



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, 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. (Policy Section III, B, #2; Bishop's Decree 3.23.2020)

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 evidence that learning usually proceeds gradually.

There is also 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 complete the Safe Environment Training

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

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

Show approved DVDs (a list of DVDs is available on the Protection of Children webpage under Safe Environment Training).

OR

Have the approved county agency present the training (List of approved agencies is available 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 much appreciated by the agency if you are 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 directly for this option.

2. Decide the dates for training. **Email the scheduled dates and method of training by October 15th of each school year to childprotection@eriercd.org**

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 number and name of the DVD('s) and the date of the training to childprotection@eriercd.org
4. Advise all parents/guardians that Safe Environment training will be conducted sometime during the year. Advise parents/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 can be done in a newsletter or letter to the parents/guardians. **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/guardians have refused training.

NOTE: Sample notification that can be used 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>

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 present/absent on the OPCY Safe Environment Training Record.

After the Training:

1. Send the appropriate Home Training Packet along with the Option Form to parent(s) or guardian(s) of any child who was absent or whose parent(s)/guardian(s) refused the child's participation in the training. 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 Packet 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/guardians and the returned, signed *Option Form*.

The *OPCY Safe Environment Training Record – Catholic Schools* is an **OPTIONAL** form. If the **same information** can more easily be generated using a computer 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 School Report for Child Protection Compliance*. These forms or records are to be kept on-site at the school. **All documentation is to be kept confidentially and indefinitely.**

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

1. Total number of students enrolled in any grade, Preschool - Grade 12 with Preschool counted separately
2. Number of students present for on-site training
3. Number of students absent/held out and trained by parents/guardians
4. Number whose parents/guardians refused on-site safe environment training

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

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