DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH
Secretariat for Catholic Education
   Department for Religious Education
   Department for Youth and Young Adult Ministry

Principles, Policies and Guidelines
for Parish Religious Education and Youth Ministry Programs
Each principle and policy section is introduced by an appropriate set of quotations derived from the following Ecclesiastical documents:

*Vatican Council II, Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC)

*Vatican Council II, Gaudium et Spes* (GS)

*Pope Benedict XVI, Following Christ and The Word of God* (Spiritual Thought Series)

*John Paul II, Catechesi Tradendae* (CT)

*John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio* (FC)

*Bishop David A. Zubik, The Church Alive and The Church Living*

*Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC)

*U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*

*The Teaching of Christ, 4th Edition* (TTOC)

*General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC)

*National Directory for Catechesis* (NDC)

*Code of Canon Law* (CJC)

*Guidelines for Doctrinally Sound Catechetical Materials, NCCB, 1990* (GDSCM)
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STATEMENT OF MISSION

The Aim of Catechesis

"Catechesis speaks to the totality of the Church’s efforts to make disciples of all people, to help them believe that Jesus is the Son of God so that believing they might have life in his name, and to educate and instruct them in this life, thus building up the body of Christ (CCC 4; see also CT 1,2). Catechesis imparts the doctrine of the faith in an “organic and systematic way with a view to initiating the learners into the fullness of Christian life (CCC 5).”

"Communion with Jesus Christ, by its own dynamic, leads the disciple to unite himself with everything with which Jesus Christ himself was profoundly united: with God his Father, who sent him into the world, and with the Holy Spirit, who impelled his mission; with the Church, his body, for which he gave himself up, with mankind and with his brothers whose lot he wished to share (GDC 81)."

In this formative process that begins at birth, parents are given the profound privilege and serious obligation of being the child’s first and best teachers of the faith. Most of the religious attitudes and values children acquire come from their parents and the home. The family is the first place where faith is learned. Interpreted and lived. It is the right of all children to have loving parents to support them in their development. “Parents communicate values and attitudes by sharing love for Christ and His Church and each other, by reverently receiving the Eucharist and living in its spirit, and by fostering justice and love in all their relationships (NDC #54). To help parents in this important responsibility, the Church understands its obligation to support and assist these parents in their family’s faith journey on the diocesan and parish levels.

The Church in Pittsburgh, in an effort to be faithful in its mission to teach, understands that the “aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but in communion, in intimacy with Jesus Christ (CT 19, CCC 426).”

The Object of Catechesis

"The object of catechesis is communion with Jesus Christ. Catechesis leads people to enter the mystery of Christ, to encounter him, and to discover themselves and the meaning of their lives in him. Christ is the living center of catechesis, who draws all persons to his Father through the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ himself is always the first and last point of reference in catechesis because he is “the way and the truth and the life (NDC 55).”

Statement of Mission
A. Contemporary Society and Catechesis

Catechesis continues to be confronted by many challenges from contemporary society. A growing secularism, an aggrandized personal freedom and egoism, increasing moral relativism, the disarming forces of the media, a growing mobility of peoples which disintegrates family life, a sense of apathy and complacency among some—all these challenges work against the journey toward holiness and unity.

In many instances the media has replaced parents as the primary communicator of values to our children. Television programming, movies, music and other multi-media sources continue to portray sexual immorality, violence, drug and alcohol use as acceptable standards for living full lives.

Computer technology and software have given our children command of a tremendous amount of information with little or no value base. Entertainment has replaced education in the lives of many in our society. All of these issues affect the formation of our children and need to be taken seriously if we truly seek to teach the heart and mind of Jesus. The ability to provide quality catechesis in the face of these realities is a constant challenge. For these reasons, in particular, the presentation and fostering of the Catholic Vision of Love, which includes media literacy and an education to moral living, has become a particular integral dimension of parish catechetical programs in our diocese.

B. Particular Circumstances and Catechesis

Religious education for children who attend public schools presents special challenges. The limited amount of time for catechesis our children experience in a formal setting maximizes the need for quality catechesis. Faced also with the reality that a number of our children have limited contact with our parish community outside this formal setting, it becomes a matter of extreme importance that they are nurtured in an atmosphere of welcoming and acceptance. For these students, “religious education must be the best it can be. Those who teach religious education must be well prepared to meet the challenges of handing on God’s Word in a way that our students can truly learn and be excited about their faith” (The Church Alive, No.95).

Due to family circumstances, children sometimes attend religious education in a parish that is not their worshipping community. This can lead to further isolation and an inability to claim an identity as a Catholic. These children are often enrolled in programs which share physical space with others, whether in a parish or public facility. This can also lead to a sense of non-belonging in their parish community.

To address these particular needs and concerns, parishes have developed various formats for religious education. In addition to the usual classroom setting in a parish school of religion model, other models for catechesis are emerging: family centered catechesis, lectionary-based catechesis, small faith sharing communities, Liturgy of the Word for Children, and family neighborhood clusters. These alternative models are being studied closely to determine their effectiveness in fulfilling the catechetical mission.

Statement of Mission
Jesus formed his disciples by making known to them the various dimensions of the Kingdom of God. He entrusted to them “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 13:11); he taught them how to pray (Lk 11:2); he opened his “meek and humble heart” to them (Mt 11:29); and he sent them “ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit.” (Lk 10:1) The fundamental task of catechesis is to achieve this same objective: the formation of disciples of Jesus Christ. Jesus instructed his disciples; he prayed with them; he showed them how to live; and he gave them his mission.

Christ’s method of formation was accomplished by diverse yet inter-related tasks. His example is the most fruitful inspiration for effective catechesis today because it is integral to formation in the Christian faith. Catechesis must attend to each of these different dimensions of faith; each becomes a distinct yet complementary task. Faith must be known, celebrated, lived, and expressed in prayer. So catechesis comprises six fundamental tasks, each of which is related to an aspect of faith in Christ. All efforts in evangelization and catechesis should incorporate these tasks.” (NDC 20)

**THE SIX TASKS OF CATECHESIS**

(NDC 20)

1. **Catechesis promotes knowledge of the faith.**
   The initial proclamation of the Gospel introduces the hearers to Christ for the first time and invites conversion to him. By the action of the Holy Spirit, such an encounter engenders in the hearers a desire to know about Christ, his life, and the content of his message. Catechesis responds to this desire by giving the believers a knowledge of the content of God’s self-revelation, which is found in Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, and by introducing them to the meaning of the Creed. Creeds and doctrinal formulas that state the church’s belief are expressions of the Church’s living tradition, which from the time of the apostles has developed “in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit.” (Dei Verbum No. 8)

2. **Catechesis promotes a knowledge of the meaning of the Liturgy and the sacraments.**
   Since Christ is present in the sacraments, the believer comes to know Christ in the liturgical celebrations of the Church and is drawn into communion with him. Christ’s saving action in the Paschal Mystery is celebrated in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, where the closest communion with Jesus on earth is possible as Catholics are able to receive his living Flesh and his Precious Blood in Holy Communion. Catechesis should promote “an active, conscious genuine participation in the liturgy of the church, not merely by explaining the meaning of the ceremonies, but also by forming the minds of the faithful for prayer, for thanksgiving, for repentance, for praying with confidence, for a community spirit, and for understanding correctly the meaning of the creeds.” (GDC) Sacramental catechesis prepares for the initial celebration of the sacraments and provides enrichment following their reception.
3. **Catechesis promotes moral formation in Jesus Christ.**
Jesus’ moral teaching is an integral part of his message. Catechesis must transmit both the content of Christ’s moral teachings as well as their implications for Christian living. Moral catechesis aims to conform the believer to Christ—to bring about personal transformation and conversion. It should encourage the faithful to give witness—both in their private lives and in the public arena—to Christ’s teaching in everyday life. Such testimony demonstrates the social consequences of the demands of the Gospel. (CT 29)

4. **Catechesis teaches the Christian how to pray with Christ.**
Conversion to Christ and communion with him lead the faithful to adopt his disposition of prayer and reflection. Jesus’ entire life, death, and Resurrection were an offering to his Father. His prayer was always directed toward his Father. Catechesis should invite the believer to join Christ in the Our Father. Prayer should be the ordinary environment for all catechesis so that the knowledge and practice of the Christian life may be understood and celebrated in its proper context.

5. **Catechesis prepares the Christian to live in community and to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church.**
Jesus said to his disciples, “Love one another. As I have loved you (John 13:34). This command provides the basis for the disciples’ life in community. Catechesis encourages an apprenticeship in Christian living that is based on Christ’s teachings about community life. It should encourage a spirit of simplicity and humility, a special concern for the poor, particular care for the alienated, a sense of fraternal correction, common prayer, mutual forgiveness, and a fraternal love that embraces all these attitudes. Catechesis encourages the disciples of Jesus to make their daily conduct a shining and convincing testimony to the Gospel (CL, 34, 51). He also distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts he makes them fit and ready to undertake various tasks of offices for the renewal and building up of the church, as it is written, ‘the manifestation of the spirit is given to everyone for profit’ (1 Corinthians 12:7). Preparation for community life has an ecumenical dimension a well” In developing this community sense, catechesis takes special note of the ecumenical dimension and encourages fraternal attitudes toward members of other Christian churches and ecclesial communities.” (GDC 86) It should always provide a clear exposition of all that the Church teaches and at the same time should foster a “true desire for unity” (CT 32) and inculcate a zeal for the promotion of unity among Christians. Catechesis will have an ecumenical dimension as it prepares the faithful to live in contact with persons of other Christian traditions, “affirming their Catholic identity while respecting the faith of others” (CT 32)

6. **Catechesis promotes a missionary spirit that prepares the faithful to be present as Christians in society.**
“The ‘world’ thus becomes the place and the means for the lay faithful to fulfill their Christian vocation.” (LG 16) Catechesis seeks to help the disciples of Christ to be present in society precisely as believing Christians who are able and willing to bear witness to their faith in words and deeds. In fostering this spirit of evangelization, catechesis nourishes the evangelical attitudes of Jesus Christ in the faithful: to be poor in spirit, to be compassionate, to be meek, to hear the cry of injustice, to be merciful, to be pure of heart, to make peace, and to accept rejection and persecution (Matthew 5:3-11). Catechesis recognizes that other religious traditions reflect the “seeds of the Word” (AG 11) that can constitute a true “preparation for the Gospel.” (LG 16) It encourages adherents of the world’s religions to share what they hold in common, never minimizing the real differences between and among them. Dialogue is not in opposition to the mission ad gentes.” (RM no. 55)

Tasks of Catechesis
**E**vangelization is so central to the life of the Church that, should she neglect her sacred responsibility of bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ to all of humanity, she would be faithful neither to the mission entrusted to her by her Lord nor to her identity as mother and teacher. As it is, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the church’s ministry of evangelization animates her life.

**T**he pastoral and missionary activity that constitute the Church’s resolute commitment to evangelize comprises certain elements that have distinctly catechetical aspects: the initial proclamation of the Gospel that awakens faith, the examination of reasons for belief, the celebration of the sacraments, the experience of Christian living and integration into the ecclesial community, and apostolic witness.

The Church’s mission of evangelization is permeated by catechesis. While catechesis and evangelization cannot be simply identified with one another, “there is no separation or opposition between catechesis and evangelization…Instead, they have close links whereby they integrate and complement each other.” (CT no.18)

Catechesis is so central to the Church’s mission of evangelization that, if evangelization were to fail to integrate catechesis, initial faith aroused by the original proclamation of the Gospel would not mature, education in the faith through a deeper knowledge of the person and message of Jesus Christ would not transpire, and discipleship in Christ through genuine apostolic witness would not be fostered.

Catechesis nurtures the seed of faith sown by the Holy Spirit through the initial proclamation of the Gospel. It gives growth to the gift of faith given in Baptism and elaborates the meaning of the sacraments. Catechesis develops a deeper understanding of the mystery of Christ, encourages more profound incorporation into the church, and nourishes Christian living. It encourages discipleship in Christ and instructs in Christian prayer. Just as the mission of evangelization enlivens the Church’s pastoral and missionary activity, catechesis makes concrete her mission of evangelization. It constitutes the “good news” that Christ commissioned his apostles to spread throughout the whole world and announce to ever person. (Matthew 16:15). (NDC 22)

It is equally important to emphasize the central role of religious education in our parishes. For students who attend public schools, **religious education must be the best it can be.** “Those students who are part of the religious education programs must see that they are as valued as are those who come to Catholic schools” (The Church Alive 95).

Tasks of Catechesis
The purpose of catechesis is to make a person’s faith become living, conscious and active, through the light of instruction” (Vatican Council II: Decree on the Bishop’s Pastoral Office in the Church, 14).

Bishops are “beyond all others the ones primarily responsible for catechesis, the catechists par excellence (CT 63).” “As chief catechist in the diocese, the bishop is responsible for the total catechetical mission of the local church. Catechesis is one of the fundamental tasks of the bishop’s ministry. In his own preaching and teaching, the bishop transmits the teachings of Christ—the teachings of the entire Church (NDC 54).”

The Second Vatican Council gave much importance to the proclamation and transmission of the Gospel in the Episcopal ministry. ‘Among the principal duties of bishops, that of preaching the Gospel excels.’ In carrying out this task, Bishops are, above all, ‘heralds of the faith,’ seeking new disciples for Jesus Christ, and ‘authentic teachers,’ transmitting the faith to be professed and lived to those entrusted to their care. Missionary proclamation and catechesis are two closely united aspects of the prophetic ministry of bishops. To perform this duty Bishops receive ‘the charism of truth.’ (GDC 222)”

In addition to devoting himself personally to the proclamation of the Gospel and the ministry of catechesis, the bishop is also to supervise the catechetical mission in the diocese. He is to ensure that the ministry of catechesis receives the support of competent personnel, effective means, and adequate financial resources. He is to make certain that the texts and other instruments used in catechesis transmit the Catholic faith completely and authentically. He is to ensure ‘that catechists are adequately prepared for their task, being well-instructed in the doctrine of the church and possessing both a practical and theoretical knowledge of the laws of psychology and of educational method’ (NDC 54).”
THE PASTOR

The bishop entrusts pastors with preaching the Gospel and sharing in the responsibility of catechesis. In his role as the principal teacher of his local parish community, the pastor must first be sensitive to the needs of the parish. He must challenge his people to live their baptismal call to a lifelong conversion, a lifelong journey in faith (CCC 2033). The pastor needs to be a visible presence that fosters the vision that religious education is the work of the whole community (CCC 2038).

All believers have a right to catechesis; all pastors have the duty to provide it.” (CT 64).

Pastors are the bishop’s closest collaborators in ensuring that the goals of the diocesan catechetical mission are achieved.

Attentive to the norms established by the diocesan bishop, the pastor is to take care in a special way:
1. That suitable catechesis is imparted for the celebration of the sacraments;
2. That through catechetical instruction imparted for an appropriate period of time children and youth are prepared properly for the first reception of the sacraments of penance and the Most Holy Eucharist and for the sacrament of confirmation;
3. That having received first communion (and Confirmation), these children and youth are enriched more fully and deeply through catechetical formation;
4. That catechetical formation is given also to those who are physically or mentally impeded, insofar as their condition permits;
5. That the faith of youth and adults is strengthened, enlightened, and developed through various means and endeavors (CIC 77; CCEO c.619).

The pastor should also ensure that:
- Catechesis is emphasized in a way that provides age-appropriate opportunities for adults, youth, and children;
- A total parish plan for catechesis is developed and implemented in consultation with the parish council and parish catechetical leadership;
- Catechesis for adults of all ages is a priority—adult formation should be provided in such a way that parishioners would recognize it as the parish’s primary catechetical mission;
- The catechesis of youth and young adults is situated within a comprehensive plan for youth ministry in the parish;
- Catechists at all levels are well formed and trained for this task;
- The baptismal catechumenate is a vital component in the organization of catechesis in the parish;
- The catechumenate is an essential process in the parish, one that serves as the inspiration for all catechesis (NDC 54).

The pastor has the primary responsibility to ensure that the catechetical needs, goals, and priorities of the parish are identified, articulated, and met. In parishes with no resident pastor, pastoral administrators have the same obligation” (NDC 54).

Leadership in Catechesis
THE CATECHETICAL LEADER

The single most critical factor in an effective parish catechetical program is the leadership of a professionally trained parish catechetical leader. While the pastor is responsible for the work of catechesis in the parish, he may delegate others to function on his behalf. He provides the parish with qualified personnel (Director/Coordinator for Religious Education, Program Manager) who can assist him in this catechetical work. Depending on the size and scope of the parish catechetical program, parishes should allocate their resources so that they are able to acquire the services of a competent and qualified catechetical leader (or someone in the process of becoming qualified and competent) or to share those services with another parish. Only fully initiated practicing Catholics who fully adhere to the Church’s teaching in faith and morals and who are models of Christian virtue and courageous witness to the Catholic faith should be designated as parish catechetical leaders” (NDC 54 B5).

Ordinarily, under the direction of the pastor, the main responsibilities of this position are as follows:

- Overall direction of the parish catechetical programs (this might involve adults, children and youth).
- Planning, implementation, and evaluation of the parish catechetical program.
- Recruitment, formation, ongoing development, and evaluation of catechists.
- Implementation of diocesan and parish catechetical policies and guidelines, including the areas of catechist certification and supervision and administrative policies related to the safety and protection of minors.
- Collaboration with the pastor, other parish ministers, and appropriate committees, boards, and councils.
- Assistance in liturgical planning.
- Attention to their own personal, spiritual, and professional development.

Preparation for service as a parish catechetical leader should include advanced studies in theology, Scripture, Liturgy, catechesis and catechetical methodology, educational psychology and theory, and administration, as well as practical catechetical experience with adults, youth and children. A comprehensive knowledge of the General Directory for Catechesis and the Catechism of the Catholic Church is essential (NDC 54 B5).

"Leadership in Catechesis"
Parents and the Home

Parents are the first and foremost catechists of their children. They catechize informally but powerfully by example and instruction. They communicate values and attitudes by showing love for Christ and His Church and for each other, by reverently receiving the Eucharist and living in its spirit; and by fostering justice and love in all their relationships. Their active involvement in the parish, their readiness to seek opportunities to serve others, and their practice of frequent and spontaneous prayer, all make meaningful their professions of belief. Parents nurture faith in their children by showing them the richness and beauty of lived faith. Parents should frequently be reminded of their obligation to see to it that their children participate in catechetical programs sponsored by the Church” (NDC 54).

The Christian family passes on the faith when parents teach their children to pray and when they pray with them; when they lead them to the sacraments and gradually introduce them to the life of the church; when all join in reading the bible, letting the light of faith shine on their family life and praising God as our Father” (Pope Benedict XVI, Homily at Mass for the Fifth World Meeting of Families, July 9, 2006).

When children are baptized the Church community promises to help parents foster their faith “and assists them specifically in their role as catechists of their children, whether they assume complete responsibility or look to the school or parish religious education program for support (NDC 54.C).”

The Church community also keeps its promise to parents by providing programs intended specifically to help them in their catechetical role. Such programs focus on the task of parents in relation to particular moments or issues in the child’s religious life, such as sacramental preparation and moral development. They also seek to familiarize parents with the stages in children’s growth and the relevance these have for catechesis.

When formally participating in the catechesis of their children, parents must be mindful of the preeminent right of the Church to specify the content of authentic catechesis. They always have an obligation to catechize according to the teaching authority of the Church. Because they have given life to their children, parents have a most serious obligation and enjoy the right to educate them; therefore Christian parents are especially to care for the Christian education of their children according to the teaching handed on by the Church (CJC 226).”

Parents, pastors, catechists, and teachers need to cooperate closely to ensure that the catechesis offered children is truly an ecclesial catechesis that is consistent with Christian values lived in the family. Pastors have a serious obligation to assist parents and educators in their mission to hand on the faith to future generations (NDC 48 E2).”

Parents have the most serious duty and the primary right to do all in their power to see to the physical, social, cultural, moral and religious upbringing of their children (CJC 1136).”
Section A: Parents and the Home

Principle

Parents first share life with their children and initiate them into the life of Christ and His Church through the celebration of baptism. Thus, the Church reminds parents of their primary responsibility to nurture their children in the life of faith which the children first received from them.

The home is the first school of Christian life and a school for human enrichment (GS 48). In this domestic Church one learns love, the joy of work, perseverance, how to forgive, how to pray and to participate in divine worship by the offering of one’s life. “They [parents] bear witness to this responsibility [to educate their children] first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for education in the virtues.” (CCC 2223).

For further policy and procedural information and reference, consult Faith Education in the Home: Catholic Homeschooling issued by the Secretariat for Education, Diocese of Pittsburgh.

Policy A I: Effective Adult and Parent Education Programs

Each parish is required to have in place effective programs of adult education which aim to equip parents to fulfill more readily their role as primary educators. These programs would include adequate pre-marriage preparation, pre-baptismal classes, education in morality; Catholic Vision of Love – Parent Meeting.

Policy A II: Sacramental Preparation Programs

Programs for parent formation are required for sacramental years (Baptism, First Penance, First Communion, Confirmation).

Policy A III: Homeschooling Parents

Recognition and care must be given to those parents who exercise their primary right to educate their children in the home. Homeschooling parents (also known as home educators) often fulfill the religious education curriculum requirements (as outlined in the diocesan curriculum guidelines) at home with their own children. While some expectations can be placed on homeschooling parents and students for sacramental preparation classes and for involvement in the life of the parish community, these demands cannot be excessive or fail to recognize the excellent catechetical preparation already done in the home.

Homeschooling parents should notify their pastor that they are fulfilling the religious education curriculum requirements at home. Curriculum and textbook materials can be obtained through the parish catechetical administrator or the Department for Religious Education. Any requirements for additional participation in the parish program of religious education should be discussed with the homeschooling parents at that time so as to clearly outline the expectations. These should include a strong encouragement for the homeschooled students to participate in any extra-curricular events at the parish religious education program (service opportunities, special liturgies and prayer experiences, social outings and field trips, etc.). Homeschooling families and parishes are to work in collaboration along with the diocesan policies in this matter set forth in the document, Faith Education in the Home: Catholic Homeschooling.
Policy A IV: Report of Absence
In the case of the absence of a child, parents are asked to report to the catechetical administrator the reason for the absence on or before the day that it occurs. They are to help the child to cover the material that was missed.

Policy A V: Custody
In order to protect each child attending religious education programs, in instances of divorce or legal separation, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent or parents to provide the catechetical administrator with a most recent copy of the official court order as to the terms of custody and access to the child and his or her records (Legal Section: Policy O I).

Unless the catechetical administrator has been provided with a court order to the contrary, both parents’ rights are to be respected.

Catechetical administrators are to avoid involvement in custodial issues (e.g. requests to document student behavior, state of mind, health, attendance).

Policy A VI: Attendance at Meetings
Parents are to attend regularly scheduled events such as meetings, sessions on parenting and catechesis, and prayer services conducted in the beginning and throughout the catechetical year as relevant to their particular children. They are also to attend meetings scheduled in connection with programs of sacramental preparation for their children.

Policy A VII: Registration of Children
Parents are to complete all registration forms with accuracy and completeness (see Section E: Policy EI). They are to offer to the catechetical administrator any additional information, not necessarily solicited by the registration form, which will aid in the effective catechesis of the child.
**Guideline A I: Involvement with Instruction**

For those parents with children in the parish religious education program, a responsibility exists which demands their active and regular involvement in the instruction of their children. Such involvement begins by sharing the faith through their daily lives and especially by weekly participation in the Eucharist. This involvement includes a weekly review of the lessons covered in class and assistance with any homework assigned.

Parents are to be assisted in every way possible to fulfill that responsibility in the home. They should be given whatever helps are available to assist them in helping their children learn the basic prayers, in insuring regular attendance at Sunday Mass, in leading their children through a regular examination of conscience and bringing them to the Sacraments of Penance often, in finding ways to promote prayer and piety in the home, such as reading the Bible, praying the rosary, and developing a sense of gratitude.

**Guideline A II: Involvement and Resource**

Parents are encouraged to consult with the catechetical administrator regarding their questions and the availability of resources. Parents need to consider seriously the invitation to serve as a resource themselves within the catechetical program as catechists, aides and/or volunteers.
CATECHISTS

“W”hatever be the level of his/her responsibility in the Church, every catechist must constantly endeavor to transmit by his teaching and behavior the teaching and life of Jesus. He will not seek to keep directed towards himself and his personal opinions and attitudes the attention and the consent of the mind and heart of the person he is catechizing. Above all, he will not try to inculcate his personal opinions and options as if they expressed Christ’s teaching and the lessons of his life. Every catechist should be able to apply to himself the mysterious words of Jesus: ‘My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.’ Saint Paul did this when he was dealing with a question of prime importance: ‘I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you.’ What assiduous study of the word of God transmitted by the Church’s Magisterium, what profound familiarity with Christ and with the Father, what a spirit of prayer, what detachment from self must a catechist have in order that he can say: ‘My teaching is not mine! (CT 6).”

“T”is Christ alone who teaches – anyone else teaches to the extent that he is Christ’s spokesman, enabling Christ to teach with his lips….Every catechist should be able to apply to himself the mysterious words of Jesus: ‘My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me’ (CCC 427).”

“W”hoever is called ‘to teach Christ’ must first seek ‘the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus’; he must suffer ‘the loss of all things…’ in order to ‘gain Christ and be found in him,’ and ‘to know him and the power of his resurrection, and to share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible he may attain the resurrection from the dead’ (CCC 428).”

“F”rom this loving knowledge of Christ springs the desire to proclaim him, to ‘evangelize,’ and to lead others to the ‘yes’ of faith in Jesus Christ. But at the same time the need to know this faith makes itself felt (CCC 429).”

Response to a Call
As important as it is that a catechist have a clear understanding for the teaching of Christ and His Church, this is not enough. He or she must also receive and respond to a ministerial call, which comes from the Lord and is articulated in the local Church by the bishop. The response to this call includes willingness to give time and talent, not only to catechizing others, but to one’s own continued growth in faith and understanding.

Witness to the Gospel
For catechesis to be effective, the catechist must be fully committed to Jesus Christ. Faith must be shared with conviction, joy, love, enthusiasm, and hope. The summit and center of catechetical formation lies in an aptitude and ability to communicate the Gospel message. This is possible only when the catechist believes in the Gospel and its power to transform lives. To give witness to the gospel, the catechist must establish a living, ever-deepening relationship with the Lord. He or she must be a person of prayer, one who frequently reflects on the scriptures and whose Christ-like living testifies to deep faith. Only men and women of faith can share faith with others, preparing the setting within which people can respond in faith to God’s grace.
Commitment to the Church
One who exercises the ministry of the word represents the Church, to which the word has been entrusted. The catechist believes in the Church and is aware that, as a pilgrim people, it is in constant need of renewal. Committed to this visible community, the catechist strives to be an instrument of the Lord’s power and a sign of the Spirit’s presence.

The catechist realizes that it is Christ’s message which he or she is called to proclaim. To insure fidelity to that message, catechists test and validate their understanding and insights in the light of the gospel message as presented by the teaching authority of the Church.

Sharer in Community
The catechist is called to foster community as one who has learned the meaning of community by experiencing it. Community is formed in many ways. Beginning with acceptance of individual strengths and weaknesses, it progresses to relationships based on shared goals and values. It grows through discussion, recreation, cooperation on projects, and the like.

Christian community is fostered especially by the Eucharist, which is at once sign of community and cause of its growth. The catechist needs to experience this unity through frequent participation in the celebration of the Eucharist with other catechists and with those being catechized. Awareness of membership in a Christian community leads to awareness of the many other communities in the world which stand in need of service. The catechist seeks to cooperate with other parish leaders in making the parish a focal point of community in the Church.

Servant of the Community
Authentic experience of Christian community leads one to the service of others. The catechist is committed to serving the Christian community, particularly in the parish, and the community-at-large. Such service means not only responding to needs when asked, but taking the initiative in seeking out the needs of individuals and communities and encouraging students to do the same.

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities
“Men and women from a wide variety of backgrounds are called to share in the church’s catechetical mission. Most are volunteers. They bring a wide variety of talents and abilities to their task. They have widely divergent levels of experience and competence in catechesis. Programs of formation should be designed to help them acquire the knowledge and skills they need to hand on the faith to those entrusted to their care and assist them in living as disciples in Christ” (NDC 55).
PROFILE OF A PARISH CATECHIST

The catechist is a person who:

1. Is called to teach in the name of Christ and His Church.
2. Speaks from the depths of his/her own personal faith journey.
3. Lives a deeply spiritual, religious life.
5. Opens his or her heart and mind to the Word of God in the Scriptures.
6. Has deep love for the Church and her teachings.
7. Lives in communion with the Church and embraces a full sacramental Life.
8. Possesses the unambiguous commitment to convey the truths of the faith in a clear and consistent manner.
9. Pursues the necessary training in theology, religious education and catechetical methodology to effectively teach the heart and mind of Christ to his/her students.
10. Participates in the social and charitable ministries of the Church.

Parish catechists, many of whom are volunteers, may be engaged in catechizing adults, young people, children, or those with special needs. There is a particular way of carrying out the promise which the Church makes at every Baptism: to support, pray for, and instruct the baptized and foster their growth in faith.

The fundamental tasks of catechists are to proclaim Christ’s message, to participate in efforts to develop community, to lead people to worship and prayer, and to motivate them to serve others. To accomplish all this, catechists must identify and create “suitable conditions which are necessary for the Christian message to be sought, accepted, and more profoundly investigated” (GDC 71). They recognize, however, that faith is a gift and that it is not ultimately their efforts but the interaction of God’s grace and human freedom which lead people to accept faith and respond to it.

Parish and diocesan personnel and others involved in catechetical ministry should help catechists develop the qualities outlined here. Because catechists approach their task with varying degrees of competence, programs should be designed to help individuals acquire the particular knowledge and skills they need.
Men and women from all walks of life volunteer for parish catechetical programs. Parish and diocesan programs for the preparation and in-service training of volunteers should include the following elements:

1. Basic orientation and preparation, including instruction in theology, scripture, psychology, and catechetical techniques. They should be shown how to identify goals and achieve them in their particular circumstances.

2. Opportunities for liturgical celebrations, prayer, retreats, and other experiences of Christian community with others engaged in this ministry.

3. Continuing in-service educational opportunities.

4. Regular assistance, from more experienced persons, in planning and evaluating their performance.

5. Opportunities to evaluate not only their performance but the programs in which they are involved.

6. More specialized training for those who will work with physically or mentally handicapped persons.

7. Cultivation of a sense of community among the catechists during the entire formation process.

8. Some form of commissioning ceremony which expresses the faith community’s call and the catechists’ dedicated response (NDC 55).

Section B: Catechists

Principle

The bishop, along with his pastors, provides “…for the catechesis of the Christian people so that faith of the faithful becomes living, explicit and productive through formation in doctrine and the experience of Christian living (CJC, Canon 773).” Pastors, with the assistance of catechetical administrators, carry out this teaching mission in the local parish church through a variety of educational ministries, one of which is the parish faith formation program. Integral to this program is the ministry of the volunteer catechist. This catechist teaches in a systematic way the Word of God to children, youth, and adults and proclaims the word by his/her own living witness of the faith.

A person who is called to teach in the name of the Church is someone who speaks from the depths of a personal faith journey. A catechist helps others to name the movement in their lives in light of the Catholic faith. This presupposes a deep spiritual and religious life, one who practices his or her faith regularly, and follows the teachings of Christ and his Church.

A life of prayer, openness to the Word of God in the Scriptures, and a commitment to the community that includes a full sacramental life are the “pearls of great price” a catechist is called to share with others.
Policy B I: Recruitment

"The Church entrusts the ministry of catechesis to exemplary followers of Christ with unquestioned personal integrity and moral character. The candidate should rise from within the community of faith, be invited to consider becoming a catechist, be known to the pastor, and prayerfully consider becoming a catechist. The suggestion that anyone can be a catechist should be scrupulously avoided in all communication involving the recruitment of catechists (NDC 55)."

In consultation with the parish catechetical leader, the pastor should assist the candidate in the discernment of the vocation to be a catechist. Only after the candidate has given careful and prayerful consideration to the responsibilities connected with being a catechist should the pastor formally invite the person to begin initial catechist formation. When this occurs some form of commissioning ceremony should be planned that expresses the Church’s call, recognizes the catechist’s generous response, and confidently sends the catechist out to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Ideally, each year all catechists, both veteran and newly invited, should be commissioned on Catechetical Sunday (the 3rd Sunday in September) in order to renew their charge and encourage the support of the faith community for catechetical ministry” (NDC 55).

With the current diocesan child safety policies in place, clearances must be obtained BEFORE a catechist can teach. (See Legal Section Policy P IIa). Therefore, recruitment of catechists must be ongoing and done early. The pastor is responsible for determining the canonical status of any potential catechists. All catechists must be aware of diocesan policies regarding social networking (See Legal, Section S).

Catechetical Administrator Information

CATECHIST RESPONSIBILITIES AND TASKS

The Catechist:
1. Is knowledgeable of the content of the faith.
2. Demonstrates some skills in presenting the faith to a particular age group.
3. Recognizes and names his/her own gifts and skills.
4. Prepares his/her lessons.
5. Is cooperative with the direction and ties of communication of the catechetical program.
6. Is aware of the safe environment policies (clearances, Protecting God’s Children) in particular policies regarding social networking (See Legal, Section S - Communication and Main Section C - Safe Environment, Catechists, Other Volunteers & Parish Staff).
7. Is aware of the catechist certification policy and is available for training on the parish/diocesan level.
8. Is available for meetings on the parish/diocesan level.
9. Is cooperative in all service and worship activities involving the students.
10. Is open to ongoing evaluation.

Catechists

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Policy B I a: The Cardinal’s Clause

The Cardinal’s Clause applies to anyone teaching in a public church ministry. The Catechetical Administrator must have on file a signed and dated Cardinal’s Clause for each catechist.

The catechist recognizes the religious nature of the parish and agrees that the pastor has the right to dismiss the catechist for serious public immorality, public scandal, or public rejection of the teachings, doctrine or laws of the Roman Catholic Church (See Legal Section: Policy P I).

Examples of the violation of this clause would include, but are not limited to, participation by the catechist in a marriage which is not recognized as being valid by the Roman Catholic Church, support of activities which espouse beliefs contrary to the Catholic Church teachings and laws such as advocacy of a practice such as abortion, or the holding up to doubt or question the official teachings, doctrine or laws of the Catholic Church.

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DEPARTMENT FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF “CARDINAL’S CLAUSE”

I hereby acknowledge and accept the religious nature and mission of the Parish Religious Education Program, and I agree that my Pastor has the right to dismiss me for public immorality, public scandal, or rejection of the teachings, doctrine or laws of the Roman Catholic Church.

Further, I acknowledge that examples of the violation of the clause would include but are not limited to, being in or entering into a marriage which is not recognized as being valid by the Roman Catholic Church, or support of activities which espouse beliefs contrary to Catholic Church teaching and laws such as advocacy of abortion.

I understand that this acknowledgement is effective for the duration of my service at any parish within the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh.

I ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF A COPY OF THE CARDINAL’S CLAUSE.
(Original to be kept in catechist permanent file)

_________________________________  __________________________________
Catechist                                 Parish Religious Education Program

_________________________________  __________________________________
Catechetical Administrator (witness)     Date

(Note: a signed copy of the Cardinal’s Clause must be kept in the catechist’s record file)
Policy B I b: Acts 33 & 34 Clearances and Protecting God’s Children Inservice

For the safety and welfare of the students attending religious education programs, all catechists are required to obtain Act 33 and Act 34 Clearances (criminal) and Department for Public Welfare Clearances (child abuse) and must attend the Protecting God’s Children Inservice. The cost will be paid for by the parish for which they are a catechist. If the catechist comes from out of state, he or she is also to obtain state clearances from whatever state he or she has come.

Copies of all clearances, and certificate of attendance for Protecting God’s Children Inservice are to be kept in the catechist personnel file. No catechetical personnel including aides, office helpers, and other volunteers who come in regular contact with children are permitted to serve in any capacity until they obtain the required clearances and attend the Protecting God’s Children Inservice.

Policy B I c: Code of Pastoral Conduct

All church personnel are to conduct themselves in a manner that upholds Catholic values. Responsibility for adherence to the Code of Pastoral Conduct rests with the individual. Church personnel who disregard the Code of Pastoral Conduct will be subject to remedial action up to and including dismissal. Corrective action may take various forms—from a verbal reproach to removal from the ministry depending on the specific nature and circumstances of the offense and the extent of the harm.

All church personnel are to read thoroughly the code of Pastoral Conduct and sign the Acknowledgement of Receipt of the Code of Pastoral Conduct. A copy of the signed acknowledgement must be kept in the personnel file of each person. Copies of the Code of Pastoral Conduct can be obtained online at www.diopitt.org or from the Department for the Protection of Children and Young People (412)456-5633.

Policy B I d: Mandated Reporting

Any church personnel, paid or volunteer, who come into contact with children in the course of his or her ministry are considered mandated reporters of child abuse. Church personnel should make the required reports whenever they have any cause to suspect that child abuse has occurred. A mandated reporter who “knowingly” fails to report child abuse commits a misdemeanor.

The Child Protective Services Law of Pennsylvania specifically grants legal immunity to any individual who, in good faith, makes a report of suspected child abuse.

The mandate to report applies to all suspected child abuse, not just abuse that has been perpetrated by Church personnel. Possible abusers could include, for example, parents, relatives, older siblings, neighbors, youth group or sports leaders, family friends and other children.

For further information regarding child safety see Section C: Safe Environment and Child Safety – Main Section and Section Q: Safe Environment and Child Safety - Legal Section. Information can also be found on the diocesan website at www.diopitt.org.
The proper parish protocol regarding mandated reporting is to be followed at all times.

PARISH PROTOCOL FOR MANDATED REPORTING

1. Catechist discusses suspected child abuse immediately with the catechetical administrator or pastor if the catechetical administrator is not available.

2. Catechetical administrator informs the pastor of the situation, discusses the next steps of action.

3. Catechetical administrator or pastor contacts the Child Abuse Hot Line (1-800-932-0313) within 24 hours to report concerns of child abuse.

4. A written report is to be made within 48 hours of the telephone report and sent to the child protective services agency in the county in which the abuse occurred.

5. The pastor contacts the Department for Canon and Civil Law Services.

Policy B II: Formation of Catechists

“T”he summit and center of catechetical formation lies in one’s faith commitment. A personal love for Jesus Christ and the Church is at the core of a catechetical vocation. But a catechist must also possess the aptitude and ability to communicate the Gospel message in a manner both clear and unambiguous. A catechist must develop the skills necessary to effectively teach the heart and mind of Christ as proclaimed in the teaching of the Church. Training in theology as well as classroom management and pedagogy are essential elements in a catechist’s preparation and formation” (CCC 906). The catechist must be an active, fully-initiated, and practicing Catholic. He/she should be a person of prayer, flexibility, relational skills, and humor.

“T”hose who teach religious education must be well prepared to meet the challenges of handing on God’s Word in a way that our students can truly learn and be excited about their faith” (The Church Alive!, Bishop David A. Zubik). Equipped with the necessary skills, a catechist is able to proclaim the Good News with a conviction and joy that can help inform the mind, affect the will and shape the heart of every student.

“E”very Christian is bound to confront his own convictions continually with the teachings of the Gospel and of the church’s Tradition in the effort to remain faithful to the work of Christ, even when it is demanding and, humanly speaking, hard to understand. We must not yield to the temptation of relativism or of a subjectivist and selective interpretation of Sacred Scripture. Only the whole truth can open us to adherence to Christ, dead and risen for our salvation” Pope Benedict XVI, Homily at Mass in Pilsudzki Square, Warsaw, May 26, 2006).

In particular, volunteer catechists are expected to attend Basic/Provisional Certification Courses offered through the diocese. These courses are based on the four components of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Creed, Sacraments, Morality with Prayer woven throughout each course, and Methods. Methods courses are based on grade level and area which the catechist will be teaching including:

- elementary religious education
- elementary Catholic school
- youth ministry, middle school ministry
- special religious education
- sacraments
- RCIA/CIC
- adult faith formation

Catechists

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At the completion of the course the catechist attainment of basic certification will be noted in the Department for Religious Education database. In addition to the diocesan records, the parish is to keep a record of the courses attended by the catechist and the level of certification obtained. Catechists are encouraged to keep a copy of these records for their own personal file.

Basic certification must be renewed within five years by taking:
- 30 hours (2 credits) earned in diocesan approved courses
- Catechetical enrichment – 5 approved credit hours earned through:
  - Diocesan/Vicariate/District workshops or courses
  - Other diocesan approved catechetical enrichment experiences

**Note:** Once basic certification is reached it is to be maintained by taking an additional 30 hours of courses/workshops every 5 years.

**Advanced** catechetical certification is earned by meeting the following three conditions:
1. Must have taught three years in a parish after earning basic certification.

2. Within five years of completing basic certification, must have completed 60 hours or 4 credits of enrichment in the following:
   - 45 hours (3 credits) in Theology
   - 15 hours (1 credit) in Scripture (i.e. 6-week Synoptic Gospels)
   - 15 hours (1 credit) in Morality (i.e. 6-week Understanding the Sunday Eucharist)

3. Must have completed 5 hours in Creative Methodology (i.e. Creative Teaching Workshop)

4. Must have completed 10 hours of diocesan approved Elective Courses/Workshops

5. Must complete the standard Advanced Catechetical Certification Form and have it signed by the Pastor (see below). The form must be returned to the Diocesan Director for the Office of Catechetical Ministries, 111 Boulevard of the Allies, Pittsburgh PA 15222.

A catechist is **NOT YET** certified if:
- The individual is a new or veteran catechist, but has not taken any courses toward certification or enrichment.
- The individual is working toward basic certification and has taken one or two components toward the goal of basic certification.
- The individual has taken enrichment courses or workshops but has not completed the courses for basic certification.
- The individual gained certification prior to 1990 and has not maintained certification by updating during each subsequent 5 year interval.

For further information on certification and training, contact the Diocesan Director, Office for Catechetical Ministries and Catechesis (412) 456-3110.
APPLICATION FOR ADVANCED CATECHETICAL CERTIFICATION

Applicant’s Name____________________________________Last 4 digits SS # __________

Phone (1) ______________________ E-Mail ______________________

Address ______________________ City ______________________
State ______________________ Zip Code ______________________ Phone (2) ______________________

Parish Name and Address____________________________________

Date Basic Certification Received ____________ Site Attended ______________________

ENRICHMENT: 45 hours of Theology: 15 hours each of:

Scripture: Title of Course:________________________________________________________
Hours_____ Date_______

Doctrine: Title of Course:________________________________________________________
Hours_____ Date_______

Morality: Title of Course:________________________________________________________
Hours_____ Date_______

CATECHETICAL METHODOLOGY: 5 hours

Title of Course:________________________________________________________
Hours_____ Date_______

Title of Course:________________________________________________________
Hours_____ Date_______

ELECTIVES: 10 hours

Title of Course:________________________________________________________
Hours_____ Date_______

Title of Course:________________________________________________________
Hours_____ Date_______

Title of Course:________________________________________________________
Hours_____ Date_______

Title of Course:________________________________________________________
Hours_____ Date_______

EXPERIENCE IN TEACHING RELIGION
Parish (s) in which Religious Education was taught:

Parish Name ______________________ Year/Years Taught ______________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________

List the years of teaching Religious Education following the date of Basic Catechetical Certification:

____________________________________________________________________________________

“I hereby apply for Advanced Catechetical Certification/Religious Education.”

______________________________________________________ Date

Signature of Applicant ______________________

The above named applicant is a member of ______________________ parish and has been satisfactorily teaching as a member of our catechetical staff ______________________

Pastor’s Signature ______________________

Catechists B10
Policy B III: Ongoing Assessment

The assurance that volunteers “teach as Jesus did” and are following diocesan policies is discerned through:

- Observations in catechetical sessions
- Evaluation tools and/or checklists
- Informal conversations
- Prudent assessment of feedback from those in volunteer’s care
- Periodic individual meetings

Policy B IV: Volunteers

Volunteers are to use good judgment to protect the safety and welfare of the students. In the event that an accident should occur, the insurance coverage of the parish normally applies except in the case of recklessness on the part of the volunteer.

Volunteer responsibilities given to teenagers of high school age are to be in proportion to their age and maturity level. Teenagers of high school age function well as aides or partners with an adult catechist. Teenage (high school age) involvement is encouraged as a means of nourishing future catechists but are always to be under the guidance of adult direction and supervision. Teenage aides are not to be left alone with students for any reason (see also Policy PIII - Legal Section).

Policy B V: Confidentiality between Catechist and Students

The catechetical administrator, catechist, youth minister, or aide must be very clear with students that the promise of confidentiality will not be honored if: (a.) the student’s health, welfare, life, and/or safety is in jeopardy; or (b.) the health, welfare, life, and/or safety of another person is in jeopardy.

If a student tells a catechetical administrator, catechist, youth minister, or aide that he or she is going to harm himself/herself or others, the catechetical administrator, catechist, youth minister, or aide must reveal that information even if a promise of confidentiality has been given to the student. The catechetical administrator must immediately notify the pastor, the parents, and appropriate authorities.

Catechists and catechetical administrators are not to counsel students in serious matters. The student/students are to be referred to an appropriate professional. Catechists or helpers are never to be alone with a single student behind closed doors unless a window or other opening permits outsiders to see into the area.

A catechist is to avoid becoming so emotionally involved with a student that objectivity and fairness are compromised. Any relationship with a student that keeps a catechist from responding to other student needs on a regular basis is inappropriate.

Catechists

B11
Policy B VI: Dismissal of Catechists

The pastor is solely responsible for the work of catechesis in his parish. While he delegates to others a share in this responsibility to teach the faith, those who teach (catechists) always serve at the will of the pastor. The pastor validates the ministry of the catechist. Catechists exercise their ministry under the pastor’s direction and supervision. The pastor always retains the right by his office to dismiss a catechist from his or her teaching responsibility. Some elements that might lead a pastor to make this decision include, but are not limited to the following:

- Incompetency
- Insubordination
- Neglect of duty
- Engaging in public demonstrations against the Church, its teaching and policies
- Failure to teach according to the guidelines established by the diocese or the use of any texts, materials or resources which are contrary to the Church’s teaching
- Public immorality, scandal, or rejection of the teachings, doctrine or laws of the Roman Catholic Church (Cardinal’s Clause – see Policy B1a – Main Section).
Guideline B I: Interview Process

The person who volunteers to serve as a catechist is a treasure. His/her time and talents will be most fruitful when directed to the area of ministry perceived best through an initial interview or series of interviews. The interview, conducted by the catechetical administrator, should consist of the following:

Allow the person to tell
- Who they are
- The age level they will hope to catechize
- Of their own formation in the faith

Such an interview process should include the following:
- The obtaining of Criminal and Child Abuse History Clearances through the diocesan on-line procedure, attendance at Protecting God’s Children Program, signing of the Code of Pastoral Conduct and the Cardinal’s Clause.
- The obtaining of basic information for the personnel file with regard to the individual’s professional and personal background inclusive of education and catechetical certification status (see below).
- The provision of:
  a) A well defined job description, developed in part from the material in Section B
  b) A copy of:
     - The parish mission statement
     - The religious education mission statement
     - The parish religious education goals/objectives
     - Calendar for the catechetical year
     - Catechist Certification Policy (see Policy B1 – Formation of Catechists)
     - Parish Handbook for Religious Education (see below)
     - Catechist Handbook (see below)
  c) Review and signing of the Cardinals’ Clause (see Legal Section PI) and the Code of Pastoral Conduct (see Legal Section PII b) Note: a signed copy of both documents must be kept in the parish religious education files.
  d) A copy of the Diocesan Mandated Reporting Policy (document can be obtained through the Department for the Protection of Children and Youth at (412) 456-5633).
  e) A tour of the facility, specifically the room(s) he/she will utilize
  f) Familiarity with available resources (supplies, audio visuals, professional library)

- The assurance to the catechist of:
  a) Catechetical administrators’ availability for initial orientation and ongoing formation
  b) Parish financial support for diocesan sponsored courses, inclusive of, but not limited to, initial provisional certification
  c) Their value as a Catholic witness in the ministry of catechesis
  d) Catechetical administrator’s prayers of gratitude and ongoing support for them
(Parish Name)

CATECHIST PERSONAL DATA

Name ______________________________ Phone _______________ E-Mail__________________

Address ___________________________________________ Birthday ________________

_last 4 digits of Social Security # ____________ Spouse’s Name ____________________________

Religion:   Roman Catholic _____ Byzantine Catholic _____
Occupation _________________________ Phone _______________ Parish_____________________

Education

High School Attended ___________________________________________ Year Graduated____
College Attended ________________________________________________
Year Graduated ______________ Degree _____________________________________________
Graduate Degree ________________ College (if different above) _______________________

Other Post-High School Training __________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Hobbies & Interests ________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Other Areas of Church Ministry __________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

(check)
Act 33/34 Criminal Clearance _____  PA Child Abuse History Clearance____
Protecting God’s Children Program ____ (Date)_______________ Code of Pastoral Conduct____
Mandated Reporting Document ____  Disabilities Awareness ____  Cardinal’s Clause____

List Three Personal References

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<th>Name</th>
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On the back of this form, please write a brief statement, giving your reasons for becoming involved in catechetical ministry.

Catechists

B14
(Parish Name)

CATECHIST PROFESSIONAL DATA

Year _________________

Name ________________________________________________________________________

Address___________________________________________ Phone _____________________

E-Mail ___________________________ Birthday _________________

Last 4 Digits of Social Security # ___________________ ___ Signed Cardinal’s Clause

Position (Catechist/aide) _______________________________________________________

Certified Catechist (date) _______________________________________________________

Years of Experience as a Catechist ______________________________________________

Grades Taught __1 __2 __3 __4 __5 __6 __7 __8 __9 __10__ 11 __ 12

Grade Level Preference __________________________________

Safe Environment Information (check):

___ Registered on the Diocesan Database

___ Obtained Criminal Record Clearance (date) _________________

___ Obtained PA Child Abuse History Clearance (date) _________________

___ Attended Protecting God’s Children (date) _________________

___ Signed Code of Pastoral Conduct (date) _________________

Certification Status:

_____ Basic Certification

_____ Renewal of Basic Certification

_____ Advanced Certification

_____ Renewal of Advanced Certification

Comments: Catechist

B15
Guidelines for Composing a PARISH Handbook (for Parents & Catechists):

PARISH HANDBOOK

The parish handbook for religious education should include all annually updated essential information covering the following:

1. Requirements for enrollment
2. Goals and objectives for the program
3. A current list of names, addresses and available phone numbers and e-mail addresses of parish staff members
4. Expected behavior of students in class, Church, and at other parish events
5. Parish sacramental guidelines
6. Copies of diocesan policies and procedures pertinent to the role of the catechist:
   a. On-line procedure to obtain Criminal Record Clearance and Pennsylvania Child Abuse Clearance.
   b. Diocesan Mandated Reporting Policy
   c. Attendance at a diocesan Protecting God’s Children program
   d. Code of Pastoral Conduct
   e. Cardinal’s Clause
7. Copies of all parish policies and procedures pertinent to the role of the catechist.
8. A current list of parish programs and events.
9. A statement of understanding and acceptance regarding parish policies and procedures and a line/place for parent(s)’ signature(s).
Guidelines for Composing a CATECHIST Handbook:

CATECHIST HANDBOOK

The catechist handbook is a vital part of catechist training and should include all annually updated information covering the following items:

1. Goals and objectives of the catechetical program.

2. A list of current names, addresses and available phone numbers and email addresses of staff members and catechists.

3. Schedule of catechetical sessions and events.

4. Accountability for student attendance.

5. Procedures for arrival and dismissal of students.

6. Procedures for fire drills and emergency evacuation.

7. Procedures for class conduct and organization.


9. Procedures for handling racial and ethnic intimidation, offensive statements and actions.

10. Communication procedures (staff, parents etc.)

11. Safety procedures (mandated reporting policy etc.)

12. Legal guidelines.

13. Available catechetical resources on site and elsewhere.


15. Responsibilities and tasks of the catechists (see below).

The catechist handbook should reflect all established diocesan policies and procedures (www.diopitt.org or Section C: Safe Environment and Child Safety - Main and Section Q: Safe Environment and Child Safety - Legal).

The handbook should also cover any other areas particular to the parish.
PROFILE OF A CATECHIST

The catechist is a person who:

1. Is called to teach in the name of Christ and His Church.
2. Speaks from the depths of his/her own personal faith journey.
3. Lives a deeply spiritual, religious life.
5. Opens his or her heart and mind to the Word of God in the Scriptures.
6. Has deep love for the Church and her teachings.
7. Lives in communion with the Church and embraces a full sacramental life.
8. Possesses the unambiguous commitment to convey the truths of the faith in a clear and consistent manner.
9. Pursues the necessary training in theology, religious education and catechetical methodology to effectively teach the heart and mind of Christ to his/her students.
10. Participates in the social and charitable ministries of the Church.
CATECHIST RESPONSIBILITIES
AND TASKS

The Catechist:

1. Recognizes that he/she is teaching in the name of Christ and His Church.

2. Is knowledgeable of the content of the faith.

3. Demonstrates some skills in presenting the faith to a particular age group.

4. Recognizes and names his/her own gifts and skills.

5. Prepares his/her lessons.

6. Is aware of the safe environment policies (clearances, Protecting God’s Children) in particular policies regarding social networking.

7. Is cooperative with the direction and ties of communication of the catechetical program.

8. Is aware of the catechist certification policy and is available for training on the parish/diocesan level.

9. Is available for meetings on the parish/diocesan level.

10. Is cooperative in all service and worship activities involving the students.

11. Is open to ongoing evaluation.
Guideline B II: Ongoing Support

The catechetical administrator is responsible to “guide and direct the work of the persons” in the religious education ministry in the parish (see DRE/CRE contract). The volunteer catechist should receive ongoing support in the ministry from the catechetical administrator.

Forms of support, guidance and direction include the following:

- Provision of times for retreat, reflection, reconciliation services and special liturgies
- Provision of supplementary materials and current publications including News & Notes
- Sharing of activities for seasonal, parish and faith hero feast days
- Encouragement of use of the Pittsburgh Catholic for weekly Gospel reflection and awareness of local church life
- Introduction of new audio visuals
- Encouragement of continued growth in the faith through the certification program and through the Continuing Christian Development Program (see Policy B II).
- Regular meeting of catechists
- Celebration of Catechetical Sunday and Catechetical Week
- Invitation to share stories of their own faith journey, successes or struggles with their classes
- Encouragement of catechists to set an example to those in their care by seizing opportunities in which they may serve others

Guideline B III: Reimbursement

The catechist should be given reimbursement with appropriate documentation for reasonable expenses incurred on behalf of the catechetical ministry. Allotment for such expenses is to be included in the annual budget.

Guideline B IV: Stipends

Some parishes offer a stipend to the catechists. Because of the nature of the call to service in the Church and the obligation of the baptized to “echo Christ,” a stipend for services is neither the expectation nor the norm for volunteering in the ministry.

Guideline B V: Classroom Supervision

Students are to be supervised at all times. A catechist should never leave students in a classroom unattended by an adult. Catechists are to be present in the classroom prior to the start of class. If the catechist needs assistance during the catechetical session, a student or aide is to be sent to the office for help.

If students are dismissed from the classroom, the catechist is to remain until all students have departed. If the catechist accompanies students to the building entrance, she or he makes sure no student lingers behind in the classroom.

If a catechist has to miss a class, it is the responsibility of the parish catechetical administrator and not the catechist to designate a proper and qualified substitute.

Catechists
B20
SAFE ENVIRONMENT AND CHILD SAFETY

“Let there now be no doubt or confusion on anyone’s part: For us, your bishops, our obligation to protect children and young people and to prevent sexual abuse flows from the mission and example given to us by Jesus Christ himself, in whose name we serve (Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops).

“All Catholics, and all persons of good will, must promote a full and complete vision of the human person with its personal and social dimensions. This means…building a culture of life by understanding the sacredness of human sexuality and rejecting the exploitation of pornography in all its insidious forms (The Church Living, 50).

“The Church Living proclaims, advances and defends the Gospel of Life in the education of children and adults…and most especially in the family. In all these social situations, and many more, all the faithful—married, single, consecrated and ordained—have the obligation to defend human life (The Church Living, 52).

Section C: Safe Environment and Child Safety

Principle

The Diocese of Pittsburgh is committed to the prevention of abuse of children and young people. On June 14, 2002, in response to the clergy sexual abuse scandal, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops approved the national “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People” which requires that every diocese in the United States implement a safe environment program.

Specific components of all diocesan safe environment programs must include the following:

1. Adults (clergy, employees and volunteers) in positions of trust in regard to minors must adhere to clear and well publicized standards of ministerial behavior commonly referred to as the Code of Pastoral Conduct.
2. Adults (clergy, employees and volunteers) must undergo a background screening to ensure that they do not pose a threat to minors.
3. Training is to be provided to children, youth, parents, ministers, educators, volunteers, and others on how to recognize and prevent child abuse.

Specific requirements of the Diocese of Pittsburgh Safe Environment Program include the following:

Adults (18 or older) who are subject to the Safe Environment Policy must:

1. Complete online database application (to track compliance with the national Charter).
2. Acknowledge that they will adhere to the standards of behavior contained in the Code of Pastoral Conduct.
3. Complete the Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check.
4. Complete the Department of Public Welfare Child Abuse History
5. Take Protecting God’s Children training.
Abuse of children, youth and vulnerable adults is a national and international problem. Experts agree that the most effective way to prevent abuse is to have policies, procedures and programs in place to educate children, young people and adults on how to recognize and prevent abuse. Through our Christian baptism we are called to share in the responsibility of protecting those who are the most vulnerable—especially the children entrusted to our care.

Every parish is required to have a safe environment coordinator appointed by the pastor. Catholic school principals and parish catechetical administrators are database site administrators and are familiar with safe environment policies. Information regarding diocesan safe environment policies and programs can be obtained through the diocesan website at www.diopitt.org

ALL PARISHES, SCHOOLS AND INSTITUTIONS OF THE DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH ARE SUBJECT TO THIS SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY.

A number of documents are in place to assist parishes in complying with all the regulations aimed at protecting children and youth. These can be found on the diocesan website www.diopitt.org and include the following:

- Online information for applying for Pennsylvania State Police Acts 33 & 34 Clearances
- Form for applying for the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare Child Abuse History
- Information regarding the Protecting God’s Children Inservices held annually across the diocese.
- Diocese of Pittsburgh Code of Pastoral Conduct
- Mandated Reporting Policy: Reporting of Child Abuse and the Child Protective Services Law of Pennsylvania
- The Catholic Vision of Love Chastity Education and Personal Safety Program (includes lessons for children in Kindergarten through grade 8).

Policy CI: Catholic Vision of Love Chastity Education and Personal Safety Program

Every diocese across the United States must have a program in place for the protection and safety of children and youth.

The Catholic Vision of Love Chastity Education and Personal Safety Program is approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee for the Protection of Children and Youth, as THE PROGRAM IN PLACE IN THE DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH for the protection and safety of children and young people.

The principle goal of the Catholic Vision of Love program is to present Christ’s vision of love and sexuality, and to encourage all to live according to the Good News of His teaching on love, marriage, the family, sexuality, and the freedom of self-possession.
The *Catholic Vision of Love* program is based on eight (8) **Foundational Principles**:

1. Education in love and human sexuality is education in an integral part of Catholic faith and life. It is formation in ways of living that are inseparable from the Gospel. Education in human sexuality is inseparable from our overall faith education. This education is not only instructional but it is affectively and holistically oriented. Its purpose is to move a person to exercise a personal freedom that chooses ways of living that are consistent with the Gospel call. Thus its concern is to prepare students to have the ability to make intelligent choices regarding their sexuality, to help them integrate their attitudes toward sexuality with their philosophy of life, to enable them to acquire self-possession, and to exercise authentic freedom.

2. There are certain doctrinal and moral teachings of faith that underlie the *Catholic Vision of Love* program. These basic tenets illumine ways of living our personal lives and of shaping our love and affection in Christian ways. That is, the program emphasizes a positive vision of what human love and sexuality means—a vision that flows from the Word of God and the teachings of the Church. These basic principles would include:

   a. Viewing the human person as made in the image of God. It is our masculinity and femininity that God has given us ways to imitate the personal goodness that is at the heart of the life of God.

   b. Seeing sexuality as God’s work. It is a tremendous God-given gift to be seen as something good. Much of the joy and energy of human life flows from a recognition of the goodness of all dimensions of the being God has give us. This includes our sexuality.

   c. Understanding sexuality in the context of human fulfillment. By our very nature, we long for the good things we need to ensure happy and fully human lives. By our very nature, we seek to escape the loneliness of the human condition and find “enduring love”—a love that gives all of itself to another.

   This sexuality becomes a “natural sacrament” or a visible sign of what lasting (enduring) love means and needs to be among human persons. All of our longing is indeed toward a richness we know that we cannot quite express. Thus it is God that we must first learn to love with all our heart. In learning to love God we learn to love one another.

3. There are indeed certain major problems that our program must face and treat affectively. These include AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, the rise in teenage pregnancies, abortion, and a variety of promiscuous attitudes. Young people’s understanding of love and sexuality is dramatically shaped by a culture caught up in materialism, hedonism, unbelief, and even despair. However, while the *Catholic Vision of Love* program faces these contemporary issues, its primary focus is not one of avoiding certain grave moral evils, but one of positively guiding people toward living excellent lives in all that touches love, affectivity and personal relationships.
4. Sexual education is primarily the responsibility of the parents. Thus an education in love and sexuality will be effective only to the extent that parents cooperate. The aim of teachers is to assist parents—to help them communicate with their children in these matters. The principle of subsidiarity reminds us that such tasks are only effectively accomplished if the essential small units, in this case, families, are doing their tasks. The Catholic Vision of Love program is meant to cooperate with parents and not substitute for them. On the other hand, teaching is very critical in this area, it simply cannot be taken for granted that parents are capable of doing it on their own with no assistance from the Church. The program focuses a great deal on parental education and involvement.

5. The Catholic Vision of Love program is to be integrated with education in Catholic faith and life generally. Therefore it is designed to be integrated into the religion curriculum itself. Catholic Vision of Love is a total parish program, thus it will involve both Catholic school and parish programs of religious education.

6. Only those who can and do agree with Catholic teaching on love and sexuality can be permitted to teach in this program. There is a need for adequate catechist formation and training prior to beginning the actual teaching.

7. Education and materials should be provided for parents and other adults. This includes education for clergy who will be instrumental in the implementation of the Catholic Vision of Love program. The media and contemporary pressures tend to press all toward attitudes and practices that are very much in contradiction to Christian principles and practice. The whole community should get a firmer grasp of basic Catholic moral principles if it is to communicate these effectively to its young members.

8. Education in the proper use of media is of primary importance.

**Policy CII: Catholic Vision of Love Lessons**

Catholic Vision of Love lessons (grades 5 – 8) are part of the regular curriculum for both Catholic schools and parish religious education programs. One additional lesson in child personal safety has been added to each of the grade levels 5 through 8.

Safe environment lessons have also been created for children in Kindergarten through grade 4.

All of the Catholic Vision of Love Chastity Education and Personal Safety lessons for Kindergarten through grade 8 must be taught each year.
Policy CIII: Catholic Vision of Love Catechists and Training

All catechists must be certified to teach the Catholic Vision of Love lessons. This certification is obtained through the 7-week Morality course of Basic Catechist Certification offered annually throughout the diocese. In the case that a parish has no catechists certified, the religious education team will offer a certification course in Catholic Vision of Love only. Catechists must agree to take the Morality course through Basic Certification at a later date.

For information regarding the Morality courses offered through the Department for Religious Education consult the diocesan website at www.diopitt.org. A list of courses is also found in the Pittsburgh Catholic Newspaper – August edition. Course offerings are also emailed to all catechetical administrators, youth ministers, and Catholic school principals each semester.

Policy CIV: Catholic Vision of Love Parent Meetings

An important goal of Catholic Vision of Love (CVOL) is to work as partners with parents to encourage students to live their lives in line with Gospel teaching. The circumstances of the times, the pervasiveness of the media, contradictions of the surrounding culture and the awkwardness of talking with young people often dominated by their peers, all serve to make the task of speaking about sexuality with one’s children very difficult at times.

Parents have the right to expect from the Church the kind of help that will make this task possible. This help in no way attempts to replace the role of the parents, but rather is offered to support and enable parents to do this important task well. In view of this, it is extremely important that parents of students in grades 5 through 8 attend a Catholic Vision of Love Parent Meeting.

Parents of all 5th grade students as well as, parents of new students in grades 6 – 8, and parents who have never attended, must attend the Catholic Vision of Love Parent Meeting.

Note: Parents of children in Kindergarten through 4th grade are not required to attend a CVOL Parent Meeting. If the catechetical administrator under the direction of the pastor chooses to hold a CVOL parent meeting for parents of kindergarten through 4th grade children, it should be a separate meeting from the CVOL parent meeting for parents of children in grades 5 – 8.

Materials for parents (especially the Parent Handbook, Talking to Youth About Sexuality: A Parent’s Guide) should be given to parents at that time. This particular document is for parents only to use at home with their child at the parents’ discretion.

Talking to Youth About Sexuality: A Parent’s Guide is not to be used by catechists in the classroom.

(Theses materials can be found in the newly revised (2011) Catholic Vision of Love CDs and materials issued by the Department for Religious Education or obtained online at www.diopitt.org).

This Catholic Vision of Love Parent Meeting for students in grades 5 - 8 is mandatory and must be held each year before the actual lessons are taught.

Safe Environment and Child Safety
C5
The Catholic Vision of Love program cannot take place each year unless parents are made aware of its importance and understand their role in the faith formation of their children, especially regarding this sensitive topic. Getting parents to attend meetings is sometimes frustrating for catechetical leaders who are responsible for implementing the Catholic Vision of Love (CVOL) program. Catechetical leaders must make every effort to “make it happen” through careful planning. The best time for a CVOL Parent meeting is early September before public schools and fall sports programs begin.

Parents should be informed about why it is important that they attend the CVOL Parent Meeting. The following points can be used to help them understand:

- The Catholic Vision of Love Chastity Education and Personal Safety Program is approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee for the Protection of Children and Youth, as the program in place in the Diocese of Pittsburgh for the protection and safety of children and young people.

- The Church has good news to share about family, love and human sexuality. This teaching is firmly rooted in sacred scripture and has been constantly taught by the Church through the centuries.

- Clearly communicate that the CVOL program will be supportive in their parental role of helping their children understand that human sexuality is part of Gospel values.

- The goal of CVOL is to present Christ’s vision of love and sexuality, and to encourage all to live according to his teaching on love, marriage, the family, sexuality, and self-control.

- The CVOL program offers their child a faith-filled and morally right context out of which to make sense of all the issues connected with human sexuality, by helping them to understand the spiritual and moral dimensions of human life, to respect the beauty and dignity of sex, and to learn the way of self-discipline and purity.

- The CVOL program teaches their child that living as Christ taught is not just an ideal but can, with God’s grace, be a reality in their lives.

- Parents will receive important materials and information to help them with this delicate task. It is very important that you provide parents with the Parent Handbook, Talking to Youth about Sexuality: A Parents’ Guide. This booklet is part of the CVOL program and is for parents to use at their discretion with their child. It can be purchased through Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Company. (Note: This document is not to be used by the catechist to instruct children).
Catechists, Other Volunteers, and Parish Staff

- Every catechist and all persons working with, or in constant contact with children must register on the Diocesan Safe Environment Database and must obtain Pennsylvania Criminal Record Clearance, Child Abuse Clearance and Attend a Protecting God’s Children In-service before they can teach/volunteer/work in a parish, religious education program, youth ministry program, and Catholic school.

- Effective May 28, 2007, the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) requires mandated immediate reporting of suspected child abuse involving anyone under the age of 18, if the child is under the care or supervision of a Church entity, including, but not limited to:
  - School students
  - Students in parish religious education programs
  - Children enrolled in child-care programs
  - Children being “babysat” during worship services or gatherings
  - Children participating in Church-related youth ministries or sports programs’
  - Catholic Charities’ clients and health care patients

(For further information regarding child abuse and mandated reporting see Legal Section Q, Policy Q V)

- All parish personnel (paid and volunteer) must read, acknowledge, and sign the Diocese of Pittsburgh Code of Pastoral Conduct before they begin their ministry/work for a parish.

The above documents and further information can be found on the diocesan website www.diopitt.org or can be obtained through the Department for the Protection of Children and Young People at (412) 456-5633.

- All catechists must be aware of the diocesan policies regarding technology and social networking (Refer to Legal Section S – Communication, Policies SI, SII, SIII, SIV, SV).

- NOTE: PARISH SOCIAL NETWORKING IS NOT PERMITTED FOR USE WITH MINORS (under the age of 14).

- PERSONAL WEBSITES, FACEBOOK, BLOGS, EMAIL, OR TEXT INSTANT MESSAGING IS NOT PERMITTED FOR USE WITH STUDENTS.
Textbooks and Materials

“Catechetical textbooks are among the tools for learning placed directly in the hands of...those being catechized. In the United States, catechetical textbooks for children and young people are ordinarily part of an integrated series that has been prepared for a number of grade levels, usually preschool or kindergarten through sixth or eighth grade. In addition, high school texts address core components of the faith in a variety of formats. Catechetical materials for adults most often take the form of adult catechisms or resources for the baptismal catechumenate, for parish renewal, and for small Christian communities. All catechetical textbooks should:

- Present the authentic message of Christ and his Church, adapted to the capacity of the learners and in language that can be understood by them.
- Be faithful to the Sacred Scripture.
- Highlight the essential truths of the faith, giving proper emphasis on particular truths in accord with their importance within the hierarchy of truths.
- Be approved by the local bishop and in conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church.
- Give to those who use them a better knowledge of the mysteries of Christ.
- Promote a true conversion to Jesus Christ.
- Inspire and encourage those who use them to live the Christian life more faithfully.
- Be culturally appropriate and reflect the real-life situations of those who use them.
- Promote charity, appreciation, and respect for persons of all racial, ethnic, social, and religious backgrounds.
- Present other ecclesial communities and religions accurately.
- Employ a variety of sound catechetical methodologies based on the results of responsible catechetical research.
- Include appropriate examples of Christian prayer and opportunities for liturgical experiences and incorporate the use of Sacred Scripture as a text for study along with other catechetical textbooks.
- Offer short passages of sacred scripture that can easily be learned by heart.
- Contain opportunities to review and measure progress in learning.
- Be visually attractive, engage the students, and offered a variety of examples of Christian art.
- Include graphics that represent the various regional, cultural, economic, and religious characteristics of the people who will be using them.
- Engage the intellect, emotion, imagination, and creativity of the students. (NDC 68)
“Whenever appropriate, special materials for use in the catechesis of persons with disabilities should be developed by professionals in the respective fields of special education in collaboration with those familiar with the languages and cultures of the persons with the specific disabilities (NDC 68).”

“Catechist and teacher manuals are essential components of any sound catechetical textbook series. Fundamentally, they should communicate to catechists and teachers what they themselves are expected to communicate to the students. Catechists and teachers manuals should contain “an explanation of the message of salvation (constant references must be made to the sources, and a clear distinction must be kept between those things which pertain to the faith and to the doctrine that must be held’ and those things which are mere opinions of theologians); psychological and pedagogical advice; suggestions about methods (NDC 68).”

“Catechetical textbook series should also include materials specifically designed to assist parents in their roles as the primary catechists of their children. Those materials should be geared directly to the parents and provide them with both the information and the practical tools to reinforce the objectives of the catechesis their children are receiving (NDC 68).”

“Other instructional materials include catechetical guides for program leaders and catechists, parent education materials, resources for the baptismal catechumenate and marriage, and other sacramental preparation materials.

“It is important that resources prepared specifically for sacramental preparation is well integrated into a basic catechetical textbook series and include materials for students, catechists, and parents. Textbooks are to prepare students for Confession and are to include the directive that the sacrament be received prior to First Holy Communion. They should present the sacraments as effective signs of God’s grace that incorporate the Christian into the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ as it is remembered and celebrated in his Church…Practical suggestions for parents to engage their children in preparation for their reception of the sacraments and for their continual participation in the sacramental life of the church should be included… All of these instructional materials should be in evident harmony with the Catechism of the Catholic Church and be artistically sensitive, technically up to date, theologically authentic, ecumenically accurate, and methodologically sound (NDC 68).”
Section D: Textbooks and Materials

Principle

After providing faith-filled and certified catechists, choosing appropriate and doctrinally sound catechetical textbooks and materials is an important task. Sound catechetical materials must be written according to the direction and spirit of major catechetical documents of the Church; the documents of Vatican II; recent papal encyclicals and letters and documents of the United States bishops.

“Catechetical materials are intended as effective instruments for teaching the fullness of the Christian message found in the Word of God and in the teachings of the Church. They include many kinds of resources…. They are prepared for groups and person of diverse interest, needs, ages and abilities”(Guidelines for Doctrinally Sound Catechetical Methods, United States Catholic Conference, 1990, p. 5).

“Catechetical materials, taken as a whole, need to promote a healthy and vital Catholic identity in such a way that the believer hears the message clearly, lives it with conviction, and shares it courageously with others (GDSCM, p. 9).”

Policy D I: Curriculum Guidelines

Curriculum on each level, grade and program must adhere to Catechetical Curriculum Guidelines promulgated by the Secretariat for Catholic Education, Department for Religious Education.

Each catechist must receive a copy of the section of the curriculum guidelines specific to his or her grade level with the expectation that the objectives be met during the course of that year. Most textbooks companies have correlated their materials to our diocesan curriculum guidelines. Contact the Department for Religious Education for specific correlations.

Policy D II: Textbooks/Materials

In selecting a textbook series and/or catechetical materials, it is necessary to ascertain that the materials correlate with both the diocesan Catechetical Curriculum Guidelines and the diocesan: Evaluations of Catechetical Textbooks and Materials for Elementary & High School Programs.

Only those textbooks identified in the Policy Document Evaluations of Catechetical Textbooks and Materials for Elementary and High School Programs are approved for use in parish religious education programs. No other textbook series are to be used.

The Department for Religious Education is available for consultation, to answer any questions regarding text materials, and to provide assistance to parishes considering change in or adoption of textbook series/materials. For further information, contact the Department for Religious Education (412) 456-3112 or religiouseducation@diopitt.org
Policy D III: Catholic Vision of Love Chastity Education and Personal Safety Program

The Catholic Vision of Love Chastity Education and Personal Safety Program is approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee for the Protection of Children and Youth, as THE PROGRAM IN PLACE IN THE DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH for the protection and safety of children and young people. This program must be taught annually to students in Kindergarten through 8th grade. (For further information see Section C: Safe Environment and Child Safety – Main Section).
Guideline D I: Resources

Library/Audio-Visuals
The parish should provide a basic resource library for catechists. Where this is not feasible, groups of parishes could come together to provide for resources. Parishes are encouraged to avail themselves of the Diocesan Learning Media Center which houses a large lending library of books, periodicals, and audio-visual materials. It is recommended that textbook samples of numerous series be available as resource and reference.

Supportive technological equipment includes the following: computer (with internet use), printer, television/VCR, DVD player and CD recorder/player.

Reference resources include major catechetical documents of the universal and national Church such as *Catechesi Tradendae, To Teach As Jesus Did, The General Directory for Catechesis, The National Directory for Catechesis*, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, the *Compendium to the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, as well as *Documents of Vatican II*, the *Code of Canon Law*, major papal encyclicals and documents of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Other specific Church documents and resources such as the U.S. Bishops’ Pastoral Statement on Handicapped Persons, Principles for Inculturation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us, and Co-Workers in the Vineyard are included.


Special care is to be given in providing ready access to those resource materials provided by the diocese for use in parish programs of religious education, some of which are required components of the Catechetical Curriculum Guidelines (*Catholic Vision of Love, and The Sacrament of Confirmation with Bishop David Zubik* DVD and materials).
Guideline D II: Facilities

Environment
Each parish catechetical program should be conducted in a welcoming environment with adequate space, equipment and materials to meet the needs of all the participants. In some area of the room a prayer center is established where appropriate liturgical symbols, including the scriptures, are placed.

Catechists and volunteers should clearly understand their responsibility to supervise the young people. Except for an emergency situation, children cannot be left unattended. This includes the time before and after class as well as during class. For further specific questions in this regard, as well as with regard to alternative models of religious education, refer to the Legal Policy Section of this handbook.

Class Size
The number of children and youth in a given class will vary according to physical circumstances, the needs of the children, the methodology employed, and the needs of the catechist. Ordinarily, a maximum of 15 participants per catechist is recommended. It is highly recommended that each catechist be assisted by an aide or co-catechist. Additional aides may be necessary when dealing with participants with special needs.*

Shared Facilities: Usage/Availability
Parish educational facilities belonging to the parish as a whole should be fully utilized by the entire parish in a spirit of dedicated cooperation within the mission of total Catholic education. Written guidelines for the use of the facility should be clearly established by the parish to help insure this cooperative effort. Religious education and Catholic school personnel each expect that facilities would be left in good order.

Display
Throughout the facility, places should be provided for the display of materials which are teaching tools, and for display of student work. Feature posters, specimens of student’s art work, art work celebrating the liturgical seasons, and displays depicting current issues such as Respect Life and Social Justice are suitable subjects for display and can be of great value in creating a learning environment in the classroom and school.

Textbooks and Materials

D6
Guideline D III: Special Needs Resources
The Department for Persons with Disabilities of the Diocese and its personnel are available for general consultation and for recommendation regarding specific catechetical methodology, including the adaptation of texts and materials, in the case of students with special needs. Every Parish Religious Education Program should have a copy of the *Best Practices Guide for Including Students with Disabilities in Religious Education Classrooms and Youth Ministry Programs.*

* For more information regarding participants with special needs please contact the Director, Department for Persons with Disabilities, 111 Boulevard of the Allies, Pittsburgh, PA 15222 (412) 456-3119 (Voice) (412) 456-3122, (TTY) disabilities@diopitt.org
“F”or the child there comes...the moment for a catechesis aimed at inserting him or her organically into the life of the Church, a moment that includes an immediate preparation for the celebration of the sacraments. This catechesis is didactic in character, but is directed towards the giving of witness in the faith. It is an initial catechesis but not a fragmentary one, since it will have to reveal, although in an elementary way, all the principal mysteries of faith and their effects on the child’s moral and religious life. It is a catechesis that gives meaning to the sacraments, but at the same time it receives from the experience of the sacraments a living dimension that keeps it from remaining merely doctrinal, and it communicates to the child the joy of being a witness to Christ in ordinary life (CT 37).”

“The parish remains, as I have said, the re-eminent place for catechesis. It must rediscover its vocation, which is to be a fraternal and welcoming family home, where those who have been baptized and confirmed become aware of forming the People of God. In that home, the bread of good doctrine and the Eucharist Bread are broken for them in abundance, in the setting of the one act of worship; from that home they are sent out day by day to their apostolic mission in all the centers of activity of the life of the world (CT 67).”

“A”catechesis (of children) should include education and formation in the inherent dignity of every person, in the church’s mission ad gentes, and in the development of a social conscience. It should provide opportunities to receive the sacraments and to participate in Christian service and missionary activities. It should foster to the students knowledge of and familiarity with the various vocations in the church and encourage them to pray to know and embrace the vocation to which God has called them—priesthood, the consecrated life, the dedicated single life, or the married life (NDC 65.4).”

“The Christian faithful since they are called by baptism to lead a life in conformity with the teaching of the Gospel, have the right to a Christian education by which they will be properly instructed so as to develop the maturity of a human person and at the same time come to know and live the mystery of salvation (CJC 217).”

“L”ay persons are bound by the obligation and possess the right to acquire a knowledge of Christian doctrine adapted to their capacity and condition so that they can live in accord with that doctrine, announce it, defend it when necessary, and be enabled to assume their role in exercising the apostolate (CJC 229).”

“There is a proper and serious duty, especially on the part of pastors of souls, to provide for the catechesis of the Christian people so that the faith of the faithful becomes living, explicit and productive through formation in doctrine and the experience of Christian living (CJC 773).”

“P”astors have the duty to provide catechesis; parishioners have the reciprocal duty to participate in and support the catechetical activities of the parish. Parish catechetical efforts should be in harmony with the catechetical goal and objectives of the diocese (NDC 60).”

Attendance and Enrollment
**Section E: Attendance and Enrollment**

**Principle**

Following the home and the family, the parish is the community within which the majority of Catholics are nurtured and strengthened in their faith and through which they express and exercise that faith. The parish mission is to enable persons to worship, to form community, to serve others and to learn about Jesus Christ and his Church.

Parishes establish catechetical programs to foster the needs of all persons in the parish to be catechized in message, community, worship and service.

**Policy E I: Enrollment**

Religious education programs must be offered to all youth and children of catechetical age registered within the parish. Children and youth outside the parish may be accepted into the program only with the mutual consent of the pastors involved.

It is recommended that registration for each catechetical year take place before September. Welcoming students into the life of the parish is always a priority which demands flexibility and understanding as particular situations arise.

With regard to late enrollment in those grades inclusive of immediate or proximate preparation for the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation, *The Sacraments of Initiation: Policies for the Diocese of Pittsburgh* are to be consulted to assist in determining prudential and pastoral judgment on the catechetical readiness of the child by the pastor in consultation with those responsible for sacramental catechesis.

Students who transfer into the parish must submit verification of enrollment and attendance from their previous religious education program if appropriate. A record should be kept for those who have informed the pastor that they are homeschooling their children. Homeschooling parents should be given a copy of the policy, *Faith Education in the Home*, which can be found on the Diocesan Web Site [www.diopitt.com](http://www.diopitt.com) or obtained through the Department for Religious Education.

The Catechetical Administrator and the Youth Minister are responsible for maintaining enrollment information of all students, youth, and their families (see registration samples below for guidance in composing registration forms) in their respective programs.
(Parish Name)
Religious Education
Family Registration

Date: ____________________________  Emergency Phone ____________________________

Family Name _______________________________ Envelope # __________ Phone ____________

Address ___________________________________________E-Mail Address ______________

Father’s Name _______________________________ Phone ____________________________

Address ___________________________________________ E-Mail Address ______________

Occupation ___________________________________________Religion ______________________

Mother’s Name (including maiden) __________________________ Phone __________________

Address ___________________________________________E-Mail Address ______________

Occupation ___________________________________________Religion ______________________

Who is responsible for religious education?  __ Both Parents __ Mother __ Father __ Guardian

Who is to receive mailings?  __ Both Parents __ Mother __ Father __ Guardian

In case of emergency – if you cannot be reached?

Name ____________________________ Phone __________ Relation __________________________________

________________________________________________________

Guardian (residing with child)

______________________________________________________________________________ Phone____________________

Mailing Address (other than above)

________________________________________________________________________________

OVER →

Attendance and Enrollment
E3
Parish Name
Children in Parish Religious Education Program (include first and last name)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Birthday</th>
<th>Baptism Date, Church &amp; Rite</th>
<th>Eucharist Date, Church &amp; Rite</th>
<th>Confirmation Date, Church &amp; Rite</th>
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Are there any particular issues/ concerns relevant to the program? How can we help?
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

Permission to share with catechist ___ Yes ___ No

For Office Use
Grade/Session __________________________________________ Fee ___________________

Attendance and Enrollment
E4
Religious Education
Annual Student Registration

(Please Print)

Registration Date: _______________

Child’s Name ___________________________ □ Male □ Female Birth Date _______________

Grade _______ Parish Program Grade _______ School Attending __________________________

School District _________________________

Parish of Previous Religious Instruction (if newly enrolled) ________________________________

Home Address ____________________________________________________________

E-Mail __________________________ Phone (H) __________________ Phone (Cell) ________________

Is your child ambulatory? □ Yes □ No: If “NO,” what kind of assistance does he/she need?
□ Wheelchair □ Helper □ Other ________________________________

Is your child verbal? □ Yes □ No: If “NO,” how does he/she communicate? __________________

Health Challenges (Please explain) ________________________________________________

Other Information you wish to share: ________________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

PLEASE NOTE: A copy of the child’s baptismal certificate is necessary upon initial enrollment.

Date of Baptism ______________________ Church of Baptism: _______________________________

Address/Location of Church of Baptism ______________________________

Suppressed Parish? ___ Yes ___ No
Student’s Name ____________________ Sex _____ Birth date ___________
Address ___________________________________ Phone __________________
Parent’s E-mail _________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Attending</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Principal</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

School Grade ______ Year ______ Parish Religious Education Grade __________________________

Previous Religious Instruction (Catholic school/former parish Religious Education program) __________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Learning Needs (please explain) ____________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Health Needs (please explain) _____________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Special Concerns__________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

Additional Information on Family Form: _____ Yes _____ No
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

<table>
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<th>Sacraments</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Baptism</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eucharist</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirmation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Penance</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Attendance and Enrollment
E6
Policy E II: Attendance
A **minimum** of 30 hours of **formal religious instruction** must be provided by each parish for grades one through eight. A kindergarten session is also recommended.

Alternative parish models **are to follow** the 30 hour minimal requirement of formal religious instruction.

**Policy E III: Absenteeism**
Students with inconsistent attendance or chronic lack of attendance will not be permitted to progress to the next level unless sufficient catechetical formation appropriate to that grade level is demonstrated to those responsible for catechesis in the parish.

Every effort must be made to help parents and students fulfill their responsibility to attend the program. Simply allowing students to “skip” grade levels and return to the program in a sacrament year is unacceptable. The Catechetical Administrator must contact those families whose children are chronically absent from the program to offer assistance (i.e. homeschooling, tutoring, with appropriate safe environment measures, etc.) that will enable them to remain current in their religious education. Every effort should be made to accommodate parents and children.

If students are unable to fulfill the requirements they may transfer to another parish with permission from the pastor of their home parish. Students may not transfer to another religious education program to accomplish advancement without completing the necessary faith formation curriculum. **Any transfer to another parish religious education program requires communication between pastors.**

The Catechetical Administrator is responsible for maintaining consistent and accurate records of attendance.

Special care is to be given to children from separated and/or divorced parents whose custody arrangements might make regular attendance at one parish program of religious education difficult for the child. Every effort should be undertaken to facilitate a catechetical program for the child that will fulfill the curriculum expectations.

Policy E IV: Conditions for Early Dismissal
Since parents presume their child is under the care of the school of religious education during class time, a child may never be released early without explicit knowledge of the parent. (This means the child may not be sent home for assignments, books, or disciplinary reasons.) Children may not be detained unduly after class without the knowledge of the parent or without the parent’s permission being reasonably presumed. If delay of individual or group dismissal will be lengthy, the parent(s) will be notified by the catechetical administrator.

**Policy E V: Requests for Early Dismissal**
Requests for early dismissal must be presented in writing. A child must **never** be released to anyone other than the parent or guardian **without written permission of the parent or guardian.**

*(See form below)*
Policy E VI: Parent Requesting Early Dismissal
When the catechetical administrator has been given a court order showing exclusive custody of one parent, only that parent may request early dismissal in writing and only that parent is permitted to pick up the child.

In case of confusion regarding the identification/identity of the custodial parent, consult the Legal Concerns Section, Policy A I Custody and Policy U V Visitors.

(Parish Name)

EARLY DISMISSAL FORM

1. Student’s Name ________________________________________

Mother, Father, Legal Guardian or other (Grandparent, Neighbor etc.) picking child up

________________________________________________________________________________

Reason for Early Dismissal _______________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

Date of Early Dismissal ___________ Time of Early Dismissal _____________

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian _____________________________________________

2. Signature of Individual Picking Up Child for Early Dismissal
(to be signed in the presence of the Catechetical Administrator or duly appointed representative)

________________________________________________________________

Signature

Relationship to child ______________________________________________________________

Affidavit of Catechetical Administrator

The individual named in point number 2 above signed the form in my presence, claimant

Produced I.D. _____ Is known to me by sight _____

Signature of the Catechetical Administrator __________________________________________

Date ____________________________

Attendance and Enrollment

E8
INCLUSIVITY

“We are one flock under the care of a single shepherd. There can be no separate church for persons with disabilities.” (*Welcome and Justice for Persons with Disabilities*, no.1)

“Persons with disabilities, especially children, are particularly beloved of the Lord and are integral members of the Christian community. They include those with cognitive disabilities, those with developmental disabilities, those with learning disabilities, those with emotional needs, persons with physical disabilities, persons with hearing loss/deafness, persons with vision loss/blindness, and others *(NDC 49).*

“All persons with disabilities have the capacity to proclaim the Gospel and to be living witnesses to its truth within the community of faith and offer valuable gifts. Their involvement enriches every aspect of church life. They are not just the recipients of catechesis—they are also its agents. Bishops have invited qualified persons with disabilities to ordination, to consecrated life, and to full-time professional service in the Church *(NDC 49).*

“All persons with disabilities or special needs should be welcomed in the Church. Every person, however unique, is capable of growth in holiness. “The love of the Father for the weakest of his children and the continuous presence of Jesus and His Spirit give assurance that every person, however limited, is capable of growth in holiness.” *(GDC 189)* some persons with disabilities live in isolating conditions that make it difficult for them to participate in catechetical experiences. “Since provision of access to religious functions is a pastoral duty,” *(Welcome and Justice for Persons with Disabilities, no. 6)* parishes should make that much more effort to include those who may feel excluded *(NDC 49).*

“All baptized persons with disabilities have a right to adequate catechesis and deserve the means to develop a relationship with God. Persons with disabilities should be integrated into ordinary catechetical programs as much as possible. Catechetical goals and objectives should not be segregated for specialized catechesis unless their disabilities make it impossible for them to participate in the basic catechetical programs.

As much as possible, persons with disabilities themselves should guide catechetical personnel in adapting curricula to their particular needs. Those who care for them or work with them can also be of considerable help. *(NDC 49)*

“Children and young people who are physically or intellectually challenged come first to mind. They have a right, like others of their age, to know “the mystery of faith.” The greater difficulties that they encounter give greater merit to their efforts and to those of their teachers *(CT 41).*

“The central importance of family members in the lives of all persons with disabilities, regardless of age, must never be underestimated. They lovingly foster the spiritual, mental, and physical development of the person with disabilities and are the primary teachers of religion and morality;” *(U.S. Catholic Bishops on Persons with Disabilities no.16)* no family is ever really prepared for the birth of a child with disabilities *(U.S. Catholic Bishops on Persons with Disabilities no. 15).* The Church’s pastoral response in such situations is to learn about the disability, offer support to the family, and welcome the child *(Welcome and Justice for Persons with Disabilities).*

Inclusivity

F1
Section F: Inclusivity

Principle

The following are guidelines for providing catechesis for persons with special needs:

- Catechesis for persons with disabilities must be adapted in content and method to their particular situations.

- Specialized catechists should help them interpret the meaning of their lives and give witness to Christ’s presence in the local community in ways they can understand and appreciate.

- “Great care should be taken to avoid further isolation of persons with disabilities through these programs which, as far as possible, should be integrated with typical catechetical activities of the parish.” (Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on Persons with Disabilities, no. 25)

- Catechetical efforts should be promoted by diocesan staffs and parish committees that include persons with disabilities. (Welcome and Justice for Persons with Disabilities, no.2)

Policy F I: Access to the Sacraments

No child is to be denied access to the Sacraments of Initiation because of disabilities, but is to be prepared at the level of his/her capacity (see Sacraments of Initiation: Policies for the Diocese of Pittsburgh); also see Guidelines for Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities, United States Catholic Conference, and October 1995; revised 5th printing 2008).

The Department for Persons with Disabilities is available for consultation and assistance in this matter. For further information contact the Director, Department for Persons with Disabilities (412) 456-3119, (Voice) (412) 456-3122, (TTY) disabilities@diopitt.org

Policy F II: Supervision of Children with Special Needs

All catechetical principles, policies and guidelines apply to alternative models of special religious education sessions. Catechetical administrators/youth ministers are expected to develop the overall plan of inclusion for each child/youth with a special need in collaboration with the parents and the catechist. They are responsible for maintaining enrollment and medical forms and information for all children, youth and young adults (ages 18-21) with particular needs who participate in their programs. (Refer to pages E1, and E3 – E5 regarding Enrollment).

Catechetical administrators and youth ministers are to provide guidance for the catechist including opportunities to learn more about helpful strategies (refer to the diocesan document: Best Practices Guide for Including Students with Disabilities in Religious Education Classrooms and Youth Ministry Programs). Conversations with the parent(s)/guardian(s) are extremely important since we rely on volunteers who may or may not have professional experience with persons with disabilities.

Catechists are expected to participate in developing the plan for the student with a special need in their classroom/program, to carry out that plan and to offer feedback to the parents and the catechetical administrator as the plan unfolds. The catechist is expected to have a good working relationship with the parent(s)/guardian(s), always letting them know about progress and challenges as they occur. Catechists are to be adults in good standing with the Catholic Church, must have all of the required clearances, must have attended the Protecting God’s Children inservice, and signed the diocesan Code of Pastoral Conduct and the Cardinal’s Clause. The same applies to adult helpers.

Inclusivity

F2
**Teen Aides:** responsibilities given to teenagers of high school age are to be in proportion to their age and maturity level. Teenagers of high school age function well as aides or partners with an adult catechist. Teenage (high school age) involvement is encouraged as a means of nourishing future catechists but must always be under the guidance of adult direction and supervision. Teenage aides are not to be left alone with students for any reason.

**Important:** All policies that apply to catechists and volunteers are to be strictly followed (see Section B, Main Section and Section P, Legal Section of this manual).

Parent(s)/guardian(s) are expected to understand that disclosure of information regarding the special needs of their child is required in order to obtain reasonable accommodations. Disclosure includes sharing interventions and accommodations that are used in the regular education classroom and at home that the parent(s)/guardian(s) know to be helpful for the spiritual, social and educational development of their child.

It is important that parent(s)/guardian(s) understand that religious education and youth ministry programs rely on volunteers from the parish who may not have professional experience and therefore need assistance in understanding what is helpful for their child. Parent(s)/guardian(s) can be effective assistants in the classroom for their child especially in the early years.

**Policy F III: Physical Accessibility**

Every effort should be made to make buildings, classrooms and rest rooms accessible. However, when all reasonable financial and physical possibilities have been exhausted, then alternative arrangements are to be provided.

Alternative arrangements for accessible environments may include altering space, moving the class, changing the schedule, or finding another placement for the student in a nearby parish program which can accommodate him or her. Help with alternative arrangements is available through the Department for Persons with Disabilities.

(Also refer to page F4 - Policy F IV – Fairness for All; pages M1 to M4 and W1 to W4 policies and forms regarding Field Trips; pages Y1 to Y10 policies and forms regarding Emergency Procedures; and pages Y3 – Y4 policies and forms regarding dispensing of medication.)

The Department for Persons with Disabilities is available for consultation regarding accessibility. For further information contact the Director, Department for Persons with Disabilities (412) 456-3119, (Voice) (412) 456-3122, (TTY) disabilities@diopitt.org

Inclusivity

F3
Policy F IV: Fairness for All
All students are to be treated fairly and with respect. Jokes, slurs, statements, stories, and activities that promote racial, cultural, and ethnic insensitivity are not to be tolerated by catechists, students, or parent(s)/guardian(s) (see Section B: Guidelines for Composing a Parish Handbook – points 7, 8 & Guidelines for Composing a Catechist Handbook – points 7, 8)

Reports of racial and ethnic intimidation, language, and actions are to be addressed immediately with the appropriate follow-up with parent(s)/guardian(s), catechists and the pastor. Appropriate catechesis follows such occurrences. In some cases, reference may need to be made to Section H: Student Discipline as well as to the local parish policy handbook (see Section B).

Texts, curricula and resources reflect the racial, cultural and ethnic diversity of the Church. Opportunities for interaction with a diversity of children are encouraged and supported so as to combat racism, prejudices, and stereotypes based on race, culture, and a fear of disabilities (see Evaluations of Catechetical Textbooks and Materials for Elementary & High School Programs, Diocese of Pittsburgh).
Guideline F I: Alternative Resources
Large print and Braille texts, or student acquired assistive listening devices, are also appropriate. Adaptive texts and lesson plans as well as classroom assistants are to be provided when necessary.

Guideline F II: Parish Advocates
The pastor is encouraged to commission two advocates for their particular faith community to support, act as liaisons, and serve all persons with disabilities. These advocates may be helpful in addressing concerns related to children, youth, and adults with disabilities in the parish religious education program.

The Director of the Department for Person with Disabilities is available to provide appropriate orientation and training for parish advocates. For further information contact (412) 456-3119, (Voice) (412) 456-3122, (TTY) disabilities@diopitt.org

Guideline F III: Inservice Programs
The parish should arrange for, or promote attendance at, in-service programs such as Opening Doors, that provide an awareness of, and heighten sensitivity to, multicultural and disability issues. Contact the Department for Persons with Disabilities to schedule this opportunity for children, youth and/or adults.

Inclusivity
F5
COMMUNICATION

“A key component in the diocesan pastoral plan is the diocesan catechetical plan...diocesan catechetical leaders work with the bishop to identify the educational and catechetical goals for the diocesan church and to determine the diocesan catechetical plan for achieving those goals. The diocesan catechetical commission, committee, or board has the responsibility of developing policy, thus giving unified leadership to the various concerns reflected in the total catechetical ministry” (NDC 59).

“T he Diocesan Catechetical Office should have sufficient professional personnel to serve as resources to parish, areas, or regions in relation to all aspects of catechesis” (NDC 59 C).

Those involved in organization for catechesis should develop a clear statement to explain the principles and goals of catechesis, the measure of accountability and the provision for the communication of information (NDC 58).

Parish catechetical efforts should be coordinated with those of neighboring parishes, clusters of parishes, deaneries, and regions. As much as possible, parishes should share resources and avoid the duplication of catechetical services, especially so that the catechetical needs of poor or otherwise disadvantaged groups can be met” (NDC 60 B).

Communication and Technology

“The means of social communication have become so important as to be for many the chief means of information and education, of guidance and inspiration in their behavior as individuals, families and within society at large (NDC 30: quote of Pope John Paul II). For this reason the effective use of mass media has become essential for evangelization and catechesis (Aetatis Novae, no. 11).

“Catechists must seriously commit themselves to learning how to use these media to bring people to Christ. Catechists also must learn the culture created by the mass media. “It is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the Church’s authentic teaching. It is also necessary to integrate that message into the ‘new culture’ created by modern communications...with new languages, new techniques and a new psychology” (Redemtoris Missio, no. 37). Catechists must also develop a critical sense with which to evaluate the media and be able to recognize the “shadow side” of the media, which at times promote “secularism, consumerism, materialism, dehumanization and lack of concern for the plight of the poor and neglected” (Aetatis Novae, 13).

“In some instances, communication technology changes so rapidly that before an individual medium and its inherent implications can be properly understood, it is already obsolete. This can confuse catechists and make them hesitant to employ contemporary media in catechesis. It will be helpful for diocesan catechetical and communications personnel to explore each individual medium of communication for its catechetical potential so that they may better assist catechists in developing the specific skills needed for the effective use of these media in proclaiming the Gospel.
“Social networking sites and other means are frequently used as a suitable way to communicate. It is important for catechetical leaders and catechists to remember to always keep these methods of communication professional when using them with young people or when it is possible that young people can access them. This helps avoid potential problems that might arise when boundaries are blurred between a youth minister/catechist/catechetical leader and a young person” (Protecting God’s Children for Adults Technology Related Communication between Adults and Students by Robert Hugh Farley, M.S.)

For further information regarding Communication and Technology consult Legal Section S of this manual.

Section G: COMMUNICATION

Principle

Good communication develops community, the honest ownership of the catechetical ministry by all members of the parish and the validation of the mission of the whole parish church. This validation recognizes the dignity, talent and time given by each of the individuals involved in the ministry of conveying the Christian message (NDC 58)

It is necessary that there be good communication among all parties concerned with the ministry of catechesis: the Secretary for Catholic Education, the Diocesan Department for Religious Education, the local pastor, the parochial vicar, the catechetical administrator, the school principal, the youth minister, the catechetical staff, the pastoral council and the religious education committee.

The purpose of any catechetical program for children is to assist the parents, for they are the first and most vital teachers of faith and values of their children. Parents guide their children primarily by example, especially by praying with their children and involving them in the spiritual life of the church. Catechists work with the parents in helping the children to grow in faith and understanding of the teachings of Christ and his Church. Because parents and catechist work as a team in sharing the Catholic faith with children, good communication between the child’s catechist and parent is vital.

Policy G I: Communications on the Diocesan Level

The Mission Statement of the Department for Religious Education states that it is “a collaborative community of faith commissioned to serve the mission of the Diocese of Pittsburgh and authorized by the Bishop to give direction to the catechetical ministry of this local church.” The Department provides assistance and support to parish leaders and calls them to accountability for their responsibility for catechetical ministry. Faithful to the Church’s catechetical documents, the Department develops services, resources, and leadership which enable all persons to come to know Jesus Christ and grow in the Christian life of sharing the faith tradition of the Catholic Church.

Communication

G2
Specifically the department maintains communication and offers collaborative association with parish pastors and priests, deacons, catechetical administrators, and all the faithful. It does so in order to offer inservice and formation opportunities to meet the needs of catechetical leaders, to communicate diocesan policies and procedures and to assist in the initiation, development and evaluation of catechetical programs at the parish level.

Likewise the parish and vicariate catechetical leadership need to initiate and maintain communication with the department on a regular basis as well as on occasions of special inquiry, need or concern.

It is necessary for all involved that the parish catechetical administrator:

- implements all diocesan policies
- completes all necessary reports requested by the Department for Religious Education, Secretariat for Catholic Education
- attends diocesan sponsored inservices and meetings for catechetical administrators

Policy G II: Communications on the Vicariate Level

The catechetical administrator must maintain regular communication with the Deacon Vicariate Director and Lay District Director for Religious Education. He/she (or a representative) must regularly attend district meetings of the catechetical administrators and actively participate in the vicariate association.

Policy G III: Communications on the Parish Level

A. Pastor: The catechetical administrator and pastor must communicate and meet frequently and regularly to establish, review, evaluate, and adapt the parish religious education program. Such communication reflects a spirit of collaboration and mutual respect.

B. Parish Staff: The catechetical administrator is a member of the parish staff and must maintain effective communication with other staff members.

C. Parish Catechetical Administrator, Youth Minister, and Principal: The catechetical administrator and principal of the Catholic school with which the parish is associated should maintain frequent communication. The catechetical administrator is a consultant on catechetical issues. The youth minister is a consultant on middle school ministry/youth matters. The catechetical administrator, principal and youth minister coordinate calendar and programming events. Clear collaboration and communication must take place among the catechetical administrator, principal, and youth minister regarding the sharing of facilities, resources, and specific roles and duties of all parties.

D. Parish Volunteer Catechists: The catechetical administrator is responsible for effective and frequent communication with the parish catechists. The catechetical administrator must establish a regular schedule of meeting(s) with the catechists as a group and as individuals that meet the needs of the particular parish. In addition to meetings, the catechetical administrator should maintain telephone and written communication with the catechists. The catechetical administrator is to be available for consultations with the catechists.

Communication

G3
It is recommended that the parish have a written **catechist handbook** detailing responsibilities and expectations so that the catechist clearly understands his/her duties and obligations (see Section B). Catechists are encouraged to share and collaborate with each other.

E. **Parents:** The catechetical administrator must maintain and facilitate communication with parents and students. A parish handbook of religious education guidelines and procedures is essential (See Section B). This parish handbook reflects compliance with diocesan policies and procedures. Some means of student and parent accountability for this information is advised. Catechists are available for communication with parents.

**Each catechetical year is to begin with a meeting for parents** which includes the calendar for the year, options for catechetical instruction if such is in place, and the **parish handbook**. It also includes other necessary and encouraged involvement of the parents throughout the year, an opportunity to meet the catechists, and an opportunity to engage parents in discussion.

The Religious Education programs can open prayer services to the parents and invite parents to visit the classrooms through an open house. The catechetical administrator should look to the parents as the *greater resource* for services as catechists, aides and other volunteers for the program.

The catechetical administrator can be a great source for parenting resources and parenting seminars.

F. **Parish:** The catechetical administrator should maintain communication with the parish through the use of the parish website, email, bulletins, newsletters and catechetical events such as Catechetical Sunday, Catechetical Week, and opportunities for catechist recognition.

G. **Education Committee:** The catechetical administrator should meet regularly with the committee and maintain communication regarding the catechetical program and its needs.

H. **Public Schools:** The catechetical administrator should seek to maintain a relationship of open communication with the community and especially the local public school system/s.
All in all, it can be taken here that catechesis is an education of children, young people and adults in the faith, which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life (CT 18).

The catechesis of children, young people, and adults aim at teaching them to meditate on The Word of God in personal prayer, practicing it in liturgical prayer, and internalizing it at all times in order to bear fruit in a new life. Catechesis is also a time for the discernment and education of popular piety. The memorization of basic prayers offers an essential support to the life of prayer, but it is important to help learners savor their meaning (CCC 2688).

Catechesis has to reveal in all clarity the joy and the demands of the way of Christ. Catechesis for the “newness of life” in him should be:

- A catechesis of the Holy Spirit, the interior Master of life according to Christ, a gentle guest and friend who inspires, guides, corrects, and strengthens this life;
- A catechesis of grace, for it is by grace that we are saved and again it is by grace that our works can bear fruit for eternal life;
- A catechesis of the beatitudes, for the way of Christ is summed up in the beatitudes, the only path that leads to the eternal beatitude for which the human heart longs;
- A catechesis of sin and forgiveness, for unless man acknowledges that he is a sinner he cannot know the truth about himself, which is a condition for acting justly; and without the offer of forgiveness he would not be able to bear this truth;
- A catechesis of the human virtues which causes one to grasp the beauty and attraction of right dispositions towards goodness;
- A catechesis of the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and charity, generously inspired by the example of the saints;
- A catechesis of the twofold commandment of charity set forth in the Decalogue;
- An ecclesial catechesis, for it is through the manifold exchanges of “spiritual goods” in the “communion of saints” that Christian life can grow, develop, and be communicated” (CCC 1697).
Section H: STUDENT EVALUATION

Principle
Programs of catechesis require the inclusion of a process of student evaluation in order to continue to best meet the needs of each child.

Evaluation utilizes a variety of means and methods reflective of the four aims of catechesis. Children with special needs may require unique forms of evaluation.

Policy H I: Evaluation Processes
Evaluation reports must be provided to the parents/guardian(s), in person, if possible, on a regular basis each year. Minimally these reports are sent out at the end of the first half of the catechetical year and at the conclusion of the year’s program. Such reports, different from an academic “report card,” are meant to be a means of a) helping the pastor assess the readiness of each student for sacramental preparation; b) assisting the catechist in determining the ability for the student to progress to the next level; and c) helping the catechetical administrator communicate to the parent(s)/guardian(s) the assessment of the child’s progress in the key areas of catechesis: message, community, worship and service.

Policy H II: Evaluation Forms
The evaluation report form should include a reminder letter to the parent(s)/guardian(s)

- To work with their children in the area of catechesis and to encourage progress in each area;

- To encourage, promote and facilitate the child’s participation in the sacramental life of the Church, especially the Sacraments of Penance and Eucharist (Mass attendance);

- To enable regular and timely class attendance.

(Note: See following sample Student Evaluation Form)
(Parish Name and Program)

**Student Evaluation Form**

Catechetical Year: ________

Religious Education Evaluation For: __________________________________________________

Grade/Level _______  Catechist __________________________________

Date _______  Sessions Scheduled _________________

Days absent _______

**Message (Understands Content of Lesson)**

_____ Grasps lessons extremely well

_____ Usually understands content

_____ Seldom shows signs of understanding

Comments: _____________________________________________________________

______________________________________

**Community (Cooperation)**

a) Cooperates in the learning experience with catechist and others in class

_____ Always cooperates

_____ Usually cooperates

_____ Sometimes cooperates

_____ Behavior difficulties

Comments: _____________________________________________________________

______________________________________

b) Completes Activities and/or Assignments

_____ All completed

_____ Most completed

_____ Very few completed

_____ None completed

Comments: _____________________________________________________________

______________________________________

Student Evaluation

H3
Worship (Prayer Opportunities):

____ Participates in class prayer, liturgy, sacramental celebrations
____ Demonstrates a reverent attitude at worship
____ Knows grade appropriate prayers

Comments: ________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________

Service (Outreach Opportunities):

____ Reflects Christian attitude of openness to, sharing with, and helping others

Comments: ________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________

Need For Conference with Parent(s)/Guardian

____ With catechist
____ With catechist and catechetical administrator

Comments: ________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________

Your comments are welcome with regards to this evaluation or any other aspect of the parish Religious Education Program. Please use the space below:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

If you desire a conference with the Catechetical Administrator or your child’s catechist, please contact the Catechetical Administrator.

Please detach this portion and return either to the parish office, the Religious Education Office or by mail within two weeks.

♣ I have received and reviewed this evaluation ♣

Student's Name _______________________________________________________________

Parent/Guardian Signature ____________________________________________________

Student Evaluation

H4
STUDENT DISCIPLINE

“Freedom makes man responsible for his acts to the extent that they are voluntary. Progress in virtue, knowledge of the good, and abscess enhance the mastery of the will over its acts (CCC 1734).”

“By this power of the Spirit, God’s children can bear much fruit. He who has grafted us onto the true vine will make us bear the ‘fruit of the Spirit…love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.’ We live by the Spirit; the more we renounce ourselves, the more we ‘walk by the Spirit’ (CCC 736).”

Section I: Student Discipline

Principle

In the Christian teaching, discipline, properly understood, is a virtue which enables persons to grow, develop, and follow as disciples in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, the divine and master teacher. An orderly environment allows for progress in catechesis to the benefit of both the individual student and the entire group. Authentic discipline reflects self-control, one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. It likewise reflects a sense of responsible freedom.

Policy I I: Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Process

Religious educators create a classroom atmosphere which enables students to grow in self discipline. The rights and responsibilities of the student must be a fundamental consideration in all disciplinary action. Parental involvement occurs early in cases calling for disciplinary action.

Parishes establish a code of conduct for parish religious education programs and distribute the code to parents before problems arise. The code of conduct includes a detailed outline of the sequence of procedures to be followed by the catechist in the cases calling for disciplinary action. It also includes suggested means for recording disciplinary infractions and responsive action by the catechist. Any action taken is to be corrective rather than punitive with emphasis on developing responsibility within the student for his/her behavior.

Classroom expectations regarding behavior, reflective of the code of conduct, are established on the first day of class in words that are clear and understandable.
Policy I II: Weapons
Any person carrying a weapon onto parish property, including, but not limited to, a parish building, outdoor areas, outdoor facilities, vehicles used to transport students, or parish related activities poses a clear and present danger to other students and staff. For the purpose of this policy, a weapon is defined to be a gun, knife or any other article which could be used to cause injury.

Any student found with an offensive weapon will be dealt with as follows:
1. Confiscate the weapon
2. Contact parent and pastor
3. Notify police
4. Suspend the child from the program

Such suspension, upon investigation and discussion with the Diocesan Director for Religious Education may result in expulsion from the parish program. Pending an investigation and the cooperation of parents, the parish will work closely with the parents to find another means of religious education.

Policy I III: Substance Abuse
An illegal substance is any alcoholic beverage or controlled mood-altering medication or chemical.

The catechist or aide must notify the catechetical administrator immediately in the case of any student:
- demonstrating obvious symptoms of possible illegal substance abuse
- observed using illegal substances
- observed in possession of apparatus in connection with the use of illegal substances
- observed in the process of distributing or obtaining illegal substances

The catechetical administrator shall remove the student from the class or parish sponsored situation, shall notify the parent and pastor, and shall have the child picked up and removed from the program setting on that occasion by parent or legal guardian.

Return to the program will only be considered if appropriate corrective measures are taken. These include proper evaluation of student and completion of program of counseling and/or treatment as indicated.

Policy I IV: Bullying
The Diocese of Pittsburgh has adopted a zero tolerance policy regarding students who bully other students. Bullying occurs when a student or other person is exposed repeatedly and over-time, to negative action on the part of one or more other students or persons. Bullying most often occurs when catechetical administrators/catechists are not present.

Bullying is a form of violence. Unlike fighting, which is easily observed, bullying is frequently less visible to the adults in charge or is seen as a non-issue. However, bullying does erode discipline and student and staff morale. Furthermore, prolonged bullying can cause explosive violence when youths are intimidated for months and believing no one cares, retaliate with rage.
Cyber-bullying takes place on computers at home or by means of cell phones. Students witnessing bullying incidents, as well as students who are victims of bullying, are expected to report such incidents to a responsible adult or catechetical/parish personnel. All students must be told that they may report bullying anonymously and that inappropriate behavior will be dealt with promptly and effectively (See Legal Section Policy T II: Bullying, for discipline and remedial action).

Students who are being bullied may show changes in behavior, such as becoming shy and nervous, feigning illness, taking unusual absences or clinging to adults. There may be evidence in work patterns, lacking concentration or truancy. Students are to be encouraged and supported to report bullying to the catechist, catechetical administrator, their parents or other responsible adults.

Catechetical staff must be alert to the signs of bullying and act promptly and firmly against it in accord with this policy.

Bullying is characterized by the following three criteria:
1. It is aggressive behavior or intentional harm-doing (physical or emotional)
2. It is carried out repeatedly over time
3. It occurs within an interpersonal relationship characterized by an imbalance of power

Bullying takes many forms, including the following:
- **Physical bullying** – physical acts of aggression such as hitting, kicking, tripping, pushing, pranks, physical restraining, flashing a weapon, stalking, or destroying or damaging property.
- **Verbal bullying** – threats of physical bullying, name calling or other insults, taunting/ridiculing, making faces or obscene gestures, cartoon drawing, graffiti on bathroom/building walls, social isolation or exclusion.
- **Internet (Cyber) bullying** – the spreading of harmful information or lies about others through email, chats, text messages, online blogs, cell phones or cameras.
- **Sexual bullying** – unwanted touching or comments made about a person’s body, body type or physical features including actions and obscene sexual gestures.

Any act of harassment, intimidation, hazing or bullying by either an individual or group of individuals is expressly prohibited—
- on parish property
- at a parish-sponsored activity or event off parish property
- on the way to and/or from parish programs or
- off parish grounds (cyber bullying)—if these actions are intended to and/or do adversely affect the safety, well-being of students while in the parish catechetical program (including cyber bullying).

This policy applies not only to students who directly engage in such an act but also to students who, by their indirect behavior, condone or support another student’s such unacceptable behavior.
Responsibilities of Parish Personnel and Students

Catechetical Administrator/Catechists/Other Volunteer Personnel

- Maintain a classroom area free of harassment, intimidation, hazing and bullying.
- Establish a positive, friendly, and trusting relationship with the class and each individual student.
- Ensure that all information concerning the policy prohibiting bullying is disseminated to all students and families. This information should be in the written form of rules, regulations, procedures or policies.
- Be particularly alert to possible situations, circumstances, or events that may lead to or constitute bullying and immediately report to the catechetical administrator/pastor any actions, instances, reports or allegations of bullying that come to his/her attention.
- Upon receiving an allegation of bullying submit a documented written report to the catechetical administrator/pastor (see Bullying Reporting Form).

Students

- Respect and obey all teachers, staff and volunteers
- Speak and act appropriately
- Respect other students in word and action
- Recognize peer conflict, report problems, and work to resolve conflict
- Be responsible for protecting the rights of others
- Accept responsibility for her/his own actions as well as the actions of a group when participating in bullying behavior
- Be truthful and candid if observing behaviors that could be a form of bullying
- Be courageous to report behaviors to a teacher or administrator
- Make it a point to include all students who are easily left out

Policy I V – Child Abuse

“Child Abuse” by definition includes serious physical or mental injury, which is not explained by the available medical history as being:

- Accidental,
- or sexual abuse,
- or sexual exploitation,
- or serious physical neglect of a child under 18 years of age, if the injury, abuse or neglect has been caused by:
  - the acts of omission of the child’s parents,
  - or by a person responsible for the child’s welfare,
  - or any individual residing in the same home as the child,
  - or a paramour of the child’s parent
Provided, however, no child shall be deemed to be physically or mentally abused for the sole reason he is in good faith being furnished treatment by spiritual means through prayer alone in accordance with the tenets and practice of a recognized church or religious denomination by a duly accredited practitioner thereof or is not provided specified medical treatment in the practice of religious beliefs or solely on the grounds of environmental factors which are beyond the control of the person responsible for the child’s welfare such as inadequate:

- housing
- furnishings
- income
- clothing

“Serious Mental Injury” is a psychological condition as determined by professionals: psychiatrist, psychologist or pediatrician. This injury is caused primarily by acts of omission of a parent or person responsible for the child (including the refusal of appropriate treatment) which:

- renders the child chronically and severely anxious, agitated, depressed, socially withdrawn, psychotic or in reasonable fear for his/her life and/or safety is threatened;
- makes the child agitated, depressed, socially withdrawn, psychotic or be reasonable fearful that his/her life is threatened;
- seriously interferes with the child’s ability to accomplish age-appropriate developmental milestones, or school, peer and community tasks.

“Serious physical neglect” is abandonment, prolonged or repeated lack of supervision of a child not old enough to care for himself, or failure to provide essentials of life by a person responsible for the child’s welfare who has the ability to provide those essentials, which results in a physical condition which endangers the child’s life or development or impairs his physical functioning.

“Sexual abuse” is defined as rape, molestation, incest or prostitution.

“Sexual exploitation” is defined as the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in or assist any person to engage in any sexually explicit conduct, or any simulation of sexually explicit conduct, for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct.

The Child Protective Services Act of 1975 requires that physicians, dentists, nurses, teachers, and others are required to report child abuse. The act specifically states, “Any persons who, in the course of their employment, occupation, or practice of their profession come into contact with children shall report or cause a report to be made . . . when they have reason to believe, on the basis of their medical, professional or other training and experience, that a child coming before them in their profession or official capacity is an abused child.” (Adapted from Principal’s Handbook Policy 602 – Child Abuse)
The Diocese of Pittsburgh requires that non-paid voluntary personnel who perform services for the Church should also consider themselves to be mandated reporters if they come into contact with children during the course of their volunteer Church work.

Examples of children considered by the CPSL to be under the care or supervision of a Church entity would include school and parish religious education students, children enrolled in child-care programs, children being “babysat” during worship services or gatherings, children participating in Church-related youth ministries or sports programs, Catholic Charities’ clients and health care patients.

A mandated reporter need not make a first-hand observation of the suspected child abuse victim. Second-hand reports of abuse must be reported to the proper authorities if the mandated reporter has “reasonable cause to suspect” that child abuse has occurred.

Any employee of a Parish in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, including catechetical administrators, music ministers, secretaries, custodians as well as volunteer catechists, aides, office personnel have the responsibility to report the suspected case on the Abuse Hotline at (800) 932-0313. A catechist is to report to the catechetical administrator who must also inform the pastor. The catechetical administrator or pastor reports the case.

For information on reporting child abuse see Policy Y VI – Legal Section of this document.
Guideline I I: Acceptable Means of Correction/Discipline
The following are acceptable means of correction/discipline: (Note: for bullying, see Legal Section: Policy T II).

a) Correction of student or isolation of offending student
b) Student/teacher conference
c) Student/catechetical administrator conference
d) Student/parent/teacher/catechetical administrator/pastor conference
e) Request for parent to attend parish religious education class with child
f) Provision of alternative means of religious education (see Section D and Policy D II)
g) Temporary suspension (may be invoked only after all other means have been exhausted)

Guideline I II: Unacceptable Means of Correction/Discipline
The following are unacceptable means of correction:

a) Corporal punishment of any type
b) Busy work of a purely repetitive name
c) Indiscriminate punishment of all pupils in a class for the disruptive conduct of one
d) Unsupervised expulsion from the classroom
e) Sending the student home without the knowledge of the parents (see Policy D IV, V and VI)
f) Punishments which ridicule the student
FINANCIAL ISSUES

“The parish is still a major point of reference for the Christian people, even for the non-practicing. Accordingly, realism and wisdom demand that we continue along the path aiming to restore to the parish, as needed, more adequate structures and, above all, a new impetus through the increasing integration into it of qualified, responsible and generous members… That is why every big parish or every group of parishes with small numbers has the serious duty to train people completely dedicated to providing catechetical leadership (priests, men and women religious, and lay people), to provide the equipment needed for catechesis under all aspects, to increase and adapt the places for catechesis to the extent that it is possible and useful to do so, and to be watchful about the quality of the religious formation of the various groups and their integration into the ecclesial community” (CT 6).

“Catechetical planning should include assessment of catechetical needs and available resources (and) establishment of a budget based on stewardship principles that ensure priorities are named as a process for allocating resources” (NDC 58).

“Organization for catechesis should ensure the equitable distribution of services, resources, and opportunities. Parishes in need should have opportunities equal to those of more affluent parishes” (NDC 58).

Section J: FINANCIAL ISSUES

Principle

The parish identifies and strives to meet the religious education needs of adults, children and youth by establishing and maintaining quality religious education programs. To this end, it is the obligation of the parish to allocate sufficient funding and to provide adequate space for the program as well as support for ongoing training for both the catechetical administrator and the catechists.

Policy J: Budget

An annual budget must be developed by the pastor, catechetical administrator, and pastoral council education committee and finance council to provide the necessary funding for religious education programs. The time frame and guidelines for the budget are to be coordinated with diocesan fiscal planning schedules.

“Planning is an essential part of catechetical organization. Catechetical planning should include…establishment of a budget based on stewardship principles that ensure priorities are named as a process for allocating resources (NDC 58).

Further reference to budget development can be found in the diocesan Hiring Handbook, Lay DRE/CRE contract and the document “Compensation for Men and Women Religious (Brothers and Sisters): Diocese of Pittsburgh.”

Financial Issues

J1
Policy J II: Fees

Each parish is responsible for providing programs of religious education for its children, young people and adults. As these programs are understood to be part of the general operating budget of each parish, *no tuition can be charged* for programs of religious education.

It is permissible, however, for a pastor to ask parents to assume some financial responsibility for textbooks and other related materials through some component fees. **However, no parish child is to be denied religious education because of an inability by one’s parents to pay the fee.** In some cases, in lieu of the *materials fee*, parents might be asked to volunteer time helping with sacramental projects or retreats, office matters, program festivities, hall monitoring, classroom aide etc.
OFFICE CONCERNS

“A as far as possible, parish catechetical programs are to be established, financed, staffed, and evaluated in light of the goal of meeting the needs of everyone in the parish (NCD 224).”

“Adequately staffed and budgeted parish catechetical programs at every level are to be provided for children who do not attend Catholic schools. The limited time available for these programs makes it absolutely necessary to set priorities and to give them active support (NCD 229).”

“Planning is an essential part of catechetical organization. Catechetical planning should include…assessment of catechetical needs and available resources (and) establishment of favorable conditions for carrying out the strategies (of the program)” (NDC 58).

Section K: OFFICE CONCERNS

Principle

Prudent stewardship of the catechetical program is reflected in the determination, establishment and maintenance of organized structures of office services and supports which will enable the catechetical mission in the most productive and expeditious manner.

Such office services and supports include, but are not limited to, professional secretarial services, updated technological equipment and contemporary communication methods as well as means of obtaining, reviewing and retaining appropriate records.

Policy K I: Records

Full and accurate records of pertinent data for all students and catechists in the parish religious program must be maintained and updated yearly by the Catechetical Administrator. Separate files for families, students, and catechists are recommended. Suggested sample forms appropriate for each are included (see Sections B and D). Since these records contain confidential data, the information must not be released to unauthorized personnel. There is never a release of records without written authorization.

Students’ files contain: registration; baptismal certificate or copy; attendance records; student evaluation reports (see Section H – Main Section); transfer information if applicable; and copies of any significant office-parent correspondence.

In order to remain consistent with the requirements of the confidentiality policy the names and addresses of students in the Catechetical Programs shall not be given or distributed to any outside source for any reason. For good cause, however, the names and addresses of students may be shared internally with parish professional staff, or with parish school groups as necessary, or for any program related to the education of these students within the context of other diocesan schools or school programs.
Whenever a student is transferred to another religious education program, the appropriate information will be provided to the new catechetical administrator upon request.

Catechist files contain personal and professional data. As such they must be kept securely locked with access limited to approved personnel only. Please refer to legal concerns section of this manual for further information.

For guidelines regarding the parish record retention schedule, established at the advice of, and in cooperation with, the diocesan Archives and Records Center (412) 621-6217, further specific consultation with the pastor is necessary.
Guideline K I: Secretarial Support
The catechetical program should be provided, based on the financial means of the parish, with some form of secretarial support. This person (whether full-time, part-time or volunteer) should have good communication and phone skills, facility with computers and computer programs, filing, handling of correspondence and record keeping. This must be a person who honors confidentiality and can serve as a “ministry of hospitality” for the religious education office to the larger community.

The pastor and catechetical administrator must provide a clear set of expectations which have been agreed upon for the secretary.

Guideline K II: Office Equipment and Supplies
The parish catechetical program should provide basic equipment for the religious education office: desk(s)/chair(s), appropriate furniture and furnishings, telephone, answering machine(s) as needed, bulletin board, file cabinet(s), shelf units, and computer with printer and internet access.

Other equipment or access thereto on parish property includes copier, fax, and office management/record CDs.

In addition, adequate standard office supplies should be maintained for both the office and the needs of catechists.
RELEASE TIME


The age and the intellectual development of Christians, their degree of ecclesial and spiritual maturity and many other personal circumstances demand that catechesis should adopt widely differing methods for the attainment of its specific aim: education in the faith. On a more general level, this variety is also demanded by the social and cultural surroundings in which the Church carries out her catechetical work. The variety in the methods used is a sign of life and resource (CT 51).”

“The laws of some states provide for releasing students from public school during regular school hours so that they can attend catechetical programs off the school premises. Some states make an hour or more available each week for catechetical instruction. Others provide for “staggered” time, releasing students on an individual or group basis at different hours and days throughout the week. While a number of places have reported good success with these forms of released time, other have complained that scheduling and transportation present serious practical difficulties; they have also noted the bad effect of compartmentalizing religion and relegating catechesis to a small and inadequate portion of the child’s or youth’s total school time.

More satisfactory results have been reported in a few places which make available a block of time for catechesis—several hours, a whole day, or even several consecutive days.

Good results have been achieved in both released time programs and after-school catechesis by catechetical centers established adjacent to public schools.

Released time programs are more effective when part of a broader parish catechetical program (NCD 235).”

Section L: RELEASE TIME

Principle

Within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Act 175 (see below) provides that public school officials, upon written request from the parents (see below) shall excuse children, for up to thirty hours per school year, in order to attend sessions for religious education and other catechetical and formational opportunities such as days of retreat and programs for Sacramental preparation.

Policy L I: Utilization of Act 175

The utilization of Act 175 is not only a valid option for instruction and spiritual enrichment but is viewed as beneficial to parish programs of religious education. The provisions of this law allow for opportunities for alternative times and models for catechesis. Effort should be taken to utilize Act 175 in order to meet a variety of catechetical challenges. Effort is made to present opportunities for enrichment in a positive light.
Policy L II: Consultation with Public Schools
The catechetical administrator should consult annually with each of the local school districts regarding their particular policies, requirements, accountability for attendance and any changes therein from the previous year. Policies vary from one public school to another as to whether such a release, covered under Act 175, is recorded on the student’s permanent record as an excused absence or a day in school.

Policy L III: Parental Approval
Parents do exercise ultimate approval regarding their child’s participation. If parents choose not to have their child participate, the child misses a potential opportunity for spiritual growth and community. Children are in no way, however, to be penalized for non-participation.

Act 175 of 1982
General Assembly of Pennsylvania
An Act
Amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L. 30, No. 14) entitled “An act relating to the public school including certain provisions applicable as well to private and parochial schools; amending, revising, consolidating and changing the laws relating thereto,” further providing for release of pupils for religious instruction.

The General Assembly of Commonwealth of Pennsylvania hereby enacts as follows:


The superintendent of the school district shall, upon the written request of a parent or other person in loco parentis, excuse any student who is the child of that parent or person in loco parentis from school attendance for a total of not more than thirty-six hours (36) per school year in order to attend classes for religious instruction: provided, however, that the request shall identify and describe the instruction, and the dates and hours for which the absence is requested and that the parent or person in loco parentis shall, following each such absence, furnish in writing to the superintendent of the school district a statement attesting that the child did in fact attend the instruction and the dates and hours upon which such attendance took place.

Section 2. This act shall take effect in 60 days.

Signed by Governor Thornburgh on June 24, 1982

Release Time
L2
Guidelines for the Implementation of Act 175

Background

Act 175 resulted from the enactment of Senate Bill 706 (P.N. 1826). This legislation was passed by the House in May of 1982, approved by the Senate in June of 1982, and signed by the Governor on June 24, 1982.

Act 175 amends Section 1546 of the Public School Code relating to the “release of pupils for religious instruction.”

The “released-time” statute provides that public school officials, upon the written request of parents, shall excuse the children of such requesting parents for a total of not more than 36 hours per school year in order to attend classes for religious instruction.

The previous released-time statute limited the release of students for religious instruction to one hour per week. The previous statute also made the release of the student’s dependent entirely upon the decision of public school officials rather than upon the choice of the parent, who, of course, has primary responsibility for the child’s overall education.

Act 175 permits the same amount of time for released-time religious instruction, but, by not limiting the configuration in which the 36 hours can be used for religious instruction, the statute creates additional potential for flexibility in released-time religious instruction programs. In short, released-time religious instruction programs for public school students can now be scheduled according to the availability of competent religious instructors, particularly if such are not available for an hour a week during the school day.

In addition, the law clearly recognizes the parents’ primary responsibility for the overall education of their children by making the release of the students, for the religious instruction program, dependent upon the preferences of the parent, rather than the decision of a public school administrator.

With this Act in place, it is possible that some creative and interesting programs can be offered through blocking the 36 “released hours” in various time configurations. For instance, some possible utilization of the “released hours” might be the following.

1) On the elementary level, students might be released for a few half days, or full days, in the fall and spring in order to concentrate on specific sacramental preparations. Obviously, these preparations could be done in conjunction with the regular catechetical program that is conducted outside of school-day hours.

2) On the secondary level, perhaps students could be released for a full day on six different occasions throughout the school year for purposes of religious instruction in the form of a day of recollection or a one-day retreat. Such programs could be totally distinct from the regular catechetical instruction program that occurs outside of school-day hours – or obviously the programs could be coordinated with the regular catechetical programs for public school students.
3) On both the elementary and the secondary level, students might be released for a two or three day retreat, perhaps in connection with specific religious holidays, such as Christmas or Easter.

Again, such religious programs could be coordinated with the regular weekly catechetical program that takes place outside of school-day hours.

Obviously, the above suggestions are only a few of many possible utilization of the statute in providing religious instruction programs for Catholic children in public schools.

**Rationale for Act 175**

It is clearly recognized that a child’s religious education is an integral part of his or her total educational growth and development. Thus the rationale for Act 175 is a need to provide opportunity for religious instruction programs for public school students in conjunction with the regular schedule of hours set aside for children’s education and schooling. In short, the opportunity is created for devoting 36 hours, or approximately six days, of a child’s public school attendance requirement each year to religious instruction and formation. Both secular and religious educational goals can be accommodated in a child’s normal school attendance requirement.

The rationale for the legislation recognizes further that parents are primarily responsible for their children’s total education and growth, which clearly includes both the secular and religious dimension.
Guidelines for Act 175

The following guidelines are offered as suggestions to consider in utilizing the provisions of the released-time religious instruction statute:

A) Catechetical Administrator

1. Ideally, the Catechetical Administrator, after planning the religious instruction program to be administered to Catholic students in public school under Act 175, should communicate to the public school superintendent the dates upon which the released-time religious instruction program will be conducted.

Comment: Ideally, the public school superintendent should be informed of the date, or dates for a released-time religious instruction program as early as possible. The spring preceding a school year is the optimum time for such communication.

If possible, the catechetical administrator should meet or have a conversation with public school officials (superintendent and/or principal) to discuss the timing of the released-time religious instruction program. The point of such discussion will simply be an attempt to avoid unnecessary conflict with other planned programs or activities for the public school students. Conflicts with some public school programs or activities might have a detrimental effect on attendance at released-time religious instruction programs.

Obviously not all conflicts can be avoided, but unnecessary conflicts with some public school activities or programs, such as a class trip or a major testing program, may result in some parents and students failing to agree to participate in the released-time religious instruction program.

If the initial meeting or discussion is conducted with the Superintendent of the public school district, it is suggested that this individual be asked whether the catechetical administrator should contact a particular school principal directly in planning the scheduling of the released-time religious instruction program.

In some situations, the catechetical administrator might not be able to give the optimum advance notification to public school officials about the planned dates for the released-time religious instruction program. If such notification cannot be done in the spring preceding a school year, then the public school officials should be informed about the religious instruction program as far as possible in advance of such program. As a general rule, such notification should never occur less than 30 days prior to the administration of the released-time religious instruction program.

In fairness to public school officials and public school students, adequate advance notice should be given with respect to the planned released-time religious instruction program in order to insure optimum attendance.
2) The Catechetical Administrator should inform the public school administrator as to which agency or entity will be responsible for the released time religious instruction program.

**Comment:** This would involve specifying that the diocese, or a particular parish, is responsible for administering the released-time religious instruction program to the public school students that will be absent from public school in order to attend the program.

Such information and notification will help parents meet the legal requirement that they “shall identify and describe” the released-time religious instruction program. It will also generally contribute to the credibility of the religious instruction program.

3) The Catechetical Administrator should inform Catholic children in public school, and their parents, about the planned released-time religious instruction program. An attempt should be made to motivate both the students and their parents so that they are interested in participating in the religious instruction program.

**Comment:** In order to have a successful released-time religious instruction program, it will be essential that both students and their parents are motivated to want to participate in the program.

Such informing and motivating, which currently goes on in the process of enrolling public school students in catechetical or religious instruction programs that do not involve a “release from public school,” can follow existing communication patterns with Catholic children in public school, and their parents.

4) After informing and motivating the parents, the Catechetical Administrator should request the parents to write a letter to the public school superintendent stating that they wish their children to be excused from school on specified dates in order to participate in the released-time religious instruction program (see sample letter at section end).

**Comment:** This meets the requirement of the law that states “the superintendent of the school district shall, upon the written request of a parent,” excuse children of such parents from school attendance in order to attend classes for religious instruction.

It is suggested that the Catechetical Administrator, in order to facilitate the program, prepare form letters for the parents to sign, requesting that their children be excused in order to attend the religious instruction program on the specified dates (see sample letters at section end).

Please note that the sample form letter for the parent includes the parent’s authorization for the Catechetical Administrator to serve in loco parentis to attest, following the completion of the program, to the child’s attendance at the religious education program session(s). This approach for the verification of the students’ attendance should be preferred by the public school administrator, since such approach will eliminate the necessity for another letter from all the parents (also, the Catechetical Administrator is actually the only one who will be able to attest to a student’s attendance at the religious instruction sessions).
The Catechetical Administrator can then send or deliver the letters from the parents to the public school superintendent, thereby specifying which children will be absent from school in order to participate in the released-time religious instruction program (see sample letter at section end).

5) The Catechetical Administrator must keep accurate attendance records so that it is known precisely which students attended which sessions.

Comment: All students, whose parents request the “release” of their children from public school in order to attend the religious instruction program, will have to be accounted for during the hours that they are released from public school to attend the religious instruction program.

If a student who is enrolled in the released-time religious instruction program, is absent from the religious instruction class or exercise without known reason, the parent or guardian of the child should be contacted immediately.

Students are required to provide a written excuse from their parents if they are absent from the released-time religious instruction program.

6) Following the released-time religious instruction program, the Catechetical Administrator shall communicate with the public school superintendent to attest that specific students did attend the religious instruction on the dates and hours when the religious instruction program occurred.

Comment: Based upon the accurate attendance records that are important for the religious instruction program, the Catechetical Administrator shall write to the public school superintendent to report the students’ attendance at the various sessions of the religious instruction program (see letter at section end).

In so reporting, the Catechetical Administrator should indicate the reasons why students were not in attendance, if some students did not attend the religious instruction and if, in fact, the reasons are known (copies of the parent’s written excuses should be submitted to the public school superintendent with the letter of attendance verification).

The follow up attendance verification letter should be a positive public relations gesture, thanking the public school superintendent for cooperation and accurately accounting for the students that were excused from public school attendance to participate in the religious instruction program.
7) The Catechetical Administrator must provide reasonable care and supervision for the released-time students when these students are participating in the religious instruction program.

**Comment:** The legal department suggests that each church should check with its insurers to assure that all possible risks are covered. In the case of field trips the Field Trip Registration Form and Consent to Treat Form must be used and signed by parents (see section L -Field Trips).

It is important to realize that “released” public school students, following proper parental request, are no longer the responsibility of public school officials.

The Catechetical Administrator should be careful that potential liabilities incurred in dealing with religious education students are covered or provided for, as likely is the case in current “non-release” religious education programs.

B) Program

1) The content of the released-time religious instruction program is entirely the domain of the religious education administrator and the sponsoring diocese or parish. The program content is in no way subject to scrutiny or approval by the public school superintendent.

**Comment:** The state, in the person of the superintendent or another local public school official, has absolutely no jurisdiction to evaluate the content of the religious instruction program. To involve the public official in this type of supervision or approval would obviously involve “entanglement” between government and church.

Although the statute provides that the parental request “shall identify and describe the instruction,” this need only require that parents and/or religious education administrators give a topical description of the religious instruction being provided in the program.

Liturgical celebrations are clearly part of the overall religious instruction program as they have an educational dimension, from the viewpoint of understanding, illumination, and growth.

Released-time religious instruction programs can be scheduled “around” specific religious holidays, with the program clearly including liturgical functions.

Religious education, officially representing the local diocese and/or parish, is the sole determinant of the content of the released-time religious instruction program.

2) The sponsoring agency (diocese or parish) responsible for the religious instruction program is solely responsible for arranging to have religious instructors participate in the released-time religious instruction program.

**Comment:** The sponsoring diocese or parish has total discretion in establishing or applying criteria for religious instruction program. The state has no jurisdiction whatsoever in establishing criteria or qualifications for religious instructors participating in the released-time program.

Release Time

L8
3) The sponsoring agency (diocese or parish) is solely responsible for deciding which instructional materials, if any, will be utilized in the released-time religious instruction program.

**Comment:** Just as the state has no authority to dictate the content of the program, so also the state has no authority to decide which instructional materials (books etc.) shall be utilized in the program.

4) The sponsoring agency (diocese or parish) shall have total discretion in deciding where the released-time religious instruction program shall be conducted.

**Comment:** While the sponsoring or administering agency has discretion in deciding where the released-time religious instruction program will be conducted, it must be remembered that religious instruction programs cannot be conducted on public school premises. This, of course, is the result of the Supreme Court McCollum decision, which specifically prohibits religious instruction on public school premises.

Although the state cannot dictate or decide where the religious instruction program will be conducted, the program administrator must remember that the administering agency does “come under a duty to provide reasonable care and supervision for the released time pupils when these pupils enter upon church property.”

5) The released-time religious instruction program cannot require that public school students be released for more than 36 hours during a school year in order to participate in the religious instruction program.

**Comment:** The maximum number of hours for which a parent can request the release of his or her child from public school for participation in religious instruction programs is 36 hours during the entire year. Obviously release from public school for religious instruction can be sought for less than 36 hours, depending upon the particular program requirement.

It is important for religious educators to realize that “released students” should be required to attend the exercises of the religious instruction program during the time that the student is “released” from public school for such purpose.

In short, religious educators should generally not dismiss “released” students during the period of time that these students have been officially released from the public school for purpose of participating in a religious instruction program (having students released from public school for periods of time substantially greater than that for which the religious instruction program is scheduled will only seriously risk the overall credibility of the released-time religious instruction program).

Since the 36-hours provision relates to “release from public school,” obviously any necessary travel time from the public school to the site of the religious instruction will be included in the 36 hours. In short, the 36 hour provision relates to “release from public school” and not specifically to the time duration of the religious instruction program.
C) Parents

1) Parents who want their children to participate in a released-time religious instruction program must submit a written request to the public school superintendent to have their child or children excused from attendance at the public school in order to attend the released-time religious instruction program (see sample letter at section end).

Comment: As noted earlier, the sponsoring agency (diocese or parish) should inform the parents of Catholic children in public school about the religious instruction program. Such parents should be motivated to want to have their children participating in the released-time religious instruction program.

Following the information and motivation, parents should be helped in requesting the release of their children from public school for participation in the religious instruction program. Such help to the parents is probably most easily supplied in the use of a form letter (see section end), containing the date, time, and topical information on the religious instruction program. Parents can insert the name or names of their children and sign the letter, which can then be submitted to the religious education administrator for transmittal to the public school superintendent.

2) Parents assume responsibility for their children during that period of time when the students are released from public school in order to participate in a religious instruction program.

Comment: This means that, after the public school superintendent has excused students in order to attend a religious instruction program, parents are responsible for seeing to it that the students attend the religious instruction program.

If a student has been released from public school to attend a religious instruction program but, because of illness, is unable to attend the religious instruction program, the parents are responsible to notify the administrative staff of the religious instruction program that the student is unable to attend because of illness. This notification should occur at the projected starting hour for the religious instruction program so that the Catechetical Administrator can account for all of the public school students that were released in order to attend the religious instruction program (clearly, no matter what the reason for a student’s inability to attend the released-time religious instruction program, parents should communicate with the administrative staff of the religious instruction program in all situations). The parent assumes responsibility for transporting the child to the site of the released-time religious instruction program, unless such transportation is included in the total religious instruction program (of course, public school transportation cannot be utilized to transport students to and from the site of the religious instruction program).
3) Following the released-time religious instruction program, parents are responsible to attest to the public school superintendent, in writing, that their children did in fact attend the religious instruction on the dates when the children were released from public school for the specific purpose of attending the religious instruction program.

**Comment:** If the initial parent letter, requesting an excused absence for the child from attendance at public school, includes the authorization for the religious education administrator to serve “in loco parentis” in order to attest to the student’s attendance at the religious instruction sessions, then it is not necessary for the parent to write the attendance attestation letter. The Catechetical Administrator will verify the attendance and in effect account for all of the public school students that were released from public school in order to attend the particular religious instruction program.

If the Catechetical Administrator is not authorized to serve in loco parentis to attest to the attendance at the religious instruction sessions, then parents are requested to write a letter to the public school superintendent to attest to the child’s attendance at the religious instruction sessions.

**D) Students**

1) After students are excused from attending public school for the precise purpose of participating in the religious instruction program, it is obvious that the students will be required to attend the religious instruction program.

**Comment:** The Catechetical Administrator must be diligent in accounting for all of the students released from public school in order to attend the religious instruction program. If strict attendance records are not kept for the religious instruction program, it is obvious that some students may be tempted to use the “religious instruction” excuse in order to be released from public school, then pursuing endeavors or activities other than religious instruction during the time when released from the public school. These types of abuses, which might result from shoddy record-keeping practices by the Catechetical Administrator, can do serious harm to the overall credibility of the released-time religious instruction statute and its basic purpose.

2) With respect to the student, academic requirements, liturgical involvement, dress and conduct standards will be left to the discretion of the administering agency of the religious instruction program. Beyond attendance, the state will not apply academic or discipline standards to the students participating in the religious instruction program under the utilization of the released-time statute.

**Comment:** As is currently the case in religious instruction programs for “non-released” public school students, the authorities responsible for the religious instruction program will set the standards for the students with respect to academic requirements, liturgical involvement, and dress and conduct codes.
3) Students may not be penalized or punished in any way for participating in the Act 175 released-time religious instruction program.

**Comment:** Although the students when “released” will miss some public school classes, these students are to be given ample opportunity to make up the missed class work or assignments. They should have the same opportunity for make-up of missed school work as applies in various instances of absence, such as for sickness.

In short, the “released” students should in no way be discriminated against because of their participation in the religious instruction program (any instances of discrimination or penalty to the students should be reported immediately to the Catechetical Administrator, who should bring such discrimination to the attention of the appropriate public school administrators, presumably the Superintendent of Schools with whom the dates for the “released” program were planned and to whom the parents communicated in requesting the legally permitted excused absence).
Sample Parent Letter
Requesting Excused Absence
for Child to Participate
in Released Time Religious Instruction Program

Parish Stationary

Dear Superintendent ___________________________________

(Name)

Under Section 1546 of the “Public School Code,” as amended by Act 175 of 1982, I hereby request that my child, __________(Name of Child or Children)______________, be excused from attendance at ________________ Name of Public School________________ on the date(s) of (Date or dates of religious education program; if partial days are included, indicate precise time of day that students are requested to be released) in order to attend a religious instruction program conducted by _(Name of parish, diocese, or agency that will be conducting the religious instruction program).

I appreciate the excused release of my child from public school attendance for participation in this religious instruction program, which I deem to be important to his or her total educational growth and development as a person. I understand my child will be given ample opportunity to make up the missed public school class-work or assignments.

I will see to it that my child attends the religious instruction program for which he or she is being released from school and I hereby authorize the religious education administrator who is responsible for the religious instruction program to serve in loco parentis for me to attest to my child’s attendance at the religious instruction program session(s).

Respectfully yours,

Signature of Parent

Release Time
L13
Sample Cover Letter of Catechetical Administrator in Delivering Parent Letters Requesting Excusal of Students

Parish Stationery

Date ________________________________

Dear Superintendent ___________ (Name) __________________:

This is to inform you officially that the Catholic (Name of sponsoring diocese or parish etc.) is conducting a religious instruction program for Catholic students that attend (Name of public school or schools) ____________________________ in the __________________ (Name of school districts) __________ on (Specify date or dates and starting and ending hours of religious education program).

In reference to the religious education program, I am hereby transmitting to you the letters of parents of public school children in your district that will be attending the instructional program. These parents are requesting that their children be excused and released from public school under Section 1546 of the Public School Code, as amended by Act 175 of 1982, in order to attend the religious instruction program.

This released-time religious instruction program is part of the Catholic instructional and formational program as authorized by the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh.

As you can see, the parents are authorizing us to serve in loco parentis for them to attest to you that their children do in fact attend the instruction on the dates and hours when the program is conducted. We will provide such attendance verification following the religious instruction program.

We will appreciate your cooperation in excusing and releasing the students from public school class in order to attend the religious education program, which we feel is very significant to the total educational growth and development of the children.

Respectfully yours,

Release Time

L14
Attendance Verification Letter
of Catechetical Administrator
Following the Religious Instruction Program

Parish Stationery

Date ________________

Dear Superintendent ___________ Name__________________:

I hereby attest that the religious instruction program, available to some students in schools of
the ___________________________ (School district)_________________________, was conducted as
planned on the dates of ____ (Indicate days and hours of program).__________

This program was conducted by the __________________________

________________________________________________________

With this letter I am enclosing the roster of students that attended the religious instruction on
the dates and hours when the program was conducted. For students who did not attend the religious
instruction for which they were released from public school attendance, I enclose a written letter of
excuse from the parents of such students.

I appreciate your cooperation in excusing the students from their public school classes so
that they could attend the religious instruction, which I feel is a significant part of their total
education and growth. Please relay my sentiments of gratitude to your school administrators and
faculty members who cooperated in the release of these students for the religious instruction
program.

Respectfully yours,

Release Time
L15
FIELD TRIPS

"Children and young people should be assisted in the harmonious development of their physical, moral, and intellectual endowments. Surmounting hardships with a gallant and steady heart, they should be helped to acquire gradually a more mature sense of responsibility toward ennobling their own lives through constant effort, and toward pursuing authentic freedom. Moreover, they should be trained to take their part in social life, so that by proper instruction in necessary and useful skills they can become actively involved in various community organizations, be ready for dialogue with others, and be willing to act energetically on behalf of the common good (Vatican Council II, Gravissimum Educationis, [GE], 1)."

Section M: FIELD TRIPS

Principle
Field trips involve experiences in which students are away from the parish property site and have a specific/identified catechetical purpose and outcome. They are structured to supplement or reinforce classroom instruction.

Policy M I: Transportation
Parishes using school buses or vans to transport students in parish religious education programs to special events, field trips etc. are expected to adhere to the following laws and regulations issued from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA).

School Vans
Recent (2011) legislation regarding school vans is as follows:
• Pennsylvania law differentiates between the definition of and driver requirements for school buses and school vehicles.
• School Bus
  ▶ A school bus is defined under 75 PACS 102 as a motor vehicle which is:
    1. Designed to carry 11 passengers or more, including the driver and
    2. Used for the transportation of pre-primary, primary, or secondary school students to or from public, private, or parochial schools or events related to such schools or school-related activities.
    3. School buses with a “school bus” license plate may not be used to transport anyone other than school students and chaperones.
  ▶ A school bus driver must possess a valid Commercial Driver’s License with Passenger and School Bus Endorsements.
Multifunction School Activity Bus

- This is a school bus (11 passengers or more) that is not used for home to school or school to home transportation. Rather, it is used only to transport students on field trips, athletic trips, or other curricular or extracurricular activities.
- This bus can be any color so long as the school bus identification on the front, back, and sides are of a contrasting color. This bus does not need the 8-way light system, side stop signal, or front crossing control arm.
- A Multifunction School Activity Bus driver must possess a valid Commercial Driver’s License with Passenger and School Bus Endorsements.

School Vehicle

- A school vehicle is defined as a motor vehicle which is:
  - Designed for carrying no more than ten (10) passengers, including the driver; and
  - Used for the transportation of pre-primary, primary, or secondary school students to or from public, private, or parochial schools or events related to such schools or school-related activities.
- A school vehicle driver must possess a valid Class C non-commercial driver’s license.

Policy M II: Field Trip Forms

Field Trip Registration Forms and Consent to Treat Forms (see below), signed by the parent(s) and/or custodial guardian, are required for field trips.

Policy M III: Field Trip Supervision and Safety

Field trips must have adequate supervision and appropriate precautions to insure the health and safety of students. For specifics regarding the above, and other matters, consult the Legal Concerns Section W of this manual.
Field Trip Registration Form

Name of Field Trip ________________________________ Date of Field Trip ________________________________

Name ________________________________ Age ________________ Sex ________________

Address __________________________________________________________________________

City _____________________________ State ____________ Zip code ________________

School ___________________________ Grade ________________ Birth date _______________________

Parish ________________________________

Permission

I/we, the parents or guardians of the above mentioned child, for me/us and for my/our child, give permission for my/our child to participate in the above mentioned Field Trip on the above written dates.

Medical Authorization

In the event of any injury or illness to my/our child during his/her participation in this field trip I/we hereby give my/our permission for the necessary medical treatment to be given to my/our child.

I/we agree that in case of injury to my/our child, I/we will apply my/our hospitalization and/or accident insurance toward payment of the expenses incurred and will not look to (Name of Parish) or the Roman Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh for the payment of any medical costs or injury related costs.

Parent/Guardian Signature ___________________________ Parent/Guardian Phone Number __________

Insurance Company ____________________________ Policy Number __________________

Name and Phone Number of Person if parent/guardian is not available:

__________________________________________________________________________

Field Trips

M3
Consent to Treat Form

I/we the undersigned parent(s)/guardian of _____________________________, a minor, do hereby authorize treatment of my/our child by a licensed medical physician in case of any accident or illness that may so arise, or any hospitalization necessary.

___________________________________  __________________________________
Father/Legal Guardian                      Mother/Legal Guardian

Date: _________________________ this consent form will remain effective until __________

Medical Matters: I hereby warrant that to the best of my knowledge, my child is in good health, and I assume all responsibility for the health of my child. Of the following statements pertaining to medical matters, sign only those in accordance with your wishes...

Medications: My child is taking medication at present. My child will bring all such medications necessary, and such medications will be well labeled. Names of medications and concise directions for seeing that the child takes such medications, including dosage and frequency of dosage is as follows:

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Signature _______________________________ Date ________________________

I hereby grant permission for nonprescription medication (such as Tylenol, throat lozenges, cough syrup) to be given to my child, if deemed advisable.

Signature _______________________________ Date ________________________

No medicating of any type whether prescription or nonprescription may be administered to my child unless the situation is life-threatening and emergency treatment is required.

Signature _______________________________ Date ________________________

Any known allergies? _________________________________________________________

Any physical limitations? _______________________________________________________

Any medically prescribed dietary needs? ___________________________________________

Is child subject to chronic homesickness, emotional reactions to new situations, and fainting?

___ Yes  ___ No

If yes explain __________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________

Field Trips

M4
Overnight Trips
For Elementary School-Aged Children

“Catechesis should make use of all aspects of the pre-adolescent’s experience including the needs generated by rapid, radical change. The example of living faith given by others—at home and in the larger community—remains highly important and catechetically effective.

Topics like the nature of scripture, the Church, the sacraments, and the reasons which underlie moral norms can be discussed in greater depth than before. Reading and lectures can be used more effectively. But the life of faith is still best presented through concrete experiences which afford the pre-adolescent opportunities to incorporate Christian values into his or her life. These experiences are a point of departure for presenting the deeper aspects of the faith and its mysteries. Audio-visuals, projects, and field trips can be effective catechetical tools for this purpose. This is the age of hero worship, and it is helpful to present—in a manner which appeals to contemporary youth—the lives and deeds of the saints and other outstanding persons, and especially the words and example of Jesus.

Growing more aware of themselves as individuals, pre-adolescent become better able to experience faith as a personal relationship with God. Prayer and service to others can become more meaningful (NCD 179).”

Section N: OVERNIGHT TRIPS
Principle
Catholic Schools, Parish Religious Education Programs and Youth Ministry Programs provide a variety of activities for developing and nurturing young people to become virtuous, faith-filled and participating members of the Church and society. Normally, for elementary school-aged children, these activities occur during the day, or in the early evening hours, on parish and/or school property. On rare and special occasions, it may be necessary or appropriate for the parish and/or school to sponsor an activity that requires an overnight stay. In conducting such activities, the parish and/or school must carefully balance concern for the development of the child with protecting the child from harm and protecting the parish and/or school from unnecessary liability. The following policy and procedures have been implemented to assist parishes and/or schools in responsibly fulfilling their multiple obligations when elementary school-aged children are involved in an overnight trip.
Policy N I: Overnight Trips
For Elementary School-Aged Children

Policy

1. Overnight trips for all elementary school-aged children are not to be sponsored by the parish and/or school. (The term “overnight trips” includes but is not limited to “lock-ins” and other such events even if they occur on parish or school property.)

2. There is an exception to this policy for 7th and 8th grade students allowing them to participate in retreats (as defined), academic activities (e.g., PJAS) and diocesan or state approved athletic competitions (e.g., WPIAL) which require an overnight stay.

3. Only the pastor can approve any parish and/or school sponsored trips which require an overnight stay. Parental/guardian permission must be obtained in writing.

4. Strict adherence to the diocesan approved procedural regulations governing these trips is required.

5. It is never permissible for any student below the 7th grade to participate in an activity which requires an overnight stay.

6. A trip or event which is not sponsored by the parish or school should not be advertised by the school nor should the school participate in the collection of funds for said project or in any other way act to give the appearance that the trip is sponsored by the parish or school.

Procedures

1. Parent(s)/guardian(s) should be strongly encouraged to accompany their child(ren) on any activity which requires an overnight stay.

2. The standard, diocesan approved overnight event registration form (including parental permission, indemnification and medical authorization) must be used for every event. The form should be filled out in its entirety, signed by the parent(s)/guardian(s), and be readily available throughout the event. A copy of this form is attached. These forms can also be obtained from the Secretariat for Education offices if needed.

3. For every seven students participating on the overnight trip, there must be at least one adult chaperon. (For the purposes of these procedures an adult is defined as someone 21 years of age or older.) The chaperon should be someone who is well-known, respected and trusted by the parish and/or school community, and must have obtained all diocesan required clearances and attended the Protecting God’s Children inservice. The first choice for chaperons is always the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the students who are participating in the activity.

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1 A retreat is defined as a multi-faceted experience held specifically to foster the spiritual life of the participant and to deepen a personal relationship with the Lord. It should include forms of prayer and worship that are engaging and spirit-filled, catechetical formation that enhances understanding, and various age appropriate activities for community building.
4. Information concerning the dispensing of prescription medicine, particular dietary needs and any other special needs is to be included by the parent(s)/guardian(s) on the basic consent to treat form (see Section M). Parent(s)/guardian(s) must be advised that no medical personnel will be present on the trip.

5. A chartered bus is the preferred mode of transportation for overnight trips. (The bus company must provide a certificate of insurance which is acceptable to the Insurance Office of the Diocese of Pittsburgh.) When adult chaperons are providing transportation in personal vehicles, then:

   a) The parent(s)/guardian(s) of those participating must be informed of this fact; and

   b) The driver(s) must be at least 25 years old, must have the proper license and insurance coverage, must possess a good driving record, must have all diocesan required clearances and attended the Protecting God’s Children inservice. This information must be verified by the person designated by the pastor as the group leader.

   c) Adult chaperons must also have all diocesan required clearances and attended Protecting God’s Children inservice before they can chaperon children.

6. Facilities for overnight accommodations must be appropriate for the physical, psychological, moral and spiritual well-being of the children. Factors would include issues of personal safety, adequate gathering space, healthy sleeping arrangements and sufficient areas for prayer and worship as needed.

7. A written code of conduct that states the goals of the overnight experience and the expectations for student behavior during the trip should be prepared. The code of conduct should be provided to the parent(s)/guardian(s) prior to the trip. Chaperons must be informed that part of their responsibility is enforcement of the code of conduct. Adults should know the whereabouts, at all times, of the young people assigned to them. Violations of the code of conduct are to be dealt with quickly and fairly by the person designated by the pastor as the group leader. An adult should never be in a private area alone with a young person without another adult present.

8. Good planning is essential of any overnight trip. This planning must include a strategy for handling crisis that should occur such as medical problems, emotional outbursts, the need for first aid and parental/guardian conduct. The handling of all participants in the event of an emergency is also to be addressed. All pertinent information such as directions to the facility, emergency phone numbers, code of conduct, list of chaperons and drivers, schedule, etc., are to be shared with the parent(s)/guardian(s) prior to the trip.

   Approved and Promulgated: April 15, 1996
   Revised: 2011
Policy N II: Diocesan Regulations
Strict adherence to the diocesan approved procedural regulations governing these trips is required. 
(See Procedures for Overnight Trips)

Policy N III: Permission Limitation
It is never permissible for any student below the 7th grade to participate in an activity which requires an overnight stay.

Policy N IV: Non Advertisement/Solicitation of Funds
A trip or event which is not sponsored by the parish or school must not be advertised by the school nor is the school to participate in the collection of funds for said project or in any other way act to give the appearance that the trip is sponsored by the parish or school.
Diocese of Pittsburgh
Procedures for Overnight Trips

1. Parents should be strongly encouraged to accompany their child(ren) on any activity which requires an overnight stay.

2. The standard, diocesan approved overnight event registration form (including parental permission, indemnification and medical authorization) must be used for every event. The form should be filled out in its entirety, signed by the parent(s), and be readily available throughout the event. A copy of this form is attached (see below). These forms can also be obtained from the Secretariat for Catholic Education offices if needed.

3. For every seven students participating on the overnight trip, there must be at least one adult chaperon. (For the purposes of these procedures an adult is defined as someone 21 years of age or older.) The chaperon should be someone who is well-known, respected and trusted by the parish and/or school community, must have all required diocesan clearances and attended the Protecting God’s Children inservice. The first choice for chaperons is always the parents of the students who are participating in the activity.

4. Information concerning the dispensing of prescription medicine, particular dietary needs and any other special needs is to be included by the parents on the basic medical authorization. Parents should be advised that no medical personnel will be present on the trip.

5. A chartered bus is the preferred mode of transportation for overnight trips. (The bus company must provide a certificate of insurance which is acceptable to the Insurance Office of the Diocese of Pittsburgh.) When adult chaperons are providing transportation in personal vehicles, then:
   a. The parents of those participating must be informed of this fact; and
   b. The driver(s) must be at least 21 years old, must have the proper license and insurance coverage, must possess a good driving record, must have the required diocesan clearances and attended the Protecting God’s Children inservice. This information must be verified by the person designated by the pastor as the group leader.
   c. Adult chaperones must also have all diocesan required clearances and attended Protecting God’s Children inservice before they can chaperon children.

6. Facilities for overnight accommodations must be appropriate for the physical psychological, moral and spiritual well-being of the children. Factors would include issues of personal safety, adequate gathering space, healthy sleeping arrangements and sufficient areas for prayer and worship as needed.
7. A written code of conduct that states the goals of the overnight experience and the expectations for student behavior during the trip should be prepared. The code of conduct should be provided to the parents prior to the trip. Chaperons must be informed that part of their responsibility is enforcement of the code of conduct. Adults should know the whereabouts, at all times, of the young people assigned to them. Violations of the code of conduct are to be dealt with quickly and fairly by the person designated by the pastor as the group leader. An adult should never be in a private area alone with a young person without another adult present.

8. Good planning is essential for any overnight trip. This planning must include a strategy for handling crises that could occur such as medical problems, emotional outbursts, the need for first aid and parental contact. The handling of all participants in the event of an emergency is also to be addressed. All pertinent information such as directions to the facility, emergency phone numbers, code of conduct, list of chaperons, schedule, etc., are to be shared with the parents prior to the trip.
# Overnight Event Registration

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Overnight Event</th>
<th>Date of Overnight Event</th>
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<tr>
<th>Child’s Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
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<th>Address</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Zip code</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
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<th>School</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Birth date</th>
<th>Parish</th>
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## Permission

I/we, the parents or guardians of the above mentioned child, for myself/ourselves and for my/our child, give permission for my/our child to participate in the above mentioned overnight event to be held on the dates shown, at ___________________________________________________.

## Medical Authorization

In the event of any injury or illness to my/our child during his/her participation in this overnight, I/we hereby give my/our permission for the necessary medical treatment to be given to my/our child.

I/we agree that in case of injury to my/our child, I/we will apply my/our hospitalization and/or accident insurance toward payment of the expenses incurred and will not look to the sponsoring parish/school or Roman Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh for payment of any medical costs or injury related costs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent/Guardian Signature</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medical Insurance Company</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
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</table>

Name and phone number of person if parent/guardian is not available
PRINCIPLES, POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

LEGAL CONCERNS SECTION
LEGAL CONCERNS

PARENTS AND THE HOME

Policy O I: Custody

In order to protect each child attending religious education programs, in instances of divorce or legal separation, it is the responsibility of the custodial parent or parents to provide the catechetical administrator with a most recent copy of the official court order as to the terms of custody and access to the child and his or her records.

Unless the catechetical administrator has been provided with a court order to the contrary, both parents’ rights are to be respected.

Catechetical administrators are to avoid involvement in custodial issues (e.g. requests to document student behavior, state of mind, health, attendance).
The Cardinal’s Clause applies to anyone teaching in a public church ministry. The Catechetical Administrator must have on file a signed and dated Cardinal’s Clause for each catechist.

The catechist recognizes the religious nature of the parish and agrees that the pastor has the right to dismiss the catechist for serious public immorality, public scandal, or public rejection of the teachings, doctrine or laws of the Roman Catholic Church. Examples of the violation of this clause would include, but are not limited to, participation by the catechist in a marriage which is not recognized as being valid by the Roman Catholic Church, support of activities which espouse beliefs contrary to the Catholic Church teachings and laws such as advocacy of abortion, or the holding up to doubt or question the official teachings, doctrine or laws of the Catholic Church.

DEPARTMENT FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF “CARDINAL’S CLAUSE”

I hereby acknowledge and accept the religious nature and mission of the Parish Religious Education Program, and I agree that my Pastor has the right to dismiss me for public immorality, public scandal, or rejection of the teachings, doctrine or laws of the Roman Catholic Church.

Further, I acknowledge that examples of the violation of the clause would include, but are not limited to, being in or entering into a marriage which is not recognized as being valid by the Roman Catholic Church, or support of activities which espouse beliefs contrary to Catholic church teaching and laws such as advocacy of abortion.

I understand that this acknowledgement is effective for the duration of my service at any parish within the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh.

I ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF A COPY OF THE CARDINAL’S CLAUSE.

__________________________________________  __________________________________________
Catechist                                     Parish Religious Education Program

__________________________________________  __________________________________________
Witness (Catechetical Administrator)          Date
Policy PII a: Acts 33 & 34 Clearances and Protecting God’s Children Inservice

For the safety and welfare of the students attending religious education programs, all catechists are required to obtain Act 33 and Act 34 Clearances (criminal) and Department for Public Welfare Clearances (child abuse) and must attend the Protecting God’s Children Inservice. The cost will be paid for by the parish for which they are a catechist. If the catechist comes from out of state, he or she is also to obtain state clearances from whatever state he or she has come. Copies of all clearances, and certificate of attendance for Protecting God’s Children Inservice are to be kept in the catechist personnel file. No catechetical personnel including aides, office helpers, and other volunteers who come in regular contact with children are permitted to serve in any capacity until they obtain the required clearances and attend the Protecting God’s Children Inservice.

Policy PII b: Code of Pastoral Conduct

All church personnel are to conduct themselves in a manner that upholds Catholic values. Responsibility for adherence to the Code of Pastoral Conduct rests with the individual. Church personnel who disregard the Code of Pastoral Conduct will be subject to remedial action up to and including dismissal. Corrective action may take various forms—from a verbal reproach to removal from the ministry depending on the specific nature and circumstances of the offense and the extent of the harm.

All church personnel are to read thoroughly the code of Pastoral Conduct and sign the Acknowledgement of Receipt of the Code of Pastoral Conduct. A copy of the signed acknowledgement must be kept in the personnel file of each person.

Policy PII c: Mandated Reporting

Any church personnel, paid or volunteer, who come into contact with children in the course of his or her ministry are considered mandate reporters of child abuse. Church personnel should make the required reports whenever they have any cause to suspect that child abuse has occurred. A mandated reporter who “knowingly” fails to report child abuse commits a misdemeanor.

The Child Protective Services Law of Pennsylvania specifically grants legal immunity to any individual who, in good faith, makes a report of suspected child abuse.

The mandate to report applies to all suspected child abuse, not just abuse that has been perpetrated by Church personnel. Possible abusers could include, for example, parents, relatives, older siblings, neighbors, youth group or sports leaders, family friends and other children.

For further information regarding Mandate Reporting please refer to the diocesan document Reporting of Child Abuse and The Child Protective Services Law of Pennsylvania that can be obtained through the Office for the Protection of Children and Young People, (412) 456-5633
The proper parish protocol regarding mandated reporting is to be followed at all times.

**Parish Protocol for Mandated Reporting**

1. Catechist discusses suspected child abuse immediately with the catechetical administrator (or pastor, if the catechetical administrator is not available).

2. Catechetical administrator informs the pastor of the situation, discusses the next steps of action.

3. Catechetical administrator or pastor contacts the Child Abuse Hot Line (1-800-932-0313) within 24 hours to report concerns of child abuse.

4. A written report is to be made within 48 hours of the telephone report and sent to the child protective services agency in the county in which the abuse occurred.

5. The pastor contacts the Department for Canon and Civil Law Services.

**Policy P III: Volunteers**

Volunteers are to use good judgment to protect the safety and welfare of the students. In the event that an accident should occur, the insurance coverage of the parish normally applies except in the case of recklessness on the part of the volunteer.

Volunteer responsibilities given to teenagers of high school age are to be in proportion to their age and maturity level. Teenagers of high school age function well as aides or partners with an adult catechist. Teenage (high school age) involvement is encouraged as a means of nourishing future catechists but must always be under the guidance of adult direction and supervision. Teenage aides are not to be left alone with students for any reason.

**Policy P IV: Confidentiality between Catechist and Students**

The catechetical administrator, catechist, youth minister, or aide must be very clear with students that the promise of confidentiality will not be honored if: (a.) the student’s health, welfare, life, and/or safety is in jeopardy; or (b.) the health, welfare, life, and/or safety of another person is in jeopardy.

If a student tells a catechetical administrator, catechist, youth minister, or aide that he or she is going to harm himself/herself or others, the catechetical administrator, catechist, youth minister, or aide must reveal that information even if a promise of confidentiality has been given to the student. The catechetical administrator must immediately notify the pastor, the parents, and appropriate authorities.

Catechists and catechetical administrators are not to counsel students in serious matters. The student/students are to be referred to an appropriate professional. Catechists or helpers are never to be alone with a single student behind closed doors unless a window or other opening permits outsiders to see into the area.

A catechist is to avoid becoming so emotionally involved with a student that objectivity and fairness are compromised. Any relationship with a student that keeps a catechist from responding to other student needs on a regular basis is inappropriate.

Legal: Catechists P3
Guideline P I: Classroom Supervision

Students are to be supervised at all times. A catechist should never leave students in a classroom unattended by an adult. Catechists are to be present in the classroom prior to the start of class. If the catechist needs assistance during the catechetical session, a student or aide is to be sent to the office for help.

If students are dismissed from the classroom, the catechist is to remain until all students have departed. If the catechist accompanies students to the building entrance, she or he makes sure no student lingers behind in the classroom.

If a catechist has to miss a class, it is the responsibility of the parish catechetical administrator and not the catechist to designate a proper and qualified substitute.
SAFE ENVIRONMENT AND CHILD SAFETY

Section Q: Safe Environment and Child Safety

Principle

The Diocese of Pittsburgh is committed to the prevention of abuse of children and young people. On June 14, 2002, in response to the clergy sexual abuse scandal, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops approved the national “Charter for the Prevention of Children and Young People” which requires that every diocese in the United States implement a safe environment program.

Specific components of all diocesan safe environment programs must include the following:

4. Adults (clergy, employees and volunteers) in positions of trust in regard to minors must adhere to clear and well publicized standards of ministerial behavior commonly referred to as the Code of Pastoral Conduct.

5. Adults (clergy, employees and volunteers) must undergo a background screening to ensure that they do not pose a threat to minors.

6. Training is to be provided to children, youth, parents, ministers, educators, volunteers, and others on how to recognize and prevent child abuse.

Specific requirements of the Diocese of Pittsburgh Safe Environment Program include the following:

Adults (18 or older) who are subject to the Safe Environment Policy must:

6. Complete online database application (to track compliance with the national Charter).

7. Acknowledge that they will adhere to the standards of behavior contained in the Code of Pastoral Conduct.

8. Complete the Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check.

9. Complete the Department of Public Welfare Child Abuse History

10. Take Protecting God’s Children training.

Abuse of children, youth and vulnerable adults is a national and international problem. Experts agree that the most effective way to prevent abuse is to have policies, procedures and programs in place to educate children, young people and adults on how to recognize and prevent abuse. Through our Christian baptism we are called to share in the responsibility of protecting those who are the most vulnerable—especially the children entrusted to our care.

Every parish is required to have a safe environment coordinator appointed by the pastor. Catholic school principals and parish catechetical administrators are database site administrators and are familiar with safe environment policies. Information regarding diocesan safe environment policies and programs can be obtained through the diocesan website at www.diopitt.org

ALL PARISHES, SCHOOLS AND INSTITUTIONS OF THE DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH ARE SUBJECT TO THIS SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY.
Policy QI: Catholic Vision of Love Chastity Education and Personal Safety Program

Every diocese across the United States must have a program in place for the protection and safety of children and youth.

The Catholic Vision of Love Chastity Education and Personal Safety Program is approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee for the Protection of Children and Youth, as THE PROGRAM IN PLACE IN THE DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH for the protection and safety of children and young people.

Policy QII: Catholic Vision of Love Lessons

Catholic Vision of Love lessons (grades 5 – 8) are part of the regular curriculum for both Catholic schools and parish religious education programs. One additional lesson in child personal safety has been added to each of the grade levels 5 through 8.

Safe environment lessons have also been created for children in Kindergarten through grade 4.

All of the Catholic Vision of Love Chastity Education and Personal Safety lessons for Kindergarten through grade 8 must be taught each year.

Policy QIII: Catholic Vision of Love Catechists and Training

All catechists must be certified to teach the Catholic Vision of Love lessons. This certification is obtained through the 7-week Morality course of Basic Catechist Certification offered annually throughout the diocese. In the case that a parish has no catechists certified, the religious education team will offer a certification course in Catholic Vision of Love only. Catechists must agree to take the Morality course through Basic Certification at a later date.

For information regarding the Morality courses offered through the Department for Religious Education consult the diocesan website at www.diopitt.org. A list of courses is also found in the Pittsburgh Catholic Newspaper – August edition. Course offerings are also emailed to all catechetical administrators, youth ministers, and Catholic school principals each semester.

Catechists, Other Volunteers, and Parish Staff

- Every catechist and all persons working with, or in constant contact with children must register on the Diocesan Safe Environment Database and must obtain Pennsylvania
  - Criminal Record Clearance
  - Child Abuse Clearance and
  - Attend a Protecting God’s Children In-service

before they can teach/volunteer/work in a parish, religious education program, youth ministry program, and Catholic school.

Legal: Safe Environment and Child Safety

Q2
Effective May 28, 2007, the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) requires mandated immediate reporting of suspected child abuse involving anyone under the age of 18, if the child is under the care or supervision of a Church entity, including, but not limited to:

- School students
- Students in parish religious education programs
- Children enrolled in child-care programs
- Children being “babysat” during worship services or gatherings
- Children participating in Church-related youth ministries or sports programs
- Catholic Charities’ clients and health care patients

All parish personnel (paid and volunteer) must read, acknowledge, and sign the Diocese of Pittsburgh Code of Pastoral Conduct before they begin their ministry/work for a parish.

The above documents and further information can be found on the diocesan website www.diopitt.org or can be obtained through the Department for the Protection of Children and Young People at (412) 456-5633.

Policy QIV: Catholic Vision of Love Parent Meetings
Parents have the right to expect from the Church the kind of help that will make this task possible. This help in no way attempts to replace the role of the parents, but rather is offered to support and enable parents to do this important task well. In view of this, it is extremely important that parents of students in grades 5 through 8 attend a Catholic Vision of Love Parent Meeting.

Parents of all 5th grade students as well as, parents of new students in grades 6 – 8 and parents who have never attended, must attend the Catholic Vision of Love Parent Meeting.

Note: Parents of children in Kindergarten through 4th grade are not required to attend a CVOL Parent Meeting. If the catechetical administrator under the direction of the pastor chooses to hold a CVOL parent meeting for parents of kindergarten through 4th grade children, it should be a separate meeting from the CVOL parent meeting for parents of children in grades 5 – 8.

Materials for parents (especially the Parent Handbook, Talking to Youth About Sexuality: A Parent’s Guide) should be given to parents at that time. This particular document is for parents only to use at home with their child at the parents’ discretion.

Talking to Youth About Sexuality: A Parent’s Guide is not to be used by catechists in the classroom.

(These materials can be found in the newly revised (2011) Catholic Vision of Love CDs and materials issued by the Department for Religious Education or obtained online at www.diopitt.org).

This Catholic Vision of Love Parent Meeting for students in grades 5 - 8 is mandatory and must be held each year before the actual lessons are taught.

Legal: Safe Environment and Child Safety
Q3
Policy Q V: Child Abuse

Any employee of a Parish in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, including catechetical administrators, music ministers, secretaries, custodians as well as volunteer catechists, aides, office personnel have the responsibility to report the suspected case on the Abuse Hotline at (800) 932-0313. A catechist is to report to the catechetical administrator who must also inform the pastor. The catechetical administrator or pastor reports the case and contacts the Department for Canon and Civil Law Services (412) 456-3135.

PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

The following procedures are to be used to report suspected cases of child abuse (also refer to Legal Section, Policy PIIc, regarding confidentiality and the Mandated Reporting Policy: Reporting of Child Abuse and The Child Protective Services Law of Pennsylvania, Diocese of Pittsburgh)

1. Any church personnel (catechist or other religious education staff member) who observes a child who appears to have been abused by an adult is obligated to immediately notify the catechetical administrator (or pastor if the catechetical administrator is not available).

2. The catechetical administrator is to consult with the pastor.

3. The catechetical administrator reports the suspected case.

4. Within 48 hours the catechetical administrator who reported the case to Children and Youth Services must submit a written report and mail it to Allegheny County Children and Youth, 933 Penn Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15222. It is to be signed by the catechetical administrator and the pastor.

5. The pastor contacts the Diocesan Department for Canon and Civil Services (412) 456-3135 and the Diocesan Department for Religious Education (412) 456-3112.

Addresses and phone numbers of other Pennsylvania county children and youth agencies are found at:

http://www/dpw.state.pa.us/Child/ChildAbuseNeglect/003671030.htm

The Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) specifically grants immunity to any individual who, in good faith, makes a report of suspected child abuse.

Note: It is not the responsibility of the person reporting the abuse to prove the abuse. Their only responsibility is to report it. It is up to the authorities to investigate whether abuse took place.
Policy Q IV: Sexual Harassment

The parish is committed to providing its students with a faith environment which is free of harassment. Students, aides, catechists or parents who believe that they have been victims of harassment should bring it to the attention of the catechetical administrator.

If the complaint involves the catechetical administrator, the person reporting should consult the pastor directly. If the complaint involves a priest, contact the Diocesan Department for Clergy Personnel, 412-456-3060.

When harassment has occurred, the parish will immediately take appropriate disciplinary action.

Definitions

Sexual Harassment, as defined in this policy, includes sexual advances; verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature; visual forms of a sexual nature (e.g., signs, posters, and the like); requests for sexual favors; or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Harassment refers to conduct, either explicit or implicit, which by its nature is calculated solely to: 1) result in creating an unproductive, hostile, or an offensive working and teaching atmosphere; 2) result in a non work/ministry related change in some condition or term of employment; or 3) result in an unjustified economic detriment to the employee or applicant.

(Adapted from Personnel Handbook, Central Administration, Diocese of Pittsburgh)
ATTENDANCE AND ENROLLMENT

Policy RI: Missing Child
When a child is reported missing from a religious education class or from the building a response is to be initiated as soon as the report is received. An appropriate response includes:

The Catechetical Administrator verifies that the child is missing:
   a) check with the catechist
   b) search the building and grounds

The Catechetical Administrator notifies the parents and the pastor.

If judged appropriate, the Catechetical Administrator notifies the police.

Policy RI: Arrival & Dismissal Procedures
The entrance of students into the program and the dismissal of students from the program are to be adequately supervised. The Catechetical Administrator or his/her designated representative is to be present on the premises before students arrive. Parents, aides, or other volunteers can be recruited to serve as hall and grounds monitors. (Note: they must have obtained clearances and attended the Protecting God’s Children inservice). Students may be permitted to enter their classrooms only if adult supervision is present.

Parishes can also consider gathering students in one general area such as a cafeteria, hall, or auditorium prior to class time. Adequate supervision is to be provided in this area which may require additional supervision from parents or other volunteers. All volunteers must have their clearances and attended the Protecting God’s Children inservice.

Halls should be monitored while classes are in session to maintain safety. If visitors enter the building they must report to the office and receive permission to enter the classroom for any purpose (see Legal Section, Policy UV, Visitors). Distribution of “visitor passes” is one way to help maintain safety of children. If parents arrive earlier than the dismissal time, they must remain in a designated area and not wander through the hallways. Parents must receive this policy information at the beginning of the catechetical year.

Dismissal
Parishes may choose to formally dismiss students from the physical plant or require parents to individually meet students at the entrance. Whichever procedure is selected, adequate supervision is to be provided and the procedure is to be clearly communicated to parents at the beginning of each catechetical year.

When the location of the parish building or traffic patterns could risk the safety of students at times of dismissal either the dismissal times are to be modified or the assistance of crossing guards, auxiliary or local police are to be enlisted. Adequate supervision is also to be provided for any crossing of students from one parish property to another. Children are to be transported through well-lighted passageways and never permitted to travel passages alone.
Regarding children who walk to and from parish religious education activities, the parish is responsible for these children only within the perimeters of parish property. The safety of children after they leave parish property is the parents’ responsibility.

**Early Dismissal**

Requests for early dismissal **must be presented in writing.** A child must **never** be released to anyone other than the parent or guardian **without written permission of the parent or guardian (see Section E (Main Section) - Policies E V & E VI).**

When the catechetical administrator has been given a court order showing exclusive custody of one parent, **only that parent is permitted to pick up the child.** (See EARLY DISMISSAL FORM below)

**EARLY DISMISSAL FORM**

*Parish Name and Program*

1. Student’s Name _______________________________________________________

Mother, Father, Legal Guardian or other (Grandparent, Neighbor etc.) picking child up ________________________________________________________________

Reason for Early Dismissal ________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________

Date of Early Dismissal _______________ Time of Early Dismissal _______________

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian _________________________________________

2. Signature of Individual Picking Up Child for Early Dismissal

(to be signed in the presence of the Catechetical Administrator or duly appointed representative)

___________________________________________________________

Signature

Relationship to child ________________________________________________

**Affidavit of Catechetical Administrator**

The individual named in point number 2 above signed the form in my presence. The claimant:

produced I.D. _____ is known to me by sight _____

___________________________________________________________

Signature of the Catechetical Administrator Date

Legal: Attendance and Enrollment

R2
**Guideline R I: Tardiness**

Each term/semester parents are to be reminded of their responsibility to drop off and pick up their children on time. When there are chronic problems with drop off or pick up of students a meeting must be held with parents to address and correct the problem.

If the problem persists after meeting with the parents, a letter can be sent to the parents suggesting that this program may not be meeting the family’s needs and perhaps the child needs to be enrolled elsewhere.

It is the parish duty to do what is reasonable to remain with the student who has not been picked up on time. Emergency contact phone numbers for parents/guardians, including cell numbers and email addresses are to be kept on file at the parish. If necessary, it is reasonable to contact the police when a child has not been picked up after a prolonged amount of time and the parent cannot be reached.

**Guideline R II: Student Responsibilities**

Our goal is to instill in each student a deep respect for self and others. Students are expected to:

- Bring their assigned book and pencil or pen to each class session
- Arrive on time for each class
- Attend each full class session
- Respect the authority of the catechists and other religious education personnel
- Respect the thoughts and feelings of other students in each class
- Actively take part in class discussions and activities
- Demonstrate respect for books and materials

Respect for self and others is a hallmark of our students. This is shown by the particular care students take of their textbook, parish furniture, equipment or property.

Students may share their meeting space and desk with other students (those who attend an alternate track and those who attend the school during the week). It is essential that particular care is taken to make sure that the meeting place is kept neat and orderly.

*(The above can be included in Parish Handbook for Parents. Other content for handbook are Listed on the following page)*
Guidelines for Composing a PARISH Handbook
(for Parents & Catechists):

PARISH HANDBOOK

The parish handbook for religious education should include all annually updated essential information covering the following:

1. Requirements for enrollment and dismissal
2. Goals and objectives for the program
3. A current list of names, addresses and available phone numbers of parish staff members
4. Expected behavior of students in class, in Church, and at other parish events
5. Parish sacramental guidelines
6. Information regarding diocesan policies and procedures pertinent to the role of the catechist:
   a. On-line procedure to obtain Criminal Record Clearance and Pennsylvania Child Abuse Clearance.
   b. Diocesan Mandate Reporting Policy
   c. Attendance at a diocesan Protecting God’s Children program
   d. Code of Pastoral Conduct
   e. Cardinal’s Clause
7. Copies of all parish policies and procedures pertinent to the role of catechists, students and parents.
8. A current list of parish programs and events.
COMMUNICATION

“Social networking sites and other means are frequently used as a suitable way to communicate. It is important for catechetical leaders and catechists to remember to always keep these methods of communication professional when using them with young people or when it is possible that young people can access them. This helps avoid potential problems that might arise when boundaries are blurred between a youth minister/catechist and a young person” (Protecting God’s Children for Adults Technology Related Communication between Adults and Students by Robert Hugh Farley, M.S.).

The following is information taken from “Recommended Technology Guidelines for Pastoral Work with Young People” developed by the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry in Consultation with the USCCB Secretariat for Child and Youth Protection and the Secretariat for Laity, Marriage, Family Life, and Youth

Policy S I: Parish Websites
Parishes with established websites should ensure that the content consistently represents the views and teachings of the Catholic Church. No personal photographs or information of parish, school or organizational staff or volunteers should appear on any page/site. This includes family pictures, social events, home phone numbers and addresses, and personal email accounts.

Parish websites must not contain personal and/or contact information about young people. Written permission from parents must be attained prior to posting photographs, or other identifying information, of minors or young people on parish or personal websites. When posting photographs of minors/young people, it is advisable to caption the photographs using only the individual’s first name.

The official parish logo or standard images should appear on the site to distinguish it as the parish’s official site, and not that of a specific person. Communication with visitors to the site should be done through official parish email whenever possible.

Catechists may establish a website for catechetical purposes only (weekly display of lessons, homework and special assignments, Parent Page information, Scriptural messages…) that parents and students can use. The above information regarding personal photographs or information also applies here.

Policy S II: Social Networking
Adult church or catechetical personnel (including catechists, aides, office personnel etc.) should establish separate sites and pages at home for personal use. Personal pages and information should be neither advertised nor accessible to minors or young people.

Catechetical personnel utilizing social networking sites, either for ministerial or personal use, must be vigilant in representing themselves as ministers of the Catholic faith/church in all interactions that can be viewed publicly. Anything that could cause scandal to the ministry/church should be avoided. Such may include mention of inappropriate use of alcohol, advocacy of inappropriate music or movies, inappropriate language, inappropriate dress, or the expression of opinions that are contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Legal: Communication
S1
Parents **must be informed** that a social networking site is being utilized as a standard part of the ministry and **written permission from parents** must be given before a young person can participate. **Parents must also have access to the site. Social Networking is not permitted for use with minors (under the age of 14).**

**Social Networking with High School Youth**

Catechetical personnel using social networking sites (i.e. Facebook, MySpace, Twitter) must be aware of the terms of use, age restrictions, and privacy options and controls for each site prior to establishing a ministry presence.

There is a difference between initiating a “friend request” and accepting one. Friend/connection requests should be initiated by the young people, not the adult representative of the parish, school, and/or youth ministry program.

In photographs of youth activities, youth should not be “tagged,” or identified by name in the photograph. On the original social networking site, it is recommended that the “no tagging” option be set.

Because of the potential of teen crises or time relevant information, the page should be monitored weekly by official parish catechetical personnel. A plea for help that goes unanswered can be legally damaging to the parish, school, and/or youth ministry program and dangerous for teens and their families.

No personal photographs or information of parish, school or youth ministry staff or volunteers should appear on any page/site. This includes family pictures, social events, home phone numbers and addresses, personal email accounts etc.

Official parish logo or standard images should appear on the site to distinguish it as the parish youth ministry site, and not that of a specific person.

**Policy S III: Email and Text/Instant Messaging with High School Youth**

Parish youth ministers must use good judgment when using text based communication tools. Parents **must be informed** of the use of email or instant messaging for communications purposes with youth and that it is a standard part of youth ministry. It is highly recommended that youth ministers (professional and volunteer) maintain separate email accounts for professional/church and personal communications. Acquiring a parish or youth ministry email account should be discussed with the pastor, who will make the final decision.

Communications should be professional and rendered on behalf of the parish, or youth ministry program. Email and instant messaging should only be used with matters that deal with one’s professional relationship. Communication should only be about matters relative to the ministry that are appropriate for discussion. Care should be taken to maintain professionalism and appropriate boundaries in all communication with youth.

*Legal: Communication S2*
Regarding email or text messages that have inappropriate overtones:

- Youth ministers are not to reply to any such email received from teens;
- Youth ministers are to make and keep a copy of any such inappropriate communication.
- Youth ministers are to notify the pastor and the director of the Department for Youth and Young Adult Ministry (412)456-3140.

Email can be misinterpreted. Always double check messages you are sending to see if someone reading it might read something into it that is not intended or if the message might be misinterpreted. **Do not send messages in haste or when emotions are involved.**

**Email and Text Messaging is not permitted for use with minors under the age of 14.**

**Policy S IV: Blogging**

Professional, ministry based blogs should only be utilized to promote upcoming events or programs and for the purpose of providing resources and information within the youth ministry setting. Such blogs should not be used to conduct or promote outside business and/or personal activities, and should not divulge any personal information regarding the youth. **Extreme care should be taken that information regarding personal blogs not be made available to young people.**

As in all professional settings, posted information, opinions, references, and resources should reflect the teachings of the Catholic Church. Communications should be professional and rendered on behalf of the parish or youth ministry program.

Blogs are an efficient method for disseminating fliers for upcoming events, activities, parent permission/consent forms, calendars and youth ministry updates. Other possible uses include posting links and references for faith formation, communicating sacramental preparation information or parent resources, communicating daily Scripture passages, prayers, or spiritual links/resources.

If youth are to engage in blogging as a part of an officially sanctioned youth ministry activity, such activity must be monitored by the youth minister and at least one other youth worker, volunteer, or parent. No youth should be identified by name or other personal information, and the content of such a blog must be in compliance with Catholic Church teaching and values.

**Policy S V: Online Video and Chat Rooms**

Streaming video is to be used for education, communication, and promotional purposes only. Any use of live streaming or chat rooms that leads to, supports, or encourages exclusive youth-adult relationships is prohibited. When posting videos online, extreme care must be taken to protect the privacy of young people, and such videos should only be utilized to showcase/advertise ministry related events and activities.

**At no time is one-on-one video or chat room interaction appropriate between adults and minors.** When presenting personal opinions and engaging in chats/discussions, it is essential for catechetical/pastoral leaders to remember that even on the World Wide Web, others may recognize them as representing the values of the Catholic Church.

Legal: Communication

S3
Policy S VI: Registration Technologies and Securing Private Information

Capturing information on registration forms, surveys, etc. involves a higher degree of technical understanding and implementation than simple websites or blogs. Forms on web pages can use any number of technologies to record and transmit information, and the transmission of that information can be made more or less secure through the technical decisions and requirements used to develop that form. No sensitive information should be transmitted through basic web interactions ([http://](http://) in the URL). Only secure, encrypted transmissions ([http://](http://) also known as “SSL” or “Secure Sockets Layer”) should be used.

In addition, though secure transmissions ([https://](https://)) can happen through any web server, most modern browsers will display strongly worded warnings when the identity of the web server cannot be verified (particularly through third party verification services like Verisign or GeoTrust). Therefore, registration processes that will capture sensitive data usually involve the additional expense of securing a third-party secure certificate.

No sensitive personal information—particularly financial information (credit card numbers, checking account numbers) and secure identifiers (e.g., social security numbers) should ever be transmitted through email, web pages that convert form information into email, or web forms using regular hypertext transmission ([http://](http://) pages).

If the explanation of these technologies and the recommendations accompanying them are beyond the technical competence of the webmaster or staff person responsible for registration forms, that should be taken as a sign that the parish or organization should not be creating such forms. Those leaders should contact a technology/web solution provider for assistance.

If possible, all financial transactions should be handled “in real time;” that is, on a commerce website that can process credit card transactions, online, thus assuring that no financial data needs to be communicated to the parish/organization. Even if a form will not include financial information, all security protocols described above are to be followed if other sensitive personal data is transmitted (such as social security numbers, passwords, unlisted phone numbers, etc.)

A third party secure certificate (e.g. Verisign, GeoTrust etc.) must be acquired for any web server that will handle SSL ([https://](https://)) transmissions.
Guideline S I: Communication
Communication as set forth in Principles, Policies, and Guidelines for Parish Programs of Religious Education by the Diocese of Pittsburgh describes what is appropriate for catechetical administrators and catechists. Catechists and catechetical administrators are to work cooperatively on issues and follow the policies. If there are special circumstances and it is deemed reasonable by the pastor to deviate from the policy, the changes are to be communicated so that all have the knowledge necessary to fully understand the situation.

Catechists need to communicate with their students to let them know their expectations and to follow up on their classroom work. Open communication is to be maintained with parents through the notification of any educational, health, spiritual, or behavioral problems encountered regarding their children in the program. Such communication is to be done in a cooperative spirit for the parents and the catechetical administrator and/or catechists to work together as a team to ameliorate the situation.

Parents are to be told in writing what the expectations are. As indicated in the Policy Handbook, handbooks are to be distributed to catechists and parents.

Catechists are to be extremely cautious in making any comments, whether oral or written, about their students. Communication is to be made only to those persons who have a legitimate right to know. Catechists are to write records keeping in mind the good reputation of both the students and themselves.

Guideline S II: Internet Communication
Websites are public communication therefore only information appropriate to the general public is to be included in a parish website or religious education homepage. Public information includes such items as official staff and mission statement. Particular details such as program times, dates, sites and so forth are better handled via email and direct response.

It is never appropriate to list the names of students, their personal information, or photographs.
STUDENT DISCIPLINE

Policy T I: Discipline
A reasonably written discipline policy as stipulated in the Principles, Policies and Guidelines for Parish Programs of Religious Education is to be distributed to catechists, parents and students alike in order for them to know ahead of time what is reasonably expected of them. All policies are to be fair and compassionate and reflect our Catholic Christian convictions. Once the policy is distributed, it is to be followed in a manner that is reasonable and just by the catechetical administrator. **Serious incidents are to be fully documented.**

It is strictly prohibited for any religious education personnel to physically punish or abuse a child. Corporal punishment or physical restraint should not be used, except in self defense or when taking appropriate action to protect the health and safety of student or staff. Verbal threats of physical harm are also strictly prohibited.

Policy T II: Bullying
Any act of harassment, intimidation, hazing or bullying by either an individual or group of individuals is expressly prohibited—
- on parish property
- at a parish-sponsored activity or event off parish property
- on the way to and/or from parish programs or
- off parish grounds (cyber bullying)—

if these actions are intended to and/or do adversely affect the safety, well-being of students while in the parish catechetical program (including cyber bullying).

**This policy applies not only to students who directly engage in such an act but also to students who, by their indirect behavior, condone or support another student’s such unacceptable behavior.**

Discipline and Remedial Action for Bullying
The response to students who commit one or more acts of bullying is to be determined based on the totality of the circumstances. In all cases, the parish catechetical administrator/pastor should attempt to actively involve parents/guardians in the remediation of the behaviors concerned. The following steps are to be taken in cases of bullying:

1. Initiate immediate talks with the bully or bullies to include:
   - documenting involvement of participation
   - sending a clear, strong message that the behavior is not acceptable
   - warning that future behavior will be closely monitored
   - warning that additional negative consequences will be administered in the behavior does not stop
   - immediate consequences may be warranted for inappropriate actions in their first occurrence
2. Talk with the victim and his/her parents/guardians to include:
   a. documenting specifics of the incident
   b. providing information about the plan of action to be taken by catechetical personnel and parents/guardians to deal with the behavior
   c. encouraging the immediate reporting of any new episodes or attempts to catechetical personnel

3. In determining the appropriate response to students who commit one or more acts of bullying, catechetical administrators should consider the following factors:
   a. the development, maturity levels, and/or special learning needs of the parties involved
   b. the levels of harm
   c. the surrounding circumstances
   d. the nature of the behaviors
   e. past incidences or past or continuing patterns of behavior
   f. the relationship between the parties involved
   g. the context in which the alleged incidents occurred

   It is only after meaningful consideration of these factors that an appropriate consequence should be determined, consistent with the diocesan policies and parish catechetical procedures.

4. Upon completion of the investigation, the catechetical administrator at the direction of the pastor, will take appropriate action. Consequences and appropriate remedial action for students who commit acts of bullying may range from positive behavioral interventions, referral to outside resources, detentions, up to and including suspension or expulsion from the program.

5. The parents/guardians concerned should be contacted. Depending on the situation, meetings can be held together with parents/guardians of both sides, or to minimize tensions meetings can be held with each family separately. The catechetical administrator should conduct the meeting(s) and if possible, the pastor should be present.
DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH
BULLYING, HARASSMENT OR INTIMIDATION REPORTING FORM

The Diocese of Pittsburgh has adopted a zero tolerance policy regarding students who bully other students. This form is to be used to report such alleged incidents perpetrated by either an individual student or group of students that occurred on parish property; at a parish-sponsored activity or event off school property; on the way to and from the parish religious education program or event if these actions are intended to and/or do adversely affect the safety and well-being of students while on parish property (including cyber bullying) in the current catechetical year.

Bullying involves actions or words against another person for the purpose of inflicting physical or emotional harm or discomfort or damage to a person’s reputation to a level that is intimidating or threatening and affects the learning and religious education program environments.

PLEASE PRINT

Today’s date: ________ / _______ / _______ Parish _______________________________________________________________________

Person Reporting Incident
Relationship to Child: Catechetical Administrator___ Parent ___ Catechist___ Aide___ Other ___ Relationship__________________________

Phone ______________________ Email _______________________

1. Name of student victim ___________________________________ Age _____ Grade ______

2. Name(s) of alleged offender(s) if known: Age Is he/she in the parish program?

□ Hitting, kicking, shoving, spitting, hair pulling, or throwing something □ Yes □ No

□ Getting another person to hit or harm the student

□ Teasing, name-calling, making critical remarks, or threatening, in person or by other means □ Yes □ No

□ Demeaning and making the victim of jokes

□ Making rude and/or threatening gestures

□ Excluding or rejecting the student

□ Intimidating (bullying), extorting, or exploiting

□ Spreading harmful rumors or gossip

□ Other (specify) ____________________________________________________________

4. Where did the incident happen (choose all that apply)?

□ On parish property □ At a parish-sponsored activity/event off school property

□ On the way to/from parish program/event

□ Off school property but believed to have the intent to and/or adversely affect the safety and well-being of child(ren) while in the parish program (including cyber bullying)

5. Which statement best describes what happened (choose all that apply)?

□ Hitting, kicking, shoving, spitting, hair pulling, or throwing something

□ Getting another person to hit or harm the student

□ Teasing, name-calling, making critical remarks, or threatening, in person or by other means

□ Demeaning and making the victim of jokes

□ Making rude and/or threatening gestures

□ Excluding or rejecting the student

□ Intimidating (bullying), extorting, or exploiting

□ Spreading harmful rumors or gossip

□ Other (specify) ____________________________________________________________

Legal: Student Discipline

T3
6. What did the alleged offender(s) say or do? ____________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________

   (Attach a separate sheet if necessary)

7. Why did the bullying occur?
   _______________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________

   (Attach a separate sheet if necessary)

8. Did a physical injury result from this incident?
   □ No   □ Yes, but it did not require medical attention   □ Yes, and it required medical attention

9. Was the student victim absent from the parish program as a result of the incident?  □ Yes  □ No

10. Had steps been taken to resolve such activity prior to this report?  □ Yes  □ No  □ Not
    applicable

11. Is there additional information you would like to provide?
   _______________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________

   (Attach a separate sheet if necessary)

Signature: _______________________________ Date: _______________________________

For office use

Received by _______________________________ Date received _______________________________

   (Signature of Parish Catechetical Program Personnel)

Corrective Action taken (specify): _______________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________

Legal: Student Discipline

T4
Policy T III: Suspension of a Student

A student may be temporarily suspended by the catechetical administrator and pastor for a serious infraction of parish religious education program rules or for behavior which endangers the student, other students or religious education personnel (see policies regarding weapons and substance abuse – Policy Y – Legal Section). Contact is to be made with parents early on to enlist their assistance when student behavior shows first signs of being problematic. Suspension is for serious matters when other disciplinary measures on the part of catechists, catechetical administrators, and parents have been exhausted. (See Main, Section I, Guidelines: I I & I II regarding acceptable and unacceptable means of correction.).

A suspension may vary in length from one week to one month. The catechetical administrator meets with the parents and the parents receive a written Notice of Suspension. The Notice of Suspension is kept on file in the religious education office and a copy is given to the parents.

The document will not only explain why the student was suspended but will contain an agreement between the student/parents and the catechetical administrator describing the student’s cooperation upon return to the program, (if necessary the student’s cooperation in some form of treatment), the instructional work to be made up during the suspension, and how the make up work is to be completed (tutor, parental instruction, etc.). The parents will meet with the catechetical administrator upon completion of the suspension to evaluate make up work and to define expectations upon the student’s return.

(Adapted from Principal’s Handbook Policy 603.1, Suspension, Expulsion, and Appeals for Review by Students)

Policy T IV: Expulsion of a Student

An expulsion is a severe punishment and should only be applied in very serious circumstances. Every attempt is to be made during earlier offenses, to provide guidance and counseling to the student and parents under the direction of the catechetical administrator and pastor. Suspension (if necessary immediate suspension pending expulsion) is always to precede expulsion.

An expulsion may be necessary for persistent and willful disregard of parish religious education rules. The following examples are illustrative but not exhaustive:

- Chronic undesirable conduct detrimental to the physical and/or moral well-being of the student or other students
- Continued malicious disobedience or disrespect for parish authority
- Continued refusal by parents and/or student to comply with parish religious education policies

An expulsion may also be necessary for a single serious incident involving disregard for or a clear violation of a parish religious education rule. The following examples are illustrative but not exhaustive:

- Selling or using drugs or alcohol
- Violation of the Weapons Policy
- Physical abuse of other students or religious education personnel
- Indecent behavior
- Arson
- Theft
Although the authority for expulsion rests with the catechetical administrator and pastor, consultation with the Department for Religious Education is required. The approval of the diocesan Director for Religious Education is required for an expulsion. The Diocesan Office for Legal Services (412-456-3126) should also be advised of any incidents involving endangerment to health or safety. In so far as possible, provision of alternative means of religious education is to be made (i.e. tutor, parental instruction, etc.).

(Adapted from Principal’s Handbook Policy 603.1, Suspension, Expulsion, and Appeals for Review by Students)
OFFICE CONCERNS

Policy U I: Confidentiality, Catechist Files
All catechists records must be kept in a locked file. Only authorized personnel may have access to these files as well as records stored on disk. (Also see Main, Section K I: - Records).

Policy U II: Confidentiality, Student Records
All student files must be kept in a locked file. Only authorized personnel may have access to these files as well as records stored on disk. Authorized personnel include the pastor, catechetical administrator, parents and legal guardians, catechists and the religious education secretary if these duties have been designated to these individuals. Catechists may have access to student files only for appropriate Religious Education related reasons, by making a request of the catechetical administrator. Parents upon request may have access to their child’s file unless prohibited by court order. (Also see Main, Section K I: - Records).

In order to remain consistent with the requirements of the confidentiality policy the names and addresses of students in the Catechetical Programs shall not be given or distributed to any outside source for any reason. For good cause, however, the names and addresses of students may be shared internally with parish professional staff, or with parish school groups as necessary, or for any program related to the Catholic education of these students within the context of other diocesan schools or school programs.

Policy U III: Prior Records
Students who transfer from another parish must submit verification of enrollment and attendance from their previous Religious Education program. Students must also submit a recently dated and sealed copy of their baptismal certificate.

Policy U IV: Copyright
Religious education programs seek to instill in those whom we form a sense of morality and a deep sense of justice. Since often times we teach more by example than by words, catechetical administrators will make catechists aware of the 1976 Copyright Act. No use of copyrighted material may be made without the permission of the holder of the copyright.

Policy U V: Visitors
For the optimal safety and welfare of the students attending religious education programs, all visitors to the center other than at arrival and dismissal times must report to the office and receive permission from the catechetical administrator to enter a classroom for any purpose.

In the event that a person with good reason is found to be suspicious or unacceptable, (i.e., non-custodial parent, person unknown to student) the catechetical administrator will ask them to leave the premises. If they refuse to leave, the police will be called to remove them. If the person wanted to see a particular child, the parents of that child must be notified.
The parish must make an effort not to schedule other activities while religious education is going on in order to keep down the number of strangers or persons not in the religious education program from circulating in the building without the knowledge of the catechetical administrator.

**Policy U VI: Site Management**

The safety and well-being of all visitors to parish property including students, catechists and parents is of primary concern. Parking lots and sidewalks are to be well maintained, kept free of debris, and adequate snow and ice removal is to be provided. The provision of janitorial services is necessary in providing for health and safety, not only for church grounds but for classrooms, gathering spaces, and rest rooms.

**Policy U VII: Student Service**

The recruitment of students to custodial duties (i.e., a duty which requires physical labor) must take into account the age of the child and the difficulty of the task assigned. The duty must be age appropriate and pose no apparent physical threat to the child. The child must be properly supervised.

While performing a custodial duty all precautions must be taken to assure that the child at no time comes into contact with or uses a substance which may be harmful to him.
FINANCIAL ISSUES

Policy V I: Fundraising

Any fundraising endeavor which the parish religious education program or youth ministry program seeks to undertake is to be approved by the pastor beforehand. The pastor may choose to consult the finance council of the parish regarding advisability of the project and/or the diocesan finance office regarding the legitimacy of the fundraising agency.

All monies collected in a parish by the catechetical leader for a diocesan, vicariate, district, or parish event is property of the parish and is used for the explicit purpose of the event. No monies are to be returned to the fundraiser student/family for any reason unless deemed appropriate after consultation with the pastor.

In the case of national/international trips (i.e. World Youth Day pilgrimages, mission trips-Appalachia etc.), the monies raised are not to be transferred or refunded to the individual who is unable to attend. All monies raised for the event are to be used by the group attending the trip/pilgrimage.
FIELDTRIPS

Policy W I: Transportation

Parishes using school buses or vans to transport students in parish religious education programs to special events, field trips etc. are expected to adhere to the following laws and regulations issued from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA).

School Vans

Recent (2011) legislation regarding school vans is as follows:

- Pennsylvania law differentiates between the definition of and driver requirements for school buses and school vehicles.
  - **School Bus**
    - A school bus is defined under 75 PACS 102 as a motor vehicle which is:
      1. Designed to carry 11 passengers or more, including the driver and
      2. Used for the transportation of pre-primary, primary, or secondary school students to or from public, private, or parochial schools or events related to such schools or school-related activities.
      3. School buses with a “school bus” license plate **may not be used to transport anyone other than school students and chaperones**.
    - A school bus driver must possess a valid Commercial Driver’s License with Passenger and School Bus Endorsements.

Multifunction School Activity Bus

- This is a school bus (11 passengers or more) that is **not** used for home to school or school to home transportation. Rather, it is used **only** to transport students on field trips, athletic trips, or other curricular or extracurricular activities.
- This bus can be any color so long as the school bus identification on the front, back, and sides are of a contrasting color. This bus does not need the 8-way light system, side stop signal, or front crossing control arm.
- A Multifunction School Activity Bus driver must possess a valid Commercial Driver’s License with Passenger and School Bus Endorsements.

School Vehicle

- A school vehicle is defined as a motor vehicle which is:
  - Designed for carrying no more than ten (10) passengers, including the driver; and
  - Used for the transportation of pre-primary, primary, or secondary school students to or from public, private, or parochial schools or events related to such schools or school-related activities.
- A school vehicle driver must possess a valid Class C non-commercial driver’s license.

Legal: Fieldtrips

W1
If students are to be transported by the religious education/youth ministry program the following guidelines must be followed:

1. Field trip registration forms must be completed and signed by the custodial parent (See Field Trip Registration and Consent to Treat forms)

2. If possible, professional transportation should be provided.

3. If volunteer drivers are used, they must be 21 years of age, and have a valid Pennsylvania Driver’s license.

4. Volunteer drivers and chaperones must have Act 33/34 criminal clearance, Pennsylvania child abuse clearance, and attended the Protecting God’s Children Inservice. (For Information on clearances see Legal Section Policy B IIa)

Forms for Act 33/34 Clearances can be included in parent handbooks produced by the parish.

**Policy W II: Chaperons**

Adult chaperons set an example for the young people participating in national, international, diocesan, vicariate, district, or parish events. The primary role of the chaperon is to provide a safe and healthy environment for the youth participants under their charge. Full awareness and enforcement of the rules and policies governing participant behavior as set forth by the Diocese of Pittsburgh is mandatory. Adult chaperons are responsible for the youth under their charge at all times, during all event sessions and free time.

Chaperons should be aware of the physical, emotional, and spiritual state of their youth during all local, national, and international events. Chaperons need to communicate any serious problems or issues that occur to the catechetical leaders in charge.

The words and actions of the adult chaperon should reflect the values of the Catholic Church at all times. All adult chaperons must comply with Diocesan Child Protection Policies. Adults chaperoning diocesan-sponsored events are expected to adhere to the following rules:

- Must be at least 21 years of age.
- Must be in compliance with diocesan policies regarding safety of children and youth. (See section 3 Conduct with Youth, Code of Pastoral Conduct, Diocese of Pittsburgh).
- Should always use proper and respectful words and actions with young people.
- Should reflect the values of the Catholic Church at all times.
- Must refrain from alcohol use at all diocesan-sponsored, national and international events, as well as vicariate, district, and parish events (including all sessions and free time). Possession and/or consumption of drugs/alcohol by chaperones (or youth) before and during an event and after event sessions (free time), will not be tolerated and immediate action will be taken.

Legal: Fieldtrips

W2
# Field Trip Registration Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Field Trip</th>
<th>Date of Field Trip</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name ____________________</td>
<td>Age ________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address_________________________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City ____________________</td>
<td>State ____________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School ____________________</td>
<td>Grade ____________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish ____________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Permission**

I/we, the parents or guardians of the above mentioned child, for me/us and for my/our child, give permission for my/our child to participate in the above mentioned Field Trip on the above written dates.

**Medical Authorization**

In the event of any injury or illness to my/our child during his/her participation in this field trip I/we hereby give my/our permission for the necessary medical treatment to be given to my/our child.

I/we agree that in case of injury to my/our child, I/we will apply my/our hospitalization and/or accident insurance toward payment of the expenses incurred and will not look to (Name of Parish) or the Roman Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh for the payment of any medical costs or injury related costs.

Parent/Guardian Signature ________________________________________________

Parent/Guardian Phone Number__________ Parent/Guardian email: ________________

Insurance Company ______________________Policy Number ______________________

Name and Phone Number of Person if parent/guardian is not available:

_________________________________________Phone________________________________

Legal: Fieldtrips

W3
Consent to Treat Form

I/we the undersigned parent(s)/guardian of _____________________________, a minor, do hereby authorize treatment of my/our child by a licensed medical physician in case of any accident or illness that may so arise, or any hospitalization necessary.

__________________________________________
Father/Legal Guardian

__________________________________________
Mother/Legal Guardian

Date: _____________________ this consent form will remain effective until _________________

Medical Matters: I hereby warrant that to the best of my knowledge, my child is in good health, and I assume all responsibility for the health of my child. Of the following statements pertaining to medical matters, sign only those in accordance with your wishes…

Medications: My child is taking medication at present. My child will bring all such medications necessary, and such medications will be well labeled. Names of medications and concise directions for seeing that the child takes such medications, including dosage and frequency of dosage is as follows:

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Signature _________________________________________ Date ________________________

I hereby grant permission for nonprescription medication (such as Tylenol, throat lozenges, cough syrup) to be given to my child, if deemed advisable.

Signature _________________________________________ Date ________________________

No medicating of any type whether prescription or nonprescription may be administered to my child unless the situation is life-threatening and emergency treatment is required.

Signature _________________________________________ Date ________________________

Any known allergies? ___________________________________________________________

Any physical limitations? _________________________________________________________

Any medically prescribed dietary needs? ___________________________________________

Is child subject to chronic homesickness, emotional reactions to new situations, and fainting?

___ Yes    ___ No    If yes explain__________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

Legal: Fieldtrips

W4
PROHIBITIVE SUBSTANCES

Policy X I: Smoking

The Act prohibits the use of tobacco by students on school district property, including school buses. For the purpose of this religious education policy, the use of tobacco by students is prohibited on parish property, including parish transportation.

The provisions of this Act preempt and supersede any local ordinance or rule relating to the same subject matter, except for smoking regulation ordinances adopted in the City of Pittsburgh prior to September 1, 1988.

The Pro-Children Act which was enacted on March 31, 1994, requires that smoking not be permitted in any indoor facility used routinely or regularly for the provision of “children’s services” to persons under age 18. This Act applies to all parishes. The term “indoor facility” means a building that is enclosed and that is either owned, leased or contracted for, with the purpose of providing service to children. Smoking lounges or other separate locations for smoking within the enclosed facility must be prohibited.

In the event that the facility is being used for community or privately sponsored functions (bingo, card party, Fashion show), smoking is permitted unless the facility is being used simultaneously for children’s services. However, by implementing a policy that prohibits smoking at all times providers of children’s services will protect children’s health from residual smoke.

Violation of smoking prohibitions could result in a civil penalty of up to $1000.00 per violation. Each day a violation continues constitutes a separate violation.

The Pro-Children Act of 1994 became effective as of May 31, 1995
(Adapted from Principal’s Handbook Policy 605.1 – Smoking)

Policy X II: Substance Abuse
(Adapted from Substance Abuse Policy, Diocese of Pittsburgh)

The Diocese of Pittsburgh, recognizing that chemical abuse is a serious problem, adopted the position that students must be chemically free to develop in the most productive manner.

It is, therefore, the intent of this policy to prevent and to prohibit the possession, use, sale, distribution and/or intent of distribution of any illegal or controlled mood-altering medication or chemical. These are prohibited on parish property and at any religious education sponsored event.

Legal: Prohibitive Substances
X1
Violations of this policy may result in the following consequences:

a) appropriate disciplinary response consistent with each individual religious education program’s philosophy

b) notification of parent / guardian

c) notification of municipal authorities when appropriate

d) suspension or expulsion from the religious education program (with provision made for delivery of religious education in an alternate format)

e) referral of student to appropriate drug and alcohol agency

This policy will be implemented through the cooperative efforts of the pastor, catechetical administrator, catechists, parent/guardian, student, and community.

(Adapted from Substance Abuse Policy, Department for Catholic Schools)

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**PROCEDURE: SUBSTANCE ABUSE POLICY**

The Religious Education system within the Diocese of Pittsburgh recognizes that chemical abuse and dependency seriously impair the ability of individuals to develop their full potential. We also recognize that problems created by chemical abuse and dependency have adverse effects on the ability of all members of each religious education community to achieve personal educational goals.

Our policy is based on the belief that chemical dependency is a life threatening illness that affects individuals in all areas of their lives: emotionally, intellectually, and socially. Because it is our conviction that chemical dependency is a treatable illness, the following substance abuse policy has been adopted. (See Substance Abuse Policy Chart, Part II, Legal Concerns – following this statement)
**Policy X III: Search and Seizure**

If a student is caught with drugs or alcohol, the catechist will confiscate the substance and take it to the Catechetical Administrator. The substance will be placed in a sealed bag with a label indicating the date and time. The bag will be placed in a locked cabinet.

- Police are to be called
- The parents are called and asked to come to the Religious Education Center immediately
- The pastor is called

If a student is currently under the influence of drugs or alcohol, found using drugs or alcohol, found in possession of any drug apparatus, or caught in the process of distributing drugs to anyone:

1. Religious Education personnel will confiscate the drugs, alcohol, or apparatus.
2. The Catechetical Administrator will ask the student to empty all pockets and/or purse, bookbag. All personal property of the student will be searched.
3. Follow procedure listed above for disposition of the contraband.

In accordance with the law, proper authorities will be contacted when:

1. A substance is located
2. A deal is witnessed
3. Notes relating to the sale of a drug are found.

(Adapted from Substance Abuse Policy, Department for Catholic Schools)

**Policy X IV: Prohibitive Substances**

Substances shown to cause harm to students are prohibited from and may **not** be brought into the Religious Education Center or property. These include items that could be used as inhalants or propellants. **All paints, markers, crayons used by students must be non-toxic.**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SITUATIONS</th>
<th>ACTIONS</th>
<th>INVESTIGATION</th>
<th>NOTIFY PARENTS</th>
<th>NOTIFY POLICE</th>
<th>DISCIPLINE</th>
<th>SUBSTANCE DISPOSITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student is currently under the influence of drugs/alcohol</td>
<td>Report to CA. CA will call parents. CA will alert pastor.</td>
<td>CA will request the student to empty all pockets/purse. Student will not be left alone.</td>
<td>Parents are to be contacted and asked to come to the Religious Education Center immediately</td>
<td>In accordance with the law, proper authorities will be contacted when: • a substance is located • a deal is witnessed • a note related to sale of drugs is found</td>
<td>Suspension from Religious Ed classes in accordance with parish policy with possible withdrawal from the program (with provision made for alternate delivery of catechesis)</td>
<td>1. Immediately take substance to the CA 2. Place substance in a sealed bag- label with date and time 3. Place bag in a locked cabinet 4. Police should be called by the CA 5. Pastor must be notified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student is caught with drugs or alcohol</td>
<td>Religious Ed personnel will confiscate the substance. Summon the CA or escort student to the Religious Education Office.</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student is found using, in possession of, or suspected to be under the influence at any Religious Ed event</td>
<td>CA will be notified. An anecdotal written report is filed. Pastor is notified.</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Parents are contacted and will be requested to transport student home. If unwilling, Police or emergency personnel will transport student.</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student is found in possession of any apparatus connected with the use of drugs (e.g. paper, pipes)</td>
<td>Religious Ed personnel will confiscate the substance. Summon the CA or escort student to the Religious Education Office</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Parents are contacted.</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Same</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from the Substance Abuse Policy, Department for Catholic Schools.) The Religious Policy is based on the belief that chemical dependency is a life threatening illness that affects individuals in all areas of lives, emotionally, spiritually, intellectually, and socially. Chemical abuse is a serious problem.
Guideline X I: Alcohol

No alcoholic beverages should ever be stored on property that houses the religious education program. If it is necessary to serve alcoholic beverages at a religious education related activity, the beverages are to be brought in immediately before the event and removed from the premises immediately after.

Alcoholic beverages are never to be served at any religious education activity or event where anyone under the age of 21 years will be in attendance.

Obviously, it would be best to avoid serving alcoholic beverages at any activity or event which takes place on parish property. If it is necessary to serve alcoholic beverages, the above guidelines are to be followed.

(Adapted from the Principal’s Handbook - #628, Alcoholic Beverage on the Premises)
EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Policy Y I: Accidents

The following are considered medical emergencies:

- Bee sting
- Cardiac Arrest
- Respiratory Arrest
- Choking
- Seizures
- Diabetic Emergency
- Allergic Reactions
- Drug Overdose
- Head Injury
- Severe Bleeding
- Severe Burn
- Severe Injury
- Trauma

It should be determined if anyone on the Religious Education staff is certified in emergency procedures. This information is to be kept accessible in the Religious Education Office.

If an accident occurs during the Religious Education Program or a Religious Education activity the following procedures should be followed:

1. Call medical emergency number immediately.

2. Follow proper first aid procedures as given by emergency personnel for that particular emergency.

3. Call parents.

Fill out an accident report form to be kept on file in the parish Religious Education office. (See Accident Report Form following this statement)

(Adapted from Catholic School Safety and Security Manual – Ch. 5 – Medical Emergency, 5-4)

Legal: Emergency Procedures

Y1
1. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES, should you make any promises regarding payment of medical expenses.
2. Complete this form and submit to the York Claims Service Center of Chubb Insurance at:
   FAX # 412-809-3010 or PHONE # 1-877-894-2459
3. Please note, this form should **not** be used for injuries which occur during the claimants participation in an organized sports program.

Name and Address of Diocese Location: ____________________________________________
                                                ____________________________________
                                                ____________________________________

Date of Accident: __________________________

Contact Person at Location: __________________________
Phone Number of Contact: __________________________

Claimant’s Name: ______________________________________
Claimant’s Address: ______________________________________
Claimant’s Phone Number: __________________________
Parent’s Name if Child is injured: ______________________________________

Description of Loss: (include time of day, exact accident location & weather conditions)
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________

What was claimant’s purpose for being on premises? ______________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________

Nature of Injury: ______________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________

Medical Treatment Required: ______________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________

Witnesses:
Name:__________________________ Address__________________________
       Phone__________________________

Name:__________________________ Address__________________________
       Phone__________________________

Name of Person completing form: ____________________________ Phone: ____________________________
Date of Report: ____________________________

(Reproduce this form as needed)
POLICY Y II: Medication

It is the responsibility of the parent to administer medication to their children either before or after Religious Education events and notify the parish regarding medical special needs when this affects the child in the program.

In the event of a day long event/retreat, it is the parents’ responsibility to make arrangements to have medication administered at appropriate times. If a member of the religious education staff agrees to administer the medication, written instructions must be provided by the parents. An official diocesan release form, the physician’s instruction form, and the medication must be supplied to the Catechetical Administrator by the parents/guardian (see below). Medication is to be kept out of the reach of students.

---

**Parent Request For Administration of Medication and Agreement of Release**

We request that religious education personnel of ________________________________ Parish Religious Education Program administer medication per attached Physician’s form A to our child, ________________________________ according to the direction of our attending physician. In making this request, we acknowledge that we have been advised that no physician will be present or available during the administration of medication, that a nurse will not be present or available for this purpose, and that medication will be administered by a person with no medical training.

We acknowledge our awareness that the administration of medication under the anticipated circumstances might pose a substantial risk of injury to, including death of, our child. On behalf of ourselves and our child, we hereby exonerate, release and discharge __________________________________ Parish, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh, and their agents and employees, from any and all claims, causes of action and liability whatsoever in respect of any injury to, including death of, our child which may result at any time in the future by reason of any action taken, in good faith, pursuant to this request.

____________________________________       ________________________________
Date                                             Parent/Guardian

__________________________________________
Signature of Parent/Guardian (signatures of all parents/guardians required)

This document is a contract which affects you and your child’s legal rights. You should read this document carefully. If you do not fully understand, you may seek independent legal advice before signing this document.

---

Legal: Emergency Procedures

Y3
# PHYSICIAN’S INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING MEDICATION GIVEN AT PARISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM

It is required by Parish Religious Education Program that the attending physician fill out the following form for all medications to be given during parish religious education program hours.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student’s Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Medication</th>
<th>Dosage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

(Date _______ to _______ (Date)
(Duration of Medication)

Condition for Which Medication is Requested: ____________________________________________

Possible Side Effects: ________________________________________________________________

Specific Instruction of Administration of Medicine: ________________________________________

Physician’s Printed Name ___________________________ Physician’s Signature ________

Physician’s Phone Number ___________________________

Parent/Guardian: Please place the medication **and this completed and signed form** in a zip-lock bag clearly marked with **child’s name and phone number**, and bring the medication to the parish religious education program in the prescription bottle or (epi-pen kit if applicable).

If the medication is to be sent by the physician, rather than brought to the parish religious education program the address is:

Parish Name __________________________________________________________________

Religious Education Program Address _____________________________________________

Attention: _________________________________________

---

Legal: Emergency Procedures

Y4
Policy Y III: Outbreak of Head Lice
If a catechist notices that a child is abnormally scratching/itching the scalp area, the catechist should gently and with discretion take the child to the catechetical administrator. The catechetical administrator should immediately notify the parent(s) and ask that a parent/guardian come to the parish religious education building to inspect the child and if lice eggs are detected remove the child from the program.

It is the parent's responsibility to notify the family physician and the school nurse at the child’s weekday school. The child must receive treatment before returning to the parish religious education program. The school nurse should determine if it is necessary to contact the other families involved in the parish religious education program. The catechetical administrator may contact the child’s weekday school principal or nurse or ask that the parent inform the catechetical administrator regarding the nurse’s decision to notify other families.

If the parish religious education families are to be notified, a simple statement on parish letterhead should suffice. An example would be:

Dear Parents,
It has come to our attention that a student in our parish religious education program has an infestation of lice. Please consult with your family physician or weekday school nurse, if you are concerned for your child. The matter is being addressed with the proper medical personnel and the child is being treated.

Policy Y IV: Weapons
Any person carrying a weapon onto church property, including, but not limited to, the Religious Education building, outdoor areas, outdoor facilities, vehicles used to transport students, or Religious Education related activities, poses a clear and present danger to other students and staff. For the purpose of this policy, a weapon is defined to be a gun, knife or any other article which could be used to cause injury.

A student in possession of a weapon violates state criminal statutes and parish regulations and shall be subject to the following discipline and penalty:

1. The student is separated from the class.
2. Parents will be immediately notified.
3. The matter will be referred to local police authorities if in the sole discretion of the Religious Education administration and pastor such a referral is appropriate.
4. After a review of the facts concerning the particular incident, the Religious Education administration and the pastor will decide upon the appropriate disciplinary measures to be taken. The student may incur suspension or ultimately expulsion. Suspension is always to precede expulsion as a next step. Consultation with the Department for Religious Education needs to be made before any action is taken.

(See Policy T III: Suspension of a Student and Policy T IV: Expulsion of a student, Legal Section)

Incidents are to be handled on a case by case basis by the Catechetical Administrator and pastor. The Diocesan Office for Legal Services needs to be notified of the incident.

(Adapted from # 630 – Weapons Policy Principal’s Handbook and Chapter 7 Catholic School Safety and Security Manual)
Policy Y V: Child Abuse

“Child Abuse” by definition includes serious physical or mental injury, which is not explained by the available medical history as being:

- Accidental,
- or sexual abuse,
- or sexual exploitation,
- or serious physical neglect of a child under 18 years of age, if the injury, abuse or neglect has been caused by:
  - the acts of omission of the child’s parents,
  - or by a person responsible for the child’s welfare,
  - or any individual residing in the same home as the child,
  - or a paramour of the child’s parent

Provided, however, no child shall be deemed to be physically or mentally abused for the sole reason he is in good faith being furnished treatment by spiritual means through prayer alone in accordance with the tenets and practice of a recognized church or religious denomination by a duly accredited practitioner thereof or is not provided specified medical treatment in the practice of religious beliefs, or solely on the grounds of environmental factors which are beyond the control of the person responsible for the child’s welfare such as inadequate housing, furnishings, income, clothing and medical care (Section 3, Child Protective Services Act of Nov. 26, 1975).

“Serious Mental Injury” is a psychological condition as determined by professionals: psychiatrist, psychologist or pediatrician. This injury is caused primarily by acts of omission of a parent or person responsible for the child (including the refusal of appropriate treatment) which

- renders the child chronically and severely anxious, agitated, depressed, socially withdrawn, psychotic or in reasonable fear for his/her life and/or safety is threatened;
- makes the child agitated, depressed, socially withdrawn, psychotic or be reasonable fearful that his/her life is threatened;
- seriously interferes with the child’s ability to accomplish age-appropriate developmental milestones, or school, peer and community tasks.

“Serious physical neglect” is abandonment, prolonged or repeated lack of supervision of a child not old enough to care for himself, or failure to provide essentials of life by a person responsible for the child’s welfare who has the ability to provide those essentials, which results in a physical condition which endangers the child’s life or development or impairs his physical functioning.

“Sexual abuse” is defined as rape, molestation, incest or prostitution.

“Sexual exploitation” is defined as the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in or assist any person to engage in any sexually explicit conduct, or any simulation of sexually explicit conduct, for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct.
The Child Protective Services Act of 1975 and as amended requires that clergy, teachers, daycare personnel, social service workers, school administrators, school nurses, health care personnel, and others are required to report child abuse. The act specifically states, “Any persons who, in the course of their employment, occupation, or practice of their profession come into contact with children shall report or cause a report to be made . . . when they have reason to believe, on the basis of their medical, professional or other training and experience, that a child coming before them in their profession or official capacity is an abused child.” (Adapted from Principal’s Handbook Policy 602 – Child Abuse)

The Diocese of Pittsburgh requires that non-paid voluntary personnel who perform services for the Church should also consider themselves to be mandated reporters if they come into contact with children during the course of their volunteer Church work.

Examples of children considered by the CPSL to be under the care or supervision of a Church entity would include school and parish religious education students, children enrolled in child-care programs, children being “babysat” during worship services or gatherings, children participating in Church-related youth ministries or sports programs, Catholic Charities’ clients and health care patients.

A mandated reporter need not make a first-hand observation of the suspected child abuse victim. Second-hand reports of abuse must be reported to the proper authorities if the mandated reporter has “reasonable cause to suspect” that child abuse has occurred.

### Policy Y VI: Fire and Building Safety

Adequate fire and building safety procedures are to be established for every parish program. Adequate exits and fire extinguishers are to be provided according to fire code. Annual fire drills are to be conducted and an evacuation plan is to be in place. Catechists are to review emergency procedures with students and practice appropriate escape plans.

If the Religious Education Program shares space with a parish or regional school, information can be sought from the school regarding the procedure for fire drills. Otherwise, the catechetical administrator can contact the local fire Marshall or the local fire company to assist with the procedure for a fire drill.

A responsible parish safety and security plan always stresses prevention. One important part of prevention involves the overall security of the site for the religious education program.

Although the “spirit” of the parish religious education program helps minimize at-risk behavior, parishes still need to realize that in today’s world at risk behavior exists. Vandalism and harm can occur. The freedom and openness with which the parish program may have operated in the past needs to be re-examined and adjustments made to insure everyone’s safety.

It is very important to keep readily available a comprehensive floor plan of the parish building showing the location of all telephone and shut-off values for water, gas and electricity. Steps are to be taken to insure that an alternative evacuation site is selected and that an accounting of students can be taken by records kept at that site.
Each parish should take into consideration the area and neighborhood in which it is located, the incidents of crime or other factors which would lead the parish to be more cautious and concerned. In other words, the degree of care and the level of preparedness should correlate with your individual circumstances.

When the above is accomplished, the parish would be able to demonstrate to parents and the wider community that reasonable steps have been taken to insure the safety and security of the parish program.

(See Parish Religious Education Program Safety and Security Survey below)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM SAFETY AND SECURITY SURVEY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Is a single entrance designated and available for admission during the catechetical session? ____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Is the single entrance supervised? ____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Is there a directive posted that all visitors check in at the catechetical administrator’s office? ____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do signs direct visitors to the entrance of preference? ____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Are catechists, aides, and volunteers instructed to greet, question and identify visitors? ____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Are students advised to report strangers to a staff member? ____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Is the same level of security maintained before and after the session by the responsible parties? ____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Do you have adult supervision on the parish premises when students are moving from one place to another? ____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Is the entire parish properly lighted? ____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Do you have a phone available for emergencies? ____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Are the landscaping/bushes trimmed to prevent its use as cover or concealment? ____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Do the windows lock properly and are they checked? ____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Policy Y VII: Bomb Threats
All bomb or other terrorist/safety threats to the building must be taken seriously. The building must be evacuated according to the procedures outlined by the emergency evacuation procedure for that building. The pastor must be contacted. The proper authorities must be notified – police department; fire department; bomb squad.

After the incident, a bomb threat report is to be filed with the Diocesan Department for Religious Education and the Diocesan Office for Legal Services. (See Checklist When You Receive a Bomb Threat) (Adapted from Catholic School Safety and Security Manual – Chapter 7 – Violence 7-10)

CHECKLIST WHEN YOU RECEIVE A BOMB THREAT

Time and Date Reported: 

How Reported:

Exact Words of Caller:

Questions to Ask:
1. When is the bomb going to explode?
2. Where is the bomb right now?
3. What kind of bomb is it?
4. What does it look like?
5. Why did you place the bomb?
6. Where are you calling from?

Description of Callers Voice:

Male_______ Female_______ Young_____ Middle Age______ Old________ Accent________

Tone of Voice_________ Background Noise_________ Is voice familiar? ___________

If so, who did it sound like? _________________________________

Any voice characteristics: _________________________________

Time Caller Hung Up: _____ Remarks: _________________________________

Address, Telephone of Recipient: _________________________________

(Adapted from Catholic School Safety and Security Manual Ch. 7 – Violence 7-10)

Legal: Emergency Procedures
Policy Y VIII: Sexual Harassment
The parish is committed to providing its students with a faith environment which is free of harassment. Students, aides, catechists or parents who believe that they have been victims of harassment should bring it to the attention of the catechetical administrator.

If the complaint involves the catechetical administrator, the person reporting should consult the pastor directly. If the complaint involves a priest, contact the Diocesan Department for Clergy Personnel, 412-456-3060.

When harassment has occurred, the parish will immediately take appropriate disciplinary action.

Definitions
Sexual Harassment, as defined in this policy, includes sexual advances; verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature; visual forms of a sexual nature (e.g., signs, posters, and the like); requests for sexual favors; or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Harassment refers to conduct, either explicit or implicit, which by its nature is calculated solely to: 1) result in creating an unproductive, hostile, or an offensive working and teaching atmosphere; 2) result in a non work/ministry related change in some condition or term of employment; or 3) result in an unjustified economic detriment to the employee or applicant.

(Adapted from Personnel Handbook, Central Administration, Diocese of Pittsburgh)
Guideline Y I: Bloodborne Pathogens

Every parish Religious Education Program is to follow the Guidelines for Exposure to Blood and Other Body Fluids. Each parish is to have in place a procedure for the disposition of contaminated material. If the parish has a school, the school procedure for disposition is to be followed.

Anyone who comes in contact with blood and/or bodily fluids must follow the precautions and procedure (this includes catechists, aides, students, office personnel and other volunteers):

Precautions and Procedure

1. Always wear intact latex gloves (boxes of gloves should be visible and accessible to staff).
2. Use specific disinfectant (chlorine bleach in a 1:10 ratio).
3. Avoid direct contact.
4. Use leak-proof bags (double bag).
5. Wash hands thoroughly with soap.
6. If clothing becomes contaminated, remove and bag if possible.
7. Use pocket mask if CPR is to be administered.
8. Protect eyes and mucosa (nose and mouth).

Follow-up Procedure

1. Notify the pastor, custodian/designated person to remove and dispose of materials.
2. Notify the parents/guardian.
3. Complete the Incident Report Form.

INCIDENT REPORT FORM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student’s Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of Incident</td>
<td>Time of Incident</td>
<td>□ A.M. □ P.M.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Incident</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kind of Injury</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Aid or medical attention give? □ Yes □ No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If yes, by whom?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reported by</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>