

Standard of Behavior – Necessary for ALL Who Serve Children

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We are approaching the fifth anniversary of the *Charter to Protect Children and Young People*, the landmark document written and adopted in June 2002 by the members of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The *Charter* was designed to provide a comprehensive approach to preventing and dealing with child sexual abuse: reporting allegations; response and care for victims, their families and affected communities; establishment of ethical and behavioral standards for ministry; provision of safe environments for children and young people; and the recruitment, training, and education of seminarians, priests and other ministers.

In particular, Article 6 of the *Charter* states, “While the priestly commitment to the virtue of chastity and the gift of celibacy is well known, there will be clear and well-publicized diocesan/eparchial standards of ministerial behavior and appropriate boundaries for clergy and for any other church personnel in positions of trust who have regular contact with children and young people.”

This Article goes beyond mere assumption of adherence to chastity and celibacy on the part of priests. It requires the development and broad distribution of clear-cut written expectations of responsible actions by ALL who have regular contact with children and young people in Catholic parishes and schools.

The *Report on the Implementation of the Charter to Protect Children and Young People* states that all dioceses and eparchies that participated in the 2005 audit were found to be compliant with Article 6¹. Among our next questions may be: Does this mean we can rest on our laurels? If not, what more can be done? Are there ways we expand the influence of this particular policy which insists on having written standards of behavior?

Thankfully, many child-serving organizations have policies regarding how adults interact with children and which set clear parameters. Some, like the Catholic Church, had to candidly address these issues after incidents of abuse of children in their care were revealed. Within our society, however, there remain organizations and businesses that have only vague, if any, written policies. Thus, the efforts of parents, grandparents, employees, volunteers, and everyone else concerned about the welfare of children, are still needed to ensure safety for those who are vulnerable. What should those efforts be? They include:

- Asking if the child-serving business or organization has written policies and procedures regarding the safety of children;
- Inquiring how and to whom those policies are disseminated;
- Inquiring about the screening and selection processes for potential employees and volunteers;



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- Learning whether ongoing abuse **prevention** training is required of employees/volunteers, in addition to training on how to recognize and report abuse that has already occurred; and
 - Calling for consistent application of policies and procedures, including monitoring and reporting of employee/volunteer compliance.

We know that even if all incidents of child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church can be eliminated, there will still be many victims in our world. By publicly sharing her response to this grave problem, we believe that the Catholic Church can demonstrate the value of “establishing permanent polices and procedures that lay a foundation for a future in which all within and outside the Church can have confidence.”ⁱⁱ



New Programs: An Introduction

The VIRTUS Programs are pleased to introduce three *new* program additions that are now available—***The Bullying Prevention Program™***, ***Keeping the Promise Alive™***, and ***The Treatment and Wellness Program™***. These programs are intended to augment the Protecting God’s Children® program.

The ***Bullying Prevention Program*** provides schools, religious education programs, daycare providers, other youth-based organizations, as well as parents, with information,

resources, and training to help prevent bullying and other violent behaviors.

The program also addresses these key issues:

- **Warning Signs that Someone is a Bully ...**

The program focuses on the primary elements of bullying and a discussion of common myths and related facts about bullies and their victims. This training generates awareness about the problems and risks associated with various forms of bullying, and it describes the warning signs displayed by someone who is a bully or who is the target of a bully.

- **Warning Signs that Someone is a Target ...**

The program illustrates the role of awareness in recognizing bullying in a youth-based environment, creating appropriate involvement and interaction, and using communication as a tool in creating a culture in which bullying is not tolerated.

- **Appropriate Responses by Caring Adults ...**

The Bullying Prevention Program answers the question, “What Can I Do to Help Prevent—or Stop—Bullying?”

Keeping the Promise Alive is the *Protecting God's Children*® refresher program. It provides ongoing awareness for the prevention of child sexual abuse. The material covered in *Keeping the Promise Alive* is designed to identify and reinforce the lessons of the original *Protecting God's Children* program by clarifying some of the more challenging aspects of the sessions and strengthening the participants' ability to recognize risky adults in their environments and take action to intervene in potentially threatening situations.

The program reinforces these key issues:

- **Warning Signs of Risky Adult Behaviors ...**
- **The Need to Communicate Any Concerns About the Behavior of Another Adult ...**
- **Regular Checks of Sex Offender Registries...**
- **Healthy Suspicion...**
- **Appropriate Responses by Caring Adults...**
- **Program Success Stories...**



Keeping the Promise Alive answers the questions, "What have been some results of the Protecting God's Children program, and what else can we do to keep all children safe?"

The Treatment and Wellness Program is designed to provide diocesan personnel with helpful responses to and appropriate guidelines for dealing with the initial reporting of abuse and also the care and treatment of victims, thereby facilitating and assisting in the healing process of abuse victims.

The steps outlined in this program are:

- **The first contact with the victim's current diocese...**
- **The initial contact with the victim's home diocese...**
- **Immediate outreach and assistance...**
- **Case investigation...**
- **Other recommended treatment and assistance...**
- **Spiritual outreach...**
- **Closure...**

The Treatment and Wellness Program answers the question, "What guidelines and resources are available to aid dioceses in developing a program to assist persons that claim sexual abuse by a priest or other employee of the Catholic Church?"

Currently in development is *The Technology Safety and Security Program*TM.



The Technology Safety and Security Program creates adult awareness of technology safety and security issues and teaches adults how to protect young people in the world of electronic communication. The target audiences are employees, volunteers, and other caring adults.

The program addresses these important topics:

- Identification of today's electronic communication technology topics
 - Awareness of technology safety and security issues
- The warning signs of potential technology-related abuse or misuse
 - Proactive strategies for the protection of young people and the organizations that serve them
 - How to appropriately respond to suspected technology-related abuse or misuse
 - What caring adults can do to ensure safe technological environments for young people in their schools, homes, and communities

The Technology Safety and Security Program answers the questions, "What are today's technological dangers, and how can we protect children from them?"

These programs are intended to aid in the development and maintenance of safe environments in which all of God's children may lead safe, healthy lives.

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ⁱ <http://www.usccb.org/ocyp/OCYPREPORT.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Dr. Patricia Ewers, Chair, National Review Board, <http://www.usccb.org/ocyp/OCYPREPORT.pdf>