



DIOCESE OF BAKER

Office of the Bishop
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November 9, 2020

Dear Priests, School Principals, and Directors of Religious Education,

In the last decade the Church in the United States has learned a very painful lesson: if we do not take care to protect our children from sexual abuse, they will suffer from our negligence—deeply and lastingly. But in our efforts to prevent such tragic suffering we have learned another, very hopeful lesson as well: child protection programs really do work. The widespread effort to heighten awareness of the dangers of sexual abuse has led to the implementation of policies to deter it. And studies show a notable statistical decline of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church. If we continue to be vigilant, together we can make the world safer for our children to grow up in. That is the firm hope which prompts my endorsement of the policy this letter sets forth.

Pursuant to the USCCB's Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, the Diocese of Baker commits itself to the following responsibilities:

1. The Diocese will see to it that all diocesan, parish, and parish school employees and all volunteers who work with minors or vulnerable persons:
 - undergo a criminal background check;
 - complete the *Catholic Mutual Group* Safe Environment Videos;
 - review and sign the Diocesan Code of Conduct for Ministry with Children, Youth and Vulnerable Persons
 - review and sign the Diocesan Internet Policies and Best Practices.
2. The Diocese will see to it that all volunteers who work even once with minors undergo a criminal background check.
3. The Diocese will see to it that parish school teachers and religious education catechists are trained to teach the *Circle of Grace* program through the 12th grade.
4. The Diocese will see to it that all teachers and catechists teach the mandatory *Circle of Grace* lessons to their students each year.
5. The Diocese will see to it that parishes and schools inform parents well in advance of the dates when the *Circle of Grace* lessons will be taught to their children and strongly encourage parents to attend the parent overview meeting that must be offered each year.
6. The Diocese will see to it that parishes and schools offer parents forms with which they may opt out in writing if they do not wish their children to participate in the *Circle of Grace* lessons.



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To ensure respect for the rights of parents as the primary educators of their children, the following Pastoral Guidelines are to be followed throughout the diocese. They govern three possible scenarios for parental involvement in the *Circle of Grace* Training.

1. **Parents attend the parents' overview meeting**, and their children receive the *Circle of Grace* lessons as part of the normal school or religious education schedule.
2. **Parents decline to have their children participate** by filling out the Diocese of Baker "Opt Out" form. From this decision two consequences follow:
 - The school principal or the pastor provides the parents with *Circle of Grace* lesson materials and invites them to present them to their children at home.
 - Their children do not attend the classes when the *Circle of Grace* training is given.
3. **Parents do not attend and do not fill out an "opt out" form.** Since parents have been informed of and invited to the parents' training session, their non-response is presumed to mean that they wish their children to receive the *Circle of Grace* classes as part of the normal school or religious education schedule.

Leah Bickett serves as the Diocese of Baker's Safe Environment Coordinator. She oversees and offers support on a regular and timely basis through the Diocese. She can be reached at the Diocesan office by phone (541) 388-4004 or email (leah@dioceseofbaker.org).

Each of you plays an indispensable part in this vitally important program. Please accept my gratitude in advance for your cooperation.

In Christ Jesus,

Most Reverend Liam Cary
Bishop of Baker