

Diocesan Manual for the Protection of Minors and the Vulnerable

2024



Office of Child and Youth Protection
Diocese of Colorado Springs
www.diocs.org



Diocese of Colorado Springs

Office of the Bishop

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To the people of the Diocese of Colorado Springs:

I am honored to be able to serve you as your Bishop. As a new Bishop for the Diocese of Colorado Springs, I am simply writing to reaffirm our diocese's commitment to the ministry of Child and Youth Protection.

I am grateful for the work which has preceded my arrival. I appreciate the leadership of Deacon Thomas Dickinson who serves as director for the office of Child and Youth Protection. Deacon can be reached at: tdickinson@diocs.org. I also appreciate the work of our victim advocates and parish safe environment coordinators who help us in this important work.

As Roman Catholic disciples of our Lord Jesus, we are called to model relationships demonstrating respect and sharing dignity with each person we encounter. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (#1810) says, "Human virtues acquired by education, by deliberate acts and by perseverance ever-renewed in repeated efforts are purified and elevated by divine grace." The ministry of our office of Child Protection serves to help each one of us to purify and elevate all our relationships.

As Bishop of the Diocese of Colorado Springs, I hereby approve of and promulgate the following safe environment programs for us in this diocese:

- VIRTUS Protecting God's Children for Adults program for our clergy, religious, employees and volunteers who work with children.
- VIRTUS Protecting God's Children Touching Safety program for use in our parish religious education programs and in our Catholic school religion classes.

The Diocese of Colorado Springs has a zero tolerance for abuse. Let us renew our commitment to protect minors entrusted to our care from all forms of abuse and neglect.

I want to thank you for supporting these efforts. Together we seek the Kingdom of God, loving one another and respecting the dignity of each human life.

In Christ,

+ James R. Golka

Most Reverend James R. Golka
Bishop of Colorado Springs

Foreword

The articles and norms instituted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) regarding safe environment for minors outline a consistent, ongoing, and comprehensive approach to create and maintain a safe environment for young people throughout the Church in the United States. Specific to the Diocese of Colorado Springs, in furtherance of these articles and norms, this manual contains policies, procedures and pastoral guidance specific to governing interactions between minors, vulnerable persons and those adults who, on behalf of a diocesan parish/school or outside organization, have regular contact in ministry with them. Therefore, this manual serves as a resource for parish/school Safe Environment Coordinators and others to comply with the articles and norms contained in the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* in addition to the local requirements established by the Bishop and/or the diocesan Office of Child and Youth Protection.

For the use of this manual, a Volunteer is an unpaid person who is eighteen years of age or older who has regular contact with minors. Consistent with the USCCB glossary of terms, a Minor is defined as a person under the age of eighteen. Minors are commonly referred to as youth, children, or young people. Reflective of the general provisions of the apostolic letter *Vos estis lux mundi*, a Vulnerable Person is defined as any person in a state of infirmity, physical or mental deficiency, or deprivation of personal liberty which, in fact, even occasionally, limits their ability to understand or to want or otherwise resist offense.

Due to different staffing levels, volunteer resources, demographics and structural differences of each diocesan parish/school, this manual cannot cover all situations or variables in creating and maintaining a safe environment for minors and vulnerable persons. In case of an emergency, call 911. Upon review and application of this manual, if questions arise, contact the Office of Child and Youth Protection. While the contents of this manual refer most often to parish/school volunteers, the intent of this manual of creating and maintaining a safe environment for young people and the vulnerable should be applied to parish/school employees, educators, and clerics as well. In summary, this foundational intent is built upon (1) the well-being of the victim, (2) the prevention of victimization, (3) the adherence to applicable local, state, federal and canon law, (4) in cooperation with local law enforcement and county child/adult protective services, (5) and always valuing and honoring the dignity every individual has being created in the image and likeness of God.



TOGETHER WE CAN

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GENERAL INFORMATION

SERIES 1000

Bishops Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People

Policy 1000

The United States Council of Catholic Bishops authored norms for diocesan policies regarding allegations of sexual abuse by priests or deacons which is titled *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. If unforeseen conflict arises between this diocesan manual and the Charter, contact the Office of Child and Youth Protection for clarification and guidance.

Forms/Resources:

<http://www.usccb.org/child-and-youth-protection/charter-protection-children-and-young-people>

Sexual Misconduct Policy (adherence to)

Policy 1010

Sexual misconduct is contrary to Christian principles and is forbidden. Sexual misconduct may constitute a criminal offense. Adults who have regular contact with minors or vulnerable persons on behalf of the parish/school or any outside organization will receive and agree to comply with the Sexual Misconduct Policy of the Diocese of Colorado Springs.

For the purposes of this manual, sexual misconduct is any sexual conduct which arises from the work of the Diocese, involves a diocesan worker, diocesan volunteer, or religious, and another individual, and which constitutes either unlawful activity, sexual harassment, or activity contrary to Catholic moral teachings or canon law.

Reflective of the Charter (2011 revision, pg. 17) and addressed in diocesan policy, sexual misconduct includes the acquisition, possession, or distribution of pornographic images of minors for purposes of sexual gratification, also known as child sexual abuse material, by whatever means or using whatever technology.

Forms/Resources:

Sexual Misconduct Policy of the Diocese of Colorado Springs; www.diocs.org/Pastoral-Services/Child-and-Youth-Protection

<https://www.usccb.org/resources/Charter-for-the-Protection-of-Children-and-Young-People-2018-final%281%29.pdf>

Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

Policy 1020

By State statute, any person defined as a Mandatory Reporter who has reasonable cause to know or suspect that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect or who has observed the child being subjected to circumstances or conditions that would reasonably result in abuse or neglect shall immediately report to the county department of child protective services, the local law enforcement agency, or the child abuse reporting hotline at 1-844-CO-4-KIDS (1-844-264-5437).

If a minor is in imminent danger call 911.

Regarding child abuse and neglect, adults who fit the statutory definition of a Mandatory Reporter most likely present in a parish/school would include a registered nurse or licensed practical nurse, private school official or employee, licensed professional counselor, clergy member, and an employed director, coach, assistant coach or athletic program personnel. Regardless of statutory definition, any person may report, and consistent with Christian moral principles should report, child abuse and neglect.

Per the Sexual Misconduct Policy of the Diocese of Colorado Springs, notification should also be made to the Diocese of Colorado Springs Office of Child and Youth. Internal notification is facilitated via online reporting on the diocesan website.

Reports of child abuse and neglect generated at a diocesan school may require additional internal reporting to the Office of Catholic Schools. The Principal/Director should be notified of any report of child abuse and neglect unless the Principal/Director is a party to the reported abuse and neglect

The Pastor should be notified of any report of child abuse and neglect unless the Pastor is a party to the reported abuse and neglect.

Forms/Resources:

Internal Reporting; www.diocs.org/Pastoral-Services/Child-and-Youth-Protection/Report-Child-Abuse

Reporting Vulnerable Person Abuse and Neglect

Policy 1030

By State statute, any person who observes the mistreatment of an at-risk elder or an at-risk adult with intellectual and developmental disability (IDD), or who has reasonable cause to believe that an at-risk elder or an at-risk adult with IDD has been mistreated or is in imminent risk of mistreatment, shall report to a law enforcement agency not more than twenty-four hours after making the observation or discovery.

If or when the State Statute defines a Vulnerable person differently than the Catholic Church, interpret each situation according to the definition that is more comprehensive.

If a Vulnerable Person is in imminent danger call 911.

Those who fit the definition of a Mandatory Reporter for Vulnerable Person Abuse and Neglect most likely present in a parish/school would include personnel at schools and clergy. Regardless of statutory definition, any person may report, and consistent with Christian moral principles should report, Vulnerable Person Abuse and Neglect.

Notification of Vulnerable Person Abuse and Neglect should also be made to the Diocese of Colorado Springs Office of Child and Youth Protection. Internal notification is facilitated via online on the diocesan website.

Reports of Vulnerable Person Abuse and Neglect generated at a diocesan school may require

additional internal reporting to the Office of Catholic Schools. The Principal/Director should be notified of any report of abuse and neglect unless the Principal/Director is a party to the reported vulnerable person abuse and neglect.

The Pastor should be notified of any report of Vulnerable Person Abuse and Neglect unless the Pastor is a party to the abuse and neglect.

Forms/Resources:

Internal Reporting; www.diocs.org/Pastoral-Services/Child-and-Youth-Protection/Report-Vulnerable-Persons-Abuse

Reporting Sexual Abuse and Related Misconduct by a Bishop

Policy 1040

Any individual who has information that a U.S. Catholic Bishop has:

- forced someone to perform or to submit to sexual acts through violence, threat, or abuse of authority,
- performed sexual acts with a minor or vulnerable person,
- produced, exhibited, possessed, or distributed child pornography, or recruited or induced a minor or vulnerable person to participate in pornographic exhibitions,
- or a diocesan or eparchial bishop who has intentionally interfered with a civil or church investigation into allegations of sexual abuse committed by another cleric or religious,

should report to the Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service (1-800-276-1562).

State Mandatory Reporting statutes apply and are not satisfied by making a report with the Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service.

If a minor or vulnerable person is in imminent danger call 911.

Forms/Resources:

External Reporting; www.ReportBishopAbuse.org; 1-800-276-1562

Adults Reporting Past Abuse

Policy 1050

An adult who reports their childhood abuse by a member of the clergy, a seminarian, a diocesan employee, a diocesan educator, or a volunteer of the church, should be encouraged to contact the Office of Child and Youth Protection. A formal diocesan report can be made via an online reporting form on the diocesan website.

The mandatory reporter statute does not apply if the suspected abuse or neglect was learned when the reported victim of the abuse or neglect is eighteen years of age or older (19-3-304 (I)). An adult reporting their childhood abuse has the right to decide whether to notify law enforcement or not. However, a report to law enforcement should be encouraged and support offered through the accompaniment of the diocesan victim advocate. Regardless of law enforcement involvement, services of the diocesan victim advocate should be offered. See policy 1060.

Forms/Resources:

Internal Reporting; www.diocs.org/Pastoral-Services/Child-and-Youth-Protection/Report-Child-Abuse

Outreach to Sexual Abuse or Neglect Victims

Policy 1060

Committed to spiritual and emotional well-being, outreach in the form of the diocesan victim advocate, pastoral support, and/or referral for other psychological or counseling assistance should be offered to a victim, and/or to his/her family, when a complaint is received regarding sexual abuse of a minor against anyone in Church service whether the abuse is recent or occurred in the distant past. Outreach should be coordinated by the Office of Child and Youth Protection.

If outreach is requested of the diocesan victim advocate, the advocate's responsibility should be restricted solely to the care of the victim. No investigative action should be undertaken by the diocesan victim advocate.

Criminal Conduct Not Youth or Vulnerable Person Related

Policy 1070

Other criminal conduct at a parish/school may include financial fraud or theft by a volunteer, employee, or religious. A Fraud and Theft report can be filed via an online reporting form on the diocesan website.

Whistle Blower Protection

If the reporting party of criminal conduct is a diocesan employee, per CPC Employee Guidelines, there shall be no retaliation for reporting harassment, misconduct, fraud, waste, abuse, violations of law or policy, or for participating in an investigation. If the reporting party is employed at the parish/school, protection is provided by the State public policy exception to the at-will employee doctrine.

Forms/Resources:

Internal Reporting; www.diocs.org/Pastoral-Services/Child-and-Youth-Protection/Report-Fraud-and-Theft

Duties of a Parish/School Safe Environment Coordinator

Policy 1080

The purpose of the Safe Environment Coordinator is to support the mission and operations of the parish/school by ensuring compliance with the diocese's safe environment manual and to serve as a liaison to the Office of Child and Youth Protection. The duties of the coordinator include but are not limited to:

- Maintain accurate records within the diocesan online safe environment training and tracking platform for both adults and minors.
- Ensure safe environment training, required documents and criminal background checks are completed in the time frame designated by the Office of Child and Youth Protection.
- Ensure minors involved in parish/school ministry are provided the diocesan approved and

promulgated safe environment training.

- Retain safe environment and volunteer related documents per diocesan policy.
- Apply and adhere to the diocesan safe environment manual.
- Attend diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator meetings.
- Actively oversee parish/school adherence to diocesan safe environment protocols and institute corrections or improvements as needed.
- Cooperate with the annual and three-year USCCB compliance audit.
- Annually report the incurred parish/school cost of safe environment protocols to the diocese.
- Update the Coordinator's contact information with the diocese as needed.

Succession Management

Policy 1090

Pastors, Principals, and Pre-K Directors should plan for succession management and ensure that a new Safe Environment Coordinator is identified, trained by the Office of Child and Youth Protection, and actively engaged in the responsibilities of their position. When a change of a Coordinator occurs, the Office of Child and Youth Protection shall be notified.

SCREENING AND TRAINING FOR ADULTS

SERIES 2000

Adults participating in a ministry involving regular contact with minors fall under this Series.

Six Month Waiting Period

Policy 2000

It is recommended that volunteers be active and known members of the parish/school community for a minimum of six months before volunteering with minors. A Pastor's discretion also applies.

New Volunteers

Policy 2010

Volunteers who will have regular contact with minors must register with the diocesan online safe environment training and tracking platform. All requirements of the platform, to include mandatory training, required document review, and a criminal background check, must be completed and approved prior to that adult volunteering around a minor. When an adult volunteer completes all diocesan safe environment requirements, they are referred to as being "in-compliance".

Criminal Background Check

Policy 2020

All adult volunteers and adult employees with regular contact with minors, *including state licensed teachers*, must pass a formal criminal background check. A criminal background check process has been integrated into the diocesan online safe environment training and tracking platform.

After an initial criminal background check is completed, the diocesan training and tracking platform will automatically prompt active adult volunteers and employees to submit for additional criminal background checks every five years. Using the diocesan platform, Safe Environment Coordinators can manually prompt a criminal background check whenever deemed prudent.

When a background check is required but not completed, this adult should not be allowed to be around minors in a ministry capacity since they are not in-compliance with diocesan requirements. Criminal background checks are reviewed by the Office of Child and Youth Protection. If a criminal entry is present on a completed check, it is at the discretion of the Pastor, Principal, Director and/or the Office of Child and Youth Protection to allow the respective adult further involvement with a parish/school ministry.

The expense of a criminal background check is incurred by the requesting parish/school. An annual budget for criminal background checks is the responsibility of each parish/school.

Parishes/schools are encouraged to have an agreement with a separate criminal background check vendor for prescreening/hiring purposes since the diocesan safe environment training and tracking platform's integrated background check is not intended as a Human Resource tool.

When a criminal background check is procured specifically for and by a diocesan parish/school for prescreening/hiring purposes, that check can be used to establish compliance. Pre-K teachers have a separate State requirement for criminal background checks and those State generated results are also accepted for the diocesan requirement.

Criminal background checks generated from entities outside the diocese, such as BSA or KofC, are not accepted.

Safe Environment Training

Policy 2030

Adults active in a ministry involving regular contact with youth should complete all assigned safe environment training. For continued education and vigilance in the protection of minors, the diocesan safe environment training and tracking platform will automatically assign specific training modules at designated times depending on the role the adult fulfills at a parish/school. If an adult becomes delinquent in completing their assigned training, it is at the discretion of the applicable oversight entity (Pastor, Principal, Director, Safe Environment Coordinator, Vicar of Clergy, Office of Permanent Diaconate, the Office of Child and Youth Protection) to allow further ministry involvement by that adult.

Frequency of diocesan required safe environment training by established USCCB Roles:

- Priests and Deacons - monthly
- Candidates for Ordination - monthly
- Educators (salaried teachers) - quarterly
- Employees - quarterly
- Volunteers - annually

Visiting and Non-Permanent Clergy

Policy 2040

Pastors are responsible for obtaining Letters of Suitability from applicable superiors attesting that all visiting and non-permanent clergy have met certain conditions prior to allowing them to provide sacramental services at their respective parish/school. Pastors should check with the Office of the Bishop to see if a letter is already on file. Otherwise, letters obtained directly from the clergy's superior are to be copied to the Office of the Bishop. Clergy who are visiting for reasons other than sacramental service, such as teaching or to facilitate a presentation, must provide a completed Testimonial of Suitability for Clergy.

Letters of Suitability may not be more than one year old and are to be retained at the parish. Letters of Suitability for ministry must attest that:

- he is of good moral character and reputation,
- there is nothing which would in any way limit or disqualify him from this ministry,
- there is nothing in his background which would render him unsuitable to work with minors,
- his safe environment training and criminal background check are current.

Per Article 13 of the Charter, when a priest or deacon, not incardinated in the diocese, is to engage in ministry in the diocese, regardless of length of time, the evaluation of his background may be satisfied through a written attestation of suitability for ministry supplied by his proper ordinary/major superior. However, it is the practice of the Diocese of Colorado Springs that all priests and deacons not incardinated and serving within the diocese will be required to comply with the same standards and level of safe environment training as incardinated clergy.

Forms/Resources:

Bishop's Office (719) 636-6486

TRAINING FOR MINORS

SERIES 3000

Minors, those not yet eighteen years of age, involved in a ministry fall under this Series.

Safe Environment Training

Policy 3000

All minors involved in a parish/school ministry, such as faith formation, should receive safe environment training using the diocesan approved, Bishop promulgated, age-appropriate curriculum taught by an adult. This specific curriculum is provided by the diocesan safe environment training and tracking platform. Minors should receive safe environment training at least once during each audit year (July 1 through June 30).

At least one make-up session should be offered at the parish/school for minors absent from safe environment training or their parent can be provided the specific parent-led curriculum.

It is highly recommended that safe environment training for minors occurs in the Fall of each audit year.

For USCCB audit purposes, every parish/school is required to record the total number of minors trained and opted out of training for each audit year.

Parental Opt-Out

Policy 3010

Safe environment training for minors should be conducted in cooperation with the parent/guardian (Article 12 of the Charter). At the direction of the parent/guardian, a minor can be excused from safe environment training.

Forms/Resources:

<https://www.virtusonline.org/educators/opt-out.cfm>

Minors as Helpers

Policy 3020

Minors as Helpers, previously known as peer leaders, shall never be placed in a position of authority or in a supervisory role over other minors. Minors as Helpers are (just) minors capable or willing to assist an adult in a ministry or activity. This minor, like all minors, shall be supervised by safe environment trained adults. Minors as Helpers cannot be counted as an adult to satisfy the “Two Adult Rule.” See policy 4010. Being minors, these Helpers are not registered, nor background check screened, in the diocesan safe environment training and tracking platform.

SUPERVISION

SERIES 4000

Supervision of Other Adults

Policy 4000

Ministry supervisors should make random and unannounced visits with their adult volunteers during parish/school activities involving minors.

Supervision of Minors (Two Adult Rule)

Policy 4010

Minors should be supervised by at least two safe environment screened and trained adults whenever possible. Due to the Colorado Spousal Privilege law, a married couple constitutes as a single individual. Minors as helpers cannot be counted as an adult.

Overnight Activities

Policy 4020

Overnight events such as camping and youth retreats are to be considered high-risk activities. In these situations, there must be a minimum of two safe environment trained and screened adults who are designated as “chaperones.” Ideally, chaperones would be comprised of both genders.

Ratio of Adult Supervision for Overnight Activities

Ten or fewer minors should be chaperoned by no fewer than two safe environment trained and screened adults. For each additional one to six minors, one adult chaperone should be added.

Designated sleeping areas should be separated by gender.

A Parental/Guardian Consent Form and Liability Waiver for the minor involved is required.

Forms/Resources:

Parental/Guardian Consent Form and Liability Wavier for Overnight Events

Chaperones

Policy 4030

Chaperones must be at least 21 years of age, and safe environment trained and screened.

Driving

Policy 4040

Volunteer drivers for a parish/school sponsored ministry:

- must review, agree and complete the Driver Information Sheet, Volunteer Waiver, and Release forms,
- must have a current, non-probationary, Colorado driver’s license,
- should be 25 years of age or older,
- may not use a cell phone while their vehicle is in motion except in an emergency,

- shall never be alone in a vehicle with an unrelated minor and whenever possible, have another adult in the vehicle when transporting minor(s),
- and shall drive with due regard to all State and Federal laws/rules of the road.

The vehicle being used:

- must have proper and current vehicle license plates and registration,
- must carry minimum insurance coverage of \$100,000 per person/\$300,000 per occurrence,
- must be equipped with sufficient working seat belts, car seats, and/or booster seats as required by law for each passenger,
- and must comply with all State and Federal laws to be operated on a public roadway.

The best practice when multiple vehicles are involved is for drivers to travel in caravans, maintain visual contact with the other vehicles, and not make any unneeded or non-scheduled stops.

The use of a 10-15 passenger van is not allowed for volunteers to transport minors or adults.

Forms/Resources:

Volunteer Driver Form

Activity Release, Permission Slip, and Volunteer Waiver

Diocese of Colorado Springs Transportation and Vehicle Policy

Activities Held Off-Site

Policy 4050

Utilizing off-site locations should be considered as a high-risk activity. Safe environment policy and procedure apply with all parish/school endorsed off-site activities involving minors.

Forms/Resources:

Activity Release, Permission Slip, and Volunteer Waiver

Parents Present During Activities

Policy 4060

Parents are welcome to parish/school ministries or events involving their children. If a parent's presence at a parish/school event or ministry evolves from spectator/observer into an ongoing role of an adult volunteer with regular contact with minors, this parent should comply with the screening and training for adults (series 2000).

COMMUNICATION

SERIES 5000

General Communication

Policy 5000

Parishes/schools should make the following information available to parishioners and others in printed form by posting in high traffic areas:

- How to Report Abuse or Neglect of a Minor

Additional materials that can be posted include:

- Information highlighting the current diocesan safe environment training and tracking platform.
- Contact information for the parish/school safe environment coordinator.
- Other child safety related information.

Forms/Resources:

VIRTUS® My Diocese tab, View Custom Forms

Pulpit/Bulletin Announcements

Policy 5010

It is suggested to have intermittent pulpit and/or bulletin announcements educating the parish on how to report abuse and neglect of a minor or vulnerable person.

Use of a Minor's Name or Image

Policy 5020

Written consent should be obtained from a parent/guardian before using a minor's name and/or audio, video, or photo depiction. The use of any name or likeness of a minor is limited to the announcement, acknowledgment of achievement, or the participation in, and information about or the promotion of, an applicable parish/school sponsored ministry or event.

Forms/Resources:

Consent for Release (Media)

Technology Communication with Minors

Policy 5030

At minimum, verbal consent should be obtained from a parent/guardian for the use of any technology platform utilized to facilitate ministry activity communication between an adult ministry lead and a participating minor. The technology platform shall only be used to provide information related to the parish/school related ministry or activity (such as event information and scheduled meetings). The parent/guardian should receive the same information provided to the minor through the technology platform.

Regardless of the technology platform, all forms of parish/school related ministry/activity

communication either visual, audio or written must reflect the values of the Catholic faith.

All technology communication between an adult involved in a parish/school related ministry or activity and a participating minor must comply with the *Electronic Communication & Social Media Policy with Regard to Minors* and the *Sexual Misconduct Policy of the Diocese of Colorado Springs*.

Forms/Resources:

Electronic Communication & Social Media Policy with Regard to Minors

Sexual Misconduct Policy of the Diocese of Colorado Springs; www.diocs.org/Pastoral-Services/Child-and-Youth-Protection

Media Relations

Policy 5040

No statements representing the Diocese of Colorado Springs may be made to the media unless authorized by diocesan General Counsel, the Bishop, or his designee.

RELATED GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS

SERIES 6000

Scouts

Policy 6000

All scouting and similar groups, whether officially sponsored/chartered by a parish or using space within the parish/school as an outside group, must comply with all safe environment standards contained in this manual. Compliance with this manual includes criminal background checks for the adults through the diocesan safe environment training and tracking platform and diocesan safe environment training for both the adults and the children.

Knights of Columbus

Policy 6010

Knights with regular contact with minors must comply with all safe environment standards contained in this manual. Compliance with this manual includes criminal background checks and safe environment training from the diocesan training and tracking platform.

Ushers, Greeters, Hospitality Ministers, Sacristans, Acolytes

Policy 6020

It is recommended that adult ushers, greeters, hospitality ministers, sacristans, acolytes or other adults fulfilling similar roles regardless of title, receive safe environment training and a criminal background check from the diocesan training and tracking platform.

Choirs

Policy 6030

If a choir ministry consists of both adult and minor singers or musicians, due to regular contact between them, at least two safe environment screened and trained adults should be present at tryouts, rehearsals and performances whenever possible. Due to the Colorado Spousal Privilege law, a married couple constitutes as a single individual. At minimum, it is recommended that the adult music ministry leader should be safe environment screened and trained.

Home and Assisted Living Visitations

Policy 6040

Home and assisted living facility visitations should be considered as high-risk activities since they involve potential interaction with vulnerable adults. The diocesan safe environment training and tracking platform offers specific training for ministering to this high-risk population. It is recommended that these volunteers register with the diocesan training and tracking platform to obtain this specific training and complete a criminal background check. For existing adult volunteers entering this ministry, this specific training can be assigned to them through the diocesan safe environment training and tracking platform.

Related adult volunteer ministries can include Stephen Ministers, Befrienders, and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to the Homebound.

Outside Speakers

Policy 6050

All outside speakers, including clergy, must comply with the protocols contained in the document

Ministry Clearance Requirements for Visiting Ministry Providers Coming into the Diocese of Colorado Springs which is available from the Bishop's Office.

Forms/Resources:

Bishop's Office (719) 636-6486

Outside Service Providers

Policy 6060

Outside companies, contractors or vendors conducting on-site business at parishes/schools should be supervised when minors are present. For schools who have outside vendors providing daily food service for students, onsite professional security services when students are present, or after school programs involving minors that use school facilities on a regular basis should contact the Office of Catholic Schools to review safety protocols, screening, contract and insurance requirements.

Sex Offenders

Policy 6070

Registered sex offenders, adult or a minor, wanting to attend a parish for the sacraments, should execute a formal covenant with the pastor that articulates parameters of participation so their attendance at a liturgical celebration does not violate the offender's terms of release and or probation. This covenant should be reviewed and executed annually. Enrollment of a minor who is registered sex offender at a diocesan school must be properly vetted by Diocesan General Counsel and the Catholic School Superintendent.

Forms/Resources:

Returning Offenders Covenant form

DOCUMENTATION AND RECORDKEEPING

SERIES 7000

Volunteer Files

Policy 7000

Volunteer files are to be maintained at the parish level in accordance with the Diocesan Record Retention Policy. Volunteer files are to be kept in a secure location for seven years after volunteer ministry ends.

With the current diocesan safe environment training and tracking platform, volunteer files are now created and maintained digitally through the platform.

Record Retention Schedule

Policy 7010

Records must be retained in accordance with the Diocesan Record Retention Policy.

Forms/Resources:

Document Retention Policy

COMPLIANCE REVIEWS AND AUDITS

SERIES 8000

Data Reporting

Policy 8000

USCCB required data regarding safe environment training and tracking for both adults and minors is digitally compiled, monitored, and annually reported through the diocesan safe environment training and tracking platform. It is incumbent and essential that all Safe Environment Coordinators actively manage their parish/school volunteers, employees, and minors safe environment data throughout the year by utilizing the platform's audit reports and active/inactive classification. Thereby, ensuring that adults who have regular contact with minors adhere to diocesan safe environment requirements and minors involved in a parish/school ministry are educated, empowered and provided a safe environment. Lax oversight by Safe Environment Coordinators can negatively impact the diocese's USCCB compliance status and negate diocesan efforts with providing a safe environment for minors and the vulnerable.

On-Site Compliance Reviews and Audits

Policy 8010

Audit Review: The diocesan Office of Child and Youth Protection will conduct on-site compliance reviews at parishes/schools when needed and/or able. Ongoing parish/school compliance is conducted continuously through digital monitoring and the diocesan Office of Child and Youth Protection will make changes within the safe environment training and tracking platform as necessary.

Audits: The USCCB and the National Secretariat for Child and Youth Protection requires an annual audit of the diocese and requests an on-site audit every three years (via Stonebridge Business Partners® auditing firm). Each Safe Environment Coordinator at every parish/school must assist the diocesan Office of Child and Youth Office Protection with both types of audits, primarily through maintaining accurate audit related data.

Audit Year

Policy 8020

The annual audit year is July 1 through June 30.

GENERAL SAFETY AND SECURITY

SERIES 9000

Sex Offender Registry

Policy 9000

It is recommended that information regarding sex offenders located on the Colorado Public Sex Offender Search and Notifications website be reviewed often.

Forms/Resources:

<https://www.sotar.us/sotar-public/initPublicIndexRedirect.do>

Safety Considerations

Policy 9010

Safety and security steps to consider:

- Unannounced and random visits during activities involving minors.
- Conduct ministerial activities in full view of others.
- No private meetings between an adult and a minor without a parent or second screened and trained adult present.
- Use adults and/or protective barriers to keep unauthorized individuals from entering an activity area; monitor entrances and exits.
- Restrooms -
 - Escort minors to restrooms in groups.
 - Designate restrooms for the sole use of minors.
 - All employees, parishioners, parents, students, and volunteers shall conduct themselves in accord with their God-given biological sex (*The Diocese of Colorado Springs Parish Response to Secularism and Human Sexuality Belief Statement*, 1.)
- Utilize parental check-in/check-out, drop-off/pick-up procedures.
- Develop coordinated emergency communication protocols in activity areas.
- Remove minors' name tags prior to dismissal.
- Secure outdoor activity areas used by minors.
- Ensure minors do not have unsupervised access to supply closets, hallways or classrooms not in use during activities.
- Ensure alcohol stored/used for liturgical purposes is secure.
- Have access to an AED and an emergency first-aid kit.

Consult with the Diocesan Insurer Catholic Mutual if questions arise about properties, facilities or best practices to mitigate liability.

Forms/Resources:

<https://www.catholicmutual.org>

DISCIPLINE FOR VIOLATION

SERIES 10000

Disciplinary Actions

Policy 10000

Priests, Deacons, Candidates for Ordination, Educators, Employees, and Volunteers should abide by the Diocese of Colorado Springs *Diocesan Manual for the Protection of Minors and the Vulnerable*. A violation of this manual subjects the violator to consequences which may include termination, removal, and/or restrictions on employment or service in the diocese; all disciplinary action is subject to applicable civil or canon law.

Transparency Relating to Sexual Abuse of a Minor by a Cleric

Question: What does canon law require a bishop to do when he receives an allegation of sexual abuse of minor committed by a cleric (priest or deacon)?

Answer: The Code of Canon Law stipulates that the first steps after receipt of an allegation of the commission of an ecclesiastical crime are usually taken by the local Bishop. If the priest against whom an allegation is brought is a member of a religious order, his superior might take the first steps instead. Any allegation that has the semblance of truth (it is not manifestly false or frivolous) undergoes what is referred to as a preliminary investigation. During the preliminary investigation, the accused has a presumption of innocence, and his good name must not be illegitimately harmed. According to the *Essential Norms*, which constitute law on sexual abuse of minors for the dioceses of the United States, the investigation should be conducted promptly and objectively. The *Essential Norms* also require the bishop to follow all civil reporting laws when the allegation concerns the sexual abuse of minors. Church officials are also to cooperate with civil authorities in their own investigations. Moreover, the bishop exercises his power of governance in other ways to make sure no harm comes to children during the phase on the preliminary investigation.

Source, <https://www.usccb.org/upload/FAQs-canonical-process-sexual-abuse.pdf>

Relevant phone numbers:

- 911
- 1-844-CO-4-KIDS
- Colorado Department of Human Services – Adult Protective Services, 303-866-5700
- Diocesan Office of Child and Youth Protection, 719-866-6479

Glossary of Terms

Adult- A person who is eighteen years of age or older.

Chaperone – A volunteer, at least 21 years of age, safe environment trained and screened, who supervises minors during overnight activities or off-site activities.

Charter – (or Dallas Charter) A short-hand term for the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*.

Child Abuse and Neglect - An act or omission that threatens the health or welfare of a child or that places a child in a situation that poses a threat of injury to the child's life or health. Any case in which a child is in need of services because the child's parents, legal guardians, or custodians fail to take the same actions to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision that a prudent parent would take. Actions resulting in identifiable and substantial impairment of, or substantial risk of impairment of, the child's intellectual or psychological functioning or development. Any case in which a child is subjected to unlawful sexual behavior.

Code of Conduct – The diocesan sexual misconduct policy serves as the Code of Conduct for all clergy, religious, employees, and volunteers in the diocese.

Educator - A USCCB role subject to audit defined as salaried teachers, principals, and administrators in diocesan and parish schools.

Employee – A USCCB role subject to audit defined as paid persons who are employed by and work directly for the diocese or parish/school.

High-Risk – Any event that presents an elevated risk (example: overnight retreats and trips, off-site events, activities with extended hours, and private meetings), to the well-being of a minor or the vulnerable.

Minor – A person not yet 18 years of age.

Minor as Helpers - A minor, a person not yet 18 years of age, who assists an adult with activities involving other minors; previously known as a peer leader. They have no supervisory authority and are not to be left alone with other minors.

Regular Contact – Recurring interactions with minors on behalf of the parish/school or any outside organization that follows a regular schedule. **Regular Contact** is the threshold for an adult to be required to receive diocesan safe environment training and screening.

Outside Group/Organization – Organizations that involve minors that are not ministries of the parish but use parish/school facilities.

Safe Environment – An environment that provides controlled and supervised interaction between adults and minors, minors and minors, adults and the vulnerable, for the purpose of preventing abuse or neglect as outlined by diocesan policy and the Charter.

Sexual Misconduct - Any sexual conduct which constitutes either unlawful activity, sexual harassment or activity contrary to Catholic moral teachings or canon law. Sexual misconduct includes the possession of child pornography.

Volunteer – A USCCB role subject to audit defined as **unpaid** persons who assist the diocese, parish, or school (example: catechists, coaches, or sacristans) who have regular contact with **minors**.

Volunteer Driver – A volunteer, at least 25 years of age or older, safe environment trained and screened, who has a current, non-probationary, Colorado driver’s license.

Vulnerable Adult/Person - Any person in a state of infirmity, physical or mental deficiency, or deprivation of personal liberty which, in fact, even occasionally, limits their ability to understand or to want or otherwise resist the offence (*Vos estis lux mundi*, Apostolic Letter, Art. 1b, expanded norms, coming into effect, Pope Francis, 30 April 2023).



Contact the Office of Child and Youth Protection with any questions.
719-866-6479