



DIOCESE OF SAN BERNARDINO

SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY
FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN



Diocese of San Bernardino
Safe Environment Policy for the Protection of Children
Code of Pastoral Conduct

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DIOCESE OF SAN BERNARDINO



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

August 16, 2021

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Our local Church continues to confront the issue of clergy sexual abuse of minors. We have done much over the past two decades to address this terrible sin, putting strong structures and policies in place to prevent it. We continue to acknowledge our past failures to protect children and we work toward healing and reconciliation of victims of abuse in our Diocese.

Yet, we also must deal with the pain of new revelations in the news detailing allegations of abuse and misconduct by trusted leaders in the Church. This is a reminder that we are still facing this evil and, thus, the need for us to be vigilant in our efforts to protect children and to continue to educate all ministers of our Church about this issue. The work of protecting our children belongs to the entire Body of Christ!

This year I have begun my Episcopacy as the Third Bishop of San Bernardino. Let me be very clear with you that I condemn, in the strongest possible terms, the sexual abuse and/or harassment of a man, woman or child in every case. It goes against everything that God intended when he created every human person with an inherent dignity. As children of God, we are called to treat all our brothers and sisters with the same love and respect with which we would be treated. (CCC, no 1964). To sexually assault or harass another person is to diminish their human dignity and worth.

When I arrived in the Diocese of San Bernardino, I was so heartened to see all that is being done in this local Church to address the issue of clergy sexual abuse of minors. We have established an entire ministry, the Office of Child and Youth Protection, to oversee education and enforcement of our Safe Environment policies; and we have a Victims' Assistance Coordinator who provides pastoral and emotional support to victims of abuse in the name of the Church. Because of these things, and the ongoing commitment of our clergy and lay ministers, our parishes and Catholic schools are some of the safest places for children and youth that you will find.

We've also taken some very important steps in recent years to acknowledge publicly past incidents of abuse in our Diocese and work toward reconciliation with victims of abuse. In 2018, the Diocese published a list of all priests credibly accused of sexual abuse of a minor over our 40-year history. We continue to update that list on the diocesan website when we become aware of any new credible allegations. In 2019, we were one of six dioceses in California to participate in the Independent Compensation Program (ICP for Victim-Survivors of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests, an independent, voluntary program that has allowed victims to receive financial compensation as a reparation for the abuse they experienced.

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I extend my blessings and my deep appreciation to all who have shared in the work of our commitment to protect children. We are becoming light in a place that once covered us in darkness.

Part of our responsibility in this ministry is to create an atmosphere of encouragement for those who have been abused to come forward and report it. As the leader of this local Church, I want to strongly encourage anyone who has experienced the trauma of sexual abuse or harassment to please report it to the proper authorities. Child abuse or harassment must be immediately reported. Child abuse must be reported to police or county child protective services. Harassment must be reported to your employer or pastor – depending on the nature and setting. You may visit the Office of Child and Youth Protection website at www.docyp.org to get more detailed information on how to report abuse.

I know that this remains a painful issue for many, bringing feelings of shame, anger, and denial. Please know that as your Bishop, I continue to hold you in prayer and our Church walks with you in your pain and doubt. We have been humbled by this experience and we will use this humility to guide us on the path of reconciliation that God lays before us. We are imperfect but we carry forth in hope. We allow God to renew in us the holiness that we seek but cannot find on our own.

Let us all continue to pray for the healing of all victims of abuse and let us support each other in our steadfast commitment to protect our precious young ones from harm through the Ministry of Child and Youth Protection.

In Christ's Love,



Most Reverend Alberto Rojas
Diocese of San Bernardino

Safe Environment Policy for the Protection of Children

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To contact the Office of Child and Youth Protection:

Call: (909) 475-5125

E-mail: childandyouthprotection@sbdiocese.org

Office of Child and Youth Protection
1201 East Highland Avenue
San Bernardino CA 92404

I. Introduction *“Tend the flock that God has entrusted to you; watch over it....
Be examples that the whole flock can follow....” 1 Peter 5:2-3*

Our belief in the dignity of all human beings demands that we who are called to minister in the Diocese of San Bernardino, as members of the Body of Christ, must commit to provide a safe environment for all. Considering our Christian values, ethical and Catholic moral teachings, we do not condone nor tolerate abuse, harassment, or misconduct of any kind.

Today, the mission of the Church demands the responsibility to provide safe environments and safe relationships within its ministries and members. When the fundamental right of human dignity is ignored, abuse may occur. Through the implementation of effective safeguards, the risk of such abuse can be prevented within our parishes, schools, and other diocesan organizations. Therefore, every person hired to work or acknowledged as a volunteer in the Diocese of San Bernardino must abide by all established safe environment policies and protocols.

II. Safe Environment Training

A. Groups Required to Complete Diocesan Safe Environment Training

1. Clergy, candidates for ordination, men and women religious, employees, private contractors and volunteers who in their capacity supervise minors or minister in programs relating to minors, or have regular contact with minors; and parents volunteering with minors other than their children are required to complete diocesan safe environment training prior to beginning service in the Diocese of San Bernardino.
 - Safe environment training is highly recommended for all parents, in general, volunteer ministry leaders, volunteers working with dependent adults, and lay ministers of Holy Communion who minister to the sick and homebound.
 - A parish or school may require safe environment training for additional volunteer roles or ministries to meet their specific or unique safe environment needs.
2. Safe Environment Facilitators assigned to facilitate in-person or videoconference safe environment training sessions.
3. Teen volunteers (14-17 years of age) who assist in programs for minors in a leadership or supporting capacity.
 - A minor must never be given the responsibility of supervising other minors or any other adult responsibilities.
4. Minors in ongoing parish and school programs such as Catholic school and religious education students, youth ministry participants, altar servers, choir members, Boys and Girls Scouts, and all other ongoing programs for minors.

B. Training Curriculum

1. Training for Adults
 - The CMG Connect “*Safe Haven: It’s Up to You*” training videos
 - Diocese of San Bernardino Safe Environment Policy for the Protection of Children
 - Diocese of San Bernardino Code of Pastoral Conduct
 - State of California Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Law
 - As deemed necessary or required for certain roles and/or ministries, training concerning the safety and well-being of dependent adults must be provided for employees and volunteers tending to the sick and homebound, the elderly, adults with disabilities and special needs.
 - Every adult required to comply with diocesan safe environment training must sign an Affidavit of Safe Environment Compliance which declares a full understanding of diocesan policies and suspected child abuse reporting procedures.
 - Safe environment training must be completed prior to beginning service in the Diocese of San Bernardino and renewed every three years.

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2. Training for Safe Environment Facilitators
 - Diocesan safe environment training
 - Safe Environment Facilitator Training
 - Safe Environment Facilitators are assigned by the parish Pastor, Priest Administrator or School Principal.
 - Safe Environment Facilitators are trained and certified by the Office of Child and Youth Protection.
3. Training for minors enrolled or active in ongoing parish or school ministries.
 - The Circle of Grace (Pre-K and K-12) safety training is required annually.
4. Training for Teen Volunteers with Minors (ages 14-17)
 - The Circle of Grace safety training (9-12) is required annually.
 - The Safe Ministries Teen Volunteer Training is required annually.

C. Delivery methods

1. For Adults
 - Online safe environment training modules through personal CMG Connect accounts.
 - In-person safe environment training sessions conducted in the Parish, School, or Diocesan Pastoral Center
 - Live safe environment training through video-conference platforms
 - Every adult required to comply with diocesan safe environment training must have a CMG Connect account.
2. For Minors
 - Circle of Grace, in-person, lesson
 - The Circle of Grace curriculum lesson plans should be distributed by parish and school ministry leadership to the lesson leaders.
3. For Teens Volunteering with Minors (14-17)
 - Circle of Grace, in-person, lesson
 - “Safe environment Teen Volunteer Training” through a CMG Connect account.
 - Teen volunteers with minors required to complete diocesan safe environment training must have a CMG Connect account.

III. Background checks

A. Groups required to complete a background check for the Diocese of San Bernardino

1. Clergy, candidates for ordination, men and women religious, employees, private contractors and volunteers who in their capacity supervise minors or minister in programs relating to minors, or have regular contact with minors, and parents volunteering with minors other than their children are required to complete a background check prior to beginning service in the Diocese of San Bernardino.
2. A parish or school may require background checks for additional roles or ministries to meet their specific or unique safe environment needs.

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3. Background checks are highly recommended for lay ministry leaders, volunteers working with vulnerable adults, lay ministers of Holy Communion who minister to the sick and homebound.
4. Background checks for the Diocese of San Bernardino are a one-time procedure.

B. Background Check Method

1. Live scan fingerprinting through the California Department of Justice and the FBI.
 - Parishes and schools must provide the appropriate diocesan Live Scan Request Form and background check service provider information to those in need of completing a background check.
 - Parishes and schools are to determine how the cost of background checks for their employees and volunteers will be covered.
 - Every person required to complete a background check must have satisfactory background check results on file with the Diocese of San Bernardino.
 - The Office of Human Resources documents and verifies all background check information.

IV. Safe Environment Compliance

A. Accountability

1. In the parish, the Pastor or Priest Administrator is responsible for the required diocesan safe environment training of parish staff and volunteers.
2. In Catholic Schools, the Principal is responsible for the diocesan safe environment training at the school site.
3. The parish Pastor, Priest Administrator or school Principal may name a Safe Environment Coordinator to supervise and coordinate the implementation of diocesan safe environment policies in the parish and/or school.
4. It is highly recommended that the Pastor, Priest Administrator or Principal assemble a safe environment parish committee to assist and advice in matters relating to safe environment policies and implementation at the parish or school.

B. Safe Environment Documentation

1. Each Parish, School, and Diocesan Office is responsible for the documentation of the safe environment training and background checks of its staff, volunteers, and minors, as required.
 - At the parish, the Pastor or Priest Administrator is responsible for verifying safe environment training and background check documentation occurs.
 - At the catholic school, the principal is responsible for verifying safe environment training and background check documentation occurs.
 - The parish Pastor, Priest Administrator or Principal may name CMG Connect “Site Administrators” to supervise and coordinate the documentation of diocesan safe environment compliance at the parish and school.
 - The parish Pastor, Priest Administrator or School Principal must request the Office of Child and Youth Protection to assign parish or school CMG Connect “Site Administrator” rights to individuals they deem necessary to maintain effective safe environment documentation.

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2. The **Office of Priests Personnel** will verify and document the safe environment training and background check compliance of bishops and priests.
3. The **Office of Permanent Deacons** will verify and document the safe environment training and background checks for all permanent deacons and diaconate candidates.
4. The **Office of Child and Youth Protection** annually requests safe environment training and background check compliance information from parishes, schools, diocesan offices, and other diocesan entities.

V. Supervision of Minors

A. Two Adult Rule

All activities or events with minors require supervision by at least two adults that are safe environment compliant with a:

- Satisfactory Background Check on file with the Diocese of San Bernardino
- Certified diocesan Safe Environment training
- Signed Affidavit of Safe Environment Compliance

B. Windows and Open Doors

Activities with minors must be visible through a window or an open door. This ensures a safe environment on our premises for both minors and adults. The Diocese of San Bernardino also requires all classrooms, meeting rooms, offices, or counseling areas are to have:

- A door with a window that allows anyone outside the room to observe inside the room without having to open the door.
- The door will remain open to any room where there is not a window that will allow observation.
 - These rooms will be posted with a sign that mandates the doors are to be left open.
- When the door cannot be left open due to weather conditions or fire code requirements, then the only option is to have two background cleared and trained supervisors present in the room.

C. Planned Supervision

All elements of any program or outing offered through the Diocese of San Bernardino must be carefully reviewed to ensure children are supervised **before, during, and after the event**, until all children are returned to their parents/guardians or have left the parish or school premises. Participants who are below the age of eighteen must have written permission from a parent or legal guardian to leave the premises before they return to their parent's or guardian's supervision.

- **A written supervision plan must be kept on file and updated annually.** This supervision must follow the two-adult rule as stated above. This supervision plan is a required part of the Parish Plan described in Part VI of this document.
- Activities organized for participants who are minors (under 18) must be limited to minors only and not mixed with young adult participants. Caution needs to be taken when events include varying ages, i.e., activities for middle-school-age children should be kept separate from high school teens, high school teens separate from young adults, etc.
- All parents or guardians must sign their children into and out of any parish-sponsored activities or areas of supervision, including Catholic School parents and parents whose children participate in before or after school care programs.
- **An emergency card** completed by the child's parent or legal guardian must be on file for all. The emergency card must indicate any individual authorized to pick up each child. **Children will be released only to those authorized on the emergency card.**

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- For minors who are responsible for their own transportation (driving or walking), a signed letter of permission by the parent must be on file.

IT IS THE DIOCESAN POLICY THAT ALL MINORS ARE SUPERVISED IN A PLANNED AND ORGANIZED MANNER, BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER ANY ACTIVITY OR EVENT.

D. Overnight Rule

All adults who stay overnight with minors must have a completed satisfactory background check on file and have completed all required Safe Environment training. Adults supervising minors during an overnight stay must be at least 25 years of age.

- In the presence of both male and female minors, there must be both genders represented as supervisors.
- Sleeping arrangements for minors must be planned accordingly so that minors are never left unsupervised.
- Each minor must have an emergency card on file.

E. Child Care Policy for:

For events where childcare is offered, parents or guardians must sign their children into and out of the childcare area of supervision. **An emergency card** must be completed by the child's parent or legal guardian and must be on file to indicate the individuals authorized to pick up each child.

Children will be released only to those authorized to pick them up, on the emergency card.

Childcare during any activity must follow the two-adult rule. If five minutes before the activity begins the required two adults are not present for childcare, an announcement must be made stating that another adult is needed immediately, or the parents must pick up their children. The childcare must be cancelled.

The Diocesan Safe Environment Policy requires that when any organization gathers and minors are present, **they MUST be supervised in an appropriate area and the Diocesan policy for childcare be followed.** An example might be when a prayer group gathers, where minors who come with their parent must be supervised in an appropriate area by adults who have:

- Completed a satisfactory background check and on file with the Diocese.
- Completed the required Diocesan Safe Environment training.

F. Parental Permission

1. Volunteers and staff must have written parental permission to be alone with a minor such as:
 - To transport by car
 - To advise (if a minor does not want the parent to know about counseling, in accordance with California Law, another adult must be present or within sight).
2. Permission from a parent or guardian can be written or by phone in the event of an emergency. Phone permission requires that two people listen to the permission given over the phone. The phone conversation will be transcribed, and the parent's or guardian's name placed on the phone permission. The two people who listened to the phone permission will also sign the transcription. The parent or guardian is to be informed that the conversation will be put in writing. A copy of the written and signed conversation is to go with the chaperone of that child and a copy will remain at the site.
3. So that proper supervision can be arranged, volunteers and staff must notify their supervisor in advance if they will be alone with a minor or take a minor off the premises of the parish or school grounds.

G. Minors Volunteering in the Parish

Minors who are engaged in a volunteer activity for the Parish or School, or who are fulfilling community service, must be visible when performing these tasks. Minors are to be under the visual supervision of an adult and work only when at least two adults are on the property. Minor volunteers will be told the location of their supervisors and how to contact them. Supervisors on the premises will be informed that minor volunteers are working and that they (the supervisors) should “check in” with the minors hourly. If the minor volunteer will be working with younger minor children, and there is the possibility that the minor volunteer may be alone with a younger child - for any reason– the minor volunteer must successfully complete the appropriate Safe Environment Policy training as other volunteers who work regularly with children do.

H. Safeguards if Advice is Given

Private counseling and pastoral care of a minor can present a dilemma. Sometimes advice can be misconstrued. Special care must be taken to balance confidentiality and protection for both minors and adults. Those collaborating with minors must never overstep their bounds or areas of competency. All people ministering in the Diocese are obliged to abide by the Diocese of San Bernardino policies for Safe Environment for the Protection of Children and Young People **AND** Code of Pastoral Conduct. The meeting site must be in a room allowing at least visual access for non-participants. The meeting must be scheduled at a time when it is likely that others will be on the premises. Private meetings at homes or other non-approved locations are expressly forbidden when it is known that there are no other adults present.

VI. Safe Environment Plan

Each parish is responsible to design a Safe Environment Plan for their parish. If a school is part of the parish, it must be included in the parish’s safe environment plan. Diocesan and private schools not affiliated with a parish must create their own safe environment plan. The safe environment plan must incorporate all aspects of the Safe Environment Policy for the Protection of Children and Young People and Code of Pastoral Conduct of the Diocese of San Bernardino. The safe environment plan must also include:

- A description of additional roles or ministries required to complete the diocesan safe environment training
- A description of additional roles or ministries required to complete diocesan required background checks
- A description of specific and local supervision guidelines and protocols for activities with minors
- A description of local safe environment documentation procedures
- Guidelines, protocols, and contact information for reporting suspected child abuse
- Specification of pulpit and bulletin announcements on safe environment practices

The safe environment parish plan must be submitted to the Diocesan Office of Child and Youth Protection, kept on file at the parish or school, and be made accessible to parish and school employees, volunteers, and parishioners. The safe environment plan must be evaluated annually and revised as needed.

VII. Reporting Safe Environment Violations and Suspected Child Abuse

Every person employed or accepted as a volunteer in the Diocese of San Bernardino is equally accountable for implementing Diocesan safe environment policies and procedures. To maintain the integrity of this Safe Environment Policy for the Protection of Children, it is necessary to report violations of this policy, the Code of Pastoral Conduct, other diocesan policies or any applicable laws of the State of California.

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1. The California Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Law requires various categories of employees and clergy to file a report for suspected child abuse to law enforcement or Child Protective Services. These categories may be found in CA publication 132 (English) and 129 (Spanish). Copies of this publication are available in the Office of Child and Youth Protection or may also be found on the office website at www.docyp.org.
2. The Diocese of San Bernardino Safe Environment Policy for the Protection of Children requires all employees and volunteers to report suspected child abuse, regardless of the State's mandated reporting laws. California law calls this discretionary reporting.
3. If there is suspected abuse of a minor, immediately report to the local law enforcement agency where the suspected abuse is believed to have occurred and to Riverside or San Bernardino County Child Protective Services, depending on where the child lives. Use the state approved Suspected Child Abuse Report (SCAR) form. This form is available from the Office of Child and Youth Protection website at www.docyp.org.

To report suspected child abuse in Riverside County, call 1-800-442-4918.

To report suspected child abuse in San Bernardino County call, 800-827-8724.

If the suspected abuse happened in a diocesan entity, also report to:

- Your immediate supervisor.
- If your immediate supervisor is suspected of child abuse, report to the next person up in the line of authority.
- If a member of the clergy is suspected of child abuse, report to the **Diocesan Vicar General's Diocesan Hotline at 1-888-206-9090.**
- If an employee is suspected of child abuse, report to the **Director of Human Resources at (909) 475-5172.**
- If a Catholic school administrator, teacher, employee or volunteer is suspected of child abuse, report to the **Superintendent of Catholic Schools at (909) 475-5437.**
- Any person can call the **Victim's Assistance Coordinator on (909) 855-2296.**
- Abuse reporting information should be visibly available throughout diocesan parishes, schools, and all other entities.

References

Good Shepherd Catholic Church Safe Environment Policy, Archdiocese of St. Louis, Missouri 1995.

San Bernardino Diocesan Policy Manual Office of Priest Personnel Section 700.1, Para .26
Residence – Lay Persons Residing in Rectories.

San Bernardino Diocesan Policy in Cases of Misconduct; Sexual Abuse by Clergy

Prayer for Abuse Victims

Creator God please hear your people as together we pray:

God of endless love, ever caring, ever strong,
always present, always just,
You gave your only Son
to save us by the blood of his cross.

Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace,
join to your own suffering
the pain of all who have been hurt in body, mind, and spirit
by those who betrayed the trust placed in them.

Hear our cries as we agonize over the harm done
to our brothers and sisters.
Breathe wisdom into our prayers, soothe restless hearts with hope
& steady shaken spirits with faith.
Show us the way to justice and wholeness,
enlightened by truth and enfolded in your mercy.

Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts,
heal your people's wounds and transform our brokenness.
Grant us courage and wisdom, humility and grace,
so that we may act with justice and find peace in you.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.