



Empowering God's Children® Safe Environment Program



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An integral component of working with children and youth involves maintaining safe environments within our parishes and schools. As part of our comprehensive safety program, every year all children and youth in Catholic schools and parish programs are provided age-appropriate safe environment training. Beginning October 1, 2020, Archbishop Alexander Sample has decreed that the Archdiocese of Portland will implement the VIRTUS® *Empowering God's Children®* Program as the safe environment training curriculum for youth in middle school and high school programs. This is a nationally recognized program used by many dioceses across the country.

The *Empowering God's Children* Program is a lesson plan-based curriculum for youth. Knowing that adults are the primary protectors of children, this program provides for collaboration between parents and lesson leaders to establish safety guidelines and principles. Our goal is to ensure that all youth are protected, and that youth have the tools they need to understand and fortify their personal boundaries, and also realize the importance of reaching out to safe adults when in need of help.

Each lesson begins with The Power to Protect™, a short six to seven-minute video introduction that lays the groundwork. In each age-appropriate video, a presenter will speak directly to children or young people about the purpose of the program and the goals for the lesson, as well as what the children can expect from the activities and discussion. The presenter will introduce the physical boundary safety rules, the concepts of "safe" and "unsafe" friends and adults, and provide some basic facts, vocabulary words, definitions, and discussion points. All topics discussed in the video will be further developed through the activities and supplemental materials provided in the "live" portion of the training.

We are pleased to be partnering with VIRTUS (<https://www.virtus.org>) and look forward to working together to make our churches, schools, homes and communities a safer place for all of God's children.