Safe Environment Step-By-Step Guide

Revised 2015

An Annual Maintenance Tool for Parishes and Schools

"Promise to Protect - Pledge to Heal"

Established by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Diocese of Bismarck

Safe Environment

September 2013

Dear Sisters and Brothers in the Lord,

The Catholic bishops of the United States adopted the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* in 2002. The charter requires each Diocese to be vigilant and responsible in ensuring the safety and security of all children and youth as they participate in all activities of the Church's life.

Many strides have been made in our Diocese to assure the protection of our children and youth. We have provided *Establishing Bonds of Trust* and *Personal Safety Awareness for Children and Youth, Curriculum Guide K-8* as tools to help implement the Charter. We have also published articles in the *Dakota Catholic Action* about child abuse prevention efforts.

In an effort to make the *Safe Environment Program* easier to administer and understand at the parish level, we have compiled this step-by-step guide. Included in this guide are instructions on ordering background checks and providing training, as well as the annual audit forms. Please make copies as needed from this guide, or use the fillable forms found on our website. The audit forms **must be completed annually** and sent to the Chancery **no later than July 1** by all parishes and Catholic schools.

In previous audits, many parishes have not responded in a timely manner to the auditors' requests for information. This has presented a number of problems and it is necessary that every Pastor in our Diocese take it upon himself to make sure his parish or parishes provide the necessary information when and by the deadline requested. I will hold each Pastor personally responsible for the proper completion and timely filing of the audit forms.

The work to protect our children is an ongoing effort. We must continue to do everything possible to help our children grow up in a safe environment.

Sincerely in Christ,

+ David D. Kagan

Bishop of Bismarck

DDK:sh

Safe Environment
Step-By-Step Guide

Our children are our most precious gifts from God. We must do all in our power to ensure that the children and youth placed in our care may worship, study and participate in activities in the safest and most secure setting possible.

In 2002 the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops published the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.* This charter mandated that every diocese, parish and Catholic school in the United States create and maintain safe environment programs for children and youth which includes an annual audit to ensure compliance.

This guide is presented to assist parishes and Catholic schools to fulfill the requirements of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Youth* in an easy to follow step-by-step format. There are four diocesan publications to direct and support the implementation of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People:*

1. Establishing Bonds of Trust (every Priest has a copy)
2. ***** Safe Environment: Step-By-Step Guide
3. ***** Diocese of Bismarck Code of Conduct
4. ***** Personal Safety Awareness for Children and Youth

*****found at bismarckdiocese.com

IF YOU HAVE A QUESTION OR NEED ASSISTANCE WITH SAFE ENVIRONMENT REQUIREMENTS, CONTACT:

Diocese of Bismarck
Safe Environment Office
P.O. Box 1575
Bismarck, ND 58502-1575
Phone: 1-701-223-1347
Toll Free: 1-877-405-7435
Fax: 1-701-223-3693

7 Safe Environment Requirements

1. Employment & Volunteer Applications

- Employment or Volunteer application must be completed. (Samples in this document)
- Professional and personal references must be contacted.
- Employee and volunteer records must be maintained in a secure location.

2. Background Check Process

All diocesan, parish and Catholic school employees and volunteers must successfully complete the background check process *BEFORE* being hired and/or having any contact with children or youth!

- All diocesan parish and Catholic school employees must have a background check. The background check must include both a statewide and federal criminal records check. The Diocese of Bismarck uses MYB, Inc. to do their background checks. The other check must be obtained from the North Dakota Department of Human Services, Child Abuse and Neglect Division.
- All diocesan, parish and Catholic school volunteers 18 years and older who have ongoing, unsupervised contact with children and youth must have a background check. Do not order a background check from MYB, Inc. for an individual under the age of 18 as they do not have public court records.
- For employees and volunteers under the age of 18, only the check through the ND Department of Human Services must be done. When working with children, volunteers under the age of 18 must be visually and physically accessible by an adult supervisor who has been background checked.
- **Background checks for active employees and volunteers who have ongoing, unsupervised contact with children and youth be must be renewed every 7 years. All parishes and schools must fully implement this recheck policy by June 30, 2017.**

BACKGROUND CHECK FORMS (found at bismarckdiocese.com)

1. **MYB, Inc. Criminal Records History Check Authorization – FAX to 1-828-698-9918**

   Summary of Your Rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) 2013
   (Give this Summary to potential employee/volunteer to keep for their records)

2. **Child Abuse and Neglect Background Inquiry (SFN 433) – FAX to 1-701-328-3538**
   If you have trouble with this PDF you can go to the ND Dept. of Human Services website

   a. Cover Letter to the Department of Human Services (accompanies form SFN 433 above.)
   b. County Child Protection Services Authorization Release Form
      (used *only* when form SFN 433 comes back with a report of child abuse.)

MYB and ND DHS send results to the Diocese. A letter is then sent to the parish/school, along with the background check results. These results must be kept at the parish/school office in a secure and confidential location. Never throw these away, as you will need them for the annual audit.

3. ***Safe Environment Training for Employees & Volunteers***

- All employees and volunteers who serve where minors may be present are required to complete Safe Environment Training.
- Adults need to be trained only one time.
- Those persons under the age of 18 who work (under the constant direct supervision of someone who meets all Safe Environment background check requirements) are still required to complete the Safe Environment training.

On July 1, 2014, the Diocese of Bismarck Code of Conduct was updated to include the mandated Safe Environment Training. (The new Code of Conduct and Acknowledgement Form REPLACE the Safe Environment Training and Guidelines for Chaperones along with the corresponding certification and signature sheets.)

The Diocese of Bismarck makes this document available at bismarckdiocese.com.

All diocesan, parish and Catholic school employees and volunteers must:

1. **Read the Diocese of Bismarck Code of Conduct.**
2. **Complete and Sign the Acknowledgement Form**

Acknowledgement forms must be kept on file at the parish/school office in a secure location. Never throw these away, as you will need them for the annual audit.

4. ***Safe Environment Education for Parents, Children & Youth***

- Parishes are required to offer annual safe environment training for parents who have not yet been trained. In parishes where there are no new parishioners, it is not necessary to offer adult training that year because adults need to be trained only one time.
- Each parish and school is required to offer a yearly, age appropriate training session for parents and children in parish religious education (CCD) programs, as well as in those the Catholic schools. It is highly recommended that parents be invited to attend these sessions.
- A sample curriculum, "Personal Safety Awareness" is available at bismarckdioce.com, and videos from the Diocese of St. Cloud were also given to each parish and contain age appropriate content for assisting teachers in making students aware of the many issues that involve their personal safety.

Be sure to keep a record of:

a) Date and time of training sessions
b) Names of students and parents in attendance
c) Curriculum used for the training
d) Opt-out forms (found at bismarckdiocese.com) If parents choose not have their child participate in the Safe Environment Training, they may come to the parish or school office and sign the opt-out form that certifies that they have been offered training and declined it.

Keep all of these documents on file in the parish/school office, as they will be needed for the annual audit.

5. ***Catechist Training***

- Parishes and schools are responsible for selecting a catechist/teacher who has cleared the Background Check Process, completed the Safe Environment Training and is comfortable with presenting Safe Environment lesson plans.

6. ***Annual Audit (Audit year is July 1 – June 30)***

- All Parishes and Catholic schools are required to submit to the diocese an annual audit of compliance to the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.
- It is vital that complete records are kept for the Safe Environment Audit which is conducted through the Office of Child and Youth Protection of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The following audit documents (available online at bismarckdiocese.com) are to be sent to the Chancery no later than July 1 each year:

1. **Letter** to the diocesan bishop indicating compliance signed by pastor/principal
2. **Parish/Catholic School Worksheet** (student Safe Environment training as well as employee, educator, volunteer background checks and Safe Environment Training)
3. **Calendar of Training** (dates/times and curriculums used for Safe Environment Training)

Required audit documents are provided on bismarckdiocese.com to all parishes/schools each spring.

7. ***Reporting of Known or Suspected Cases of Child Abuse or Neglect***

Allegations of sexual abuse of a minor
by an employee, volunteer, clergy, or religious
must be reported immediately
to a law enforcement agency and to the Diocese of Bismarck.
The complaint form may be found at bismarckdiocese.com
and within the Diocese of Bismarck Code of Conduct.

Victim Assistance Services are available by contacting the
Victim Assistance Coordinator Dale Eberle
701-223-1347
Toll-Free:1-877-405-7435

APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

PERSONAL	Last Name, First, Middle Initial	Date
	Street Address	Home Telephone
	City, State, Zip	Other Telephone
	Have you ever applied for employment with us before? ☐ Yes ☐ No If Yes: Month & Year Location	Pay Expected
	Are you available for full---time work? ☐ Yes ☐ No If not what hours can you work?	When will you be available to begin work?
	Are you legally eligible for employment in the United States? ☐Yes ☐No	
	Other Special Training or skills (languages, office machines, Computer, etc.)	
	How did you learn of our organization?	

	School	Name and Location of School	Course of Study	No. of Years Completed	Did you Graduate?	Degree or Diploma
EDUCATION	Graduate School				☐ Yes ☐ No	
	College/ University				☐ Yes ☐ No	
	Business/Trade Technical				☐ Yes ☐ No	
	High School				☐ Yes ☐ No	
	Elementary				☐ Yes ☐ No	

EMPLOYMENT

Please give accurate, complete full-time and part-time employment record
Start with your present or most recent employer

1	Employer	Telephone
	Address	Employed (month/year): From To
	Name of Supervisor	Weekly Pay: Start End
	Job Title and Duties Employer	Reason for Leaving Telephone
2	Address	Employed (month/year): From To
	Name of Supervisor	Weekly Pay: Start End
	Job Title and Duties Employer	Reason for Leaving Telephone
3	Address	Employed (month/year): From To
	Name of Supervisor	Weekly Pay: Start End
	Job Title and Duties	Reason for Leaving
4	Employer	Telephone
	Address	Employed (month/year): From To
	Name of Supervisor	Weekly Pay: Start End
	Job Title and Duties	Reason for Leaving

We may contact the employers listed above unless you indicate those you do not want us to contact.	**DO NOT CONTACT**	
	Employer:	Reason
	Employer:	Reason

Previous Address:	How long at your present address? Yrs. Months
	How long at previous address? Yrs. Months

Do you have any relative or friends working for the Catholic Church? ☐Yes ☐No
If "Yes" describe in full.

SIGNATURE

The information provided in this Application of Employment is true, correct and complete. If employed, any misstatements or omission of fact on this application may result in my dismissal.

I understand that acceptance of an offer of employment does not create a contractual obligation upon the employer to continue to employee me in the future.

If you decide to engage an investigative consumer reporting agency to report on my credit or criminal history, I authorize you to do so. If a report is obtained, you must provide, at my request, the name of the agency so I may obtain from them the nature and substance of the information contained in the report.

_____ Signature Date_____

VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

Volunteer Profile

The climate in the United States at this point in history is such that a concern about potential liability is raised in every sector of American life, including the Church. This is coupled with a heightening awareness of a responsibility to ensure that those who act in the name of the Church would never violate basic Christian decency.

Name:_____
(Last) *(First)* *(Middle Initial)*

Address _____
(Street) *(City)* *(State)* *(Zip)*

Home phone:_____**Business phone:** _____

Cell phone:_____**E-mail Address** _____

Volunteer History Please list your last three volunteer activities, starting with the most recent:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Personal Information

a. Have you ever been charged with, arrested, or convicted of a crime other than a minor traffic violation? _____Yes_____No

If yes, explain fully the circumstances (Such charge or conviction may be relevant if job related, but does not bar you from volunteering.)

_____
_____

b. Have you ever been the subject of an investigation involving an allegation of sexual abuse?

_____Yes_____No If yes, please explain:

_____
_____
_____

c. Has a civil or criminal complaint ever been filed against you alleging physical abuse or sexual abuse?

_____Yes_____No

If yes, give a short explanation of the complaint. (Please indicate the date, nature, and place of the incident leading to the complaint, where the complaint was filed, and the disposition of the complaint)

_____
_____

d. Have you ever terminated your employment or had your employment terminated for reasons relating to allegations of physical abuse by you?

_____Yes_____No If yes, please give a short explanation of the allegations, the disposition of the allegations, and your employer at the time, including your employer's name, address and phone number.

_____
_____
_____

e. Have you ever received any medical treatment, physical or psychological, for reasons involving physical abuse or sexual abuse by you?

_____Yes_____No If yes, give a short description of the treatment, including date(s) nature and location(s), identifying the treating physician with name, address, and phone number. _____
_____
_____

IMPORTANT

Volunteers who will work in an unsupervised capacity with minors or vulnerable individuals MUST have a background check. Volunteers who work in a supervised capacity are not required to have a background check unless it can be foreseen that there is a reasonable possibility they MIGHT find themselves in an unsupervised situation, for example, youth retreats.

X _____ _____
Signature of Applicant ***Date***

This page is for parish/school use only.
These questions provide insight into the general scope of information that the USCCB requires.

1. Does your parish/school have an on-going Safe Environment training program for the following groups**?**
   * Minors * Parents * Employees
   * Volunteers * Educators

2. Does your parish/school have an official letter (letter on diocesan letterhead) from the diocesan bishop promulgating the Safe Environment program? (There is a letter included in this document.)

3. Does your parish/school have an on-going program of background checks for employees and volunteers who work regularly with minors? Are the reports on file in a confidential, secure location?

4. Does your parish/school have on file a letter signed by the pastor and addressed to the bishop that the parish/ school has received the required Safe Environment programs and has implemented them?

5. Does your parish/school have a calendar of training for the current audit period?

6. Does your parish/school have its curricula and training materials readily available for review by an auditor? These will have to be made available to the Safe Environment auditor upon request.

7. Has your parish/school provided the diocese the information on the number of times & places where safe environment training has occurred during this audit year?

8. Has your parish/school provided the diocese with the number of people in each of the groups (minors, parents, employees, volunteers and educators) and the number who have received training on the prevention of sexual abuse of minors? This information is reported to the diocese on the *Safe Environment Parish Worksheet* and the *Safe Environment Catholic School Worksheet.*

9. Does your parish/school have Safe Environment Training Code of Conduct Acknowledgement Forms on file? (Certification Sheets and Signature Sheets on file if signed before July 1, 2014)

10. Does your parish/school have the forms on file signed by those parents/guardians who have received the training materials, but have opted out of the training program for their children? These forms must be available in your office for possible review.

11. Do your parish/school staff and volunteers know where to find complaint forms alleging sexual abuse of a minor? <u>Volunteers and/or staff must know where forms can be found.</u>

12. Do your parish/school staff and volunteers know to what agencies allegations of sexual abuse must be reported? Please note that all allegations of actual or suspected child abuse must be reported to the county social services agency in the county in which the abuse is alleged to have occurred. A list of all counties in ND was provided to your parish in the past. If you do not have such a list, please call the Safe Environment office at 701- 223-1347, or Toll-Free:1-877-405-7435. Allegations of actual or suspected cases of clerical abuse must also be reported to the Chancellor, Diocese of Bismarck.

13. Does your parish/school have a Safe Environment Coordinator? Please note that the name and contact information of the Safe Environment Coordinator must be on file at the Diocese of Bismarck. <u>Please contact 701-223-1347 or Toll-Free: 1-877-405-7435 with this information</u>.

DIOCESE OF BISMARCK
Safe Environment Timeline for Parishes & Catholic Schools

August/ September	**New** teachers, employees and volunteers: • Must have a background check. • Must have completed Safe Environment training by reading Code of Conduct and signing Acknowledgement Form (see Diocese of Bismarck website) • **Cannot be alone with children until both the background check and the training are completed**
October/November/ December/January/ February/ March/ April	Students in grades K-12 who attend either parish religious education programs or Catholic schools must have annual training in child abuse prevention. • The Diocese of Bismarck has made available the *Personal Safety Awareness: K-8 Curriculum Guide.* It is not a mandate nor is it intended to replace any child personal safety program presently in place. • For grades 9-12, the Safe Environment Training Materials on the Diocese of Bismarck website would be appropriate to use as training. ***Any new teachers, employees and volunteers during these months must have a background check and Safe Environment training!***
May/ June	☐ COMPLETE the Parish Worksheet and /or Catholic School Worksheet. ☐ COMPLETE the Calendar of Training. ☐ COMPLETE the Letter to the Bishop indicating compliance from the parish or school. This letter must be on letterhead signed by the pastor of the parish(es) or superintendent/principal of the school(s). ☐ ALL 3 above forms must be sent to the Chancery before **JULY 1**.
July	Work with the Safe Environment Office at the Chancery to take care of any deficiencies prior to the auditors visit.