

Requirements of the Safe Environment Program

All clerics, religious, employees, and volunteers who work with or has regular access to children during church or catholic school events must be cleared by the Amarillo Diocese Safe Environment Office.

These procedures will be followed:

- Will fill out thoroughly the “Safe Environment Questionnaire” and sign the “Declaration” of understanding as to the Safe Environment Policy of the Diocese of Amarillo.
- The Praesidium “Called to Protect” is the Diocesan training program and everyone described above must attend in person.
- Additional Safe Environment Training may be required as training programs are implemented in the Diocese.
- A Criminal Background check will be conducted.

All Diocesan programs that involve children or minors, to include but not limited to Catholic Schools, Parish Faith Formation Classes, Youth Activities, etc. will be required to participate in the “Right Relationship” programs.

These programs are educational programs that teach children how to protect themselves from being sexually abused. Age appropriate programs have been implemented throughout the diocese..

“Right Relationships” was developed by the Arch-Diocese of Salt Lake City.



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Reporting Procedures

Individuals who are aware of or suspicious of possible abuse or sexual misconduct of minors (children and youth under 18 years of age) must report that information to the:

**Texas Department of Family
and Protective Services
1-800-252-5400
In an emergency call 911**

It is the policy of the Diocese of Amarillo not only to fulfill the reporting law but to cooperate fully with the investigating civil authorities.

Direct concerns, questions, or to report sexual abuse to:

Belinda G. Taylor
Victim Assistance Coordinator
806-373-5232

Or write to them to the:
Victim Assistance Coordinator
4200 Ridgcrest Drive Suite B-8
Amarillo, TX 79109

Or
Rev. John Valdez
Vicar or Clergy
Diocese of Amarillo
806-358-2461 Monday-Friday
806-353-1016 Nights & Weekends

A report to the Diocese does not relieve the individual from reporting abuse as required by Texas State Law.



05/2014

Catholic Diocese of Amarillo

Safe Environment Program



Mission Statement

Everyone, especially our children, have the right to be safe, secure, and protected from harm, whether sexually, physically, spiritually and/or emotionally, in any and all environments – home, school, neighborhood, community, and most particularly, in our religious institutions.

The Diocese of Amarillo makes this pamphlet available to parents, teachers, volunteers, religious, clergy and parishioners as part of our effort to ensure the full and moral integrity of all parish and school ministries.

**Statement from the
Most Reverend Patrick J. Zurek,
Bishop of Amarillo**

Dear Friends in Christ,

As the Bishop of the Diocese of Amarillo, I am committed to “Protect the vulnerable and guard the integrity of ministerial relationships... Sexual misconduct by clergy, church personnel, church leaders and volunteers is contrary to the Christian morals, doctrine, and canon law. It is never acceptable!”

The Diocese of Amarillo will comply fully, with the updated requirements as promulgated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops as per the “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People”.

Our mission is to create a safe environment for all minors, and anyone, who is entrusted to our Church by:

- Thoroughly screening church personnel and supervising all church ministers, employees and volunteers who work with minors as part of their ministry.
- Providing appropriate Safe Environment Training in preventing and recognizing child sexual, physical, and/or psychological abuse.
- Holding all those who work with minors to Christ-centered and professional codes of conduct.
- Providing age based training for minors in the recognition of what constitutes appropriate and moral behavior.
- Reporting such sexually inappropriate and/or criminal conduct to appropriate Civil and Church authorities.

Know the Warning Signs

Knowing the warning signs means that we can recognize the early signs of an inappropriate relationship with a child. If we know the warning signs, then we can identify potential abuse before it happens. If we know the warning signs, we do not have to rely on a child to report an incident. Be cautious of an individual who:

- Discourages other adults from participating or monitoring Children activities
- Seeks way to be with a child alone.
- More excited to be with children than with adults.
- Gives excessive gifts to select children, often without permission.
- Always wants to touch wrestle or tickle.
- Thinks the rules do not apply to them.
- Allows children to engage in activities their parents would not allow.
- Uses bad language or tells dirty jokes.
- Uses force and bullying to intimidate.
- Shows children pornography.
- Takes excessive photographs of children.

Monitor all Programs

Child molesters look for ways to spend time alone with children. If they know someone is watching they have more trouble finding opportunities to abuse without getting caught.

- Identify secluded area, lock empty rooms.
- Staff should check bathrooms before sending children in alone.
- Do not permit children to enter staff-only areas.
- Only meet with children where other adults can pass by you.
- Supervisors should look in on activities.
- Always have two cleared adults present.
- Allow parents to drop in on programs.

Parents Be Aware

Being aware means that parents should know what is going on in the lives of their own children and pay attention to subtle signs of a problem. Parents should talk to their children, listen to them, and observe them. When we observe and communicate with our children, we are more likely to detect the signs if they are in danger. We can notice a sudden change in behavior, if they get moody or aggressive, lose interest in school, or stop taking care of their personal hygiene

- Talk to your children.
- Listen to your children.
- Observe your children.
- Let your children know they can tell you anything.
- Teach your children where their private parts are.
- Talk to your children often about protecting themselves.
- Teach your children how to protect themselves
- Teach your children what to do if someone tries to touch them.
- Teach your children what to do if someone makes them feel uncomfortable.



For Further information please go to the Amarillo Catholic Diocese’s Safe Environment Website at:

amarillodiocese.org