



Office for the Protection of Children and Youth (OPCY)  
**Children and Youth Safe Environment Training**  
**Instructions for Parishes**

*Dioceses/eparchies are to maintain "safe environment" programs which the diocesan/eparchial bishop deems to be in accord with Catholic moral principles. They are to be conducted cooperatively with parents, legal guardians, civil authorities, educators, and community organizations to provide education and training for minors, parents, ministers, employees, volunteers, and others about ways to sustain and foster a safe environment for minors. (Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People Article 12)*

**ALL children and youth enrolled in any Parish Formation Program (includes youth in home-based programs or homeschooled) in the Diocese of Erie are required to receive safe environment training in an age-appropriate manner on an annual basis.** *(Bishop's Decree 2020.3.23; Policy Section III, B, #2)*

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## **Process to complete Safe Environment Training**

Safe Environment training **MUST** be offered on-site, this includes the Edge program, confirmation program, and post confirmation programs. Training all children by solely sending the *Home Training Packet* to their homes is **NOT PERMITTED**. All forms, letters, records, lists of diocesan approved DVDs and agencies, etc., can be found at [www.erieecd.org](http://www.erieecd.org) under Protection of Children, Safe Environment Training or in the *MyDioErie* section under Protection of Children and Youth Forms.

### **A. On-site Formation Programs:**

1. Decide the training method. **NOTE: The training methods for the Diocese of Erie are promulgated** *(Decree is available on the website).*

Show an age-appropriate DVD from the approved list.

**OR**

Have an approved agency present the training. Agencies do not charge for their services. However, it would be much appreciated by the agency if the parish is able to make a small donation to cover the cost of their handout materials and travel. **NOTE to Parishes in Erie County: due to staffing, the Crime Victim Center of Erie County may NOT BE able to provide services to parishes in Erie County. Parishes in Erie County should use DVDs to accomplish the training.**

The OPCY will provide online video links to those parishes who cannot use DVDs or an agency for training presentations. Please contact Cindy Zemcik directly for this option.

2. Decide the date(s) the training will occur. **Email the scheduled date(s) and method of training to the OPCY before October 15<sup>th</sup> each year.**
3. Schedule the agency by calling the agency directly **or** reserve DVDs through the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth by emailing the OPCY with the DVD(s) name and number along with the date of the training.

Advise all parents/legal guardians that Safe Environment training will be conducted sometime during the year. Advise parents/legal guardians who do not want their child to participate in the program to notify the parish in writing, so the child may be excused from the training presentation. This notification of training can be placed on the registration form, in a bulletin announcement or letter. Sample notifications can be found in MyDioErie, #1. Everyone, Protection of Youth: The Right to Refuse Training

<https://www.eriecd.org/Protection-of-Children-and-Youth-Forms.html>

**The Absent from Training Form is not to be used to inform the parents/legal guardians of the training.** This form is sent *after* the training to note absence or refusal.

4. On the day of the training:
  - Begin by using the age-appropriate lesson outline and prayer service found on the Protection of Children webpage.
  - Show the approved DVD using the facilitator guide provided with the DVD  
OR the Agency presents training.
  - Record date of training, DVD/agency used, Presenter, and youth present/absent on the OPCY Parish Safe Environment Training Record.
5. After the Training:

Send the form letter along with the appropriate Home Training Packet and Absent from Training Form to parents/legal guardians of any child who was absent or whose parents/legal guardians refused the child's participation in the training. Ask parents/legal guardians to return the completed form to the parish. Including a self-addressed, stamped envelope may facilitate the return of the form. **Copies of the form listing "refusal" as the reason must be returned with the Annual Parish Report for Child Protection Compliance.**

## **B. Home-based Formation Programs:**

Youth in Home-based/homeschooled programs are excused from on-site training. Parish Leader **must** contact the Child Protection office for online video links. Form letter, Training Form and Training Record for Home-based/homeschooled youth can be found on the Protection of Children webpage.

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## **Documentation of Safe Environment Training**

The parish must have documentation to show that the parish was not negligent in providing every child with safe environment training, as evidenced by one of the following:

1. Record of attendance at Safe Environment Training  
OR
2. If the youth was absent, a record of the date the Home Training Packet was sent to the parents/legal guardians, date the Absent from Training form was returned, or notation the form was not returned.

3. For Home-based or Homeschooled: Notation of date that information was sent to parents/legal guardians of those children and the returned, signed *Record of Safe Environment Training for Home-based or Homeschooled Formation*.

***The completed Training Record and Absent from Training forms are confidential files and must be kept on file at the parish indefinitely.*** Documentation of the numbers of parents/legal guardians who received information and returned forms must be submitted on the *Annual Parish Report for Child Protection Compliance*.

The *OPCY Parish Safe Environment Training Record* is an **OPTIONAL** form. If the **same information** can more easily be generated using Ministry Platform or another software program, that is acceptable. The format of the form is not critical if the necessary documentation can be produced, and information submitted on the *Annual Parish Report for Child Protection Compliance*.

Parishes will be required to provide the following information on the *Annual Parish Report for Child Protection Compliance*:

1. Total number of youths enrolled in all parish programs
  2. Number of youth present for on-site training
  3. Number of youth absent or held out and trained by parents/legal guardians
  4. Number whose parents/legal guardians refused safe environment training
  5. Number of youth trained by parents/legal guardians in home-based or homeschooled programs
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