

## 5. Practical Matters and Other Concerns

This component addresses practical matters that arise during awareness and education sessions and the implementation of comprehensive screening, the Pastoral Code of Conduct, and other safe environments measures. Practical matters and concerns include such things as safe environments conditions of usage for the use of parish facilities by people outside of the parish and resolving conflicts between diocesan safe environments policies and other professional codes of ethics and conduct.

### *Your help is needed!*

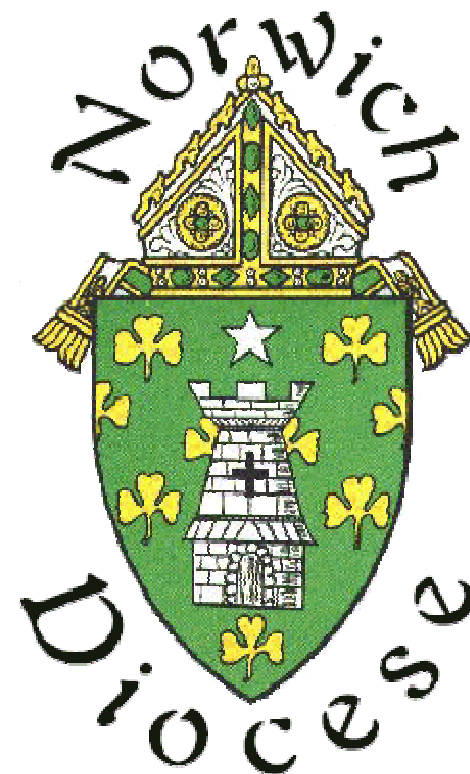
Creating and maintaining safe environments for children and young people is not the responsibility of one or two people. Each and every person can assist in providing safe environments for all of God's children.

In fact, for these initiatives to be truly successful, we need the help and assistance of all Catholics. To find out how you can help in creating and maintaining safe environments for all of God's children, contact your local parish, school, or Catholic institution or contact:

Office for Safe Environments  
Diocese of Norwich  
201 Broadway  
Norwich, CT 06360

This brochure is provided as part of the ongoing commitment of the Diocese of Norwich to create and provide learning, worship, and social environments that are safe from harm.

# *Safe Environments in the Diocese of Norwich*



*Safe Environments* refers to environments that are created and maintained in an effort to provide children, young people, ministers, and other people with the safest possible place in which to minister, study, and work.

The Diocese of Norwich and its parishes, schools, and other affiliated institutions is committed to providing safe environments for children, young people, and adults.

To assist in creating and maintaining safe environments, Bishop Michael R. Cote has established the Office for Safe Environments. The responsibilities of this office include overseeing the creation and implementation of safe environments programs and policies. In the Diocese of Norwich, there are five components to the safe environments programs and policies:

### **1. Awareness and Education**

In creating any safe environment, awareness and education are essential.

The Diocese has chosen the VIRTUS program Protecting God's Children as one of the avenues for raising awareness regarding the issue of child sexual abuse and how to prevent it. This particular program provides a foundational understanding of the risks, warning signs, and appropriate responses to child sexual abuse. It also discusses preventive strategies and how to implement them.

All priests, deacons, ministry leaders, and employees and volunteers who interact with children and teenagers on a regular basis have an obligation to attend this program and to follow-up with continuing online education by virtue of the leadership role and/or ministerial position they have.

In addition to the VIRTUS program, the Diocese has embarked upon several initiatives to raise awareness and increase education in regard to safe environments. These initiatives include:

- the writing and distribution of pamphlets, bulletin inserts, and other educational materials;
- articles in the Four County Catholic;
- postings on the diocesan website ([www.norwichdiocese.org](http://www.norwichdiocese.org));
- other programs and forums determined by the Office for Safe Environments.

### **2. The Pastoral Code of Conduct**

The Pastoral Code of Conduct is a set of guidelines for all Catholics to follow in creating and maintaining safe environments. It also includes provisions for addressing a lack of compliance with the Pastoral Code of Conduct and referrals in how to report sexual misconduct.

### **3. Comprehensive Screening**

Comprehensive screening refers to the screening process for employees, volunteers, and contractors affiliated with the Diocese of Norwich. It includes:

- a written application form with signed statement by the employee, volunteer, or contractor;
- checks of references listed on an application form;
- a personal interview with the employee, contractor, or volunteer;
- observations of the person's conduct;
- a criminal background check of the contractor, volunteer, or employee.

### **4. Sexual Misconduct Policy**

The Sexual Misconduct Policy of the Diocese of Norwich addresses child sexual abuse and other issues of sexual misconduct by priests, deacons, employees, volunteers, and contractors of the Diocese of Norwich. It describes how to report allegations of sexual misconduct and how the Diocese will respond to allegations. This policy complies with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, which was drafted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in June of 2002.