

Home-based Catechetical Classes

Parish premises and parish-sponsored activities are protected against third party claims for property damage and bodily injury by general liability insurance; wherever possible catechetical classes should be held on parish property. Some parish catechetical programs in our diocese involve meeting in private homes. In order to provide an environment that protects both the children and the catechists, the Diocese of Bismarck has implemented the following policies and guidelines for home-based catechetical classes. Catechetical class in the home should always be a means of last resort.

The following diocesan policies are mandated and must be followed:

Home-based catechists must comply with all "Safe Environment" requirements including background checks and safe environment training.

1. Two adult instructors (unrelated) must be present at all times for the classes.
2. To the extent possible, individual students, other than the catechist's own children, should not be in the catechist's home alone.
3. Students should remain in the designated learning areas of the house.
4. At no time should students be allowed in bedrooms or other secluded areas of the home.
5. Window coverings should be fully opened while classes are being held.
6. Learning spaces should be well lit.
7. The DRE (or catechetical leader) is encouraged to perform random site visits to each home-based location in which a class is meeting.
8. The DRE (or catechetical leader) should pre-approve the location of the home in which classes will meet.

Building Safety

1. Smoke detectors must be installed and functioning properly on each floor of the house.
 2. A carbon monoxide detector should be installed.
 3. Emergency evaluation plan must be posted and practiced.
 4. A properly functioning and serviced fire extinguisher needs to be accessible and visible to the catechist.
 5. Uneven areas of the sidewalk must be clearly marked.
 6. The handrails into the home and to the basement and/or second floor must be installed and secure.
 7. Snow and ice must be removed promptly from the walkways, driveways and stairs prior to the arrival of students.
 8. Any loose rugs or buckled rugs need to be leveled to present trip hazards.
 9. Furniture should be installed in such a manner to avoid an obstacle course.
 10. Emergency battery back-up lighting must be provided. (A battery flashlight is sufficient.)
 11. No unrestrained pets are allowed in the area where the students will be arriving or attending the class.
- The home owners' insurance would be primary in the event of a claim. It should be understood that Catholic Mutual has the interest of the dioceses and parishes as a concern and does not extend the coverage to the home owner.

+ Paul A. Zipfel

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Bishop Paul A. Zipfel
Diocese of Bismarck