



Office for the Protection of Children and Youth (OPCY)
Children and Youth Safe Environment Training
Instructions for 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 for the Protection of Children and Young People, Article 12)

ALL children and youth enrolled in Catholic Schools 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)

Process to complete Safe Environment Training

Safe Environment training **MUST** be offered on-site. Training all students 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.eriercd.org under Protection of Children, Safe Environment Training or in the *MyDioErie* section under Protection of Children and Youth Forms.

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

Show an age-appropriate DVD from the approved list

OR

Have an approved agency present the 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 much appreciated by the agency if the school is able to make a small donation to cover the cost of their handout materials and travel.

The OPCY Office will provide online video links to those schools 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 15th 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 school office in writing, so the child may be excused from the training presentation. This notification of training can be done in a newsletter or letter to the parents/legal guardians. Sample notifications can be found in *MyDioErie*, #1. Everyone, Protection of Youth: The Right to Refuse Training. <https://www.eriercd.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 DVD using the Facilitators guide provided with the DVD
OR the Agency presents training.
 - Record date of Training, DVD/agency used, Presenter, and student present/absent on the OPCY Safe Environment Training Record.
5. After the Training:

Send the form letter along with the appropriate Home Training Packet and the 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 school. ***Copies of the form listing "refusal" as the reason must be returned with the Annual Catholic School Report for Child Protection Compliance.***

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:

- Record of attendance at Safe Environment Training
OR
- If the student 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.

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

The *OPCY Catholic Schools - Safe Environment Training Record* is an **OPTIONAL** form. If the **same information** can more easily be generated using a software program, that is acceptable. The format of the form is not critical if the necessary documentation can be reproduced, and information submitted on the *Annual Catholic School Report for Child Protection Compliance*.

Schools will be required to provide the following information on the *Annual Catholic School Report for Child Protection Compliance*:

1. Total number of students enrolled in the school.
2. Number of students present for on-site training.
3. Number of students absent/held out and trained by parents/legal guardians.
4. Number whose parents/legal guardians refused safe environment training.