



Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

Safe Environment Implementation Guide

January 2012

SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM COMPONENTS -- SECTION I

A. SUMMARY OF PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Articles 12 and 13 of the U.S. Bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People mandate that each Diocese implement a safe environment program. The required components of the safe environment program include training on the issues of child sexual abuse awareness and prevention, published standards of conduct for clergy and all personnel working with children and youth, as well as background evaluations. The safe environment program currently being implemented in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston incorporates each of these components.

Chancery/Parish Employee and Volunteer Training

Required Attendance - VIRTUS® Protecting God's Children for Adults Workshop:

- All active priests and permanent deacons
- All seminarians
- All employees of the Archdiocese, including parishes and schools, regardless of position, ministry, part-time and full-time status
- All contract employees
- Volunteer directors/coordinators of religious education
- Religious education catechists and staff
- Volunteers in youth ministry programs, including Life Teen, e.g., regular drivers
- Volunteers in parochial and diocesan schools
- Coaches or volunteers in athletic programs
- Volunteers in quinceaneras preparation
- Scout Leaders (Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, etc.)
- Volunteers with children and youth choirs
- Volunteers in an early childhood center/program
- Volunteers in Mother's Day Out programs
- Volunteers in a parish nursery
- Volunteer coordinators/trainers of altar servers
- Volunteers that include an overnight stay, e.g., retreats, lock-ins, away from the child/youth's home
- Volunteers in Children's Liturgy of the Word programs
- Instituted Acolytes
- St. Vincent de Paul sponsored food pantries

Participants in other ministries are **recommended** to complete VIRTUS if, in the course of their ministry, they come into contact with children/youth. We understand that each parish is unique and it is up to the discretion of the pastor to make this determination. Such ministries would be:

- Liturgical ministers (lectors, ushers, EMHC' s, acolytes/servers, choirs, wedding coordinators)
- Food Pantry volunteers (other than SVDP) where families with children are served
- Volunteers in any other public ministry which carries with it an “implied trust”

**Volunteers having regular contact with children or youth are defined as those whose participation is "frequent, routine or ongoing"*

*** The term “implied trust” means that this person, due to the performance of their ministry, would be considered by the parishioners to be a “safe and trusted” person or leader of the church due to the function of their ministry.*

Catholic School Employee/Volunteer Training

All prospective **school employees** will attend the VIRTUS training “*Protecting God’s Children*” program. This includes employees of agencies providing services to students; i.e. Before/After School Programs, instructors of extra-curricular activities, third-party service providers, contractors, catering, transportation vendors, sports officials, individually or through the Greater Houston Catholic Athletic Association, etc...

Federally funded tutors/instructors working on Catholic school campuses must provide proof that the independent school district where they are employed has required them to complete a criminal background check. Inquiry should be made as to whether the federally-funded tutor/instructor has participated in a child abuse prevention program and, if so, a certificate of course completion should be provided to the school although this is not a mandatory requirement. All tutors should sign the Educator’s Agreement document found in the Catholic Schools Manual before they are permitted to operate in the Catholic school.

All **school volunteers** who have *frequent, ongoing, or recurring* contact with students will attend VIRTUS training.

- **Frequent**: Volunteers in more than 1 volunteer school event per academic year
- **Ongoing**: Volunteers in a capacity that requires frequent contact with children. Some examples would be:
 - Office helper
 - Room Mom/Dad
 - School Fundraisers that require volunteers to be at the school during regular school hours
 - Chaperone
 - Lunch room monitor
 - School social events for the students
 - Drivers of students for school events (*refer to section for driver rules*)
- **Recurring**: Volunteers in successive academic years for 1 school event or more

Driver Rules

Drivers for a contracted transportation vendor must have a background check from the company where they are employed. The school must verify that the transportation vendor conducts background checks on its employees. Since a school will have different drivers assigned from the same contracting company these drivers will not be required to be VIRTUS compliant. However, drivers are to be closely monitored at all times by a VIRTUS-trained school employee or adult chaperone and must never be left alone with children for any period of time. All other transportation guidelines are listed in the Catholic Schools Manual and must be followed.

“Protecting God’s Children” is a workshop on child sexual abuse prevention. Applicants must register for VIRTUS training on-line or through the School Safe Environment Coordinator.

B. TRAINING

VIRTUS® “Protecting God’s Children” for Adults Workshop

The VIRTUS® *“Protecting God’s Children” for Adults Workshop* (PGCA) is a 3-hour session including 2 videos and facilitated discussions focusing on the prevention of abuse and the protection of children. Participants learn how to recognize the signs and symptoms that an adult is a potential risk of harm to children and how to know that a child is being abused or exploited in some way. In addition, they will learn about steps that the faith community can take to create a safe environment for all God’s children and how to respond when adults behave in a way that raises concerns. This workshop credit is valid for 5 years. **After 5 years** employees/volunteers will need to take the VIRTUS *“Keeping the Promise Alive”* Refresher Workshop.

All individuals who are required to attend a “Protecting God’s Children” workshop must present a valid, non-expired form of Identification. Anyone who has expired or none of the forms of ID listed cannot take a PGC or KPA workshop. No Exceptions.

The forms of Identification accepted are:

- **Valid and Current Passport**
- **Driver’s License**
- **Texas Identification Card**
- **Mexico Consulate Identification Card**
- **Guatemala Consulate Identification Card**

PGCA Workshop Schedule & Registration

The workshops are scheduled monthly at various parishes and locations across the Archdiocese. In order to attend a workshop, participants must **pre-register** at the VIRTUS® website www.virtus.org

To view a schedule of upcoming PGCA workshops and pre-register:

- Go to www.virtus.org
- Click on the yellow “Registration” link in the left margin
- Select - View a list of sessions
- Select your organization – “Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston”
- View available sessions then click “Begin Registration” at the top of the page

OR

- Go to www.archgh.org
- Click on Safe Environment link on the bottom of the home page
- Then select Register and Attend a PGC workshop
- Then view a list of sessions

VIRTUS® “Keeping the Promise Alive” Refresher Training

Keeping the Promise Alive is a 1.5 hour session with 1 video that is taken by employees/volunteers **after 5 years** of taking the “*Protecting God’s Children*”® program. It provides ongoing awareness for the prevention of child sexual abuse. The material covered in *Keeping the Promise Alive* is designed to identify and reinforce the lessons of the original “*Protecting God’s Children*” program by clarifying some of the more challenging aspects of the sessions and strengthening the participants’ ability to recognize risky adults in their environments and take action to intervene in potentially threatening situations.

All individuals who are required to attend “Keeping the Promise Alive” refresher workshop, must present a valid, non-expired form of Identification. Anyone who has expired or none of the forms of ID listed cannot take a PGC or KPA workshop. No Exceptions.

The forms of Identification accepted are:

- **Valid and Current Passport**
- **Driver’s License**
- **Texas Identification Card**
- **Mexico Consulate Identification Card**
- **Guatemala Consulate Identification Card**

KPA Workshop Schedule and Registration

(Only to be taken 5 years after completion of a PGCA session)

The workshops are scheduled monthly at various parishes and schools across the Archdiocese. In order to attend a KPA workshop, you must log into your active account and follow the directions that apply below.

For individuals who read bulletins

(Please refer to page 5 to see who is a bulletin reader)

- Log into your account
- Select Toolbox tab
- Click on Code of Conduct. Sign your electronic volunteer code of conduct by clicking (Yes, I understand) it will then show the date you agreed.
- Next, select Background Check. Please click (Yes, I agree) to sign electronically, list any maiden or previous marriage names and enter your date of birth in the correct format.
- Then, update your account information such as (address, email, parish or school location)
- Select Training tab, then Live Training from the left green column
- Then pre-register for an upcoming session in your area

For individuals who are not required to read bulletins (offline users)

- Log into your account
- Select Toolbox
- Click on Code of Conduct. Sign your electronic volunteer code of conduct by clicking (Yes, I understand) it will then show the date you agreed.
- Next, select Background Check. Please click (Yes, I agree) to sign electronically, list any maiden or previous marriage names and enter your date of birth in the correct format.
- Then, update your account information such as (address, email, parish or school location)
- Select Instructor-led training
- Select register for additional upcoming sessions

Protecting God's Children for Adults Training Bulletins

These articles are designed to renew and broaden a person's awareness and knowledge of child abuse prevention. Pursuant to Archbishop Joseph A. Fiorenza's Memorandum dated March 18, 2003 outlining the VIRTUS Program, the following individuals are required to review this specific category of online training bulletins:

Review of Periodic Training Bulletins at VIRTUS® Online Website:

- All active Priests and Permanent Deacons
- Principals
- Parish employees/volunteers in leadership positions for ministries involving children & youth, Youth Ministers, Directors/Coordinators of Religious Education, Directors of Early Childhood Centers, Parish Nursery Coordinators, Family Life Ministers, Directors/Coordinators of Sacramental Preparation, Directors of Liturgy, Children's Choir Directors, etc.
- Pastoral Associates/Parish Administrators
- VIRTUS® Protecting God's Children Facilitators
- VIRTUS® Keeping the Promise Alive Facilitators
- Parish and School Safe Environment Coordinators

Protecting God's Children for Facilitators Training Bulletins

These articles are designed exclusively to assist Protecting God's Children Facilitators in improving their workshop presentation. Facilitators are the only individuals **required** to review this category of training bulletins.

Accessing VIRTUS Online Training Bulletins

Individuals required to review the periodic training bulletins at the VIRTUS website should receive an email notification when new training bulletins have been posted, including direct link to the VIRTUS website. However, in some instances these emails are caught by spam filters. Not receiving the reminder emails does not mean that the individuals are not still required to read the bulletins. Please follow these instructions in order to access the new bulletins:

- Go to www.virtus.org
- Enter the user I.D. and password you selected
- Select "My Training" tab
- See the box on the right side named "Training Bulletin Report"
- Click here to see your complete report
- Next to "Protecting God's Children" for Adults, select (*click here for details*)
- Then select the title of the bulletin
- Answer the question(s) at the end (*to receive credit for completion*)

Individuals experiencing difficulty viewing the online training bulletins or receiving credit for completion after viewing an article should contact VIRTUS directly for assistance:

C. **STANDARDS OF CONDUCT**

Ethical and Personal Conduct Policies

Effective October 1, 1990, the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston established Ethical and Personal Conduct Policies to set forth basic standards of ethical behavior and personal conduct for all personnel associated with the Archdiocese and its parishes, schools and other affiliated organizations. All employees, both existing and those newly hired should receive a copy of this policy and complete three (3) forms necessary for compliance:

- Acknowledgment Form
- Informational Questionnaire
- Release of Information Form

Completed forms are to be retained in the employee's personnel file.

Volunteer Code of Conduct

Effective March 18, 2003, the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston established a Code of Conduct to set forth basic standards of conduct for all volunteers having regular contact with children and youth. The standards provided in the Code of Conduct are mandatory; therefore, the form may not be altered in any way by the volunteer. Each volunteer must sign electronically when pre-registering for a VIRTUS workshop online. The Volunteer Code of Conduct is in lieu of the Archdiocesan Ethical and Personal Conduct Policy signed by employees.

D. **BACKGROUND EVALUATIONS**

1. Criminal Background Clearance Procedure

The Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston currently contracts with a reputable background check company affiliated with the NAPBS (National Association of Professional Background Screeners) to perform criminal background checks on employees, all parish and school personnel, and volunteers having regular contact with children or youth, in order to fulfill the requirements of the Charter.

2. National Criminal Index Scan

This database contains criminal records from 41 states across the U.S., including sex offender registries, from 39 of the 41 states. If an individual's address history reflects that they have resided in one of the states not reporting to National Criminal Index scan, then we have the ability through our vendor to perform a statewide and/or county check in the jurisdiction where they previously resided.

3. Refusal to Complete Background Check Authorization Form

As demonstrated above, our ability to perform a thorough criminal background check on an employee or volunteer having regular contact with children or youth is conditioned upon having complete information. Refusal to fully complete the criminal background check authorization form in its entirety is considered grounds for immediate termination of individual's employment and/or volunteer service. Any incomplete forms received omitting specific information, i.e. date of birth, will be returned to the Parish or School Safe Environment Coordinator with a request to resubmit the form when it is fully completed. Also, any forms received that have been altered by the volunteer or employee, i.e. crossing through portion of the document, shall also be returned to the Parish or School Safe Environment Coordinator.

4. Criminal History Reports

If an individual employee or volunteer has a criminal history, the determination as to whether the offense will prevent the individual from being employed and/or from engaging in volunteer service with children or youth will be made on a case by case basis considering several factors. Those factors include the type of offense, time lapse since offense was committed, the individual's criminal history in the intervening time period, the facts and circumstances surrounding the criminal offense, etc.

5. Notification of Non-clearance

When an individual's criminal history excludes them from employment and/or volunteer service with children or youth, their Pastor will receive notification from the Safe Environment Office that the individual has not cleared the criminal background check. The notification will **not** include any specific information regarding the criminal offense. In the case of an employee, the Pastor shall notify the individual directly of their non-clearance. In the case of a volunteer, the Pastor shall notify the ministry leader of the non-clearance and that the individual is prohibited from volunteer service with children or youth. The ministry leader shall communicate the non-clearance to the volunteer.

6. Application for Volunteer Service

All new volunteers having regular contact with children or youth are required to complete an Application for Volunteer Service and submit it to the ministry leader of the program for which the volunteer is seeking to serve. The ministry leader should thoroughly review the volunteer's application form for suitability in their particular ministry and check the references provided by the applicant prior to acceptance. The Application form should be retained on file at the parish. Do not send to Archdiocesan Safe Environment Office.

D. COMPLIANCE – NEW EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

New Employees in Leadership Positions in Ministries Involving Children & Youth as a Condition of Employment:

- Must attend VIRTUS “Protecting God’s Children” Workshop within thirty (30) days of hire
- Must successfully complete a background clearance
- Must agree to comply with the Archdiocesan Ethical and Personal Conduct Policies
- Must review periodic online training bulletins at the VIRTUS website following attendance at the VIRTUS Workshop

New Employees in Other Positions/Ministries Not Involving Regular Contact with Children & Youth as a Condition of Employment:

- Must attend VIRTUS Protecting God’s Workshop within sixty (60) days of hire
- Must successfully complete a background clearance
- Agree to comply with the Archdiocesan Ethical and Personal Conduct Policies

New Volunteers in Leadership Positions in Ministries Involving Regular Contact with Children & Youth Prior to Engaging in Volunteer Service:

- Must attend VIRTUS “Protecting God’s Children” Workshop
- Must complete the Application for Volunteer Service
- Must successfully complete a background clearance
- Must review periodic online training bulletins at the VIRTUS website following attendance at the VIRTUS Workshop
- Must agree to comply with the Archdiocesan Volunteer Code of Conduct

New Volunteers in Non-Leadership Positions in Ministries Involving Regular Contact with Children & Youth Prior to Engaging in Volunteer Service:

- Must attend VIRTUS “Protecting God’s Children” Workshop
- Must complete the Application for Volunteer Service
- Must successfully complete a background clearance
- Must agree to comply with the Archdiocesan Volunteer Code of Conduct

F. VIRTUS® WORKSHOP FACILITATORS

The Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston will hold training sessions as needed for new VIRTUS Protecting God's Children Workshop Facilitators. Volunteers interested in being trained as a Facilitator should complete the Facilitator Application form and submit it to the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Manager for consideration. Excellent candidates are those possessing strong verbal skills, with experience speaking before groups and time to make a commitment to presenting workshops in their home parish, but also other parishes within the same deanery.

G. DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE AT ARCHDIOCESAN WEBSITE

The following is a list of the Safe Environment Program documents which may be viewed and downloaded from the Archdiocesan website. Log onto www.archgh.org and select "Safe Environment Program" on the bottom of the page, and then select Documents:

- Archdiocesan Policy for Reporting Suspected Abuse of a Minor
- Volunteer Background Check Authorization
- Volunteer Code of Conduct
- Community Referral Resources
- Employee Verification Form

SECTION II – SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

A. PERSONNEL AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. **Archdiocesan Safe Environment Office**

The Archdiocesan Safe Environment Program (VIRTUS) Office maintains responsibility for the daily implementation of the Program, including, but not limited to, the following tasks:

- Scheduling Facilitators to present VIRTUS® “Protecting God’s Children” and “Keeping the Promise Alive” Workshops
- Approving VIRTUS attendance training records
- Maintaining databases of VIRTUS training records & criminal background checks
- Performing staff and volunteer criminal background checks;
- Scheduling training for new Parish and School Safe Environment Program Coordinators and Facilitators.

2. **Parish Safe Environment Coordinator**

Parish Safe Environment Coordinators are responsible for implementation of the Safe Environment Program at the parish level and ensuring compliance by all parish personnel. The term parish personnel is defined as "all parish employees and those volunteers having regular contact with children and youth". The following is a list of general tasks:

- Identify by name all parish personnel and volunteers who have contact with children and submit compliance reports to the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Compliance Coordinator annually by May 31st
- Schedule VIRTUS® “Protecting God’s Children” and “Keeping the Promise Alive” Workshops at parish site to accommodate staff, volunteers and parents
- Distribute periodic VIRTUS online training bulletins to employees without internet access
- Submit updates when new parish personnel begin or old parish personnel leave to the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Program Coordinator on as needed basis.

3. **School Safe Environment Coordinator**

With regard to Parochial and Archdiocesan regional schools, the Principal or school representative serves as the local School Safe Environment Coordinators for those sites. They will have the same responsibilities as those cited above for the Parish Safe

Environment Coordinators. (Non-parish affiliated schools may schedule one individual session per year, which MUST be open to outside participants.)

B. HOSTING VIRTUS® WORKSHOPS

Trained VIRTUS® Workshop Facilitators are available to present PGC and KPA workshops at parishes within their Deanery, and several have committed to present the workshop anywhere in the Archdiocese.

All Workshops that are scheduled will be posted on VIRTUS and may be viewed by going to the VIRTUS website at www.virtus.org. You can click on the yellow Registration link in the left margin and select the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston from a dropdown of different dioceses.

In parishes where there are significant number of employees and volunteers, the Parish Safe Environment Coordinator should submit a workshop request to be presented at the parish. Sessions will not be limited to participants from a specific parish or school location. (**All sessions must be open to all parish and school employees, volunteers, and parishioners of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston**)

1. Scheduling A Workshop - Determine Available Date(s) & Submit Request

- After the Parish Safe Environment Coordinator has consulted with the pastor and determined available dates on the parish and ministry calendars, he or she should submit the Request for VIRTUS Protecting God's Children Workshop Form (*Under the My Diocese tab of your VIRTUS account*) to the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Program Coordinator.
- The Archdiocesan Safe Environment Office will contact Facilitators to determine availability for the date and time requested. Upon successfully scheduling a Facilitator, the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Office will email the workshop confirmation signed with the Facilitator contact name and number then post the workshop online.
- All workshops will be scheduled and posted three months from the workshop date. Please do not submit requests more than six months in advance. Requests submitted less than one month prior to the workshop date will not be scheduled without special permission from the Safe Environment Office.
- Parish Safe Environment Coordinator should refer to the Workshop Checklist for additional pre-workshop responsibilities including publicizing the workshop.

2. Workshop Registration

In order to ensure that there is sufficient space, chairs, materials, refreshments, etc., all workshop participants **must pre-register** to attend. Please **strongly encourage** all workshop participants to pre-register online at www.virtus.org or www.archgh.org. This

is the most efficient means of accomplishing pre-registration and to ensure that all those mandated by Cardinal DiNardo to attend have done so.

3. Workshop Equipment & Participant Materials

When a parish or school is hosting a workshop, the Safe Environment Coordinator must refer again to the Workshop Checklist (*Under the My Diocese tab of your VIRTUS account*) for additional responsibilities, including securing the necessary equipment and Workshop materials.

The Safe Environment Coordinator should be prepared to be on site the day of the workshop and make arrangements for sufficient copies of the participant materials, which consists of the following:

PGC workshops

- VIRTUS® Protecting God's Children Participant Workbook*
- Pre-printed sign in sheet from VIRTUS
- Blank sign in sheet (Walk-in's)
- Employee Verification forms (Employees only)
- Volunteer Background Check (Walk-in's)
- Volunteer Code of Conduct

KPA refresher workshops

- VIRTUS® “Keeping the Promise Alive” Participant Workbook*
- Pre-printed sign in sheet from VIRTUS
- Blank sign in sheet (Walk-in's)
- Employee Background Check (Walk-in's)
- Volunteer Background Check (Walk-in's)
- Volunteer Code of Conduct

The copies of the above participant materials are available in both English and Spanish.

*The Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston has been granted a license from VIRTUS® that allows you to photocopy this workbook.

4. Viewing/Printing Workshop Sign-In Sheet(s)

The Parish Safe Environment Coordinator may view and print a list of those individuals who are pre-registered for the upcoming workshop to be hosted at their home location directly from the VIRTUS website as follows:

- Go to www.virtus.org
- Enter User I.d. and Password
- Go to “Administration” tab top right
- Select “Live Training” in left margin
- Select “Manage Registrations”

- Then your session should be the listed in the drop down box
- Scroll to the bottom and select either “export sign-in” or “create sign-in sheet”

The day of the workshop, the Safe Environment Coordinator should access and print a sign-in sheet containing the list of individuals that have pre-registered to attend the Workshop and format the sign-in sheet to provide ample room for the signature line. (See directions in the My Diocese tab, then my policies)

In order for every participant to receive credit for attending a workshop, they must sign in with their full name, correct date of birth, and present a valid, non-expired form of I.D. No Exceptions.

5. Walk-ins

In the event participants arrive to attend the workshop without pre-registering online, a blank sign-in sheet should be available for those participants. Please have extra copies of the Background Check and Volunteer Code of Conduct, they must fill one out. Since they did not pre-register online or sign the documents electronically via the VIRTUS website. Walk-ins should only be admitted on a space availability basis. All walk-ins must present a valid photo I.D. (Passport, Driver’s License, Texas ID, Mexico Consulate ID, or Guatemala Consulate ID) with name and date of birth matching the information they entered on the sign-in sheet. Mail all the walk-in forms to the Safe Environment Office for processing.

6. Late Entrants

After the first video *A Time to Protect God’s Children* begins, the sign-in sheets must be collected by the Parish Safe Environment Coordinator who will forward them to the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Coordinator. **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD A WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT BE ALLOWED TO SIGN-IN AFTER THE FIRST VIDEO HAS STARTED.** It is imperative that every participant arrives before the first video begins to receive the complete message of the program. There may be resistance to this procedure!

7. Community Resource Referral

During the course of the presentation of the Workshop, particularly the first video, there may be participants that find the content of the material extremely difficult to view. Understand that the video may be surfacing memories of the past abuse of the participant or a close family member and the severe pain the experience causes. The participant may wish to leave the Workshop. We ask that the Parish Safe Environment Coordinator please approach them gently and compassionately, attempt to persuade them to wait for the second video which is very empowering and outlines the plan to ensure that no other child will have to suffer the way that they have suffered. We also have prepared a list of community resources to be provided to the individual to seek additional help in dealing with the abuse (*see My Diocese tab, then my forms*), which includes the contact information for the Victim's Assistance Coordinator for the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. Copies of this resource should be available at the Workshop.

8. Workshop Documentation

After hosting a VIRTUS Workshop, the following documentation should be collected and forwarded to the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Program Coordinator for processing immediately:

“Protecting God’s Children” workshops

- Sign-in Sheets
- Background Check Authorizations for all Volunteer (Walk-in’s)
- Volunteer Codes of Conduct for (Walk-in’s)
- Employee Verification Forms (Employees only)
- Evaluations

“Keeping the Promise Alive” workshops

- Sign-in Sheets
- Background Check Authorizations for all Volunteer (Walk-in’s)
- Volunteer Codes of Conduct for Volunteer (Walk-in’s)
- Employee Background Check forms (Employees only)
- Evaluations

Please note that the Application for Volunteer Service forms should be retained on file at the volunteer’s home location and **should not** be forwarded to the Archdiocese. If any pertinent information is missing from the Criminal Background Check Authorizations or Volunteer Codes of Conduct the form will be returned to the Parish Safe Environment Coordinator.

C. VERIFICATION OF ATTENDANCE

1. Verification of Attendance at VIRTUS Workshop - Through Parish or School Safe Environment Program Coordinator

An individual's attendance should be verified through the Parish or School Safe Environment Coordinator. All Safe Environment Coordinators have access to confirm if an individual is approved to volunteer through the VIRTUS database. They have the ability to search by first or last name for individuals who attended the VIRTUS training outside of their home parish or school.

2. Request for Proof of Attendance for VIRTUS Training

All requests for proof of attendance for VIRTUS training should be referred to either the VIRTUS website or their local Safe Environment Coordinator for assistance. Any individual that pre-registered themselves at the VIRTUS website may log onto www.virtus.org Enter the User Id and Password. Select the Toolbox tab and then select Instructor-led training. The next page will be their proof of attendance. It will have their name in the top right hand corner, and the date, time, and location of where they attended along with **ATTENDANCE CONFIRMED**. They can print this page for proof of attendance. If the individual forgot their user I.D. and password, the VIRTUS online system will email it by selecting Forgot your password. However, if the individual did not pre-register themselves, they must contact their Parish or School Safe Environment Coordinator to update their email and send an automated email containing the User Id and password.

3. Procedure for Acceptance of Safe Environment Training from a Prior Diocese or Organization Outside of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

A new employee or volunteer moving into the Archdiocese may have previously attended the VIRTUS “Protecting God’s Children” Workshop in their former Diocese. Because the reporting laws regarding child abuse and neglect vary by jurisdiction, as well as the Diocesan reporting policies.

We only accept VIRTUS “Protecting God’s Children” training from another Diocese if the training was taken within the **last 12 months** of when the individual starts here in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. We **do not accept** any other program, examples (Praesidium, NetSmartz, Boy Scouts of America) we **only** accept VIRTUS “Protecting God’s Children” training. The following requirements must be made:

- Safe Environment Coordinator obtains verbal confirmation that the training date was within the last 12 months and the Safe Environment training program is VIRTUS “Protecting God’s Children” from the prior Diocese
- Safe Environment Coordinator reviews the Archdiocesan Reporting Policy and Texas law regarding mandatory reporting of child abuse or neglect (brochure from Texas Attorney General) and provided the individual with copies of each document.
- Safe Environment Coordinator mails in the following forms listed below.
 - ✓ Request for Transfer of Safe Environment Training form
(*Under My Diocese tab, then my forms*)
 - ✓ Criminal Background Check form filled out completely
 - ✓ Volunteer Code of Conduct form signed

The Parish or School Safe Environment Coordinator should submit completed to the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Program Coordinator for processing.

SECTION III – CHILDREN/YOUTH PROGRAMS

A. TRAINING FOR CHILDREN/YOUTH TO PROTECT THEMSELVES

1. Sacred & Safe

In compliance with the USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, Cardinal DiNardo has directed that every parish in the Archdiocese implement Sacred & Safe, a program which provides faith-based safe environment lessons for children and youth in kindergarten through the 12th grades. This annual program will involve an ongoing endeavor to provide one grade-specific lesson each year to help children and youth develop the skills to protect themselves from sexual abuse. An essential parent component will complement the grade-specific lessons. The Offices of Continuing Christian Education and Youth Ministry will oversee the formation process. The Archdiocesan Safe Environment Office will oversee the reporting process. More information can be found at www.sacredandsafe.org

2. Jeremiah 1:7 Youth Training

Jeremiah 1:7 is an Archdiocesan Safe Environment program which provides formation for high school-age youth who assist adults in ministry to children and youth under the age of 18. The program is a collaborative effort between the Offices of Youth Ministry, Continuing Christian Education, and Safe Environment. The Office of Youth Ministry is responsible for the day-to-day operating management of the program.

More information can be found at www.archgh.org/youthministry/jeremiah17/

Minors under the age of 18 will not be permitted to take VIRTUS “Protecting God’s Children” nor “Keeping the Promise Alive” Adult courses.

**ARCHDIOCESE OF GALVESTON-HOUSTON
SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM CONTACTS**

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Isabel Guerra, Safe Environment Program Coordinator
Phone: 713-652-8294
iguerra@archgh.org

Juliette Thomas, Safe Environment Compliance Coordinator
Phone: 713-652-4443
jthomas@archgh.org

Mailing Address

Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston
Attn: Safe Environment Dept.
P.O. Box 907
Houston, TX 77001

VIRTUS® Organization:

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Director, VIRTUS Programs & Services
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