



ARCHDIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES

SAFEGUARD THE CHILDREN PARISH COMMITTEE

HANDBOOK

(SAFEGUARD THE CHILDREN OFFICE, MAY, 2013)

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HANDBOOK
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SAFEGUARD THE CHILDREN PARISH COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the *Safeguard the Children Parish Committee Handbook* is to provide guidance and resources to the Safeguard the Children Committee for understanding and fulfilling the objectives of the *USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*.

Sections A & B of the *Handbook* contain the “mandated” requirements of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles about the formation of Safeguard the Children Parish Committees and their meetings.

Section C contains contact information for the Office of Safeguard the Children.

Section D gives directions on “How to Form a Safeguard the Children Committee” and insights into why a Committee needs to include both volunteers and staff.

Section E contains the six areas of “Safeguard the Children Parish Committee Responsibilities and Practices” that help the Committee direction and focus. At each meeting the Committee should study these six areas carefully and set goals and priorities. Special attention must be paid to those items that are marked with a green asterisk (*) and boxes, however, it is also important that the Committee pay attention to some additional “practices” that need to be included each year.

The areas include the need to:

1. **Monitor: Archdiocese of Los Angeles Policies & Procedures**
2. **Educate: Safe Environment Programs & Resources**
3. **Evaluate: Parish/School Site Safety**
4. **Review: Parish/School Policies, Programs & Events**
5. **Assist: USCCB Safe Environment Pre-Audit & Audit Process**
6. **Celebrate: Child Abuse Prevention Month**

Section F provides pages to help your Committee to “Develop a Mission Statement and a Three Year Plan” so that they will be able to set clear priorities to help keep the children and young people at your site safe.

SAFEGUARD THE CHILDREN PARISH COMMITTEE
REQUIREMENTS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

A. REQUIRED SAFEGUARD THE CHILDREN PARISH COMMITTEE: EFFECTIVE 9/2002

The formation of the Safeguard the Children Parish Committee was mandated by Cardinal Roger Mahony in his letter dated September 13, 2002, in which he wrote:

“It is essential that each parish of the Archdiocese establish as soon as possible a special group entitled: *The Safeguard the Children Parish Committee*. Our Catholic parents are eager to assist in such an effort at the parish level, and it is a splendid opportunity to involve parents and parish leaders in your parish/school, religious education program, Confirmation program, youth ministry program and the like.”

Each Safeguard the Children Parish Committee plays a crucial role in assuring that the safeguard initiatives found in the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* have been made a priority in every parish and school in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and that the Archdiocesan safe environment programs, policies and procedures are being implemented throughout the parish/school and its community.

B. REQUIRED SAFEGUARD THE CHILDREN PARISH COMMITTEE MEETINGS:
(REVISED JULY 1, 2009)

It is mandated that every parish and/or school site in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles have an active Safeguard the Children Committee.

Meetings:

Beginning with the new Safe Environment Audit Year, July 1, 2009, all Safeguard the Children Parish Committees are required to have a formal meeting of their Committee members at least two times a year. You are encouraged to meet more often if your Committee feels there is a need to do so.

IT IS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED THAT SAFEGUARD THE CHILDREN PARISH COMMITTEES MEET QUARTERLY USING THIS HANDBOOK AS A GUIDE FOR A THREE-YEAR PARISH/SCHOOL PREVENTION AND SAFETY PLAN.

Minutes:

Detailed Safeguard the Children Parish Committee Meeting minutes are to be taken at these required meetings. The minutes are to be signed by the Safeguard the Children Committee Chairperson and copies of the minutes must be submitted to the Archdiocese of Los Angeles with the annual USCCB Parish Audit Compliance Report.

C. OFFICE OF SAFEGUARD THE CHILDREN CONTACT INFORMATION:

Questions concerning Parish Safeguard the Children Committees should be addressed to Joan Vienna in the Office of Safeguard the Children, Archdiocese of Los Angeles at: (213) 637-7227 or jvienna@la-archdiocese.org.

D. HOW TO FORM A SAFEGUARD THE CHILDREN PARISH COMMITTEE:

“Each parish/school site must have a Safeguard the Children Parish Committee. This program is not optional. Each parish/school must proceed by inviting parents and other lay volunteers to take the leadership in this effort. The Safeguard the Children Parish Committee includes representatives from both the parish and school working together to provide a safe environment for children.” (Mandated by Cardinal Roger M. Mahony, September 13, 2002.)

COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

The chairperson of the Safeguard the Children Parish Committee should be a volunteer who is a member of the parish/school community and not an employee of the parish. This is important for two reasons: 1) it brings in a new perspective and energy from the parish community; 2) it does not overburden staff members.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Each committee should represent the different facets of their community. For instance, some parishes may have a school, some may not. Some may have a youth ministry program and others may not, etc. A well-rounded Safeguard the Children Parish Committee that represents the site is critical to its success.

Volunteer members from the parish/school might include:

- Parent representatives from the school, religious education program, youth group, etc.
- Representatives from various cultural groups in the parish
- A representative from the Parish Council
- Interested adults from the parish community
- Experts in the area such as a therapist, law enforcement, nurse, social worker, etc.
- VIRTUS® Facilitator(s)

Volunteers bring an important and often new perspective to the table when addressing child sexual abuse prevention and other safety issues. They are often the ones who have children that they have entrusted to the parish and school and therefore look at things from a parent's point of view. They may have concerns or ideas that might not otherwise be voiced.

Staff members should include:

- The Pastor and/or Associate Pastor and/or Pastoral Associate
- The Principal and/or Vice-Principal
- The Director of Religious Education
- The Youth Minister / The Confirmation Coordinator
- Pre-School Coordinator
- Parish Council Member
- Financial Counsel Member or Parish Business Manager

The staff of the parish/school are the ones in authority and therefore responsible for implementing the Archdiocesan policies and guidelines of the Safeguard the Children Program. Their cooperation and support are necessary in order to implement the ideas of their committee, e.g.: education opportunities, site evaluations and new resource development.

E. “AT A GLANCE”

SAFEGUARD THE CHILDREN PARISH COMMITTEE

RESPONSIBILITIES AND PRACTICES



1. Monitor:
Archdiocesan
Policies & Procedures



2. Educate:
Safe Environment
Programs & Resources



3. Evaluate:
Parish/School Site
Safety



4. Review:
Parish/School
Policies/Programs/Events



5. Assist:
USCCB Safe Environment
Pre-Audit & Audit Process



6. Celebrate:
Child Abuse Prevention Month
(April)



SAFEGUARD THE CHILDREN PARISH COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES AND PRACTICES

5/3/2013

Following are a list of the requirements and suggested practices for Safeguard the Children Parish Committees. Each committee should review items below and add their own ideas. When the priorities for your site have been identified, a three year plan should be developed that best meets the needs of protecting the children and young people in your parish, school and community.

Items marked with green asterisks (*) and green boxes ☐ are mandated requirements in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and need to be completed in order to comply with the USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.

1. MONITOR: ARCHDIOCESAN POLICIES & PROCEDURES

The Safeguard the Children Committee plays an important role in helping to ensure that the Archdiocese of Los Angeles policies and procedures are followed and that accurate records are kept to verify that the norms of the **Charter** have been met.

- ☐ 1) *Plan, organize and advertise the fingerprinting dates and locations for all parish/school staff and volunteers who are alone with a child or young person or who have supervisory control over a child or young person. See Archdiocese of Los Angeles Fingerprinting Requirements.
- ☐ 2) *Archdiocese of Los Angeles Guidelines for Adults Interacting with Minors at Parish/School Activities or Events must be read and signed by all adults who work or volunteer in any capacity with or around children. A copy of each person's signature must be on file at the parish/school. *(Revised April 24, 2006)*
- ☐ 3) *Archdiocese of Los Angeles Boundary Guidelines for Junior High and High School Volunteers Working with Children or Youth must be signed by all junior high and high school student volunteers, including those who are already 18, who work or volunteer with children/youth in school or parish settings. They also must receive training on these boundary guidelines before undertaking their ministry in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.
- ☐ 4) *Each parish/school must ensure that all staff and volunteers understand the State of California laws and Archdiocesan policies and procedures on **how to report child sexual abuse**. A current copy of all necessary hotlines and other critical phone numbers as well as current reporting forms should be readily accessible at the parish/school/religious education office.
- ☐ 5) It is also important to run a "Megan's Law" check on all staff and volunteers, especially those who work or volunteer with children or young people. Go to: <http://www.meganslaw.ca.gov> and scroll down to the bottom of the home page to "Enter Megan's Law Sex Offender Locator Site" and click to enter the information.

COMMITTEE REVIEW NOTES:

2. EDUCATE: SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMS & RESOURCES

Education is the key to change. One of the most important jobs of the committee is to ensure that all adults who work with or around children have attended the VIRTUS® Adult Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Programs and that all children and young people have been educated in one of the Archdiocesan approved children's programs. The committee should also help educate through the use of outside speakers and resources.

- ☐ 1) *Concurrent with beginning any activities in a parish/school, all parish/school volunteers, teachers, staff or other paid personnel, who work in any capacity with or around children, as well as the elderly or special needs persons, will be required to participate in the VIRTUS® Protecting God's Children Awareness Session for Adults or an equivalent safe environment training program approved by the Archdiocese. The Committee should help plan ongoing trainings at the parish/school site to make sure everyone has met this requirement.
- ☐ 2) *VIRTUS® Re-Certification is required every four years. This may be done by taking the 1 ½ hr. VIRTUS® Keeping the Promise Alive program
- ☐ 3) *Each year, all children and young people in any Archdiocesan school, religious education program or youth ministry group must receive Safe Environment Training either through Teaching Touching Safety or Good-Touch/Bad-Touch. All trainings need to be recorded on VIRTUS® Online.
- ☐ 4) Contact your local police department for a speaker/contact person in their office who handles child abuse and neglect cases. The police can inform the committee on how these cases are handled at the local level and explain how reports are filed and the follow-up procedures.
- ☐ 5) Sponsor special community speakers to address the issue of child sexual abuse, internet safety, etc. (i.e.: Tracy Webb at the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office - (213) 485-2352).
- ☐ 6) The committee should be familiar with the new *Electronic Communications Policy & Resource Guide*.

COMMITTEE REVIEW NOTES:

3. EVALUATE: PARISH/SCHOOL SITE SAFETY

The following items should be evaluated from the perspective of child and youth safety issues. Although Safeguard the Children focuses on child abuse prevention it is also about the safety of our children at all times!

- ☐ 1) List secluded rooms or areas in buildings or on the grounds and secure them.
- ☐ 2) Install windows in the doors of rooms where adults and minors interact such as classrooms, confessionals, etc., thus ensuring a clear view at all times. In rooms where this installation is not possible be sure that doors are opened at all times or that the adult and minor are in clear view.
- ☐ 3) Check to make sure all rooms used for children's classes/activities provide a safe environment by checking the areas for dangerous equipment, broken chairs/tables, safe stair access, trash and storage usage, etc.
- ☐ 4) Make signs for "children only" bathrooms, play areas, etc. Make sure they are visible and enforce them! Make appropriate signs with safety rules (e.g.: "No Children allowed on stage without adult supervision," "No children in teacher/staff area," etc.)
- ☐ 5) Check fencing and security on the property to ensure that strangers are kept out and children are kept in.
- ☐ 6) Evaluate where safety "conveyance cameras" are needed and compile estimates to present to the Finance Committee.
- ☐ 7) Make a list of where all keys are and who has access to them. Recall keys annually and change locks if necessary.
- ☐ 8) If you are planning on building a new parish, parish hall, school, etc., be sure members of the Safeguard the Children Committee are included on the planning team.

COMMITTEE REVIEW NOTES:

4. REVIEW: PARISH/SCHOOL POLICIES, PROGRAMS & EVENTS

Each parish/school site has many programs and events which take place each year. Many of these are opened to the community at large. It is important to review these on a yearly basis and evaluate any safety issues which may arise and establish clear safe environment monitoring policies and procedures for addressing them.

- ☐ 1) Know and monitor all programs on your parish/school site and review them on a regular basis (i.e.: Do you know the leaders of all the programs in your parish that operate when children are present?). Develop a "Parish Program/Ministry Review Sheet."
- ☐ 2) Review procedures for monitoring visitors who come to the site and establish sign in procedures and staff and visitor badges.
- ☐ 3) Review outside organizations that use the parish (i.e.: AA, Rotary Club, Boy Scouts, etc.). Do you monitor outside groups that rent your parish to give lessons to children or young people?
- ☐ 4) Have a review committee for any new ministries or activities beginning in the parish.
- ☐ 5) Evaluate and monitor any parish/school activities such as fiestas, carnivals, Christmas gatherings, etc. to insure that they provide a Safe Environment for children and young people who attend.
- ☐ 6) Review parking lot procedures and traffic patterns to ensure safe drop-off and pick-up of children and youth. Be sure to monitor the "Youth Mass" and activities as well; even though we consider them young adults, they are still minors.

COMMITTEE REVIEW NOTES:

5. ASSIST: ANNUAL USCCB SAFE ENVIRONMENT PRE-AUDIT & AUDIT PROCESS

The Safeguard the Children Chairperson and their Committees play an important part in the USCCB Safe Environment Audit Process.

- ☐ 1) *The Chairperson and Committee help to insure that the parish/school is in compliance with all the requirements of the *USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*.
- ☐ 2) *The Chairperson and Committee help to insure that all parish/school safe environment compliance records are clearly filed and easily accessible.
(i.e.: VIRTUS® “Protecting God’s Children” Certificates, Signature Sheets of Guidelines for Adults Working and Volunteering with Minors, Fingerprinting Records verified on VPIN, Children’s Training recorded on VIRTUS® Online, Parent Opt-Out Forms, etc.)
- ☐ 3) *The Chairperson and Committee assist the pastor in completing the annual “USCCB Safe Environment Audit Report” and returning it to the Archdiocese of Los Angeles by the deadline.
- ☐ 4) The Chairperson and Committee Members are also asked to participate in any “onsite” “Safe Environment Pre-Audit” and USCCB audits. (If Chairperson is a volunteer and cannot participate because of work this requirement is waived. All parish/school staff on the committee must attend.)

COMMITTEE REVIEW NOTES:

6. CELEBRATE: CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH (APRIL)

Celebrating what we as members of the Catholic Church are doing to help stop child sexual abuse is an important role of the Committee. April is a great month to spread the word that “together we are making a difference” not only in our parishes/schools but also to the surround community.

- ☐ 1) Plan to celebrate Child Abuse Prevention Month in April at your parish. (USCCB Resource Packets are distributed to all parishes and Catholic Schools from the Office of Safeguard the Children at the beginning of March.) For more information email: jvienna@la-archdiocese.org
- ☐ 2) Distribute child abuse safety resources to the parish/school community such as: VIRTUS® online bulletin articles, Tidings Articles on Child Sexual Abuse Prevention, brochures from your local police/sheriff department, etc. Post “USCCB Safe Environment” posters in prominent places.
- ☐ 3) *Feature a regular **“Did You Know?”** section in your weekly bulletin and/or parish website. List your Safeguard the Children Committee Chair and write some of the committee’s missions, goals and activities. Include easy-to-use, approved bulletin announcements that can be found at: <http://www.la-archdiocese.org/org/protecting/>
- ☐ 4) *Order and display the current year’s **“Working Together to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse”** brochures in the vestibule of the parish and in parish, school and religious education offices. Also, distribute the brochures during Child Abuse Prevention month to all parents of school and religious education children.
- ☐ 5) Begin a **“Safeguard the Children Neighborhood Watch”** campaign in your parish community. (Ideas for the campaign along with sample Safeguard the Children window plaques will be available for Child Abuse Prevention Month 2011.)
- ☐ 6) **Remember “Keep Kids Safe” can be celebrated around the year.** Many parishes and schools are contacting the Office of Safeguard the Children for resources for booths and displays that they now have as a part of parish and school events such as:
 - a. Ministry Fairs
 - b. Carnivals and Fiestas
 - c. Back to School Nights

Some of the items that are offered free include:

Working Together to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse Brochures, Parent Handouts and Articles, Keep Kids Safe Stickers and various other items that can be used at these and other events.

COMMITTEE REVIEW NOTES:

**F. DEVELOPING A MISSION STATEMENT AND THREE YEAR PLAN FOR YOUR
SAFEGUARD THE CHILDREN PARISH COMMITTEE**

It is critical that every Safeguard the Children Parish Committee have their own Mission Statements and Develop a Three Year Plan that will enable the Committee to have clear goals for fulfilling the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and insuring a safe environment for the children and youth on the parish/school site.

OUR SAFEGUARD THE CHILDREN PARISH COMMITTEE MISSION STATEMENT:

YEAR ONE:

***ARCHDIOCESAN REQUIREMENTS THAT NEED TO BE FULFILLED:**

SUGGESTED PRACTICES OUR COMMITTEE WANTS TO ACCOMPLISH:

ADDITIONAL IDEAS & GOALS FOR THE YEAR:

YEAR TWO:

***REQUIREMENTS THAT NEED TO BE FULFILLED:**

SUGGESTED PRACTICES TO BE ACCOMPLISHED:

ADDITIONAL IDEAS AND GOALS FOR THE YEAR:

YEAR THREE:

***REQUIREMENTS THAT NEED TO BE FULFILLED:**

SUGGESTED PRACTICES TO BE ACCOMPLISHED:

ADDITIONAL IDEAS AND GOALS FOR THE YEAR: