



Safe Environment Newsletter

JANUARY 2020

KEEPING OUR PROMISE TO PROTECT

The Diocese of Bridgeport has remained in full compliance with all articles of the *U. S. Bishops Charter* since it was implemented in 2003.

A recent data collection audit of our diocesan safe environment programs was conducted by Stonebridge Business Partners of Rochester, New York. The audit process found that the Diocese of Bridgeport is compliant with all articles of *The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* for the 2018-2019 audit period. Two types of audits are regularly conducted, onsite and data collection. Every three years an onsite audit involves members of the Stonebridge firm who travel to the Diocese of Bridgeport to conduct interviews with our Bishop and everyone involved with safe environment administration as well as survivors of sexual abuse by priests from our diocese.

Our most recent on-site audit of diocesan Safe Environment programs was conducted in October of 2018. The auditor spent two days interviewing and checking records which are submitted annually by schools and parishes and reflect their compliance with Safe Environments for adults and children. The auditor commented that our survivor group and victim assistance ministry is the strongest he has encountered.

The Diocese of Bridgeport utilizes the Think First & Stay Safe training for children and parents, Netsmartz for teens & VIRTUS for Adults. We include Code of Conduct, reporting information and a background check during VIRTUS online registration so that pastors and principals can keep track locally.

The next onsite audit in the Diocese of Bridgeport will take place in 2021 and will include onsite audits at schools and parishes to review their training and background check compliance. Within the next 18 months, representatives from the Office of Safe Environment will schedule onsite meetings with local coordinators to share best practices and give feedback in advance of their onsite audit.

Since 2003, our Diocese has policies and procedures in place which exceed Charter requirements. These policies are included in our Safe Environment Handbook and may be found on our Diocesan website at <https://www.bridgeportdiocese.org/safe-environments/safe-environments-handbook/>

IN THIS ISSUE



U.S.C.C.B. *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*

Learn more about how the Diocese of Bridgeport works to create Safe Environments, prevent abuse and assist victims



IDENTIFYING GROOMING BEHAVIORS

Learn to recognize some of the early warnings signs and behaviors exhibited by offenders of child sexual abuse

THE U.S.C.C.B. CHARTER

The *U.S.C.C.B Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* is a comprehensive set of procedures originally established by the USCCB in June 2002 for addressing allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy. The *Charter* also includes guidelines for reconciliation, healing, accountability, and prevention of future acts of abuse. It was revised in 2005, 2011, and 2018. The *Charter* directs action in all the following matters:

Creating a safe environment for children and young people.

In the Diocese of Bridgeport, we provide child sexual abuse prevention training for adults as well as children and we conduct comprehensive criminal background

checks on a 5 or 10 year renewal cycle based on a person's role.

Healing and reconciliation of victims and survivors.

Our Victim Assistance Coordinator, Erin Neil, L.C.S.W., and Victim Assistance Counselor, Michael Tintrup, L.C.S.W, provide outreach and assistance to victims of child sexual abuse by clergy. We also have an active survivor group in place who help plan for an annual Mass of Hope and Healing for victims, assist in our prevention efforts and provide outreach to other survivors.

Making prompt and effective response to allegations and cooperate with civil authorities.

The Diocese of Bridgeport cooperates with civil authorities and reports all allegations of sexual abuse of minors to the CT Department of Children and Family Services within 12-hours of becoming aware of the

information. In addition, the Diocese also reports the information to the police in the town where the alleged incident occurred.

Disciplining offenders and providing for means of accountability for the future.

Read about our zero tolerance policy in our Safe Environment Handbook and Judge Holmberg's accountability report for the Diocese of Bridgeport at www.bridgeportdiocese.com.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/charter.cfm>

<https://www.bridgeportdiocese.org/safe-environments/accountability-investigation/>



GROOMING WARNING SIGNS IN OFFENDERS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Grooming is a gradual process by which an adult intentionally initiates contact with a minor in order to eventually sexually abuse them. Offenders go to great lengths to avoid detection. Most children and family members will know the abuser. 29% of all cases of child sexual abuse are committed by family. You can't identify an offender by their physical characteristics, age, occupation, race or gender. It is a person's behavior that sets them apart and enables caring adults and children to spot early warning signs. It is critical to learn these signs and to report them as soon as possible. All adults who work or volunteer in the Diocese of Bridgeport are taught to avoid certain behaviors which may appear as grooming behaviors when working with minors. Some of these most common grooming behaviors are listed below. It is important to note that only 11% of child sexual abuse is committed by a stranger. For more information visit www.virtusonline.org (BRIDGEPORT) to attend an upcoming workshop.

Offenders often exhibit one or more of the following signs.....

- ✓ Always wants to be alone with children.
- ✓ Gives gifts without parent's permission. Expensive and frequent gifts may be a sign. Gifts might include meals, trips, electronics, video games or money. It is always a warning sign if a child is threatened if they tell.
- ✓ Excessive praise & attention of child.
- ✓ Takes pictures or videos without parent's knowledge or permission.
- ✓ Compliments child's attractiveness.
- ✓ Believes the rules do not apply to them.
- ✓ Uses private one-on-one electronic communication with minors.
- ✓ Texts or phone calls may be frequent or during times when parents aren't around. The offender may give child the electronic device.

- ✓ Allows or encourages children to break rules or break the law making them feel responsible and less likely to report abuse.
- ✓ Undermines parental authority or manipulates a situation by siding with the child over the parent.
- ✓ Uses foul language in the presence of the child, tells inappropriate jokes or talks about sex.
- ✓ Offers to give the child chores or jobs to earn money without parent's permission and with no other adults around.
- ✓ Suggests games involving physical contact which appear accidental at first and but the intent is to groom the child for sexual contact.
- ✓ Gives illegal drugs, alcohol or shows pornography.

- ✓ Goes overboard touching, wrestling, horseplay, hugs, rubbing, pinching, tickling, patting, having the child sit on laps or gives piggy back rides. The touch may appear accidental and in public at first and then the touching becomes sexual and private over time.
- ✓ More excited to be with children than with adults.
- ✓ May spend time with peers or siblings of the victim who they do not abuse to gain trust.
- ✓ Offers to make a child famous or get them on T.V. or offers to introduce them to a famous person. They may ask the child to keep it a secret.
- ✓ Insists a child accept assistance like a ride home or they might make the child feel bad for refusing the help.

Talk with your child often about the warning signs and the tricks used by offenders in a non-threatening and age appropriate manner. Let them know about safe boundaries which should always exist between adults and minors and what behaviors are against the law. Teach them to report anything that makes them feel uncomfortable and assure them that you will take their concerns seriously.

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday February 22nd, 2020 TRAINING

BECOME A VOLUNTEER VIRTUS FACILITATOR TRAIN-THE TRAINER

VIRTUS is a child sexual abuse awareness and prevention program which educates adults in our schools and parishes on the warning signs of child sexual abuse and how to prevent it. Contact your school or parish Safe Environment Coordinator as a first step if you are interested in becoming certified as a VIRTUS facilitator or call Erin Neil, L.C.S.W., Director of Safe Environment (203) 416-1406. **A referral from your pastor or school principal and an application is required.**

To attend VIRTUS training as a participant or to decide if becoming a facilitator of this program is right for you, visit www.virtusonline.org. Select Bridgeport diocese as your organization.

SCHOOL & PARISH COORDINATORS TRAINING

VIRTUS SAFE ENVIRONMENT COORDINATOR QUARTERLY MEETINGS (Catholic Center)

Every school and parish in the Diocese of Bridgeport has a Local Safe Environment Coordinator who assists the pastors and school principals with tracking Safe Environment training and criminal background checks for clergy, employees and volunteers

This training can be used as a refresher for Local **Safe Environment Coordinators and Administrators** as well as for new Coordinators. The content focuses on how to manage the VIRTUS database for effectively tracking Safe Environment compliance. This session reviews the basics on how to create reports and update accounts. Contact Astrid Alvarez, VIRTUS Training and Development Specialist (203) 416-1407

Tuesday, February 18, 2020	10:00 am
Tuesday, May 12, 2020	1:30 pm
Friday, August 21, 2020	10:00 am
Wednesday, October 28, 2020	1:30 pm

RSVP: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/virtus-database-coordinator-refresher-training-session-2020-tickets-88874609349>

Saturday March 21, 2020 TRAINING

SAFE ENVIRONMENT TRAINING FOR PARENTS & CHILDREN

This is a child sexual abuse awareness and prevention program for children together with their parent. Pre-registration is required and all minors must be accompanied by a parent or a legal guardian. Students may only attend the session that is appropriate for their age/grade level

Kindergarten: (35 minutes) Time: 9:00 A.M. - 9:35A.M.
Grades 1 & 2 (45 minutes) Time: 9:45 A.M. - 10:30 A.M.

Grades 3 & 4 (45 minutes) Time: 10:45 A.M. - 11:30 A.M.
Grades 5 & 6 (45 minutes) Time: 11:45 A.M. - 12:30 P.M.
Grades 7 & 8 (45 minutes) Time: 1:00 P.M. - 1:45 P.M.
High School Grades 9-12 (1 Hour) Time: 2:00 P.M.-3:00.

Location: 238 Jewett Avenue, Bridgeport.

Preregistration is required by calling Deacon John DiTaranto (203) 416-1650 or email: dnditaranto@diobpt.org

Sunday March 22, 2020 5:00 PM MASS

MASS OF HOPE AND HEALING FOR SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE.

The Most Rev. Frank Caggiano, together with a planning committee of Survivors of Sexual Abuse as Minors by Priests, will hold a very special Mass for anyone who has been sexually abused as a minor, their family members and for others who have been impacted. The Mass will be held on **Sunday March 22nd, 2020 5:00 PM** Fairfield University Egan Chapel. Light refreshments will be served following the Mass.

SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE MEETING

MEETING FOR SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE AS A MINOR

If you or someone in your family is an adult and has been sexually abused as a minor by a member of the clergy, support through the Diocese is available. Come and meet with one of our victim assistance coordinators and fellow survivors of sexual abuse for an evening of friendship, prayer and peer support.

Thursday February 27th, 2020 6:30 PM. For meeting location and for more information, please contact Erin Neil, L.C.S.W., (203) 650-3265 or Michael Tintrup L.C.S.W., (203) 241-0987

REPORT ABUSE

To report an allegation involving abuse, neglect or risk of injury to a vulnerable adult or minor or suspected child grooming behavior by a person from the Church, call:

Erin Neil, L.C.S.W., Director of Safe Environment & Victim Assistance Coordinator Tel: (203) 416-1406 & (203) 650-3265 Email: eneil@diobpt.org **OR**

Michael Tintrup, L.C.S.W., Victim Assistance Counselor (203)241-0987 Email: mtintrup@ccfc-ct.org

and

The Police and CT Department of Children and Families Care-line **1-800-842-2288**. Mandated reporters must directly report all allegations of abuse of a minor within 12-hours of becoming aware of it to the D.C.F. Care-line. Anyone may report to the Care-line and are encouraged to do so, regardless of when the allegation occurred, recently or in the past.

You may also contact aThird Party Reporting Survivor and Witness Hotline (833) 990-0004

www.lighthouse-servoces.com/diobpt.org or report online directly to the Diocese of Bridgeport <https://www.bridgeportdiocese.org/safe-environments/incident-report-of-an-allegation-of-abuse-or-misconduct/>

ABUSE OF A VULNERABLE ADULT (60+) Call the police in the town where the abuse occurred and/or Elderly Protective Services at 1-888-385-4225 or info-line 2-1-1. Abuse of an individual with an intellectual disability between the ages of 18 and 59, please call the police or 1-844 878-8923.

TO CONTACT THE OFFICE OF SAFE ENVIRONMENT:

For questions relating to the Safe Environment Database, VIRTUS Re-Certification or to Register for a live initial class which is necessary before working or volunteering, contact: Astrid Alvarez, M.S, M.B.A., VIRTUS Training and Development Specialist Office: (203) 416-1407 Cell: (203) 209-7347

Email: aalvarez@diobpt.org

To schedule a VIRTUS facilitator to come onsite to conduct a live training at your school or parish, contact: Diane Scott, Safe Environment Program Assistant. (203) 416-1409 Cell: (475)988-5366

Email: diane.scott@diobpt.org **OR**

Deacon John DiTaranto, Safe Environment Program Assistant Phone: (203) 416-1650

Email: dnditaranto@diobpt.org