



Memo

Date: July 30, 2018

To: Pastors, Parish/Mission Administrators and Principals

From: Perla Freed, Director of Safe Environment; Office of Child and Youth Protection

Re: Instructions for Safe Environment On-Site Audit

To ensure full compliance with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) [*Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*](#), the Archdiocese of Atlanta requires that all parishes and schools follow the Safe Environment (SE) program requirements. An important aspect of the Safe Environment program is the preparation for the on-site audit, which occurs every three years.

This year, in addition to the on-site audit visit to the Chancery during the week of October 8, 2018, StoneBridge Business Partners will conduct on-site audits at parishes and schools to determine the extent of the understanding and compliance of the *Charter*. Specific parishes and schools will be randomly selected by the auditors and notified in the near future.

In preparation for the on-site audit the week of October 8, we need your always-generous cooperation in assisting the Safe Environment (SE) Office with the following:

- Parish/School Safe Environment Audit Self-Assessment via Survey Monkey online – due September 7, 2018 **(Attachment A)**
- Review the Safe Environment Audit Checklist and take appropriate measures to be compliant with all Safe Environment guidelines **(Attachment B)**
- Include link(s) on your website to the Archdiocesan Safe Environment page to ensure everyone at the parish and school level has access to all the Charter compliance information **(Attachment C)**
- Submit a certification letter signed by pastor, principal or administrator stating that Safe Environment programs have been

implemented in their location for audit year 2017-2018 (**Attachment D**)

Many thanks to you and your staff for your support of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* and all you do to ensure the safety of the most vulnerable.

I am grateful for your cooperation in meeting the SE requirements. Though this process is not always easy, it is required to fulfill our commitment to the Church to protect all of God's children.

Attachment A

Complete Online Audit Self-Assessment via Survey Money

One submission per location. The Pastor, Principal, or Administrator must appoint someone to complete the assessment online before September 7, 2018 using the following link.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SE2018Audit>

Parish/School Audit Self-Assessment pdf copy of the assessment for reference purpose only so you can collect the responses prior to submitting the completed assessment online.

Completing the audit self-assessment is an excellent way to know if you are ready for the auditors in the event your parish/school is selected for an on-site visit. The Safe Environment office needs for all locations to submit their completed self-assessments no later than **September 7, 2018**.

General Information

We need to know who you are and your Safe Environment functions at your location.

* 1. Location Name (Please select from drop down menu)

If other, please specify

* 2. Name of the person completing this audit self assessment

* 3. Please enter your job title:

* 4. Please enter your phone number

5. Name(s) of the Safe Environment Coordinator(s) if different than above:

Please note that we refer to Safe Environment Coordinator(s) as those individuals who are the point person for the Sterling system (background checks), VIRTUS Online (SE training), and those who track the SE training compliance for employees and volunteers at your location.

Name

Email

Name

Email

Archdiocesan Safe Environment Policies and Requirements

We must ensure all our parishes and schools are aware that all Safe Environment Archdiocesan policies and requirements are readily available on our website.

- * 6. Does your location publicize the Archdiocesan Safe Environment policies and procedures?
Examples might include publication in parish bulletins, information provided at Masses, brochures or posters in the vestibules of buildings.

Yes

No

If yes, how do you publicize:

- * 7. Does your Parish/School website include link(s) to diocesan website and/or the Diocesan reporting policy with contact information for the Office of Child and Youth Protection staff?

Yes

No

If no, please explain

- * 8. Are all those people who work with children and/or vulnerable individuals at your location made aware of the Archdiocese of Atlanta's online availability of all the Safe Environment policies including the Code of Conduct and Sexual Abuse Policy?

Yes

No

- * 9. Do all volunteers (working with children, youth, and/or vulnerable individuals) and employees at your location complete and sign the Safe Environment Acknowledgement which includes confirming they have read and understood all SE Archdiocesan policies?

Yes

No

10. Does your location ensure that background screenings through Sterling Talent Solutions are conducted on all those who work with children and/or vulnerable individuals before they start their work or volunteer service?

Yes

No

If no, please explain

* 11. Does your location display the "You Matter" Safe Environment posters in a public area accessible to all employees, volunteers, parishioners, parents, etc.?

Yes

No

If no, please explain

* 12. Is there a clear policy for employees, volunteers & students about use of the Internet on the premises at your location?

Yes

No

If no, please explain

* 13. Does your location ensure that Safe Environment training (VIRTUS) has been completed by all those who work with children and/or vulnerable individuals before they begin to work or volunteer service?

Yes

No

If no, please explain

* 14. PARISH ONLY QUESTION

Does the pastor at your location ensure that visiting clergy (e.g., priests or deacons who witness marriages or perform baptisms) are in good standing? Pastors should request a letter of good standing from the visiting priest's home diocese or religious community, as required by the Office of Priest Personnel in order obtain faculties.

Yes

No

N/A for Schools

Children's Program - VIRTUS Protecting God's Children

VIRTUS PGC for Children was implemented Fall 2014. We want to make sure that suggestions on how to implement the program have been taken into consideration and applied to your location. If your location is not a parish or diocesan school, please select N/A.

* 15. Was the VIRTUS Protecting God's Children training for Children K-12 offered at your location last school year (July 1, 2017 - June 30, 2018)?

- Yes N/A
 No

If no, please explain:

* 16. The annual Children's Safe Environment training deadline set by the SE Office in the Fall is:

- Sept 15 Oct 31
 Sept 30 Nov 30
 Oct 15 N/A

* 17. Does your location provide access to Safe Environment training materials to parents (e.g., in the parent/student handbook, direct them to Archdiocesan website)?

- Yes N/A
 No

If no, please explain

* 18. Are parents at your location advised that they may opt their child out from the safe environment training?

- Yes N/A
 No

* 19. Is your location keeping a copy of all signed parent notification forms (opt out forms) for the school year?

Yes

N/A

No

If no, please explain

* 20. Is your location publicizing the dates for the Safe Environment training for children, VIRTUS PGC, in the parish/school calendar, bulletins, parent communications, etc.?

Yes

N/A

No

If no, please explain

21. Has your location scheduled this school year's Children's SE training? (July 1, 2018- June 30, 2019)
Please provide us with the date(s) you have scheduled for the VIRTUS Children's training this year.

Training 1

MM/DD/YYYY

Training 2

MM/DD/YYYY

Training 3

MM/DD/YYYY

Training 4

MM/DD/YYYY

22. Is your location in need of training by the Safe Environment office for lesson leaders who conduct the Safe Environment Children's training, VIRTUS Protecting God's Children?

Yes

N/A

No

Please provide us with contact information for the employees and/or volunteers who need training.

Safe Environment Documentation

We want to make sure that all locations are consistent with their procedures regarding the retention and safe keeping of Safe Environment documents.

- * 23. Does your location keep PAPER files of Safe Environment documents pertaining to the employees? The file should include: Background Consent Form, Lay Acknowledgement of Receipt, and copy of latest background screening.

Yes

No

If no, please explain:

- * 24. Does your location keep Safe Environment employee files separate from HR/personnel files?

Yes

No

If no, please explain

- * 25. Does your location keep PAPER files of Safe Environment documents pertaining to volunteers? The file for volunteers working with children and/or vulnerable individuals must include: Volunteer application, Background Consent Form, Lay Acknowledgement of Receipt, and copy of latest background screening. The file for volunteers NOT working with children and/or vulnerable individuals must include the Volunteer application.

Yes

No

If no, please explain:

- * 26. It is our goal to have all employee and volunteer SE files uploaded in Sterling adhering to the electronic file retention suggestion of 50 years. Estimate the percentage of Safe Environment files at your location which remain in paper format as opposed to electronically in Sterling?

25%

75%

50%

100%

Other, please specify

Reporting Procedures and Understanding

We need to ensure all of our locations are aware of our procedures for processing allegations of child abuse. All staff must know how, what, and when to report any allegation of child abuse.

* 27. To the best of your knowledge, does the pastor/school principal (person in charge of the facility) at your location know how, what, and when to report an allegation of child abuse or where to find the information?

Yes

No

If no, please explain

* 28. To the best of your knowledge, are all the employees at your location aware of how, what, and when to report an allegation of child abuse or where to find the information?

Yes

No

If no, please explain

* 29. Are volunteers at your location mandated reporters?

True

False

* 30. All mandated reporters are required to make a report regarding child abuse to the appropriate authorities within what period of time?

2 hours

36 hours

24 hours

48 hours

* 31. If a mandated reporter at your location receives an allegation of child abuse, he/she must follow the next steps:

Talk to the alleged abuser, Report to DFCS, Follow up DFCS with a letter

Investigate the situation, Call the police, Report to DFCS

Call 911, Investigate the situation, Report to DFCS, Follow up DFCS with a letter

Tell person in charge of the facility, Report to DFCS, Follow up DFCS with a letter

Victims' Assistance at the Archdiocese of Atlanta

We want to promote the healing opportunities available for victims of sexual abuse at the Archdiocesan level. We need for all locations to be aware of who to contact at the Archdiocese in the case you meet a victim who needs our help.

* 32. Does the pastor/school principal/ agency director at your location know how to obtain outreach for victims?

Yes

No

If no, please explain

* 33. Does your location promote in your bulletin or through other methods, the Archdiocesan 24-Hour Abuse Reporting Hotline 1-888-437-0764?

Yes

No

* 34. Has your location promoted the retreats for victims of child abuse organized by the Archdiocesan Victims Assistance Coordinator?

Examples might include publication in parish bulletins, information provided at Masses, brochures or posters in the vestibules of buildings or other high traffic areas.

Yes

No

If no, please explain

"We humbly seek forgiveness from the faith-filled people of our church and from our society at large," he said, "and especially from those whose lives may have been devastated by our failure to care adequately for the little ones entrusted to us and for any decision that we made or should have made that exacerbated the sorrow and heartache that the entire church has felt and continues to feel—for what we have done, and for what we have failed to do."

Archbishop Gregory

Bishops' Spring Meeting 2017 - Indianapolis

The Office and Child and Youth Protection would once again like to thank you for your role in creating a safe environment for our children and vulnerable individuals by adhering to the Archdiocesan Policies and Procedures. You may contact us by email OCYP@archatl.com or by phone 404-920-7550.



2018 Parish/School Safe Environment Audit Preparation Checklist

This checklist is to assist your location in identifying areas of compliance required by the Office of Safe Environment under the articles of the [Charter](#) for the Protection of Children and Young People.

- Include link(s) in your location's website to the Archdiocesan Safe Environment webpage <https://archatl.com/ministries-services/safe-environment/> and the reporting abuse webpage <https://archatl.com/offices/child-and-youth-protection/reporting-abuse/>
- Perform thorough review of all active employee and volunteer SE files. Make sure all SE training, policies, and background screenings are renewed every five years.
- Maintain original documents at the location level under lock with limited access. Make sure to keep active files separate from inactive. Never keep SE files combined with HR/personnel files.
- Inactivate all employees and volunteers who are no longer active in your parish/school from the system. If volunteer/employee is working at another location, please NOTE (make a note in Sterling in the candidate record) in the system that they are no longer active at your location instead of changing their status to Inactive.
- If any existing employees and volunteers have not completed VIRTUS Protecting God's Children training, ensure that they complete training before their renewal date.
- Ensure your Parish/School has the You Matter posters available throughout the location in high traffic areas. (To request posters, please email Gina Garcia at ggarcia@archatl.com)
- Raise awareness among your staff and volunteers about the Safe Environment Archdiocesan policies and where to find them in our website. <http://www.archatl.com/ministries-services/safe-environment/policies-and-procedures/>
- Ensure your staff is aware of Child Abuse Reporting Procedures, especially the following:
 - ✓ Any allegation of abuse of a minor must be reported to DFCS within 24 hours.
 - ✓ DFCS Centralized phone number 1-855-GACHILD or 1-855-422-4453
 - ✓ Archdiocesan 24-hour Abuse Reporting Hotline 1-888-437-0764
 - ✓ Once a report has been made to DFCS, mandatory reporter must follow up with a written letter.
 - ✓ All abuse reporting information is available online on our website <http://www.archatl.com/offices/child-and-youth-protection/reporting-abuse/>
- Promote the resources available to victims of child abuse. The first step is by including the contact information to the Archdiocesan 24-hour Abuse Reporting Hotline 1-888-437-0764 in your bulletins, newsletters, flyers, etc.

- Safe Environment training for children in grades K-12th, VIRTUS Protecting God's Children, must be **offered every year**. Last school year 2017-2018, your location must have offered the training to ALL children.
- Promote the Safe Environment training for children in grades K-12th, VIRTUS Protecting God's Children, by offering a parent information session.
- Record VIRTUS Protecting God's Children total numbers (trained, not trained, and opt outs) for the current audit year in the VirtusOnline website no later than October 31 every year.

SE Documentation Requirements

- Ensure that every **employee and independent contractor** has completed the following:
 - ✓ Background Consent Form
 - ✓ Sterling background screening is on file (paper or electronic format)
 - ✓ Acknowledgement of receipt for all policies
 - ✓ Additional paperwork will be required by the HR department
- Ensure that every **Adult Volunteer working with minors and/or vulnerable individuals** has completed the following:
 - ✓ Volunteer application
 - ✓ Background Consent Form
 - ✓ Sterling background screening is on file (paper or electronic format).
 - ✓ Acknowledgement of receipt for all policies
- Ensure that every **Adult Volunteer working with minors and/or vulnerable individuals without a SSN** has completed the following:
 - ✓ Volunteer application
 - ✓ Submitted three (3) references
 - ✓ References were verified by a Parish/School Staff. Signed and dated documentation must be on file at the location
 - ✓ Acknowledgement of receipt for all policies
- Ensure that every **MINOR volunteer working with minors and/or vulnerable individuals** has completed the following:
 - ✓ School Reference Form or three (3) references for those who are home schooled
 - ✓ References were verified by a Parish/School Staff
 - ✓ Completed Minor Volunteer Application (signed by Parent/Guardian)
- Ensure that every **volunteer NOT working with minors and/or vulnerable individuals with/without a SSN** has completed the following:
 - ✓ Adult Volunteer Application

Attachment C

Template for Website Content regarding Safe Environment Program

Option 1

Archdiocesan Safe Environment Program

The Archdiocese of Atlanta is committed to helping children and young people learn and grow in a healthy and safe environment. **<Parish, School, or Agency Name>** complies with archdiocesan safe environment policies and procedures in accordance with the U.S. Bishop's [Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People](#). Safe Environment programs are in place to assist parents and children – and those whose duties involve contact with minors – in preventing harm to young people.

The Archdiocese of Atlanta proudly offers Safe Environment training materials to all schools and parishes. [VIRTUS Protecting God's Children](#) (commonly referred to as "Virtus") is the training program for adults and children in grades Kindergarten through 12th grade.

We are happy to partner with you in working to keep your children safe. Please visit the Archdiocesan Safe Environment page for information on [reporting child abuse](#).

Option 2

Volunteer Safe Environment Requirements

The Archdiocese of Atlanta requires that all adult volunteers (18 years old or older) working with children, youth, and/or vulnerable individuals must complete the Safe Environment training (VIRTUS) and undergo a background screening before they start volunteering.

<https://archatl.com/ministries-services/safe-environment/volunteers/>

In addition, volunteers must be familiar with the Reporting Child Abuse Guidelines. To view these guidelines, [CLICK HERE](#).

If you have any questions, please contact <Parish/School/Agency Safe Environment Coordinator> (000-000-0000).

Important Links

SE Main page - <https://archatl.com/ministries-services/safe-environment/>

Reporting Abuse - <https://archatl.com/offices/child-and-youth-protection/reporting-abuse/>

SE Policies and Procedures - <https://archatl.com/ministries-services/safe-environment/policies-and-procedures/>

VIRTUS - <https://archatl.com/ministries-services/safe-environment/virtus-protecting-gods-children/>

Attachment D

Sample Letter – Charter Compliance

<Parish or School Letterhead>

The Most Rev. Wilton D. Gregory

Archbishop of Atlanta

2401 Lake Park Dr SE

Smyrna, GA 30080

Dear Archbishop Gregory,

I am writing to inform you that <Parish & Missions or School> in <City> has/have completed training for the 2017-2018 audit year and is/are in compliance with the Revised 2011 Charter and Norms for the Protection of Children and Young Persons.

In accordance with Archdiocesan policy, to the best of my knowledge, all employees and volunteers whose duties involve contact with minors have participated in the Safe Environment training. All employees and volunteers have agreed to abide by the Archdiocesan policies, and a background check was processed in the last five years.

Children and youth enrolled in religious education programs, and/or children and youth enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12, were offered the annual age-appropriate VIRTUS training in compliance with standard Archdiocesan policy.

Sincerely,

REQUIRES SIGNATURE OF PASTOR OR PRINCIPAL ONLY