

DIocese OF WORCESTER

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Office of the Chancellor
Office of Communications

December 4, 2014

Dear Father,

At the Presbyteral Council Meeting held on December 1, I had the opportunity to address two issues related to our compliance with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.

First, I announced that we now have an online Safe Environment Training program launched for any employees and volunteers. I have enclosed a simple Q&A format document which details how it works. The online program essentially provides an opportunity for people to be trained at their convenience, while providing a level of “proof” in the form of a certificate of completion which satisfies both the letter and the spirit of the charter. Our Diocesan Review Committee highly recommends that “best practice” would be to make this training available to people as a refresher who attended training more than 5 years ago, although it is not mandated by our policy or by the charter. The training is paid for by the diocese and there is no cost to the participant or to the parish.

Secondly, I have enclosed a short Q&A about the topic of parish audits as part of the on-site diocesan audit which will occur in the summer of 2015 by the national auditors. Again, upon the advice of the Diocesan Review Committee, we want to make ourselves available to parishes to help assure each other that we are prepared to verify our compliance with the charter. I invite you to read that document for more information.

Although we may not need to address these issues until after the Christmas Season, thank you for your continued support and vigilance to these ongoing concerns in our parish and diocesan life in order to assure the safety of young people in our programs.

Please accept my sincere prayers for a joy-filled Christmas Season and best wishes for 2015.

Sincerely,

Ray Delisle

Parish Onsite Audits for Compliance with the National Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People

The reality of screening backgrounds, providing safe environment training and offering counseling services to those who have been abused as minors in the past will continue in the day-to-day administration of our parishes, schools and ministries for many years to come. As a diocese, we are committed to the safety and care of minors involved in our programs and ministries.

Why are we having local audits of our Child Safety practices?

The National Review Board has been encouraging dioceses to use local audits to verify their information. Every 3 years, the auditors which have been contracted by the USCCB have been asked to visit parishes as part of the on-site audit. The basis of the audit is to verify that systems are in place to support the Parish Self-Assessment Documents which are returned each year to the Chancellor's Office and are the basis for the annual national audit of our diocese.

Who will conduct the audit?

Members of the Diocesan Review Committee are volunteering their time to visit parishes and schools to act as auditors. Membership is listed online under the Healing and Prevention website and includes social workers, pediatricians, a former judge and a retired state police colonel. One volunteer would be accompanied typically by a diocesan staff person from the Committee.

What do we need to demonstrate?

Essentially the process falls into four categories:

1. How can you show that a person has had a background screening, been trained and has signed a Code of Conduct? We would pick a staff member, a volunteer catechist and perhaps another person as examples from your roster of names.
2. Show the team how the records are maintained: your own database, access to the ParishSoft database or a physical system?
3. Are you promoting the services of the Office of Healing and Prevention occasionally in your bulletin, on bulletin boards, the parish/school website or other public areas?
4. Demonstrate how do you determine the numbers used in the annual self-assessment reports. (Youth in programs, number of volunteers, number of staff, etc.)

When will I be contacted?

After the Christmas Season, parishes which have been selected will be contacted by letter and asked to coordinate a date and time through the Chancellor's Office. The appointments will be spread out over a few months to allow time for the committee members to volunteer their time.

How long will an audit take?

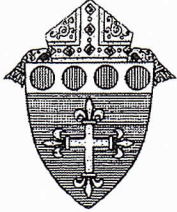
Assuming the pastor and appropriate staff are prepared, the entire process should take 45 minutes to one hour.

Is there any benefit to having an audit? Can my parish request one?

The audit process is not intended to be punitive. It is an opportunity to find out if your process is being effective and, perhaps, if there are ways to simplify or streamline your procedures while remaining compliant with both the letter and the spirit of the Charter.

Can my parish learn more without being part of an audit?

Following the series of audits being conducted in the winter/spring months, the committee will compile its findings and publish a document to all the parishes containing best practices. It is our hope that we can all learn from each other's efforts.



Online Safe Environment Training Diocese of Worcester

The Diocese of Worcester has contracted the services of nationally-recognized Dallas Child Advocacy Center to offer online safe environment training 24 x 7 to staff and volunteers. This has been customized for our diocese and is offered free of charge to all diocesan, parish and school employees and volunteers.

How do I access the training?

In order to access the training, we need to EMAIL AN INVITATION for the program to you. That invite is unique to you. When you click on the link it will automatically go to the program which will allow you to test your knowledge before and after watching the 30 minute video. If you need to stop the video at any point and return to it later, the system will remember where you left off. You can also watch it any number of times (or share it with family and friends) for up to one year.

How do I prove I have completed training?

At the conclusion of the training, you will again take the test that was given at the outset. If you pass the test, you can then print a certificate of completion. As an employee or volunteer you must submit a copy of the certificate to the parish or school Safe Environment Coordinator. That copy will be kept on file at the institution. The parish or school will notify the Office of Healing and Prevention when a certificate is received so that the diocesan database (ParishSoft Safe Environment Program) will be updated to include the date of completion of training.

How often must I be trained?

Training is only required once. HOWEVER, it would be best practice to refresh your knowledge. If you participated in training some years ago, we can send an email invite to you to do this training. Certainly staff and volunteers with direct responsibility for youth and young people should be encouraged to take this as a refresher every 3 to 5 years.

Who sends the invites?

During the first few months of implementation (beginning December 1, 2014) we will issue the invites from the Office of Healing and Prevention to monitor the program. The person needing to be trained should email cpeloquin@worcesterdiocese.org. Within a few months, we will be training Safe Environment Coordinators and Catholic School Administrators to act as 'facilitators' with the ability to invite their own staff and volunteers to take the training.

Will there still be on-site, group training?

The Diocese will continue to promote locations holding on-site training being offered by the locally trained facilitators for those individuals who do not feel comfortable with online training, or have no email access, or prefer a setting in which questions can be asked. Visit worcesterdiocese.org/healing.

How do we get access to local materials?

The Office of Healing and Prevention section of the diocesan website (worcesterdiocese.org) will continue to have fact sheets and materials related to reporting suspected abuse, especially if you must file a 51A to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as a mandated reporter.

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