



Memo

Date: August 26, 2019

To: All Pastors, Principals, and persons in charge of Children's Safe Environment training duties

From: Perla Freed, Director, Safe Environment

Re: Children's Safe Environment Training – *VIRTUS Teaching Safety - Empowering God's Children* for Grades K-12

The Archdiocese of Atlanta has utilized the VIRTUS Children's training since Fall 2014. This program replaced our self-generated program, *You Matter*. Since the launch of the program, we have trained school age children enrolled in our Catholic schools and parish faith formation programs. Please review the list below with the updates to the VIRTUS Children's training program.

- The name of the program has improved from Teaching Touching Safety to **Teaching Safety – Empowering God's Children**. Please make sure to update information on your website and other materials to reflect the program's name change.
- The introductory videos are intended to relieve trainers of the responsibility for "breaking the ice" on this sensitive subject matter. While the video lays the groundwork, the trainer uses the activities to help students apply the message from the lessons to their daily lives.

The updated videos, Power to Protect 2.0, are available through the VIRTUS Online website under the Educators tab and the YouTube links below. The Office of Child & Youth Protection encourages you to take advantage of the online resources. Our office will not keep inventory of physical copies of the updated videos. However, if you wish to order DVD or USB drive copies of the introductory videos, please complete and send the order form directly to VIRTUS. The cost for these materials will be the responsibility of the parish or school submitting the order form.

➤ Elementary School

[Empowering God's Children Grades K-5](#)

K-5 [Spanish](#)

➤ Middle School

[Empowering God's Children Grades 6-8](#)

6-8 [Spanish](#)

➤ High School

[Empowering God's Children Grades 9-12](#)

9-12 [Spanish](#)

- The lesson plans 1-4 have been updated as well. You are welcome to use the updated lesson plans this school year 2019-2020. However, we understand some locations may already have selected another set of lesson plans for this year, so we ask you to plan to offer the updated lesson plans in the next school year.
 - Lesson 1 - Physical Boundaries: Safe and Unsafe Touching Rules
 - Lesson 2 - Safe Adults, Safe Touches and Special Safe Adults
 - Lesson 3 - Boundaries: You Have Rights!
 - Lesson 4 - Secrets, Surprises and Promises
- Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide for Caring Adults, Parents, and Guardians is now available on the VIRTUS and Archdiocesan websites. Please feel free to share this guide with your parishioners, parents, and volunteers. <https://www.virtusonline.org/educators/Teaching-Boundaries-and-Safety-Guide-English.pdf>
- Updated Children's Safe Environment "Cheat Sheet" is available on the Archdiocesan website <https://archatl.com/ministries-services/safe-environment/grades-k-12/>

How to access the new introductory videos and lesson plans:

- ✓ Archdiocesan website - <https://archatl.com/ministries-services/safe-environment/grades-k-12/safe-environment-lesson-plans/>
Password: V1rtus
- ✓ VIRTUS website under the Educators tab - <https://www.virtusonline.org/virtus/>

If you or someone in your staff need access to the Educators tab, please contact the Safe Environment office.

Additional Resources

- VIRTUS – Empowering God's Children order form
- USCCB - Takeaway Messages Children must hear in Safe Environment training
- Children's Safe Environment "Cheat Sheet"

If you have any questions regarding this communication or any Safe Environment matter, please feel free to contact the Safe Environment Office at 404-920-7550 or any of the people below.

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Order Form for Empowering God’s Children™ Program Material

Price for Power to Protect vs 2.0 DVD/USB Drive*:

Power to Protect vs 2.0 DVD (English/Spanish included)	_____	@\$15.00 each*
	Quantity	
Power to Protect vs 2.0 USB Drive (English/Spanish included)	_____	@\$25.00 each*
	Quantity	

Price for Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide in Hard Copy*:

Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide (English)	_____	@\$0.85 each*
Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide (Spanish)	_____	@\$0.85 each*

Shipping/Billing Information:

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Billing Address: _____

Shipping Address: _____

Email Address: _____

Phone (____) _____ Ext. _____

Date needed: _____

- Please send by USPS delivery (4-5 business days)
- Please send by FedEx Overnight Delivery (approx. \$30 additional charge for overnight delivery)

Please fax completed form to: **Fax: 918-392-4400**

Or, email your order to: ggunnels@virtus.org

The VIRTUS® Program
National Catholic Services, LLC
3114 East 81st Street, Suite 101
Tulsa, OK 74137
Toll-free: 888-847-8870

* Additional charges for shipping and handling.



UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

Messages Children Hear In Safe Environment Programs

In Catholic schools and parishes nationwide, Safe Environment training gives children the skills necessary to protect themselves from would-be-offenders. The Associate Director of the Secretariat for Child and Youth Protection of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), has listed here some of the messages children should hear in Safe Environment programs.

1. Abuse is never a child's fault.

The blame **always** belongs to the adult who is taking advantage of a child's trust and vulnerabilities.

2. God loves children forever and wants them to live holy and happy lives.

The shame of child sexual abuse needs to be put where it belongs: on the abuser.

3. Abuse that has happened should be reported.

One study shows that children tell of their abuse an average of nine times before someone believes them.

4. You can recognize abuse when it happens.

Children learn to trust that feeling that says something isn't right and to tell a parent or other trusted adult when something happens that makes them feel uneasy.

5. There are ways to spot a grooming process.

Children learn that anyone who lets children break rules, gives them alcohol or shows them pornography needs to be reported to parents and other trusted adults.

6. Parents or other trusted adults will talk about this subject.

Children often try to protect their parents from bad news, so they need to learn they can tell their parents anything.

7. Boundaries exist.

Children who listen to the voice that says, "This doesn't feel right," can protect themselves.

8. Children can stand up for themselves.

Children learn when it is appropriate for them to say, "No, stop doing that."

9. There are ways to explain inappropriate behavior.

The ability to articulate what has happened to a child enables a child to more easily confide in a parent or other trusted adult. This is ultimately the goal of safe environment education.

Safe Environment Reminders

- Avoid being left alone with a minor. At least **2** adults must always be present when minors are around.
- The children/youth Safe Environment training must be offered **every year** for all age groups.
- The adult Safe Environment clearance for adult volunteers is to be renewed every **5 years**. This process includes renewing all Safe Environment policies, VIRTUS training, and undergoing a background screening.
- **All Volunteers** dealing with Children and Vulnerable Individuals must complete Safe Environment training and submit to a background screening. Examples of Volunteers NOT* required to submit to a background screening:
 1. Sacristans
 2. Altar dressers (persons responsible for washing and maintaining altar linens)
 3. Lectors
 4. Adult choir member in an all adult choir. Choirs where minors are members
 5. Cantor
 6. Extraordinary Minister of Eucharist (if at Masses only)
 7. Bereavement Group Leader (if not involved with children)
 8. Parish Council members; Finance Council members
 9. Ladies' Guild, Council of Catholic Women, Bible Study Groups, Ministry groups that do not have unsupervised or regular contact with children
 10. Men's and Women's adult organizations that do not have unsupervised or regular contact with children

* The person in charge of the facility (pastor or principal) can determine additional Safe Environment requirements to better fit his/her location's needs.



CONTACT INFORMATION Office of Child and Youth Protection Archdiocese of Atlanta (OCYP)

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What is **Child Abuse**?

- (A) Physical injury or death inflicted upon a child by a parent or caretaker thereof by other than accidental means;
- (B) Neglect or exploitation of a child by a parent or caretaker thereof;
- (C) Endangering a child (e.g. witnessing domestic violence);
- (D) Sexual abuse of a child; or
- (E) Sexual exploitation of a child.

**Archdiocese of
Atlanta
24 Hour Abuse
Reporting Line
1-888-437-0764**

PLAN AHEAD!!

- * Make sure if minors are attending parish sponsored events such as: Festivals / Vacation Bible School / Field trips / Retreats
- 1. Volunteers are Safe Environment cleared a month prior to event (including chaperones).
- 2. Volunteers drivers must also undergo a motor vehicle records search. Contact Catholic Mutual for Liability Insurance Information.

ATTENTION MANDATORY REPORTERS!

- 1 • If the alleged/suspected victim of abuse is a **minor** (under 18 years old).
- 2 • Inform the person in charge of the facility (pastor/principal) of the allegation. Letting the pastor/principal know about the allegation does not take away the mandatory reporter's responsibility to notify DFCS.
- 3 • Call the **DFCS** immediately (no later than 24 hours) 1-855-GACHILD (1-855-422-4453). Be prepared to provide them with child's name, address, age, nature of the abuse, suspected perpetrator, and relationship with the child.
- 4 • Follow up with a letter to DFCS and communicate the incident to the Office of Child and Youth Protection.
- 5 • If alleged abuse involves Church Personnel (Clergy, Religious, Deacon, Employee, or Volunteer): 1) ALSO call the District Attorney's office and call the Archdiocesan 24 hour Abuse Reporting Line **1-888-437-0764** or the OCYP Office **404-920-7550**.

**Division of Family and
Children Services**
To report any suspicion of
child abuse, please call
DFCS within **24 hours**
1-855-GACHILD
(1-855-422-4453)





Archdiocese of Atlanta
CHILDREN’S SAFE ENVIRONMENT
TRAINING
Office of Child and Youth Protection

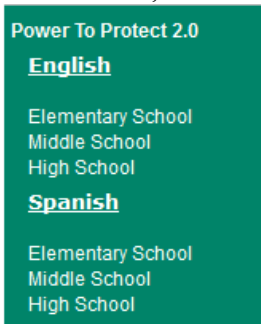


The Archdiocese of Atlanta selected the program **VIRTUS – Empowering God’s Children** as a replacement to the You Matter program effective Fall 2014. Please note that this program was formerly known as *Teaching Touching Safety*.

Please visit www.virtus.org or the Office of Child and Youth Protection under www.archatl.com for more information regarding VIRTUS – Empowering God’s Children program.

How to access the new Safe Environment training in VIRTUS Online?

- Log in to www.virtus.org
- If you do not have a login or an “Educator” tab at the top of the page once you log in, please contact OCYP@archatl.com or call 404-920-7550. You need the “Educator” tab to access the lesson plans, the introductory videos (Power to Protect 2.0), and record your Safe Environment training classes.
- Once you log in, the Educator page will provide you with a Program Overview, The Guide for Parents and Guardians, and the Permission/Op-Out Form for Parents
- To access the introductory videos for the Children’s training, Power to Protect 2.0
 VIRTUS Online: Locate the video links under the Educator Tab, on the left menu



Physical copy: Order DVDs (limit of 3) by email at OCYP@archatl.com or by phone 404-920-7550.

- To access “**Lesson Plans**” click “continue” on the bottom of the page
 - Select your grade level and click “continue”
 - K-2 3-5
 - 6-8 9-12
 - Select the lesson you need to view and click “continue”
 - Lessons 1-4 have been updated for the school year 2019-2020

- Make sure to click on the green arrow to view or print the lesson plan you have selected.

Recording your training classes in VIRTUS Online:

- ✓ In the left-hand green column, click on “**Record Training**”



- ✓ Click on “Add a new training record”
- ✓ “Program name” is already populated
- ✓ “Where the training occurred” = Select your parish or school where the SE training took place
- ✓ “School Type” – Select “Religious Education” for parishes, select “Catholic School” for schools.
- ✓ Select the date when the training took place
- ✓ Enter the trainer’s name
- ✓ Select the Age group and Lesson number. If you select “Not Specified” for either of these, you must explain why in the comment box.
- ✓ Select the lesson language (English or Spanish)
- ✓ Fill in the number of children trained, opted out, and absent. Remember that sending the materials home for the children with the parents does not count as that child’s Safe Environment training, instead the child will be considered absent unless an opt out form was completed by the parents
- ✓ Click on “Record Training”
- ✓ A confirmation page will come up and you **MUST** click on “Record Training” again once you have verified the information you have entered is correct.
- ✓ If you notice an error in your recording, please contact the Safe Environment office at OCYP@archatl.com or 404-920-7550.

“Let there now be no doubt or confusion on anyone’s part: For us, your bishops, our obligation to protect children and young people and to prevent sexual abuse flows from the mission and example given to us by Jesus Christ himself, in whose name we serve.”
 USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People