

## DIOCESE OF FORT WAYNE – SOUTH BEND

### Safe Environment Program

## Safe Environment Education Program for Children and Young People

The Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend created a safe environment educational program for all children enrolled in Catholic schools and parish religious education programs. The diocese established this important program to fulfill part of the mandate of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. Article 12 of the *Charter* reads, “Dioceses ...are to maintain “safe environment” programs...to provide education and training for children, youth, parents, ministers, educators, volunteers and others about ways to make and maintain a safe environment for children and young people.” Children receive this educational program **every year**. Repetition is a good thing. It helps the children remember what is safe and what is not. The presenter also identifies herself/himself as a safe, kind person with whom they can share their needs whenever necessary.

**Permission forms** that are sent to parents asking parental permission for their children to attend the safe environment teaching are *not required or recommended* by the diocese. This educational material is “important personal safety information that every child should have.” This is not sex education. Our program asks that the parish/school give parents notice that the safe environment teaching will take place with sufficient time for them to find out more about it if desired. Sufficient time would be at least one week, but may be longer. Also, the parish/school should let the parents know that the material is available for their review. One example would be for the parish/school to give this information in the handbook or manual provided to parents at the beginning of the year. Other ways to provide it would be in a regular newsletter or a special note sent home.

**Opt outs** are those children who do not attend the teaching because their parents do not want them to do so. The parents must sign a **PARENT REFUSAL FORM** each year. The school/parish is to keep the forms on file. Provide copies of the teaching material to the parents and request that they do the instruction at home.

**Absent Students** should attend a make-up session or take the education material home with them. A note should accompany the child asking the parents to review the material with their child.

### **Children in Preschool – Grade 6**

The *Good Boundaries Script*, commonly known as the *Script*, is the required education material for children in preschool to grade 6. There are two different *Scripts*, one for preschool - grade 3 and a second for grades 4 - 6. Each *Script* is written in two formats – a written text and an outline. Both formats contain the same information. The instructor should use whichever format she/he prefers. Available at: <http://www.diocesefwsb.org/safe-environment/safe-environment-education/>

Two *optional* resources are also at the website address given above. They are coloring pages that reinforce one important aspect in the education material. The first coloring page, *children in swimsuits*,

is meant for younger children, for example, preschool – grade 1. The second coloring page, *children's faces*, is for older children, perhaps grade 2 or above.

The school/parish can choose whomever it feels is the best instructor(s) for the education sessions. Some obvious choices are: the classroom teacher, catechist, school counselor, DRE, or principal. Others could be a volunteer with a counseling, social work or similar background. A simple "How to Teach Script" outline is available at the address above for first time presenters.

The school/parish should complete all the education sessions by November 30<sup>th</sup> of each year.

The principal or DRE will complete **SAFE ENVIRONMENT FORM 3** after the teaching has taken place. The form is available on the safe environment website and it is sent to the Safe Environment Coordinator for the diocese. <http://www.diocesefwsb.org/safe-environment/forms-and-background-checks/>

### **Young People in Grades 7 & 8**

The paperback book, *Boundaries: A Guide for Teens* (Boys Town Press), is the educational material for young people in grades 7 & 8. Chapters 1-3 are presented to grade 7 students and chapters 4-7 are presented to grade 8 students. Ordering information for the books available at: <http://www.diocesefwsb.org/safe-environment/safe-environment-education/>

Several *optional* resources are available from the Safe Environment Coordinator. These resources may be helpful in the presentation of the material to grades 7-8. These include:

- PowerPoint slides from original workshop (February 2005)
- *Getting Started* – Resource for teachers on how to present material
- *Golden Rule Activity* – Could be used with grade 6 also.
- *Discovering God's Purpose for Relationships* (5 sessions with teacher outlines, 35 pages)
- *Ten Commandments/Life Skills Matrix*
- *Ten Commandments Sessions* (3 sessions with teacher outlines, 25 pages)

The school/parish should complete all the education sessions by December 15<sup>th</sup> of each year.

The principal or DRE will complete **SAFE ENVIRONMENT FORM 3** after the teaching has taken place. The form is available on the safe environment website and returned to the Safe Environment Coordinator for the diocese. <http://www.diocesefwsb.org/safe-environment/forms-and-background-checks/>