

It is the goal of the Diocese of Columbus, and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, to make the Church a place of safety: A place of prayer, ministry, and comfort. Everyone who enters our churches, schools, or facilities must be confident in this. Not one child or young person should suffer from abuse while in our care.

In order to assure the safety of our children and young people, the Diocese of Columbus has enacted a complete program of protection. As part of this program, the Diocese of Columbus will provide appropriate, just, and pastoral care for anyone who has suffered the crime of sexual abuse of a minor at the hands of diocesan clergy or church employees or volunteers. The Diocese of Columbus will report any and all allegations of abuse reported to it to the authorities and will cooperate fully with those authorities. Each parish has a copy of the diocesan policy and procedures for addressing allegations of sexual abuse of minors by priests or deacons and have it readily available for parishioners and staff.

What follows are the Policies and Procedures the Diocese of Columbus provides, edited for the particular circumstances of our parish.

Be assured of our care and vigilance in protecting the children of our parish and our diocese.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CATECHETICAL LEADERS/COORDINATORS OF YOUTH MINISTRY**

### **Ecclesial & Theological**

Catechetical leaders

- ❖ work collaboratively with the pastor (and/or other supervisors) in ministry.
- ❖ faithfully represent and practice the teachings of the Catholic Church with integrity in word and action.
- ❖ are competent and receive education and training commensurate with their role(s) and responsibilities (§ 231, Code of Canon Law).
- ❖ respect the diversity of spiritualities in the faith community and will not make their own personal form of spirituality normative.

### **Inclusion**

Catechetical leaders

- ❖ recognize the dignity of each person and refrain from behaviors or words that may be disrespectful of anyone or any group.
- ❖ serve all people without regard to gender, national origin, age, marital status, socioeconomic status, or political beliefs.
- ❖ act to ensure that everyone has access to the resources, services, and opportunities they require with particular regard for persons with special needs or disabilities.

### **Accountability**

Catechetical leaders

- ❖ are accountable to the pastor or other duly appointed representative, under the authority of the diocesan bishop.
- ❖ are called to serve the faith community, carrying out their ministry “...conscientiously, zealously, and diligently” (§ 231, Code of Canon Law.)
- ❖ exercise responsible stewardship of resources while holding themselves to the highest standards of integrity regarding fiscal matters placed in their trust.

## **Confidentiality**

### **Catechetical leaders**

- ❖ respect confidentiality but are not held to confidentiality in the same way as ordained ministers and licensed, certified counselors.
- ❖ adhere to civil and ecclesial law in reporting neglect, abuse, or the danger of physical harm coming to a person or to a third party.
- ❖ support the rights and roles of parents while ministering to the needs and concerns of adolescents.

## **Conduct**

### **Catechetical leaders**

- ❖ are aware they have considerable personal power because of their ministerial position and will sustain respectful ministerial relationships, avoiding manipulation and other abuses of power.
- ❖ know that physical, sexual, or romantic relationships with an adolescent are unethical and are prohibited.
- ❖ model healthy and positive behaviors with adolescents.
- ❖ know that procuring, providing, or using alcohol and/or controlled substances for or with adolescents is unethical and is prohibited

## **Referrals and Intervention**

### **Catechetical leaders**

- ❖ are aware of the signs of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse and neglect.
- ❖ are aware of their limitations with respect to paraprofessional counseling and make appropriate referrals.
- ❖ adhere to civil and ecclesial law, policy, and procedure for reporting abuse, suspected abuse or neglect.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CATECHISTS/YOUTH MINISTRY TEAM MEMBERS**

### **Catechists and Youth Ministry Volunteers**

- ❖ work collaboratively with the pastor, coordinator of youth ministry (and/or other supervisors) and associates in ministry.
- ❖ faithfully represent and practice the teachings of the Catholic Church with integrity, in word and action.
- ❖ are competent and receive education and training commensurate with their roles and responsibilities (§ 231, Code of Canon Law.)
- ❖ respect the diversity of spiritualities in the faith community and will not make their own personal form of spirituality normative.
- ❖ recognize the dignity of each person and refrain from words or behaviors that are disrespectful of anyone or any group.
- ❖ serve all people without regard to gender, national origin, age, marital status, socioeconomic status, or political beliefs.
- ❖ act to ensure all persons have access to the resources, services, and opportunities they require with particular regard for persons with special needs or disabilities
- ❖ are accountable to the pastor, coordinator, or other duly appointed representative, under the authority of the diocesan bishop.
- ❖ are called to serve the faith community, carrying out their ministry “...conscientiously, zealously, and diligently” (§ 231, Code of Canon Law.)

- ❖ exercise responsible stewardship of resources while holding themselves to the highest standards of integrity regarding fiscal matters placed in their trust.
- ❖ respect confidentiality but are not held to confidentiality in the same way as ordained ministers and licensed, certified counselors.
- ❖ adhere to civil and ecclesial law in reporting neglect, abuse, or the danger of physical harm coming to a person or to a third party.
- ❖ support the rights and roles of parents while ministering to the needs and concerns of adolescents.
- ❖ are aware they have considerable personal power because of their position and will sustain respectful ministerial relationships, avoiding manipulation and other abuses of power.
- ❖ know that physical, sexual, or romantic relationships with an adolescent are unethical and are prohibited.
- ❖ model healthy and positive behaviors with those in their care.
- ❖ know that procuring, providing, or using alcohol and/or controlled substances for or with minors is illegal and unethical and is prohibited.
- ❖ are aware of the signs of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse and neglect.
- ❖ are aware of their limitations with respect to paraprofessional counseling and make appropriate referrals.
- ❖ adhere to civil and ecclesial law, policy, and procedure for reporting abuse, suspected abuse, or neglect.

Youth ministry team members are aware of and comply with all applicable parish, organizational and/or diocesan policies with special attention to sexual misconduct, safety, transportation, parental permission, and medical emergency policies.

The Diocese of Columbus and our parish do not tolerate bullying or harassment.

**Bullying** is a pattern of abuse over time and involves a student being “picked on”. Bullying includes physical intimidation or assault; extortion; oral or written threats; teasing; putdowns; name-calling; threatening looks, gestures, or actions; cruel rumors; false accusations; and social isolation. Anyone who observes or becomes aware of an act of bullying will take immediate, appropriate steps to intervene. Youth and parents who become aware of an act of bullying report it to the coordinator and the pastor.

**Harassment** is verbal or physical conduct that embarrasses, denigrates, or shows hostility toward a person because of his/her race, color, religion, gender, sex, national origin, age or disability or other protected characteristics.

**No youth participant, volunteer adult leader, or parish staff member - male or female - should be subject to unlawful harassment in any form, and specifically not to unsolicited and/or unwelcome sexual overtures or conduct, either verbal or physical.**

## **YOUTH MINISTRY GATHERINGS AT PRIVATE RESIDENCES**

Many well-intentioned employees and volunteers have a desire to open their homes to young people. Even with the best of intentions, this would put young people at risk by making it acceptable in the mind of a young person to enter the residence of an adult. This could later be exploited by another adult whose intentions are not altruistic.

IT IS THE POLICY OF THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS AND OUR PARISH THAT NO PARISH SPONSORED YOUTH MINISTRY GATHERINGS, EVENTS, OR ACTIVITIES TAKE PLACE AT PRIVATE RESIDENCES.

This policy is designed to protect both young people and adult youth ministry leaders. It ensures accessibility and transparency of our youth ministry programs and helps establish a safe environment for everyone involved.

## **PARENTAL OBSERVATION AND OTHER VISITORS**

Parents are welcome to observe all youth activities sponsored by the parish. While efforts should be made to create an environment where youth are comfortable expressing themselves, "...the right and duty of the parents to educate their children are primordial and inalienable." (CCC 2221) Parents should never be denied the right to observe programs in which their children participate, but there must be a safe environment for all students. Parents and any other visitors are never alone with students and always observable by a duly certified activity leader.

## **ADULT CHAPERONES FOR YOUTH ACTIVITIES**

- ❖ Parishes follow a strategy of "two-deep" ministry with adolescents, where at least two adults are present at all youth ministry activities and situations, wherever possible.
- ❖ Where a one-to-one activity is required (e.g. counseling), such activities should take place in an open environment, with another person or people nearby. Special attention should be given to provide a safe and confidential forum while following standards of prudence.
- ❖ Adult chaperones for youth activities must be at least 21 years of age.
- ❖ For youth ministry activities away from parish property, a ratio of one adult per ten youths must be followed. For overnight activities, a ratio of one adult per six youths must be followed. The ratio of male-to-female chaperones should closely parallel the ratio of male-to-female youths at an activity. This is particularly important for overnight activities.
- ❖ For overnight activities where private rooms are used, an adult chaperone must never share a room with a youth. (Except where a parent is serving as a chaperone and there are no other persons sharing the room.)
- ❖ No adult chaperone should ever enter a youth's room unless it is absolutely necessary. If circumstances require it, the chaperone must be accompanied by another adult and the door must remain open the entire time the adults are present. Both adult chaperones should be of the same sex as the youth(s) in the room. If this is not possible, one male and one female chaperone may be used.
- ❖ A youth must never be invited or instructed to enter the room of an adult chaperone.

## Our Lady of Lourdes ~ Safe Environment Protecting God's Children ~ and You

### **All Volunteers Abide by the Following:**

As a volunteer working with children and/or youth, I am subject to a thorough background check including criminal history, required to attend Protecting God's Children Training, and must be approved by the Pastor. "Certified compliant" means having completed a Background Check and PGC training.

I understand that any action inconsistent with the policies of the Diocese of Columbus and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish or any failure to comply or take action mandated by these policies will result in my removal as a volunteer with children and/or youth.

**What follows is an extremely brief outline of the policies and procedures for volunteers, especially volunteers serving in the Parish School of Religion and any activities with minors.**

There is a packet provided when a person is accepted as a volunteer which includes an application and further policy information, some with required signature validation.

There is a Safe Environment display set up in the parish hall with the Diocesan Policy Handbook as well as other Safe Environment resources.

Visit the parish and diocesan websites for Safe Environment resources  
Visit [Virtus.org](http://Virtus.org) for the source documents  
of the Protecting God's Children program we use to certify compliance

**As a person tasked with the  
Protection of God's Children  
and providing a Safe Environment  
please take advantage of all the resources listed above to  
further the cause of preventing child abuse,  
especially the sexual abuse of children**

ANYONE OVER 18 YEARS OF AGE WHO WISHES TO VOLUNTEER IN ANY CAPACITY THAT INCLUDES 'CARE, CONTROL, OR CUSTODY' OF CHILDREN WILL, BEFORE BEGINNING, HAVE ATTENDED THE DIOCESAN SANCTIONED **PROTECTING GOD'S CHILDREN®** WORKSHOP AND HAVE OBTAINED A FINGERPRINT/BACKGROUND CHECK

## POLICIES

### **Parish School of Religion Volunteers**

It is our practice to **invite** parishioners to serve in the Parish School of Religion (PSR) but anyone over 18 years old who would like to volunteer in the PSR as a catechist or catechist aid or in any other capacity that involves children is asked to speak with the Pastor or with the current Parish PSR Coordinator or Parish Safe Environment Coordinator - who will consult with the Pastor.

Asking to serve or being invited to serve does not guarantee that a person will serve. As stated, other factors such as suitability, background check results, and Protecting God's Children training are all considered for the approval to serve.

**Registration** is a requirement for attendance of the PSR and VBS; one copy is kept in the custody of the PSR Coordinator and one copy is for the classroom catechist or VBS activity leader. It provides all the contact and health information necessary for a child's well-being, includes any special family circumstances requiring extra care and vigilance on the part of the staff, and explicit permission to attend & indemnification for the parish.

The Diocesan Policy is to have **"Two-deep Ministry with Children."**

We (Our Lady of Lourdes Parish) make every effort to have **two** certified compliant catechists in each classroom at all times. When we cannot provide two adult leaders, classroom doors are left open (unless the door has a window) AND the PSR Coordinator (or certified compliant designee) is stationed near the classrooms for the duration of classes or activities.

### **Classroom Visitors**

Parents and Grandparents (or Legal Guardians) are welcome in the classroom when it is a benefit to the child. Historically, this is only necessary for a few sessions. While the visitor is in the classroom, they may not interact with any of the children or intervene in any way; they are present as observers only. They are welcome to sit in the hallway outside the classroom if it will reassure them or the child.

\*If the parent or grandparent feels it is necessary to stay longer than three sessions, then they too must undergo the Fingerprinting/Background check and PGC Training that catechists do. This is to ensure that anyone who has sustained actual or visual contact with our parish children has been as thoroughly vetted as is possible.

### **Vacation Bible School – Special Circumstances**

During Vacation Bible School, we invite children as young as two to participate - as long as a parent or guardian can stay with their child(ren) and help them; other parents simply like to stay and help. Since we welcome parents and grandparents (or guardians) to experience VBS with the children, we do not require their certified compliance for just the one occasion. (If they wish to become regularly involved with VBS then they must abide by the Safe Environment compliance mandates as listed above.) We do, in any case, **maintain vigilance and oversight** through the majority of helpers who are PSR Catechists and who are already certified compliant. These 'certified compliant' adults are responsible for making sure that any visitors or any adult or teenaged volunteers are not acting in any way that raises any Safe Environment concerns.

### **Times and Places for Classes**

PSR classes and Vacation Bible School are to be held on parish property unless it is a planned 'event' and then will follow the same policy guidelines as outlined above but to include 'special event' requirements.

All grades meet on Sunday morning to ensure a transparency and the availability of other certified compliant adults. Gatherings at any other time need the approval of the Pastor with adequate protections (as listed above) provided.

**Intergenerational Activities** (religious and otherwise) must include the same safeguards as the PSR classes and events, especially by keen oversight by certified compliant adults to provide for the safety of both the children and the adults.

As has been learned through training, it is a fact that predators will 'groom' children (and the caring adults around them) to gain access to a child, even if it takes years. And it is a fact that it is usually someone who is in, or who has gained access to, the family's inner circle that will perpetrate the abuse. Any certified compliant adult is in a position of trust and must keep boundaries in place, even among the families in their care who are also personal friends of themselves or their families.

## **NO PSR GATHERINGS OR ONE ON ONE MEETINGS MAY TAKE PLACE IN THE HOME OF ANY PARISH OR PSR PERSONNEL/VOLUNTEER**

**NO PSR Catechist or any volunteer, staff, or clergy will meet privately with a PSR student or any parish minor.**

- If a student wishes to talk it will take place in a public place, making sure that the two are easily observed by others. Ideally, the catechist will make advance plans for a 'witness' to be on hand nearby.
- In the case of RCIC (Rite of Christian Initiation of Children) coordinator or catechists may conduct individualized classes but only in the presence of another certified compliant adult or the child's parent or guardian. The better alternative is for the child to be in an age appropriate class while the parents are responsible for the preparation for the sacraments of initiation. It is with the guidance of the Pastor that the best course for an individual is to be determined. First and foremost to consider is the protection of the child and the catechist.
- No catechist (or any volunteer) is to assume the role of Pastor, Psychologist, Counselor, or Spiritual Director for a child. These roles require special training and/or licensure.

## **Retreats – Field Trips and any Off-site Activities**

Retreats may be held on-site or off-site and must be approved by the Pastor. Whether on or off site, respect for boundaries and respect for the property and its intended use is to be maintained at all times.

There shall be at least two compliant catechists serving as chaperones for every ten participants for any activity or event. Any overnight events will necessitate more chaperones, at least two for every six but more if it requires driving (see below).

**ANY ADULT WHO ASSISTS/ATTENDS RETREATS MUST BE OVER 21, APPROVED BY THE PASTOR, AND MUST BE CERTIFIED COMPLIANT**

**An Activity Registration Form** must be filled out by a parent or guardian for each child for any PSR activity that takes place off-site.

Drivers for any PSR activity off-site must be Certified Compliant and be insured according to diocesan requirements, plus have filled out a **Volunteer Driver Information** form for each activity. There must be two certified compliant adults in each vehicle unless ALL the passengers are the driver's children.

**TEEN DRIVERS:** Teens may drive ONLY themselves and family members to any PSR activity, including PSR Classes, and only with written parental permission to do so.

## **Diocesan Offices Contact Information**

### **Regina Quinn**

Director, Diocese of Columbus Safe Environment Office

614-241-2568 x1543

[rquinn@columbuscatholic.org](mailto:rquinn@columbuscatholic.org)

### **Erik Bonilla**

Specialist, Safe Environment Office

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### **Laura J. Lewis, M.A., L.P.C.C.-S**

Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator

866-448-0217

[llewis@columbuscatholic.org](mailto:llewis@columbuscatholic.org)

[helpisavailable@columbuscatholic.org](mailto:helpisavailable@columbuscatholic.org)

### **Reporting Concerns**

Even minor concerns with another volunteer are to be reported to the Pastor; major concerns should initiate an immediate intervention and summoning of the Pastor.

Any 'certified compliant' adult is a mandatory reporter; any concern regarding a child's safety is to be immediately reported to the Pastor, the Diocesan Safe Environment Office, and Child Protective Services. Child Protective Services will determine the need to, and usually will, contact local Law Enforcement.

The mandate to report includes an instance when any minor reveals they have been abused or sexually assaulted in the past. Any adult who reveals an assault from years past also has recourse through the Diocese's Victim Assistance Coordinator Laura Lewis

**December, 2021**