

Diocese of Dallas
Safe Environment Program for Schools and
Parishes

St. Gabriel the Archangel Catholic Community
Adult Continuing Education

Please note:

This is a training renewal option. If you have not already attended the Family of Faith Safe Environment Training session held at the parish center or another parish you must attend the session. You can then use this option to renew for next year. Please refer to our bulletin or our web site www.stgabriel.org for session dates and times.

Option 3: What we can do about child abuse.

2009

Instructions

1. Read this document.
2. Print and fill out the self assessment form at the end of this document.
3. Fill out and sign the signature form at the end of this document. (In order to receive credit, be sure to print your name **legibly**.)
4. Return the self assessment and signature forms to the church office (mail or drop off).

By doing so, you will have fulfilled your annual training requirement that is mandated by our parish's Safe Environment Program.

St. Gabriel's is a Stewardship parish. This program is made possible by the generous stewardship contributions of many parishioners. Our parish relies on these contributions, given in thankful response to God's generosity, to fund parish ministries and activities like this.

St. Gabriel the Archangel Catholic Community
Safe Environment Program Continuing Education
Option 3 What we can do about child abuse?

Note to Volunteers and Employees

As you know, you previously completed the initial core training requirements of our Safe Environment Program when you attended an awareness session as part of being screened and cleared for service. This packet provides you with additional information related to child safety and protection issues, as well as expands upon and/or updates information that you learned about or received when you attended the Safe Environment Awareness session.

Our Mandate

As you learned when you attended the awareness session, our Diocese and parish have each accepted that as Christian adults, we all have a moral and legal responsibility and are entrusted by God with the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of children. As they participate in activities within or sponsored by our Diocese and parish, it is our responsibility and commitment to provide an environment that is safe and nurturing.

Our Parish's Commitment

We are committed to assuring that all clergy, employees, and volunteers who serve in our church or school receive appropriate ongoing training to help them meet their responsibilities for providing an environment that is safe for children. We hope you will find this information helpful for increasing your knowledge and awareness of these issues. If there is anything in these materials about which you have questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact the Safety Officer at 972-542-7170

Mandate to report under the policy of the Diocese of Dallas:

The Diocese, through its schools, institutions, agencies, and organizations, has numerous daily contacts with many children. It is, therefore, most important that all persons responsible for the care of children, particularly all staff members of parishes, schools, and agencies in the Diocese of Dallas, protect the rights of children and be alert to the possibility for child abuse. It is the policy of the Diocese of Dallas not only to fulfill the reporting law but to cooperate fully with the investigating civil authorities. Individuals must report incident or suspicions of sexual misconduct or sexual harassment. Situations involving minor children must be reported to Texas Child Protection Services at 1-800-252-5400 or in emergency to the appropriate police authority, usually by calling 911. Individuals with knowledge about violations of Diocesan policy should call the Chancellor or the Risk Manager of the Diocese at 214-528-2240, or they may write to them at the Diocese of Dallas, P.O. Box 190507, Dallas, TX 75219.

When You Suspect Child Abuse or Neglect: A General Guide

We all have the responsibility to protect our children from harm. If you suspect the abuse or neglect of a child, it is your duty to report it immediately.

Anyone having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect **MUST** report the case immediately to a state or local law enforcement agency or the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (TDPRS)

TDPRS has a toll-free, 24-hour Family Violence Hotline: 1-800-252-5400

Your legal obligation. Current law requires that professionals such as teachers, doctors, nurses, or child daycare workers must make a verbal report within 48 hours. Failure to report suspected child abuse or neglect is a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment of up to 180 days and/or a fine of up to \$2,000 (Texas Family Code, Chapter 261).

Reporting suspected child abuse to your principal, school counselor or superintendent will **NOT** satisfy your obligation under this law. Local school district policy cannot conflict with or supercede the state law requiring you to report child abuse to a law enforcement agency or TDPRS. Reporting suspected abuse to your church will **NOT** satisfy your obligation under this law.

Your legal Protection Your report of child abuse or neglect is confidential and immune from civil or criminal liability as long as the report is made in "good faith" and "without malice."

In good faith means that the person making the report took reasonable steps to learn facts that were readily available and at hand. Without Malice means that the person did not intend to injure or violate the rights of another person. Provided these two conditions are met, you will also be immune from liability if you are asked to participate in any judicial proceedings that might result from your report.

If you have reason to believe that a child is being abused:

- DON'T try to investigate
- DON'T confront the abuser
- DO report your reasonable suspicions

It is not up you to determine whether your suspicions are true. A trained investigator will evaluate the child's situation. Even if your report does not bring decisive action, it may help establish a pattern that will eventually be clear enough to help the child.

The following indications don't by themselves necessarily indicate abuse. You might talk to the child a little to see if there is a simple or innocent explanation for what you have observed.

A disclosure, If you are the first person the child tells about sexual abuse, your testimony as "outcry witness" may be especially important in future legal proceedings. What you say the child told you is not considered hearsay but is admissible evidence in a trial involving a sexual offense against a child. This exception applies only to the first person the child approaches.

You are legally responsible for the safety of your own child. If you permit your child to be in a situation where he or she may be injured, then you yourself may be prosecuted for child abuse. The fact that the abuser is a parent or other family member does not remove your obligation to protect the child.

If you are frightened for your own safety or that of your child, call 911 or 1-800-252-5400.

If you are uneasy about your own behavior toward your child, you can call the Parents Anonymous toll-free hotline at: 1-800-554-2323.

You are legally responsible for the care of your child. You must provide your child with safe and adequate food, clothing, shelter, protection, medical care and supervision, or else you must arrange for someone else to provide these things. Failure to do so may be considered neglect.

When You Suspect Child Abuse or Neglect: A General Guide

Suspect Physical Abuse When You See...

- Frequent injuries such as bruises, cuts, black eyes or burns, especially when the child cannot adequately explain their causes
- Burns or bruises in an unusual pattern that may indicate the use of an instrument or a human bite; cigarette burns on any part of the body
- Frequent complaints of pain without obvious injury
- Aggressive, disruptive and destructive behavior
- Lack of reaction to pain
- Passive, withdrawn, emotionless behavior
- Fear of going home or seeing parents
- Injuries that appear after the child has not been seen for several days
- Unseasonable clothes that may hide injuries to arms or legs

Suspect Neglect When you see...

- Obvious malnourishment
- Lack of personal cleanliness
- Torn and/or dirty clothes
- Obvious fatigue and listlessness
- A child unattended for long periods of time
- Need for glasses, dental care or other medical attention
- Stealing or begging for food
- Frequent absence or tardiness from school

Suspect Sexual Abuse When You See...

- Physical signs of sexually-transmitted diseases
- Evidence of injury to the genital area
- Difficulty in sitting or walking
- Frequent expressions of sexual activity between adults and children
- Pregnancy in a young girl
- Extreme fear of being alone with adults, especially if of a particular gender
- Sexually suggestive, inappropriate or promiscuous behavior
- Knowledge about sexual relations beyond what is appropriate for the child's age
- Sexual victimization of other children

Answer the questions on the following page and return it along with the signature form to the safety officer. You can fax the sheets, mail them or drop them off at the parish center. If you drop them off at the parish center you can give them to one of the staff, put them in the facility/safe environment cubby by the office door or in the mailbox immediately outside the entrance to the parish center building.

St. Gabriel the Archangel Catholic Community
Safe Environment Program Continuing Education
Option 3 What we can do about child abuse?

Self Assessment Form

Name _____

1. If a child tells you someone has been abusing him or her you should ask them who did it. True False
2. Which of the following kinds of questions should you ask?
 - a. Leading (Did your brother hurt you?)
 - b. Open Ended (Tell me what happened)
 - c. Both of above
3. You should investigate or build a case before reporting to the authorities?
 True False
4. What should you take note of and record to report?
 - a. What you saw and heard
 - b. What other people tell you they saw and heard
 - c. Both
5. Children often make up stories to get attention so you should doubt the child and give the other person the benefit of the doubt until you can find proof.
 True False
6. If the child asks you to keep what they tell you a secret you should:
 - a. Say you will just so the child will confide in you
 - b. Say no and tell the child you want to help him or her
 - c. Tell the child you will try to keep it a secret.
 - d. Any of the above is fine
7. You should tell the child that the person who hurt him or her is a bad person so the child will feel better.
 True False
8. You should comfort the child and assure him or her that he or she did nothing wrong.
 True False
9. You can help prevent child abuse by doing which of the following?
 - a. Teach your children about their private body parts
 - b. Listen to your children when they talk about being around other people.
 - c. Support other parents you know by lending a sympathetic ear or helping out with babysitting
 - d. All of above

We sincerely thank all those who share their time and talents as employees of and/or volunteers in the programs and activities of St. Gabriel the Archangel Catholic Community

St. Gabriel the Archangel Catholic Community
Safe Environment Program Continuing Education
Option 3 What we can do about child abuse?

Signature Form

Last Name _____ First Name _____ Middle Initial _____

Ministry _____

SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM
ANNUAL TRAINING UPDATE
SIGNATURE FORM

Please print legibly or you may not receive credit. Please print first, middle (name or initial), and last name. Also include a suffix (e.g. Jr., Sr., etc.), if applicable.

Address:

Daytime Phone: _____ Email _____

Please print email carefully

I have read the document "What can we do about child abuse"

I filled out the "Self Assessment Form" on this topic and it is attached to this form.

I understand that by doing so I have met the annual training requirements under our parish's Safe Environment Program. If there is anything I do not understand or if I have any questions about anything I read in these materials I will contact the Safety Officer at the church office 972-542-7170.

My Signature: _____ Date: _____

The date 12-months from today's date is _____

I know I must complete my next annual training no later than this date if I wish to remain eligible to serve.

**Please drop this form and assessment off at or mail it to your church office,
Attention Safety Director**

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