Diocese of Erie - Office for the Protection of Children and Youth (OPCY)

Catholic School Student
Safe Environment Training Instructions

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 a Catholic School in the Diocese of Erie will receive age-appropriate safe environment training 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, list of diocesan approved methods, 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 video from the approved streaming list or approved DVD list. The OPCY Office will provide online video links. Please contact the office directly for this option

      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.

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, contact the OPCY for a list of online video links for streaming **or** reserve DVDs by emailing the OPCY with the DVD(s) name and number along with the date of the training. Titles of available DVDs are on the website.

4. Notify parents/legal guardians that Safe Environment training will be conducted. The notice should include instructions on how to opt their child out of the training for those parents/legal guardians who do not want their child to participate in the program. 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 Opt-out of Training. https://www.eriercd.org/Protection-of-Children-and-Youth-Forms.html

The Safe Environment Training for Students Acknowledgement 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 opt-out.*

5. 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 video/DVD
     OR the Agency presents training.

   - Complete the Safe Environment Training Record with the date of training, method used, Presenter, and student present/absent.

6. After the Training:
   Send the diocesan provided letter, age-appropriate Home Training Packet and Acknowledgement Form to the parent/legal guardian of those students who were absent or opted-out of the training. Ask the parents/legal guardians to return the completed Acknowledgement form to the school. ***Copies of the Acknowledgement form listing "Opt out" as the reason must be submitted with the Annual Catholic School Report for Child Protection Compliance.***

Documentation of Safe Environment Training

The school must keep 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 Acknowledgement form was returned or notation the form was not returned.

The Training Record and Acknowledgement forms are confidential files and must be kept on file at the school indefinitely. Documentation of the number trained, the number of parents/legal guardians who received information and number of returned forms will be reported on the *Annual Catholic School Report for Child Protection Compliance.*

The *OPCY Catholic School 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*.