

ARCHDIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES

SAFEGUARD THE CHILDREN PARISH COMMITTEE

HANDBOOK



(SAFEGUARD THE CHILDREN OFFICE, FEBRUARY, 2016)

SAFEGUARD THE CHILDREN PARISH COMMITTEE
HANDBOOK
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SAFEGUARD THE CHILDREN PARISH COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the *Safeguard the Children Parish Committee Handbook* is to provide guidance and resources to the Safeguard the Children Committee for understanding and fulfilling the objectives of the USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.

Section A & B: of the *Handbook* contains the “mandated” requirements of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles regarding the formation of Safeguard the Children Parish Committees and their required meetings and minutes.

Section C: contains contact information for the Office of Safeguard the Children.

Section D: gives directions on “How to Form a Safeguard the Children Committee” and insights into why a Committee needs to include both volunteers and staff.

Section E: contains the six areas of “Safeguard the Children Parish Committee Responsibilities and Practices” that help give the Committee direction and focus. At each meeting, the Committee should study these six areas carefully and set goals and priorities. Special attention must be paid to those items that are marked with a blue asterisk (*) and boxes, however, it is also important that the Committee pay attention to some additional “practices” that need to be included each year.

The areas include the need to:

1. **Monitor: Archdiocese of Los Angeles Policies & Procedures**
2. **Educate: Safe Environment Programs & Resources**
3. **Evaluate: Parish/School Site Safety**
4. **Review: Parish/School Policies, Programs & Events**
5. **Assist: USCCB Safe Environment Pre-Audit & Audit Process**
6. **Celebrate: Child Abuse Prevention Month**

Section F: provides pages to help your Committee to “Develop a Mission Statement and a Three Year Plan” so that it will be able to set clear priorities to help keep the children and young people at your site safe.

SAFEGUARD THE CHILDREN PARISH COMMITTEE
REQUIREMENTS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

A. REQUIRED SAFEGUARD THE CHILDREN PARISH COMMITTEE: EFFECTIVE 9/2002

It has been mandated since September of 2002 that every parish and/or school site in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles have an active Safeguard the Children Committee.

Each Safeguard the Children Parish Committee plays a crucial role in assuring that the safeguard initiatives found in the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* have been made a priority in every parish and school in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and that the Archdiocesan safe environment programs, policies and procedures are being implemented throughout the parish/school and its community.

B. REQUIRED SAFEGUARD THE CHILDREN PARISH COMMITTEE MEET TWICE A YEAR:
(JULY 1, 2009)

All Safeguard the Children Parish Committees are required to have a minimum of two formal meetings a year. However, it is highly recommended that the Committee meets quarterly using this *Handbook* as a guide for a three-year parish and/or school child abuse prevention and safety plan for the site.

C. SAFEGUARD THE CHILDREN PARISH COMMITTEE MINUTES:
(JULY 1, 2009)

Detailed minutes of the two required Safeguard the Children Parish Committee Meetings are to be recorded each year and signed by the Pastor, Administrator, Parish Life Director or Principal. Copies of the minutes must be submitted to the Archdiocese of Los Angeles with the annual USCCB Safe Environment Parish/School Audit Compliance Report.

D. OFFICE OF SAFEGUARD THE CHILDREN CONTACT INFORMATION:

Questions concerning Parish Safeguard the Children Committees should be addressed to Joan Vienna in the Office of Safeguard the Children, Archdiocese of Los Angeles at: (213) 637-7227 or jvienna@la-archdiocese.org.

E. HOW TO FORM A SAFEGUARD THE CHILDREN PARISH COMMITTEE:

“Each parish/school site is mandated to have a Safeguard the Children Parish Committee. This is not optional.” Parents and other parish and school volunteers should be invited to take the leadership in this effort. The Safeguard the Children Parish Committee includes representatives from both the parish and school working together to provide a safe environment for all God’s children.

COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

The Chairperson of the Safeguard the Children Parish Committee should be a volunteer who is a member of the parish/school community and not an employee of the parish. This is important for three reasons: 1) it brings a new perspective and energy from the parish community; 2) it does not overburden staff members; 3) it keeps everyone accountable.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Each committee should represent the different facets of the community. For instance, some parishes may have a school, some may not. Some may have a youth ministry program and others may not, etc. A well-rounded Safeguard the Children Parish Committee is critical to its success.

Volunteer members from the parish/school might include:

- **Parent representatives from the Catholic School, Religious Education program, Confirmation and Youth Ministry, etc.**
- **Representatives from various cultural groups in the parish**
- **A representative from the Parish Council**
- **Interested adults from the parish community**
- **Experts in the area such as a therapist, law enforcement, nurse, social worker, etc.**
- **VIRTUS® Facilitator(s)**

Volunteers bring an important, new perspective to the table when addressing child sexual abuse prevention and other safety issues. Many of them have children that they have entrusted to the parish and school and therefore look at things from a parent's point of view. They may have concerns or ideas that might not otherwise be voiced.

Staff members must include the:

- **Pastor/Administrator/Parish Life Director or Pastoral Associate**
- **Principal and/or Vice-Principal**
- **Director of Religious Education**
- **Youth Minister / Confirmation Coordinator**
- **Pre-School Coordinator**
- **Parish Council Member**
- **Finance Council Member or Parish Business Manager**

The staff of the parish/school are the ones in authority and therefore responsible for implementing the Archdiocesan policies and guidelines of the Safeguard the Children Program. Their cooperation and support are necessary in order to implement the ideas of the Committee, e.g.: education opportunities, site evaluations and new resource development.

F. “AT A GLANCE”

SAFEGUARD THE CHILDREN PARISH COMMITTEE

RESPONSIBILITIES AND PRACTICES



1. Monitor:
Archdiocesan
Policies & Procedures



2. Educate:
Safe Environment
Programs & Resources



3. Evaluate:
Parish/School Site
Safety



4. Review:
Parish/School
Policies/Programs/Events



5. Assist:
USCCB Safe Environment
Pre-Audit & Audit Process



6. Celebrate:
Child Abuse Prevention Month
(April)



SAFEGUARD THE CHILDREN PARISH COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES AND PRACTICES

5/3/2013

Following are a list of the requirements and suggested practices for Safeguard the Children Parish Committees. Each committee should review items below and add their own ideas. When the priorities for your site have been identified, a three-year plan should be developed that best meets the needs of protecting the children and young people in your parish, school and community.

Items marked with blue asterisks (*) and blue boxes are mandated requirements in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and need to be completed in order to comply with the USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.

1. MONITOR: ARCHDIOCESAN POLICIES & PROCEDURES

The Safeguard the Children Committee plays an important role in helping to ensure that the Archdiocese of Los Angeles policies and procedures are followed and accurate records are kept to verify that the Norms of the **Charter** have been met.

- 1) *Help plan, organize and advertise the fingerprinting dates and locations for all parish/school staff and volunteers who are alone with a child or young person or who have supervisory control over a child or young person. See Archdiocese of Los Angeles Fingerprinting Requirements.
- 2) *Assure that the Archdiocese of Los Angeles Guidelines for Adults Interacting with Minors at Parish/School Activities or Events are annually reviewed and signed by all adults who work or volunteer in any capacity with or around children. A copy of each person's signature must be on file at the parish/school. (*Revised April 24, 2006*)
- 3) *Each parish/school must ensure that all staff and volunteers understand the State of California laws regarding mandated reporting and Archdiocesan policies and procedures on **how to report child sexual abuse**. A current copy of all necessary hotlines and other critical phone numbers as well as current reporting forms should be readily accessible at the parish/school/Religious Education office.
- 4) Archdiocese of Los Angeles Boundary Guidelines for Junior High and High School Volunteers Working with Children or Youth must be signed by all junior high and high school student volunteers, including those who are already 18, who work or volunteer with children/youth in school or parish settings. They also must receive training on these boundary guidelines before undertaking their ministry in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.
- 5) It is also important to run a "Megan's Law" check on all staff and volunteers, especially those who work or volunteer with children or young people. Go to: <http://www.meganslaw.ca.gov> and scroll down to the bottom of the home page to "Enter Megan's Law Sex Offender Locator Site" and click to enter the information.

COMMITTEE REVIEW NOTES:

2. EDUCATE: SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMS & RESOURCES

Education is the key to change. One of the most important jobs of the Committee is to ensure that all adults who work with or around children have attended the VIRTUS® Adult Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Programs and that all children and young people have been educated in one of the Archdiocesan approved children's programs. The Committee should also help educate through the use of outside speakers and resources.

- 1) *Concurrent with beginning any activities in a parish/school, all parish/school volunteers, teachers, staff or other paid personnel, who work in any capacity with or around children, as well as vulnerable adults or special needs persons, will be required to participate in the VIRTUS® Protecting God's Children Awareness Session for Adults or an equivalent safe environment training program approved by the Archdiocese. The Committee should help plan ongoing trainings at the parish/school site to make sure everyone has met this requirement.

- 2) *VIRTUS® Re-Certification is required every four years. This may be done by taking the 1 ½ hr. VIRTUS® Keeping the Promise Alive program

- 3) *Each year, all children and young people in any Archdiocesan Catholic School, Religious Education, Confirmation programs or Youth Ministry groups must receive Safe Environment Training either through VIRTUS® Teaching Touching Safety or Good-Touch/Bad-Touch® child abuse prevention programs for children and young people. All trainings need to be recorded on VIRTUS® Online.

- 4) Contact your local police department for a speaker/contact person in their office who handles child abuse and neglect cases. The police can inform the Committee on how these cases are handled at the local level and explain how reports are filed and the follow-up procedures.

- 5) Sponsor special community speakers to address the issue of child sexual abuse, internet safety, etc. (i.e.: Tracy Webb at the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office - (213) 485-2352).

- 6) The Committee must be familiar with the Archdiocesan Administrative Handbook, which contains all the Safe Environment policies, procedures, training, form, etc.

Chapter 9: Safe Environment / <http://handbook.la-archdiocese.org/chapter-9>

COMMITTEE REVIEW NOTES:

3. EVALUATE: PARISH/SCHOOL SITE SAFETY

The following items should be evaluated from the perspective of child and youth safety issues. Although Safeguard the Children focuses on child abuse prevention, it is also about the safety of our children at all times!

- 1) Note secluded rooms or areas in buildings or on the grounds and secure them.
- 2) Install windows in the doors of rooms where adults and minors interact such as classrooms, confessionals, etc., thus ensuring a clear view at all times. In rooms where this installation is not possible, be sure that doors are open at all times or that the adult and minor are in clear view.
- 3) Check to make sure all rooms used for children's classes/activities provide a safe environment by checking the areas for dangerous equipment, broken chairs/tables, safe stair access, trash and storage usage, etc.
- 4) Make signs for "children only" bathrooms, play areas, etc. Make sure they are visible and enforce them! Make appropriate signs with safety rules (e.g.: "No Children allowed on stage without adult supervision," "No children in teacher/staff area," etc.)
- 5) Check fencing and security on the property to ensure strangers are kept out and children are kept in.
- 6) Review check-in and check-out procedures for all children and young people involved in the Catholic School, Religious Education and Confirmation programs as well as the Youth Ministry Groups. Visits to these programs should be issued a "Visitors" badge.
- 7) Evaluate where safety "conveyance cameras" are needed and compile estimates to present to the Finance Committee.
- 8) Make a list of where all keys are and who has access to them. Recall keys annually and change locks if necessary.
- 9) If you are planning on building a new parish hall, school, etc., be sure members of the Safeguard the Children Committee are included on the planning team.
- 10) Review security of all parish/school computers to make sure that proper password and safeguards such as "firewalls" are install and being used at all times.
- 11) Review parish/school websites and insure that "parental permission form" have been obtained for pictures taken at other than public events.

COMMITTEE REVIEW NOTES:

4. REVIEW: PARISH/SCHOOL POLICIES, PROGRAMS & EVENTS

Each parish/school site has many programs and events which take place each year. Many of these are open to the community at large. It is important to review these on a yearly basis and evaluate any safety issues which may arise and establish clear safe environment monitoring policies and procedures for addressing them.

- 1) ***Know and monitor all programs on your parish/school site and review them on a regular basis** (i.e.: Do you know the leaders of all the programs in your parish that operate when children are present?). Develop a “Parish Program/Ministry Review Sheet.”
- 2) ***Review procedures for monitoring visitors who come to the site and establish sign-in procedures and staff and visitor badges.**
- 3) ***Review outside organizations that use the parish (i.e.: AA, Rotary Club, Boy Scouts, etc.). Do you monitor outside groups that rent your parish to give lessons to children or young people?**
- 4) ***Have a review committee for any new ministries or activities beginning in the parish.**
- 5) ***Evaluate and monitor any parish/school activities such as fiestas, carnivals, Christmas gatherings, etc., to insure that they provide a Safe Environment for children and young people who attend.**
- 6) ***Review parking lot procedures and traffic patterns to ensure safe drop-off and pick-up of children and youth. Be sure to monitor the “Youth Mass” and activities as well; even though we consider them young adults, they are still minors.**

COMMITTEE REVIEW NOTES:

5. **ASSIST: ANNUAL USCCB SAFE ENVIRONMENT PRE-AUDIT & AUDIT PROCESS**

The Safeguard the Children Chairperson and his/her Committee plays an important part in the USCCB Safe Environment Audit Process.

- 1) *The Chairperson and Committee may be asked to assist the pastor in completing the annual “USCCB Safe Environment Audit Report” and returning it to the Archdiocese of Los Angeles by the deadline.
- 2) *The Chairperson also provides a minimum of two sets of Safeguard the Children Parish Committee Meeting Minutes to be included with the completed Report.
- 3) The Chairperson and Committee review the location of all parish/school safe environment compliance records to help insure that they are clearly filed and easily accessible. (i.e.: VIRTUS® “Protecting God’s Children” Certificates, Signature Sheets of Guidelines for Adults Working and Volunteering with Minors, Fingerprinting Records verified on VPIN, Children’s Training recorded on VIRTUS® Online, Parent Opt-Out Forms, etc.).
- 4) The Chairperson and Committee are also asked to participate in any “onsite” “Safe Environment Pre-Audit” and USCCB audits. (If Chairperson is a volunteer and cannot participate because of work, this requirement is waived. All parish/school staff who are members of Committee must attend.)

COMMITTEE REVIEW NOTES:

6. CELEBRATE: CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH (APRIL)

Celebrating what we as members of the Catholic Church are doing to help stop child sexual abuse is an important role of the Committee. April is a great month to spread the word that “together we are making a difference” not only in our parishes/schools but also to the surrounding community.

- 1) *Plan to celebrate Child Abuse Prevention Month in April at your parish. (USCCB Resource Packets are distributed to all parishes and Catholic Schools from the Office of Safeguard the Children at the beginning of March.) For more information email: jvienna@la-archdiocese.org
- 2) *Distribute child abuse safety resources to the parish/school community such as: VIRTUS® Online bulletin articles, brochures from your local police/sheriff department, etc. Post “USCCB Safe Environment” posters in prominent places.
- 3) *Feature a regular **“Did You Know?”** section in your weekly bulletin and/or parish website. List your Safeguard the Children Committee Chair and include the Committee’s mission, goals and activities. Include easy-to-use, approved bulletin announcements that can be found at: <http://www.la-archdiocese.org/org/protecting/>
- 4) *Order and display the current year’s **“Working Together to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse”** brochures in the vestibule of the parish and in parish office, school and Religious Education Office. Also, distribute the brochures during Child Abuse Prevention month to all parents of school and religious education children.
- 5) Begin a **“Safeguard the Children Neighborhood Watch”** campaign in your parish community. (Ideas for the campaign along with sample Safeguard the Children window plaques will be available for Child Abuse Prevention Month Packet distributed annually.)
- 6) **Remember “Keep Kids Safe” can be celebrated around the year.** Many parishes and schools are contacting the Office of Safeguard the Children for resources for booths and displays that they now have as a part of parish and school events such as:
 - a. Ministry Fairs
 - b. Carnivals and Fiestas
 - c. Back-to-School Nights

Some of the items that are offered free include:

“Working Together to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse” brochures, parent handouts and VIRTUS® Articles, Keep Kids Safe Stickers, etc. that can be used at these and other events.

COMMITTEE REVIEW NOTES:

**F. DEVELOPING A MISSION STATEMENT AND THREE YEAR PLAN FOR YOUR
SAFEGUARD THE CHILDREN PARISH COMMITTEE**

It is critical that every Safeguard the Children Parish Committee have its' own Mission Statement and develop a Three-Year Plan that will enable the Committee to have clear goals for fulfilling the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and insuring a safe environment for the children and youth on the parish/school site.

OUR SAFEGUARD THE CHILDREN PARISH COMMITTEE MISSION STATEMENT:

YEAR ONE:

***ARCHDIOCESAN REQUIREMENTS THAT NEED TO BE FULFILLED:**

SUGGESTED PRACTICES OUR COMMITTEE WANTS TO ACCOMPLISH:

ADDITIONAL IDEAS & GOALS FOR THE YEAR:

YEAR TWO:

***REQUIREMENTS THAT NEED TO BE FULFILLED:**

SUGGESTED PRACTICES TO BE ACCOMPLISHED:

ADDITIONAL IDEAS AND GOALS FOR THE YEAR:

YEAR THREE:

***REQUIREMENTS THAT NEED TO BE FULFILLED:**

SUGGESTED PRACTICES TO BE ACCOMPLISHED:

ADDITIONAL IDEAS AND GOALS FOR THE YEAR:

