs.

Safe Environment Coordinators

Each parish and Catholic school has a designated “Safe Environment Coordinator”. The Safe Environment Coordinator is selected by the pastor in the parish and by the principal in each Catholic school and serves as a vital component to the child and youth safety programs at the local level. This Coordinator assists in the communication and implementation of compliance with the Office of Child and Youth Protection policies and guidelines. The Coordinator is ultimately responsible for the Safe Environment Program at his or her location. A list of Safe Environment Coordinators for each location along with contact information can be found at www.dioceseoftrenton.org.

Training

The Bishop of Trenton has promulgated that “RCL Family Life” is the official safety program for the children and youth of the Diocese of Trenton. This program exceeds the requirements of the *Charter*. This safety/morality program is intended to be taught in all Religious Education Programs and Catholic schools. Additional information about the Family Life program can be found at www.rclbfamilylife.com.

Not only do we strive to ensure that any volunteer or employee who comes into contact with the children and youth of our communities is properly screened with a background check, each is required to attend a preventive education program called VIRTUS, Protecting God’s Children Program for Adults. VIRTUS is the brand name that identifies best practice programs designed to help prevent wrongdoing and promote “right doing” within religious organizations. “VIRTUS” derives from Latin and means valor, moral strength, excellence and worth. It is the official Safe Environment Program for all employees and volunteers.

The VIRTUS programs, “Bullying Prevention” and “Internet Safety” continue to be available for parish use.³

A schedule of these sessions can be found at www.dioceseoftrenton.org under the “Our Promise to Protect” tab.

- 2) Takes action to ensure that the standards of conduct for clergy and other persons in positions of trust with regard to children are made clear to clergy and all members of the community.

Codes of Conduct

This is the embodiment of the standards of conduct that have been adopted by the diocese and applies to all volunteers and employees of the parishes, diocesan facilities and properties as well as to non-contractual school employees.

By signing a Code of Conduct, each individual pledges to both act and refrain from acting in certain situations to protect the children and youth in their care or under their supervision

³ The VIRTUS program “Teaching Touching Safety Program for Children” will be phased out of use by July 2017.

during their employment or ministry. The Code of Conduct form must be read and signed by any volunteer, employee and non-contractual school employee upon engagement.

Christian Witness Statement

All Catholic schoolteachers are called to have an active faith in God and to give visible witness by their manner of living. All those engaged in the educational ministry in the Diocese of Trenton must give assurance to the local school that they understand and support those tenets of Catholic education described in the Christian Witness Statement document and the philosophy and the goals of the schools. Each contracted employee is asked to attest to living in accordance with the Christian Witness Statement upon signing his or her contract. By signing, each person acknowledges that his/her support of the statement must be reflected in his or her public behavior as well. The principles contained within the Christian Witness Statement are used in the interviewing, hiring and rehiring of all educators.

- 3) Evaluates the background of all incardinated and non-incardinated priests and deacons who are engaged in ecclesiastical ministry in the diocese as well as all parish, school or other paid personnel and volunteers whose duties include ongoing, unsupervised contact with minors. Over the past 10 years, the diocese has conducted 190,000 criminal background checks.
- 4) Will not transfer an offending priest or deacon to a ministerial assignment in another diocese.
- 5) Cooperates with other churches and ecclesial communities, other religious bodies, institutions of learning and other interested organizations in conducting research in this area.
- 6) Continues its commitment to strengthen diocesan programs for initial and ongoing formation of priests and to promote programs of human formation for chastity and celibacy for both seminarians and priests. The diocese serves as a resource to other churches and civic organizations for child protection efforts. Through prayerful discernment and mentoring, the diocese fulfills its commitment to Catholic moral teachings.

Memorandum of Understanding for Reporting Certain Offenses to County Prosecutors

The Diocese of Trenton has an understanding with the New Jersey Division of Criminal Justice that includes specific criteria and procedures for reporting sexual offenses to law enforcement. This Memorandum of Understanding requires that the diocese report all allegations of sexual offenses to law enforcement. The diocese has appointed a designated liaison to assist in compliance with the terms of the Memorandum. The full text of the Memorandum of Understanding can be found at <http://portal.dioceseoftrenton.org/document.doc?id=29>

Additional Tools for the Protection of Our Children and Youth

There are several additional elements of our Child and Youth Protection Program instituted to prevent abuse before it can occur. Each element is critical to this mission. Carefully screening each clergy member, employee and volunteer and then training each in a preventive education program are key tools to help ensure that our child protection policies and mandates are understood and followed by those who will have interaction with children.

Policies and Guidelines for the Ministry of Catechesis & Evangelization

Policy: Employment

All applicants for either a salaried or volunteer religious education position must complete an application. The candidate must submit to a screening interview by the pastor, program director or other designated person. In addition, the candidate must submit to a criminal background check. Personal references will be verified. Religious education personnel must participate in on-going formation/education.

Policy: Megan's Law

Each pastor must register the Religious Education Program of the parish with the local prosecutor's office and name someone as the "designated official" to receive community notification of registered sex offenders in the community surrounding the parish.

Policy: Bullying

The Diocese of Trenton prohibits acts of harassment, intimidation or bullying of a child. The violation of this policy could result in disciplinary action and/or criminal prosecution.

Policy: Safety

With the assistance of the local fire chief or police, each parish is asked to establish a Safety Policy in order to address crises or emergency situations.

Guideline: Internet and Electronic Communications

Teachers, catechists, administrators and other adults working in parishes/schools are given guidance for the appropriate method of electronic communication concerning children/students. This guideline also reinforces the diocesan policy regarding the proper use of cell phones and the Internet, and advises that anyone who makes inappropriate use of electronic communications that are considered harmful to the good order and discipline of the parish/school, its religious mission or its educational objectives is subject to disciplinary action.

All are advised that it is important for teachers, catechists, administrators and other adults working in parishes/schools to maintain appropriate boundaries with respect to students.

Guideline: Overnight Trip Guidelines for Chaperones

Both the criteria for chaperone selection as well as chaperone behavioral standards are detailed to provide guidance for the care and safekeeping of the members of youth groups involved in activities outside the immediate area.

What You Can Do To Help Protect Our Children and Youth

Vigilance

Parents are a part of the solution to the problem of child sexual abuse in our homes, parishes, and communities. An important component in the effort to prevent abuse and keep our children safe from abuse is the vigilance required of each and every adult who comes in contact with a child. When caring adults have a “healthy suspicion” about something in their surroundings, they can identify the risks to children early enough to prevent child sexual abuse from occurring. The VIRTUS Protecting God’s Children training empowers each person with five steps to help prevent child sexual abuse.

- Know the warning signs that help to identify the early indications that an adult or older child is engaging in an inappropriate relationship with a child or youth.
- Control access to children in our homes, parishes, schools and communities.
- Monitor all programs to eliminate any opportunity for an adult to be alone with a child in a secluded area. Awareness of what is going on in parishes, schools, homes and communities is a critical step in keeping children safe.
- Be aware of what is happening in a child’s life by talking with, listening to and observing them.
- Communicate concerns by talking to the person involved, the person’s direct supervisor or by notifying a Church official.

Key VIRTUS policies:

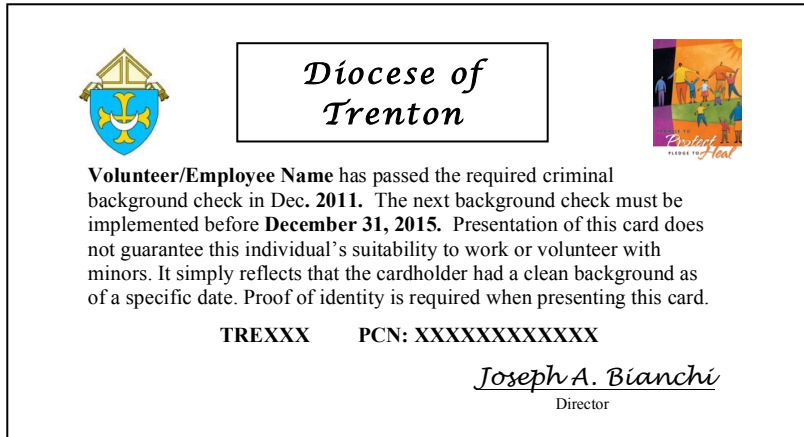
- No adult may drive an individual child in any vehicle to any destination related to his or her volunteerism/employment at the parish.
- No adult should separate a child from other VIRTUS trained, fingerprinted employees or volunteers or a parent/legal guardian of that child unless they are in an area which is open, accessible and within view of other VIRTUS trained people.
- If children are asked to volunteer, they must be in the company of their parent or legal guardian or two VIRTUS trained and fingerprinted adults at all times.

VIRTUS training programs are given throughout the year. A schedule of classes can be found on the “Child Protection Efforts” page at www.dioceseoftrenton.org.

Every person is asked to monitor the safety of all of our children at all times.

Identification Cards

All employees and volunteers (including unpaid coaches) who have completed a Diocese of Trenton Criminal History Background Check must wear a diocesan Identification Card at all times during the performance of their respective jobs or volunteer duties for the diocese.



School employees, staff and volunteers must wear any school issued ID at all times during the course of their employment or volunteerism.



Parents, caregivers, employees and volunteers can help to ensure the safety of our children by asking to see the ID card of any employee or volunteer who is not displaying the appropriate ID card and by reporting any individual who is unable or unwilling to present an ID card for inspection.

Identification of Priests in Good Standing: Testimonial of Suitability Card

The Bishops of the Province of Newark have created a way to identify priests who are in good standing within the Archdiocese of Newark and the four dioceses within New Jersey through the issuance of a “Testimonial of Suitability Card”. The use of this card will facilitate the ministry of priests in our state, who are often invited or who seek to partake in a variety of liturgical, devotional and instructional events in a diocese other than that in which they are incardinated.

The possession and presentation of a Testimonial of Suitability Card ensures that only those priests in good standing who enter the Diocese of Trenton from any other diocese in the State of New Jersey may perform services within the Diocese of Trenton.

This card identifies the priest by name and diocese. Together with government issued identification, the Testimonial of Suitability Card must be presented to the local pastor of the parish in which the ministerial act is to be performed. If there is doubt regarding the legitimacy of the “Testimonial of Suitability Card” or if a priest from a sister diocese within the Province of Newark (which consists of the Archdiocese of Newark & the Dioceses of Camden, Metuchen, Paterson & Trenton) fails to present the Card, permission for the exercise of ministry will be denied.

The priest identified on this card is a priest in good standing of the Diocese of Trenton. I attest that he is free from canonical censures and irregularities and that I am not aware of anything in the external forum that would render him unsuitable to work with minor children or vulnerable adults. He possesses the pastoral faculties of this Diocese and is qualified to celebrate Mass and administer the Sacraments. He has participated in the Protecting God’s Children program and has passed a criminal history background check. Please extend to him every courtesy.

Valid unless revoked or until date of expiration.



David M. Connell, C.M.

BISHOP OF TRENTON

Thomas J. Mullen

VICAR OF CLERGY

Depending upon the canonical assignment, the wording on these cards may differ slightly.

Reporting and Investigation

Reporting any suspect behavior or abuse through the Abuse Hotline, the Diocesan Response Officer or the parish Safe Environment Coordinator is both a right and responsibility of anyone who bears witness to this type of behavior.

If you have been abused or suspect that a child is being abused or has been abused, utilize the Abuse Hotline at 1-888-296-2965 or send an email to abuseline@dioceseoftrenton.org. Individuals have the right to report the suspected activity to the civil authorities.

A poster containing a diocesan statement on the “Promise to Protect Pledge to Heal” can be found at your local parish.

This booklet is not intended to replace the Office of Child Protection Policy Manual, The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, the Essential Norms, the Statement of Episcopal Commitment or the Memorandum of Understanding between the Diocese of Trenton and the State of New Jersey. Rather, this booklet should serve as a reference guide to the policies and programs of Diocese of Trenton for the protection of children and youth.

Resources

Diocese of Trenton Website: www.dioceseoftrenton.org

Office of Child and Youth Protection webpage: <http://portal.dioceseoftrenton.org/page.aspx?pid=656>

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: <http://www.usccb.org>

Memorandum of Understanding between the Diocese of Trenton and the State of New Jersey:
<http://portal.dioceseoftrenton.org/document.doc?id=29>

The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People: <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/charter.cfm>

VIRTUS programs: www.virtus.org

Fingerprint Scheduling: www.bioapplicant.com/nj

Please obtain your form from your Parish Safe Environment Coordinator.

