

Christian Stewardship of Children

in the

Catholic Community

PROLOGUE

The “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People” adopted in 2002 by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops promotes the need for a code of conduct for all Church employees and volunteers who work with children on a regular basis. Kathleen McChesney, executive director of the U.S bishop’s Office for Child and Youth Protection, has called for a comprehensive “safe environment” program that includes such a code of conduct to be in place in every US diocese and eparchy by June 20th, 2003. This manual, developed by lay members of the Archdiocese of Boston, can be helpful to parishes that seek a resource for complying with this mandate.

The Protection of Children Committee has prepared this manual by drawing, in part, upon the works of others who belong to communities that care deeply about children, and the need to keep them safe when they are entrusted to the care of others. We believe that this document can prove to be useful for Catholic parishes that seek to provide a systematic approach to the protection of children. However, we do not believe that any single document can fit all the various circumstances that are presented to the faithful of each parish. Therefore, we invite you to adapt or excerpt portions from this work that you find to be useful in making your parish a safe environment for children.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

POSITION STATEMENT.....	3
GOAL STATEMENT.....	3
PREMISES.....	4
AUDIENCE.....	5
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED POLICIES.....	6
CODE OF CONDUCT – ADULTS.....	7
CODE OF CONDUCT – CHILDREN.....	7
BEHAVIORAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.....	8
CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP STAFFING COUNCIL.....	10
SAFETY COMMITTEE.....	15
ANNUAL EVALUATION.....	18
SAMPLE FORMS.....	19
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	29

POSITION STATEMENT

A comprehensive, proactive, policy document for the prevention of abuse and neglect of children.

GOAL STATEMENT

The document, *Christian Stewardship of Children in the Catholic Community*, articulates policies, programs, and procedures, and provides a framework that Roman Catholic parishes may choose to adopt. The purposes of the document are to focus upon a safe, nurturing, healthy, spiritual environment and to provide guidance for all individuals entrusted with the care of children.

Although the genesis of this document is a response to the sexual abuse scandal in our environment, we hope to make the users cognizant that abuse may have many manifestations. Abuse is not only sexual, but it may also be emotional, physical, social, and psychological. This document provides guidelines for the prevention and elimination of all manifestations of child abuse.

PREMISES

We begin with this basic premise: **EACH CHILD is a GIFT of GOD.**

Emanating from this basic fundamental understanding are the following:

Premises

Life

All children exhibit the exquisite beauty of life.

Love

All children manifest the love of life.

Hope

All children enjoy the promise of life.

Giving

All children exude the warmth of life.

Sharing

All children communicate the wealth of life.

Liberty

All children are entitled to an uncompromising path of life.

Happiness

All children are innocent seekers of the fullness of life.

Unique

All children are individually creative.

Esteem

All children are in need of praise and love.

Dignity

All children are deserving of respect.

All children are entitled to a safe, healthy, nurturing, and spiritually uplifting environment.

AUDIENCE

Anyone who has contact with children and youth may use this document. These individuals include, but are not limited to:

- ❖ Parents
 - ❖ Clergy, deacons, nuns and orders of religious men and women
 - ❖ Pastoral council members
 - ❖ CCD teachers
 - ❖ Directors of youth ministries
 - ❖ Director of all church related activities
 - ❖ Volunteers
 - ❖ Childcare providers
 - ❖ Community leaders of activities for children and youth
-

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED POLICIES

Each parish pastoral council, in conjunction with the pastor, should create a Christian Stewardship Staffing Council (Staffing Council) to organize, interview and screen the audience that may interact with children.*

- A The Staffing Council will create a Safety Committee to receive and act upon any allegations of abuse, physical, sexual or otherwise. The Safety Committee will establish educational awareness programs regarding preventative policies of sexual abuse and other forms of abuse. The Safety Committee shall create a child safety policy document.
- B The Staffing Council shall appoint an overseer, or establish a set of procedures, that will guarantee the confidentiality of all personnel information.

These committees shall have the further responsibility of ensuring that all safety policies are implemented and the further responsibility of reporting all allegations of abuse or neglect to the civil authorities per Massachusetts General Law (MGL) Chapter 119 Section 51A. They shall also report these allegations to the appropriate religious authorities. Additionally, it is the duty and responsibility of these committees to recommend removal of any person, paid or unpaid, from his or her position if allegations of physical, sexual or other forms of abuse can be substantiated.

**Children are defined, for the purposes of this document, as those people who are under the age of 18 years and/or have diminished mental capacity.*

CODE OF CONDUCT – Adults

Parents and caretakers have entrusted the well being of their children to parish personnel (clergy, staff and volunteers). That trust is sacred, and a breach of that trust shall not be compromised and will not be tolerated.

The focus of the educator or volunteer is as a positive role model exhibiting desirable community influences and characteristics that all children would choose to emulate.

Clergy, staff, volunteers and audience members shall always act in the best interest of the child, even when interacting outside of parish-related activities. Adults shall treat children with respect and dignity at all times. Adults shall not intimidate or coerce any child nor exploit any age difference, experience, size or strength against any child. Adult negative behavioral characteristics will not be tolerated and are cause for removal and discharge.

CODE OF CONDUCT – Children

Children attending parish field trips may be asked to sign the Youth Participant Covenant. The individual personal information contained in the covenant shall be private and secured. (See Sample Youth Participant Covenant Form)

BEHAVIORAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Adult Interaction with Children

- 1 Children shall never be left unsupervised, unattended or unobserved.
- 2 Adults must never be alone with a child. There should always be another adult present when an adult is with a child, other than his or her own child.
- 3 In the event of a behavioral problem, the adult should notify the school supervisor or the parent/guardian. The adult must not restrain a child, or touch a child in any way, except in the case where the child threatens harm to him/her self or other children.
- 4 Adults should not swear or use unacceptable language in the presence of children.
- 5 Adults should not offer children cigarettes, alcoholic beverages, narcotics, controlled substances, habit-forming substances or pornographic material.
- 6 Adults should not strike children, shake children, or touch children in any way that might inflict pain or injury.

Retreats and Field Trips

- 1 No child shall be included in an activity that is off parish property unless a chaperone has received a signed permission slip from a parent or guardian.
 - 2 Off-site activities will always require a minimum of two adult chaperones (21 or older).
 - 3 Adult chaperones must complete application forms and submit them to the Staffing Council before assuming responsibility for children.
-

- 4 Volunteers transporting children in a motor vehicle must abide by the safe driving policy of the parish.
 - 5 Adult chaperones, for retreats or other field trips including overnight activities must not bring with them or procure at their destination alcoholic beverages, controlled substances, habit-forming agents or pornographic material. Adult chaperones are not to drink alcoholic beverages or use any controlled substances while children are in their care.
 - 6 If anyone observes an incident of abuse, immediate intervention must occur to provide safety for the abused person. The person observing the abuse must make a report to the Parish Safety Committee, the Staffing Council, the local public safety civil authorities and to the Massachusetts Department of Social Services (see MGL Chapter 119 Sect 51A).
-

CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP STAFFING COUNCIL

A person interested in serving on the Staffing Council must agree to submit to an interview, submit an application form, complete the required screening process, and allow a criminal background check. Additionally, that person shall be of good character and provide personal references as determined by the pastor and the parish council.

The pastor, in conjunction with the parish pastoral council, shall take the following factors into consideration in establishing the Staffing Council:

A Membership

- 1 How many
- 2 How chosen
- 3 Term
- 4 Vacancies
- 5 Compensation
- 6 Professional background

B Responsibilities

- 1 Establish employment practices, prepare forms and conduct interviews
 - a. Forms (Staffing Council Forms) to be completed by all applicants for parish services (clergy, staff and volunteers)
 - i. Clergy
 - Driving application form
 - Screening and application form
 - Criminal records and sexual offender background check

- Personal recommendations
- ii. Hired personnel
 - Emergency and first aid
 - Driving application form
 - Screening and application form
 - Criminal records and sexual offender background check
 - Personal recommendations
- iii. Volunteers
 - Emergency and first aid
 - Driving application form
 - Screening and application form
 - Criminal records and sexual offender background check
 - Personal recommendations

b. Staffing Considerations

- i. Clergy, Contracted Personnel, Paid Employees, Students and Adult Volunteers
 - Qualifications – personal skills and abilities, academic credentials, professional experiences.
 - Information divulged on application forms
 - Interview behavior

- 2 Stay current with laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- 3 Keep personnel files confidential through established procedures and/or entrusting all sensitive materials to an overseer of personnel information

- 4 Keep training programs current and relevant to provide a safe and secure environment for parish minors

C Policies and Procedures

1 Screening Volunteers and Paid Employees

- a All volunteers and paid employees must complete a questionnaire before being accepted for any position of responsibility that requires interaction with children.
- b Convicted felons shall not be accepted.
- c People who are ill with infectious diseases shall not interact with children until they are well.
- d Fluency and good English communication skills are a prerequisite.
- e People who are not mentally competent shall not be accepted.
- f A thorough background check shall be conducted by the Staffing Council on any volunteer and any full or part time paid employee that is brought into the parish for the purpose of teaching or counseling children, or in any other capacity which may cause them to work with or supervise children.

2 Religious Education

- a Individuals who volunteer to be CCD instructors must be active members of the parish before assuming the position of educator.

- b Volunteers must complete an application form and have their credentials verified by a CCD permanent employee and/or the Staffing Council before beginning work.
- c Classroom doors must remain open at all times, unless the door contains a window that permits others to look into the classroom while instruction is under way.
- d Instructors must stay in the classroom with their students at dismissal until parents or caregivers have picked up all children.
- e Volunteers are expected to offer young children warmth, safety and comfort, which may include handholding, a shoulder hug or a gentle pat on the back or arm. Teachers should NEVER touch or view a child's genitals, kiss children or touch them in a sexual way.
- f Teachers who are having difficulty managing a child's behavior should consult with the school supervisor immediately. Teachers should never resort to the use of physical punishment, shame, sarcasm, ridicule, or humiliation in response to the behavior of children.
- g Any volunteer who *believes or suspects* that a child in his or her care has been subjected to abuse or neglect must, by state law, report his/her concerns to the Massachusetts Department of Social Services, or to a designated agent who is a mandated reporter if the parish has opted to name such a person (MGL Chapter 119 Sect 51A).

3 Other Ministries

The Staffing Council should adopt policies and procedures that provide safety for children involved in all parish ministries. Every parish program that involves children should be considered, including daycare, choir, altar server training, youth ministries, etc.

SAFETY COMMITTEE

The Safety Committee must be prepared to anticipate, receive and respond quickly to any allegations of abuse or neglect. The Staffing Council shall establish the following criteria:

A Membership

- 1 How many
- 2 How chosen
- 3 Term
- 4 Vacancies
- 5 Compensation
- 6 Professional background

B Responsibilities

- 1 Establish policies of protection
- 2 Educational programs for children and parents
- 3 Stay current with child protection laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- 4 Maintain and update a *list of professionals that* deal with prevention and treatment of abuse
- 5 Publicize the Safety Committee's existence and purpose in the parish bulletin
- 6 Publish a comprehensive list of relevant 'hot line' telephone numbers for police, Massachusetts Department of Social Services and other agencies
- 7 Identify and name a 'designated agent' to act as an alternative mandated reporter under MGL Chp 119 section 51A. This person will have the responsibility of filing reports with the Massachusetts Department of Social

Services on behalf of those in the parish who have reasonable cause to believe that a child under the age of 18 is suffering abuse.

- 8 Select candidates to become members of the parish's Child Abuse Protection Team (CAP Team) and coordinate their training activities as they,
 - a at the request of the Archdiocese's Office of Child Advocacy, Implementation and Oversight, work to make the parish a safer place for children and,
 - b work with volunteers and parish employees to teach them how to identify abusers and,
 - c teach all adults in the parish how to be alert for signs of abuse, and how to make it very difficult for abusers to gain access to children.

C Knowledge is Power

1 Good Touch/Bad Touch

- a It is essential that anyone working with young people be trained in discussing with them the concept of Good Touch/Bad Touch
- b Good touch is a touch that makes a child feel proud, confident, happy and loved, e.g. a pat on the back
- c Bad touch is physical contact, or a look, that makes a child feel uncomfortable, insecure, apprehensive, afraid or ashamed.
- d Children need to be encouraged to report incidents of 'Bad Touch'
- e An appropriate Good Touch/Bad Touch program focused at the kindergarten through fourth grade level should be implemented in the CCD program. One resource to consider is the Children's Trust Fund program, *Talking About Touching: A Personal Safety*

Curriculum. For information call (617) 727-8957 or visit www.mctf.org.

- f. Adolescents need to be encouraged to discuss incidents of Bad Touch with appropriate counselors, parents and church authorities

2 How to React to Threats

- a Children should be encouraged to report incidents of Bad Touch.
- b Children should be reassured that they are not to blame for the incidents of Bad Touch. Children have a right to feel safe and happy, despite the threats of abusers.
- c When it comes to abusive behavior, “All threats need to be told, all secrets need to be shared.”

3 Sex Education

- a Provide a Catholic perspective on the role of sexuality in a person’s life, to educate youth so they may distinguish inappropriate sexual advances and deal with such behavior appropriately
 - b A Catholic perspective is necessary to counter the value-neutral content of public school sex education versus the moral content of Catholic education.
 - c Emphasize chastity and purity until marriage.
 - d Encourage youth to respect their virginity and, for those who are not virgins, to commit to celibacy until they marry.
-

ANNUAL EVALUATION

Staffing Council – Safety Committee

Annually the Staffing Council and the Safety Committee shall review their policies, procedures, and programs, revising them as necessary. An annual report shall be given by each committee to the pastor and to the parish pastoral council.

PARTICIPANT COVENANT

I _____ covenant with myself, God, fellow trip participants, and members of the _____ parish organization, to act as a responsible individual during the field trip to the _____ area destination. The field trip is sponsored by the _____ parish and is scheduled for _____ days beginning on _____ (day) of _____ (month) _____ 2003.

My signature confirms that I shall agree to the following conditions and will carry out these conditions to the best of my ability.

I will be present at all functions, meetings, activities prior to the related trip, unless excused.

At these meetings, I will address any concerns that I may have as an individual.

While on the field trip, any decisions affecting the group that need to be made will be carried out with the interest of all in mind. No decision affecting the group, unless emergency in nature, will be made unless it has been discussed with all other members of the group attending the function.

I will be supportive of all individuals who attend the trip, but will not condone inappropriate behavior that will result in a breach of this covenant.

I will follow Christian teachings in all of my actions during the trip, and will let God be my spiritual advisor and leader.

Unless an emergency exists, I will remain with the trip until its completion so as not to jeopardize the safety of other trip participants.

I agree to remain substance free during the duration of the trip and to conduct myself as a good role model to others.

I agree to refrain from any and all inappropriate sexual, abusive, intimidating or harassing behavior toward other trip participants.

By signing this covenant, I will abide to the conditions stated and listed above. I agree to fully participate in all activities during the trip, to listen to and respect adult leaders and all participants , to follow _____ parish guideline, to follow predetermined rules set up by the youth participants and adult leaders, to respect the space, property and ideas of all, and to provide a safe and nurturing learning environment for all to the best of my ability.

I also am aware that inappropriate behavior, (sexual, abusive, physical, coercive, intimidating), prohibited substance use, (cigarettes, alcohol, narcotics, barbiturates), unacceptable literature or communication materials, (pornographic, violent media, inappropriate web sites), are strictly forbidden and that, should I abrogate the covenant, the predetermined response will be taken according to a set of rules and consequences. These rules and consequences may include being sent home immediately. I also, realize my actions have consequences and what I do may affect the group as a whole. If I find myself unable to abide by the rules and regulations as stated above for some reason, I will seek advice from an adult advisor and or the clergy members present on the trip. Signed_____

Date_____/_____/_____



Student Information Form

Catechist: _____

Location of class: _____

Day & time of class: _____

Child's name: _____

Parents' names: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Email: _____

School and Grade: _____

How my child will get to class: _____

Persons allowed to pick up my child after class: *(Please note. No students will be dismissed to unauthorized persons without express permission from parents.)*

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Please describe any special or medical needs your child may have, including allergies, medications, and whether child must have medication with him or her at all times.

*In case of emergency, and **if** parents are unavailable, please contact:*

Name: _____

Telephone: _____

Parent's signature _____ Date _____

Activity Permission and Release Form

I, the parent / guardian of _____, give my permission for him / her to participate in _____ at _____ on _____ date. I the undersigned parent or guardian hereby release and hold harmless Our Lady Help of Christians its superiors, agents, and chaperones from any and all liability arising out of my child's participation in this activity and/or from injuries received or caused by my child or by emergency or other care provided to him /her.

If in your judgment, my child needs emergency medical care, you are hereby authorized to take such action as may be needed or useful to stabilize my child until I or another parent or guardian can be reached. I DO / DO NOT [circle one] give permission for chaperones to dispense aspirin, acetaminophen, and similar non-prescription medications to my child when he /she requests or seems to need them. N.B.: if no response is given, permission will **not** be assumed.

If the child needs to take prescription medication while participating in this activity, or if he / she has any medical condition that the chaperones or emergency medical personnel need to be aware of, please give the details here (use the back of this form if necessary)._____

A copy of this form shall be as valid as the original. In case of emergency, please call:

Name: _____

Telephone: _____ Cell Phone _____

Child's physician is: _____

Physician's telephone: _____

Signed _____

Parent / Guardian

Parent's or guardian's name: _____

Address _____

Date _____

Promise to Abide by Parish
Care and Safety Guidelines

I have read and reviewed the **Christian Stewardship of Children in the Catholic Community** document.

I shall abide by the concepts, policies, programs and procedures contained in this document.

Signed: _____

Name (Printed) _____

Date: _____

Incident Report Form

Please fill out this report as soon as possible after an incident has occurred, and promptly return it to your supervisor or the pastor. Be as accurate, specific, and complete as you can. N.B. An "incident" is any action, event, omission, or set of circumstances that is harmful or dangerous in itself or in its potential consequences and requires a protective or remedial response, usually on an urgent basis.

Person completing this form:

Name _____

Address _____

Town _____

Telephone _____

Position of responsibility (if any) _____

Which of the following best describes your participation or involvement on the occasion of the incident? Check as many as pertain.

I was directly involved in the incident

I witnessed the incident

I was on the scene immediately before or immediately after the incident took place

I witnessed part of the incident or its aftermath

I did not witness the incident itself, but can describe its circumstances

Date and time of the incident _____

Specific location of the incident _____

Describe any action taken to address the incident (use another sheet if necessary) _____

Was an ambulance summoned or medical help sought? _____

Are you personally related to or acquainted with anyone directly involved in this incident? If so, please specify. _____

Please indicate who else was present and may have seen what took place. Use an additional sheet if necessary.

Please describe below, as specifically and accurately as possible, what happened as you witnessed it. Especially important are any observations about the cause, relevant circumstances, and aftermath or follow-up of the incident and any personal injury or property damage that may have occurred:

Signature of person submitting report

Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document was compiled by *The Protection of Children Committee* of the **Concord Area Voice of The Faithful (VOTF)** – Concord, Massachusetts.

Chair – Mary Pine

Members: Gail Aufiero, William Murphy, James Vecchio.

- Thanks to Saint Paul Parish’s Response Task Force and their “Behavioral Guidelines” for providing general concepts and structure for this document.
- Thanks to the *Safe Place Task Force of the West Concord Union Church*, United Church of Christ for use of the document, “Safe Place Policies and Procedures,” from which many recommendations were extracted.
- Thanks to the St. Elizabeth of Hungary Parish, Acton, MA for the use of the document, “Care and Safety in Our Parish”.