

Child Safety/Safe Environment FAQ's

1. Why do we need Safe & Sacred?

Safe & Sacred training is provided to ensure the safety of all minors in our diocese. It is a response to the USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People (approved in 2005 and revised in 2011). Safe & Sacred training is also provided to protect adults from false accusations of abuse and/or inappropriate behavior.

2. What is the age of an adult or a minor?

A minor is someone who has not reached his or her 18th birthday. However, best practices dictate policies and procedures for students enrolled in our programs through their senior year of high school, even if they have reached their 18th birthday.

3. Do 18 year-olds need to be housed separately from minors and/or adults when traveling with a group?

Eighteen year olds are considered adults and would be housed with adults unless they are still enrolled in high school. In this case, 18-year-olds would be assigned rooms with other 18-year-olds -- not with adults or those who have not reached their 18th birthday.

4. Should 18-year-olds be required to participate in Safe & Sacred training?

Every adult (18 and older) needs to participate in Safe & Sacred training if he/she is working with minors.

5. Is there an age too young for going through Safe & Sacred training as a leader?

Safe & Sacred training is only appropriate for those 18 and older. However, older minors working with young children should review best practices with the appropriate ministry supervisor. Such minors should never be left alone with other children.

6. How often is Safe & Sacred training required?

Diocesan employees and volunteers must participate in Safe & Sacred training (including a background check) every three years. However, best practices for safe conduct and child safety must be reviewed at least every year with school, catechetical, and youth ministry staff members. See administrative handbooks for schools (learningconnection.doe.in.gov/UserGroup/GroupDetailFileBookmarks.aspx?ugfid=8239&gid=1561) and catechetical ministries (www.pocatechesis.org/catechetical-and-youth-ministry-administrative-handbook) for details.

7. How do you handle a problem situation in a locker room setting?

*Ideally locker rooms should be designed with modesty panels such that an adult can be in the room, but out of view of those who are showering or dressing. Great care must be taken to protect the privacy of those showering or changing clothes. It is best to have two adults of the same gender as the minors in the room or right outside the door such that any kind of bullying or inappropriate behavior can be detected or dealt with. Adults must then use their own judgment in determining when to enter the area or intervene. Child safety means that the parish and/or school provides a **safe environment**. This means children are safe from physical and emotional threats and acts from facilities and/or other persons, including other minors.*

8. What if someone is active in multiple Parishes or Church organizations? Is there a central database to check their protocol status?

Safe Environment Coordinators (SECs) have access to a central database. Contact your local SEC, the Pastoral Office for Education, Pastoral Office for Catechesis or Human Resources Director to verify background checks and Safe & Sacred training.

9. What should be the adult to participant ratio for events/programs?

The ratio depends upon the age of the minors and the nature of activities. Refer to Appendix 47 of the Catechetical and Youth Ministry Administrative Handbook (www.pocatechesis.org/catechetical-and-youth-ministry-administrative-handbook) for details.

10. What are some ways one can avoid being in a one-on-one situation and still handle talking about delicate matters?

Adults should always avoid being in a one-on-one situation with a minor. In the case that it is necessary to do so, and particularly if the conversation is sensitive, the conversation should take place in an area with windows and/or open doors such that the participants are visible to others. Interactions of this sort should be observable and interruptible. Depending upon the nature of the conversation another adult (parent or professional) may be invited to be present. Youth with ongoing personal concerns should be referred to a parent and/or therapist.

11. To whom does one report a violation of Safe & Sacred protocols that is not abuse or neglect?

When an adult recognizes the violation of protocol of another adult, it would be wise for him or her to approach the violator with a reminder of best practices. Depending upon the seriousness of the violation, this may also need to be reported to the person's supervisor. The report should also be made if the violator reacts negatively or without concern about correcting his or her actions.

12. What are the mandatory reporting situations?

Anytime a child reports that he or she has been abused, or a person has reason to suspect that a child has been or is being abused, he or she has a moral and legal

responsibility to report this to child protective services. In parishes and schools the person should contact Child Protective Services (CPS) immediately. The report to CPS should also be documented on the appropriate form. Supervisors should have these forms, but they can also be obtained from the Pastoral Office of Education (www.dol-in.org/documents/2016/6/AF100ChildAbuseReportingForm-Schools.docx), the Pastoral Office of Catechesis (www.pocatechesis.org/documents/2016/6/AF100ChildAbuseReportingForm-Catechesis.pdf), or the Human Resources Director.

13. How do you handle non-mandatory reporting of serious situations? For example, a young person tells you he has been drinking.

Any serious situation or cause for concern about youth safety should prompt a report to adults responsible for the young person. In most cases this would be the parent. However, an employee or volunteer may want to consult with his or her supervisor and allow that person to make the contact, if it is appropriate. Professional personnel in the diocesan offices are always available to advise employees and volunteers on these issues.

14. When are the Safe & Sacred protocols binding? (e.g. Is a parent required to follow the protocols with two adults in the car when driving their son and his friend to a Church event? Or to an event that has nothing to do with the Church, but the two might have met through the Church? Does it apply to Confirmation Sponsors? Does it apply when driving nephews or nieces?)

All adults are required to follow the Safe & Sacred protocols while working with youth in any parish or school sponsored activity. However, adults are advised to consider these practices with any interaction they have with minors. We cannot dictate rules for behavior outside of parish and school events, but adults are wise to consider the best practices and make wise judgments in the relationships with all persons. Our Christian faith dictates this kind of prudence.

15. Who sees the background check information?

Safe Environment Coordinators (SECs) are notified if a background check is returned as clear or flagged. Flagged background check information is sent to the Diocesan Human Resources Director. If this information presents a concern about the person's participation in a parish and/or school program, the Director contacts the pastor or chief administrator of the school or parish and together a decision is made about whether or not the concern should prohibit involvement. In some cases the Vicar General may also be consulted. All background check information is kept strictly confidential.

16. Who pays for the background check?

Parishes and schools pay for the background check.

17. How much contact with children do you need before you need to have a criminal background check?

*Any adults working with minors in the Diocese of Lafayette are required to complete Safe & Sacred training and a background check **prior** to employment or volunteer work. There may be a few exceptions to this. Please check with the Director of Human Resources, Director of Catechesis or Director of Education if you believe an exception should be made.*

18. Are guest speakers who come to a school or parish for a special program required to complete Safe & Sacred training?

Guest speakers who will be at a school or parish for a limited amount of time (for example, law enforcement officials, DARE officers, or firefighters in a school, referees, etc.) and who are accompanied by a professional staff member are not required to complete Safe & Sacred.

Guest speakers who will have ongoing interaction with children (for example, for a youth rally or week-long program) must either provide proof that they have received similar training in their diocese or complete diocesan Safe & Sacred training.

When in doubt, contact a diocesan director for consultation.

19. If a parent is assisting in a child's class one time do they need to complete Safe & Sacred training?

Yes. Such a parent is considered a volunteer and must complete the training.

20. Are liturgical ministers required to complete Safe & Sacred training?

Readers, servers, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, ushers and greeters are not required to complete Safe & Sacred training unless they are ministering at school Masses or other liturgies primarily for children. Choir members and musicians are required to complete the training if minors are members of the choir.

21. Are ushers and other people who handle parish or school funds required to complete a background check?

Yes, anyone handling collection monies or other funds in excess of \$1,000 is required to complete a background check.

22. What about _____ volunteer?

A volunteer is required to complete Safe & Sacred if a) they are participating in a church or school-sponsored activity b) where they will be interacting with minors. If you are unsure, contact the Human Resources Director. Of course, all parishioners – especially those in leadership positions, even if they do not interact with children – are encouraged to complete Safe & Sacred in order to learn about and be alert for the signs of abuse in our communities.

23. What about adults who officiate at athletic events?

Because officials are never alone with youth and do not directly interact with them, this may be an exception. However, this assumes that they are qualified and trained officials. Please check with the Superintendent for Catholic Schools if you need further clarification.

24. What kind of physical contact is permitted? Can adult leaders take part in activities such as flag football or ultimate Frisbee with youth participants? Can youth leaders take part in such things with youth participants? What about in teaching physical activities, such as swimming?

Adults should exercise caution with any physical contact with youth. Sports may be an occasion in which there may be physical contact. A key word is "appropriate." Another key word is "boundary." Adult participation in these activities may occasionally be appropriate, but proper boundaries imply that the adult is not perceived as "one of the boys (or girls)." In teaching physical activities it is assumed that the teacher is trained and knows how to perform these duties professionally.

25. Are there different kinds of background checks?

Yes. The Director of Human Resources will make the decision to conduct a deeper check if needed.

26. How long does it take to have a background check returned?

It usually takes 48 hours for a submitted background check to be returned. It may take longer for someone with multiple addresses or previous names.

27. What are the signs of suicidal tendency?

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention has compiled a list of warning signs and risk factors: www.dol-in.org/documents/2016/6/WarningSignsOfSuicide.docx.

28. What is the policy about social media?

Adults should not connect with minors as part of their own personal social networking. See the Diocesan Social Networking/Technology Directives (www.dol-in.org/social-networking-technology-) for details.

29. What is the policy about email? Phones? Texting?

See the Diocesan Social Networking/Technology Directives (www.dol-in.org/social-networking-technology-) for details.