



Instructions to complete the Safe Environment Training of Youth attending Catholic Schools

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, 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, Article 12)

ALL students attending Catholic Schools, Preschool – Grade 12, in the Diocese of Erie are required to be safe environment trained in an age appropriate manner annually. This training is to be completed by the end of April each year. (Policy Section III, B., #2)

Rationale for annual Safe Environment Training

Teaching children and youth skills and strategies to protect themselves is a critical task and one that necessitates awareness of proven educational techniques. It is a well-known fact that repetition improves learning. There is also evidence that learning usually proceeds gradually. For instance, a cardinal rule of thumb in advertising is that potential customers usually need to see the name of a product seven times or more before they're motivated enough to even think about making a purchase.

There is evidence to suggest that if children and youth are presented with age-appropriate information regarding safe environment and personal protection; they become more comfortable discussing such issues. Some are even proud of knowing the material offered in our programs. Comfort and pride help empower children to protect themselves and/or report incidences of abuse.

Process to carry out the Safe Environment Training

Training programs **MUST** be offered on-site; training all students by solely sending the *Home Training Packet* to their homes is **NOT PERMITTED**.

The Bishop has promulgated the training methods for the Diocese of Erie. The process to complete the training in each of the approved ways is listed below.

1. Decide the method for training. You may use the approved DVD's (listed on the Child Protection webpage under Safe Environment Programs)

OR

Have the approved PCAR agency in your county present the training (List of approved PCAR agencies is on the Child Protection webpage under Safe Environment Training). *If the agency gives suggestions for size of groups, time schedules, etc. please make the appropriate accommodations.* Agencies do not charge for their services, however, it would be appropriate and much appreciated by the agency if you are able to make a small donation to cover the cost of their handout materials and travel.

2. Decide your dates for training. **Email the scheduled Safe Environment training dates and method of training (DVD's or agency presentation) for all students by October 15th of each catechetical year to childprotection@eriercd.org**
3. Schedule the PCAR agency or reserve your DVD's through the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth by emailing childprotection@eriercd.org
4. Advise all parents that Safe Environment training will be conducted sometime during the year. Advise parents who do not want their child to participate in the program to notify the school office in writing, so the child may be excused from the group the day the training is presented. This can be done in a newsletter or letter to the parents. **The Option Form is not to be used to inform the parents of the training.** The Option Form is sent after the training when a student is absent or the parents have refused training.

NOTE: Sample notification that can be used can be found in MyDioErie, #1. Everyone, Protection of Youth: Parents right to refuse training. <https://www.eriercd.org/Protection-of-Children-and-Youth-Forms.html>

On the day of the Training:

1. Begin by using the age-appropriate diocesan lesson outline and prayer service, which can be found on the Protection of Children webpage under safe environment training.
2. Show the diocesan approved DVD using the Facilitators guide provided with the DVD
OR the Agency presents training
3. Record date of Training, DVD/agency used, Presenter, and student absence on the Student TrainingRecord

After the Training:

1. The parent(s)/guardian(s) of any child who is absent or whose parent(s)/guardians(s) have refused the child's participation in the on-site training must receive the age appropriate diocesan Home Training Packet along with the Option Form. Ask parent(s)/guardian(s) to return the completed option form to the school office.

1.1. Copies of the option form listing "refusal" as the reason must be returned with the Annual School Report for Child Protection Compliance.

2. The Training Record, Form letter, Home Training Packets and the Option Form can be found on the Child Protection webpage under Safe Environment Training.

Documentation of Safe Environment Training

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

1. Record of attendance at Safe Environment Training
OR
2. If the student was absent, a record of the date that the Home Training Packet was sent to the parents and the returned, signed *Option Form*.

The *Safe Environment Training Record – Catholic Schools* is an **OPTIONAL** form to be used if desired. If the **same information** can more easily be generated using a computer program, that is acceptable. As long as the necessary documentation can be produced, and information submitted on the *Annual School Report for Child Protection Compliance*, the format of the form is not critical. These forms or records are to be kept on-site at the school and not sent to the diocese. ***All documentation is to be kept confidentially and indefinitely.***

Schools will be required to provide the following safe environment training information on the *Annual School Report for Child Protection Compliance*, in the spring of the year:

1. Total number of students enrolled in any grade, Kindergarten - Grade 12
(Preschool is counted separately)
2. Number of students absent/held out on-site and trained by parents.
3. Number whose parents refused on-site safe environment training.

Information and forms necessary for Safe Environment Training compliance can be found online in MyDioErie <https://www.eriercd.org/Protection-of-Children-and-Youth-Forms.html> or and at the Protection of Children webpage of the diocesan website. Click on Safe Environment Training.