

Health, Safety and Environment Policy and Procedures

2025-26 St. Laurence Faith Formation

Rev. Reginald Samuels, Pastor and Dr. Christine Hernandez, Director of Faith Formation

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1. Statement of Purpose and Scope

As a point of clarification, catechists in this document refer to all catechists, core team, facilitators, or volunteers of Faith Formation. Child(ren) in this document refers to any minor, who is under 18 years of age.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The primary goal of this manual is to manage and provide for the safety and security of the St. Laurence Faith Formation children, catechists and volunteers, staff, and visitors.

SCOPE

St. Laurence Catholic Church is a welcoming and caring community. Our belief in the sacredness of life extends beyond the spiritual well-being of each individual to include emotional and physical well-being. In order to provide a safe and healthy environment for those involved with St. Laurence Faith Formation, we distribute and review the Health, Safety, and Environment Policy and Procedures each year with staff and catechists. Copies of the document are also available at the front desk. Although every circumstance cannot be anticipated in advance, these policies and procedures should provide the basic guidance to maintain a safe and healthy environment and to handle emergencies as they arise.

2. Health

2.1 General

The health of each child, adolescent, and adult involved in St. Laurence Faith Formation is important to the staff and catechists. If any individual has a medical condition or other health issue that may create a medical emergency or a health risk to other individuals, we ask that this information be shared with the staff. We respect the privacy and dignity of all individuals and will limit that information to those staff members and catechists who need to know this information.

2.2 Immunizations and Contagious Diseases

It is expected that each child attending Faith Formation be current with all immunizations. If an individual in any classroom setting is diagnosed with a serious contagious disease (tuberculosis, meningitis, etc.), which may pose a serious health risk to others, all parents will be notified in a timely manner.

2.3 Illnesses

We are asking parents to respect the health and well-being of other individuals and refrain from sending children with fever, nausea, conjunctivitis (pink eye) and other contagious infections to class. Anyone attending Faith Formation must be fever free for 24 hours without medication.

Fever is defined as body temperature of 100.4° or above. If a child develops symptoms of illness during class, the parents will be notified immediately and the child **MUST** be picked up.

2.4 Medications

It is the policy of St. Laurence Faith Formation **NOT** to administer any medications to any children attending any program or event. If the child needs routine medications, they should be administered before or after class. If a child is required to carry and use prescription medications, the coordinator and the child's catechist must be informed accordingly and a parent must remain on site to administer the medicine to the child.

2.5 Drug and Alcohol Abuse

If any individual is suspected of drug or alcohol abuse, immediate notification will be made to the coordinator who will notify the Director of Faith Formation and the Parish Administrator. If the individual is deemed to be a hazard to themselves or others, parents will be called to pick up the child and legal authorities will be notified, if necessary. Drug and alcohol abuse will include notification of parents or guardians, and may involve suspension or expulsion from the program. There is a zero-tolerance policy for possession of illicit and illegal drugs on St. Laurence Catholic Church property.

2.6 Child Abuse

Child abuse is a serious concern. Any staff member or catechist who suspects a child to be the victim of child abuse **MUST** notify Child Protective Services (not anonymous) and/or local authorities (anonymous). The reporting adult should also notify the coordinator who will notify the Director of Faith Formation and the Parish Administrator. Additional follow up will be determined in consultation with Archdiocesan staff.

Texas Abuse Hotline (Dept. of Family and Protective Service): 1-800-252-5400

All staff members and catechists are required to attend an online Safe Haven training class (Safe Environment Training for Adults). After five years a refresher course must be attended by all staff and volunteers in regular, consistent contact with children. Staff members and catechists are also required to have a Criminal Background check. Volunteers must sign the Volunteer Code of Conduct and complete an application for volunteer service which includes references. All staff members are required to sign an acknowledgment that they have read and understood the Ethical and Personal Conduct Policies of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston.

2.7 Suicide/Self-Injury Intervention

Should a catechist become aware of a situation where a child may be contemplating suicide or inflicting injury to himself or herself, **the catechist must bring the child directly to the office of the coordinator.**

The parent(s) must be called immediately, proper documentation must be made and the pastor will be notified.

AT NO TIME IS THE CHILD TO BE LEFT UNATTENDED BY AN ADULT OR ALLOWED TO LEAVE THE PREMISES UNTIL THE PARENT(S) ARRIVE.

When the parent(s) arrive, they are briefed about the incident and/or reason for concern. The child is then released to the parent(s) care. The names and telephone numbers for counselors and other appropriate assistance groups should be given to the parent(s) before they leave.

For administrative records a detailed report describing the incident should be kept in a confidential file. The coordinator is encouraged to follow up with the parent(s), but there is no legal obligation to do so.

2.8 Behavior

All participants are expected to behave in an age-appropriate manner and show respect for the staff, catechists, volunteers, and fellow participants. Behavior that is disruptive, disrespectful, malicious and/or dangerous will not be tolerated. Such behavior may include counseling with the faith formation coordinator and director, joint meetings with parents and the child, or suspension or expulsion depending on the severity of offense and the individual's attitude and receptiveness to counseling.

2.8.1 Electronic Devices

The use of cellular phones or other electronic devices should be restricted to emergency use only during faith formation, except for legitimate presentation purposes.

Catechists and children should be respectful in their use of electronic devices, including social media, as well as other forms of communication about faith formation, colleagues, and children. At registration, a waiver for photographic and videography permission is signed for permission for images posted or sent for programming purposes.

2.8.2 Weapons

No weapons, of any type, are permitted in the buildings of St. Laurence Catholic Church. There is a zero-tolerance policy for possession of weapons in St. Laurence Catholic Church buildings with exception of law enforcement personnel.

- ☐ If any person is found in possession of a weapon, legal authorities will be notified.
- ☐ If the individual is a minor, the parents and the proper authorities will be notified.
- ☐ The individual must then receive written permission from the pastor, Director of Faith Formation and Parish Administrator prior to returning.
- ☐ If a weapon is found unattended on the premises, the area shall be restricted until the proper authorities intervene.

3. Emergency Preparedness

A crisis or emergency is defined as any event that may disrupt the normal schedule of activities or present harm to an individual or group. The following emergency situations will be addressed by this policy: fire, medical emergency, weather, campus intruder, threats, and hazards. Adequate preparation is necessary in the event of an emergency in order to avoid panic, provide the fastest and best response possible, ensure that appropriate officials are notified, eliminate any additional hazards, and return to normal operations as soon as possible.

The safety of all individuals at St. Laurence Catholic Church is a paramount concern. On such occasions when emergencies arise, Faith Formation personnel will observe the following guidelines for appropriate action.

3.1 Notification Procedures for Emergency

- 1) CALL 911 - Emergency Response Personnel (Fire, Police, Ambulance)
- 2) Contact coordinator or other staff member on duty
- 3) Coordinator or staff member will contact the Director of Faith Formation, Parish Administrator, Facilities Director, and Clergy

Ave Maria Center (main line): 281-265-5774

Coordinators (typically on site during most events):

Pre School	<i>Susan Mulé</i>
Elementary (K-5)	<i>Joan Hastreiter</i>
Middle School/EDGE	<i>Caitlyn White</i>
High School/Life Teen	<i>Mike Cleary</i>

Confirmation	<i>Rachel Alcocer</i>
Adult/OCIA/OCIC	<i>Justin Frato</i>
First Sacraments/Family Faith	<i>Naomi Henry</i>
Spiritual Direction	<i>Anne Marie Daniel</i>
Parish Library	<i>Susan Mulé</i>

Director of Faith Formation Christine Hernandez 281-265-5774

Parish Administrator Suzanne Byrne 281-980-9812

Facilities Director Sheila Stulak 281-980-9812

Clergy

Pastor Fr. Reginald Samuels 281-980-9812

Parochial Vicar Fr. Wayne Ly 281-980-9812

4) As needed, Non-Emergency Telephone Numbers:

Sugar Land Police 281-275-2020

Sugar Land Fire 281-980-0852

Methodist Sugar Land Hospital 281-274-7000

Memorial Hermann Sugar Land Hospital 281-725-5000

Texas Poison Control Center 800-764-7661

St. Laurence Catholic Church Parish Office 281-980-9812

3.2 Alert Procedures for an Emergency

To notify the proper authorities, catechists should:

- 1) Use cell phone to dial 911
- 2) Use room intercom or cell phone to contact the coordinator and front desk office assistant (main line: 281-265-5774)
- 3) Front desk office assistant will page the building with necessary alerts
- 4) Coordinator or office assistant will use walkie-talkies (located at the front desk, staff office, and Weekday Children's Program offices) with needed alerts

3.3 Closings/Cancellation

The health and safety of children and staff is the main factor in any decision to close or cancel an event.

Closure/event cancellation notification will be made in the following ways:

- ☐ Posted online at <https://stlaurence.org/education>

- ☑ A recorded voice message will be placed on the Faith Formation main number at 281-265-5774
- ☑ If possible an email/text message will be sent out notifying parents of advance cancellations

The following criteria will be used to determine closure/event cancellation.

Facility Related

- Conditions/Hazards which impact the health and safety of children and/or employees
- Facility without electricity for more than 3 hours
- Facility without water for more than 2 hours.

Weather Related

- Concerns referenced from weather bureau, travel advisory and NOAA.
- Weather conditions such as area flooding, icing, snow accumulations, etc., which would prevent safe arrival and departure of catechists and children.
- Immediate area under a hurricane watch

Health Related

- Area Public Health officials recommend or order closure of the program to reduce spread of illness.

3.4 Emergency Procedures

3.4.1 Injury, Trauma, or Other Medical Emergency

Procedures for the First Responder to a Crisis Situation:

In the event that any child, catechist, visitor or staff member sustains an injury or requires emergency medical treatment, the following procedure should be followed by the first responder:

- 1) Assess life/safety issues immediately
- 2) Immediately call 911 and request an ambulance be routed to the appropriate location. *It is very important to tell the emergency response units your exact location and when feasible that you call from a land line to help emergency personnel in tracking of location:*
St. Laurence Ave Maria Center 3103 Sweetwater Blvd 77479
- 3) A responsible adult should remain with the injured individual and another get help
- 4) Never leave a class unattended. Combine two classes together, if necessary.
- 5) Control the scene and the crowd
- 6) Make sure any hazards such as bodily fluids or weapons are covered or blocked.
- 7) If qualified to do so administer first aid as necessary. A first aid kit is available.

- 8) Have a responsible adult meet the ambulance and direct the emergency personnel to the scene.
- 9) Follow the notification procedures in 3.1

After the initial emergency response has been addressed, parents of the affected child(ren) will be notified, *per the phone listing on the registration form*.

In the event that the emergency will impact other facilities of St. Laurence Catholic Church, such as the church offices, school etc., then those groups should be notified as well.

3.4.2. Fire/Smoke/Explosions/Gas Leaks/Bomb Threats

A fire alarm or threat in any of the St. Laurence facilities must be taken seriously. The pre-school through first grade sessions are located on the first floor, close to an exit so that young children can be transported quickly and safely outside. **Evacuation** is the safest response.

Fire Alarm/Drill Procedures:

- 1) Catechists must familiarize themselves with the nearest fire pull and fire extinguisher to their classroom. In each room a map is posted that details the primary and alternate exit routes and gathering place outside the building.
- 2) When a fire alarm sounds, catechists must gather their students and lead them in an orderly manner, single-file to the designated gathering point.
- 3) Catechists are expected to carry the class attendance sheet and a flashlight with them at all times during the evacuation.
- 4) Catechists should be the last ones out of the room, being certain all students have been evacuated. Students are expected to remain quiet and move quickly out of the building.
- 5) In the event that the primary exit route is blocked by smoke or fire, catechists should select the alternate exit route indicated on the room map keeping all students together and calm.
- 6) Everyone must remain outside of building until an "All Clear" signal is given by fire department personnel or staff during a drill.

STANDARD EVACUATION ROUTES

Ave Maria Center First Floor:

- Rooms 100, 101, 110, 113 & 114 – exit back (SOUTH) door of classroom area and gather along the fence line closest to Colony Park
- Rooms 102, 103, 104, 105, 106 & 107 will exit the side (WEST) door and gather in the parking spaces just outside
- Rooms 108, 109, 111 & 112 will exit through the playground (WEST) door and gather in the parking spaces just outside
- Marian Hall, Guardian Angel Hall, Library, Oratory, Coffeehouse, and Faith Formation Staff Offices – exit the nearest front (NORTH) door and gather at front of the covered driveway

Ave Maria Center Second Floor

- St Anne, St Joseph, St Clare, St Joseph, and Spiritual Direction rooms – head down the designated main front (NORTH) stairs, out the front door and gather at front of the covered driveway
- Youth Hall – head down the left (WEST) side stairway and gather in the parking spaces just outside
- Rooms 200, 201, 202, & 203 – head down the main front (NORTH) right stairway, out the front door and gather at front of the covered driveway
- Rooms 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210 & 211 head down the right side (EAST) stairway and gather in the parking spaces just outside
- Rooms 212, 213 & 214 – head down the main front (NORTH) left stairway, out the front door and gather at front of the covered driveway

Note: All stairwell traffic flows TWO LANES DOWN during evacuation.

Once evacuated, catechists should move children from the original gathering spot to a secondary evacuation spot, upon direction of emergency personnel or parish administration. Catechists should direct their group to cross the street at the crosswalk and proceed to the St. Laurence Catholic Church courtyard

3.4.3 Weather Watch/Warning

Before Program Begins

- If a weather warning/watch is issued, a decision will be made by the administration regarding the cancellation of a program and notification will be given via the procedures listed above in 3.1.

During Program

- Participants follow weather watch evacuation procedure listed below.

Weather Watch/Warning Procedures

In the event a weather emergency (tornado, massive flooding, etc.) occurs during the hours when students are in class, catechists will be warned (if possible) of the approaching danger.

- 1) For weather watch/warning, children and catechists will be asked to move to the **center of the building** away from windows into the assigned rooms/locations listed below -

Ave Maria Center Room	Evacuates to:
100	Hallway outside of 108
101	Hallway outside of 108

102	Room 108
103	Room 108
104	Room 108
105	Room 110
106	Room 110
107	Room 110
108	Stays in 108
109	Stays in 109
110	Stay in 110
111	Room 109
112	Room 110
113	Stay in 113
114	Room 113
Marian Hall	Parish Library, Oratory, RE Staff Workroom
Guardian Angels Hall	Hallway just inside classroom area
Oratory	Stay in Oratory
Library	Stay in Library
RE Staff Offices	RE Conference Room
Lobby & Coffeehouse	Parish Library
Kitchen	Parish Library
St Anne	St Joseph
St Joseph	Stays in St Joseph
St Clare	St Joseph
St Francis	St Joseph
Youth Hall	Admin hallway bathrooms (split up girls and boys)
Spiritual Direction Rooms	St Joseph
200	Room 201
201	Stay in 201
202	Room 201
203	Room 204
204	Stays in 204
205	Room 206
206	Stays in 206
207	Room 206
208	Stays in 208
209	Room 208
210	Stays in 210
211	Room 210
212	Room 214
213	Room 214
214	Stays in 214

- 2) All assume the **“Duck and Cover”** position. To assume the “Duck and Cover” position kneel with head against the wall and bend forward placing both hands on head.
- 3) Catechists and students remain in duck and cover until notified of “All Clear” by authorized personnel.

3.4.4 Campus Intruder

If a nearby threat, catechists will be instructed to **“Lock-out.”**

- 1) Catechists, children, and staff will remain in the building and proceed with their session
- 2) Staff will lock exterior doors
- 3) Windows will be kept closed
- 4) Everyone should remain inside the building until given the “all clear” by the emergency authorities.
- 5) Students will not be dropped off or picked up during a “lock-out” order. Outside doors will remain locked until local emergency authorities give the “All Clear” signal.

If an active shooter, *call 911*. Staff have been trained in the CRASE program by the Sugar Land Police Department and will alert catechists with instructions via building pager or walkie-talkies.

The following three responses can be used, according to the situation, to guide children and allow emergency responders to stop the intruder most efficiently:

Evacuation: If the intruder is not in the path of an escape route

- Catechists and children should evacuate via the safest and closest route possible with hands visible
- When evacuating, help others but do not move the wounded
- Move outside the building and toward the secondary evacuation spot, the St. Laurence Catholic Church courtyard

Shut-Down: If the intruder is near the room or in the path of an escape route

- Catechists should block doors (door stops or any furniture)
- Catechists and children should hide in an area outside of the shooter’s view in quiet

Defend: If the intruder presents an immediate threat

- Any adults should fight back and attempt to incapacitate the intruder
- Children should use nearby objects to distract the intruder and protect themselves

Note: parents will be alerted via text or email messaging by parish administration and should plan to meet their children at the St. Laurence Catholic Church courtyard

4. Environment

4.1 Facilities

The facilities at the Ave Maria Center have been designed and constructed to offer a safe, climate-controlled environment for Faith Formation use. The buildings have emergency lighting during power outages. While these facilities are designed to be as safe as possible, it is still possible for hazards to exist. Each staff member and catechist need to be vigilant in identifying any potential danger and making the coordinators aware, so that those situations can be remedied.

4.1.1 Hazard Identification and Reporting

If any individual identifies a hazard that may cause immediate danger to the safety of anyone such as water on the floors, electrical hazard, overhead (falling) objects, propped exterior doors, etc., that person should immediately secure the surrounding area and notify a staff member. The staff member will notify the maintenance staff and remain at the hazardous scene until the situation is remedied by the maintenance staff. Staff members all need to be aware of where the main cutoffs (electric, water and gas) are in each building and be prepared to shut them down.

4.1.2 Orientation and Postings

All staff and catechists are required to familiarize themselves with the building layout and where the primary and alternate escape routes are from their classrooms as well as areas of responsibility. The building layout and escape routes are on a map in each room. In addition, they must be aware of the gathering points outside, so that all persons in their control are quickly accounted for in an emergency. Each catechist must carry a copy of their class list/attendance sheet. The catechists and staff must also know the location of the nearest fire alarm and fire extinguisher.

Primary and secondary escape route maps and evacuation locations are posted in each room. Names and numbers for emergency notification are posted by the phones in each building.

4.1.3 Security

Security of our children is a primary concern, and we must be cautious before releasing children to any person. We need to report any activity that may seem suspicious or out-of-place on the grounds. It is better to be over cautious than to regret not having taken sufficient security measures.

It is everyone's responsibility to politely question anyone on campus who appears not to be part of the St. Laurence Faith Formation program.

4.1.3.1 Child check-in and Release

All children and youth (unless driving self) who are brought to a Faith Formation program must be picked up by their parent, guardian or other person specifically authorized by the legal guardian to do so. Any changes in the regular pickup schedule must be submitted in writing to the catechist or Program Coordinator in advance.

4.1.3.2 Visitor Check-in at Office

All parents and visitors must check-in with the Front Desk Assistant except during drop off or pick up for a program. Parents and visitors are not permitted to visit the faith formation rooms unless serving as a catechist with Safe Environment certification or with special permission and Safe Environment certification. At no time will visitors be left with a child unattended.

4.1.3.3 Leaving Children Unattended

No child will be left unattended at St. Laurence. In the event of an emergency in a classroom, the catechist will combine the class **with another class** until the emergency is resolved. All catechists must remain with their children until the last one is picked up. If a child has not been picked up after a session dismisses, please bring the child to the Coordinator so that the parent can be notified. Parents who do not pick up their children on time will be counseled. Repeat offenses could result in their child's termination from the program.

4.1.3.4 De-escalation

If an individual on campus presents themselves in an abnormal state, either emotionally unstable or incoherent, the following procedures are recommended:

- 1) Notify the front office assistant and/or Coordinator
- 2) Remain calm
- 3) One catechist should continue to engage the children
- 4) A second catechist, might assess the individual in a calm, non-threatening way until the office assistant or coordinator arrives
- 5) The office assistant or coordinator will escort the individual to a separate space and contact the proper authorities
- 6)

4.2 Mobility

The location of the Faith Formation presents a normal risk of parking lot safety. Please use care within the parking lot and keep all children close to you to prevent any accidents.

4.2.1 Street Crossing

If limited parking availability at church requires parking across the street on the main church campus vigilance, is required in crossing the street. **All persons are required to cross the street at the marked pedestrian crossing at the intersection.** The light at the intersection controls both vehicle and pedestrian traffic, although care must still be taken for cars turning right on red, etc. **Jaywalking across the median is dangerous and is strictly forbidden.**

4.2.2 Parking Lot Safety

All parent and youth drivers are expected to use the utmost care when driving through the St. Laurence parking lots. This facility has many children and they may dart out at any time. Drivers that speed through the lot and drive in a manner that endangers the life of any persons will be counseled. For programs that have traffic flow policies, these policies will be strictly enforced to ensure safety of all.

4.2.3 Drop-off/Pick-up Procedure

Traffic Flow Pattern: **All traffic is encouraged to enter via Austin Parkway to enter the parking lot and exit through Sweetwater Blvd.** Colony Park Dr. is an exit only and is **NOT** an entrance into the Ave Marie Center.

Drop off/Pick up Procedures

- **Preschool** children are to be accompanied by at least one parent to the designated meeting room. This is a parent/child program so children remain with their parents.
- **Elementary (Kinder – 5th grade)** children must be escorted into the Marian Hall, wait with child until the catechist is present, and picked up and signed out in their designated Ave Maria classrooms.
- **EDGE youth (6th - 8th grade)** are dropped off at the covered entrance to the Ave Maria Center and picked up and signed out by parents in Marian Hall.
- **LIFE TEEN / CONFIRMATION (9th – 12th grade)** youth are dropped off and picked up at the covered entrance or can park in the Ave Maria Center parking lot.
- **FAMILY FAITH** children 3rd and younger are to be accompanied by at least one parent to and from the designated meeting room for age-specific catechesis. Older children and youth should proceed to Marian Hall. Otherwise, this is a parent/child program and children remain with their parents.

4.2.4 Transporting Children

It is the policy of St. Laurence that staff and catechists WILL NOT transport children in their personal vehicles. In the event of a field trip or other off-site activity, parents will be asked to sign a waiver permitting such transport.

Very little control can be exercised with the high school youth regarding accepting rides home from friends. We ask all youth to be respectful of their parents and seek permission to do so, but St. Laurence Catholic Church cannot be responsible for the actions of these youth.

5. **Applicability:** The policies and procedures detailed in this handbook apply to all individuals involved with any program (staff, catechists, parents, visitors, and students) at St. Laurence Catholic Church.
6. **Authority:** This handbook is administered under the authority of the Pastor of St. Laurence Parish, who is directly responsible to the Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. Any deviations from this policy must be approved by the Pastor or his designates in this matter. The Church may be contacted at: **St. Laurence Catholic Church**, 3100 Sweetwater Boulevard, Sugar Land, TX 77479, (281) 980-9812

7. Referenced Documents

Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston Emergency Management: Emergency Operations Management Guide
St. Laurence Catholic School, *Crisis Management Manual*, School Year 2022-23
St. Laurence Catholic School, *Commitment to Safety & Security*, 2022-23