



Foundational Questions

1. Why are we being asked to provide sexual abuse prevention curriculum within our faith formation classes?

We have been called not only to educate our youth about our Catholic Faith, but we have been called to a ministry. A ministry that embodies the mission of Christ in caring for our youth and caring for one another. Unlike other venues within the Archdiocese of Seattle, we have identified that our youth gather most frequently in faith formation and youth ministry classes, along with attendance in our Catholic Schools. As a result we can take that opportunity to educate our youth and give them the tools they need to protect themselves from those who may harm them. In creating a safe space for our youth, we can teach and show them the ways of Christ in a safe environment conducive to learning. Keeping our minors and vulnerable adults safe starts with you. We ask that you take part in this effort in extending the Archbishop's effort to help evangelize our youth in a safe space.

Logistical Questions

1. What curriculum will we use to teach our youth this material?

With the partnership of the Safe Environment and Faith Formation Office, the material for sexual abuse prevention has been integrated into the liturgical curriculum that Faith Formation adheres to. For instance, on the Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time catechetical leaders for Kindergarten will teach on the topic of religious tasks, essential concepts and standards about Moral Formation and Community Life. Safe Environment objectives will be integrated into this lesson as to create a natural flow. Catechetical leaders for each grade level will receive their lesson plans that are developmentally appropriate for their youth.

2. Is there any other material we need to teach these lessons?

Yes, anyone teaching the material for grades 3-8th will need the DVD that is used to accompany the material. These DVD's have been provided at deanery meetings that the Safe Environment and Faith Formation Offices hosted. If you need a replacement copy, you can email our office at sep@seattlearch.org.

3. Where can we find more information about the lesson plans and information about these requirements in general?

The Safe Environment Office has created a web page dedicated to Faith Formation Leaders and for parents of youth who will be in faith formation classes receiving these lessons. You can find the active link at: <http://www.seattlearchdiocese.org/SEP/faithformation.aspx>. This website has "Parent Resources," as well as a "Faith Formation Leadership Toolkit" designed to provide information about VIRTUS sexual abuse prevention curriculum we will be using.

4. We don't have time to implement these lessons. We have such limited time with our youth, how are we expected to get this done?

In our sensitivity to your time constraints, the lessons that the Faith Formation Office provides to catechetical leaders have integrated Safe Environment objectives into the already existing lesson plan. This has been strategically developed to ensure you have ample time to teach all your faith formation lessons.

5. How often do we have to provide these sexual abuse prevention courses to our youth?

Catechist (or any other individual) teaching the material will provide these lessons once a year. The lessons will remain the same every year per grade level. This is to allow those teaching the material to feel comfortable and grow more confident with the material as each year passes.

6. To whom do we provide these lessons?

All catechetical leaders will provide the integrated lesson plan to their specific age group, in attendance, on the day the lesson is designed to be presented. For all intents and purposes this date will be the Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (February 19, 2017). However, please note that this is a recommended date and we are flexible and open to time issues. Our main concern is that everything (Record Forms) is given to the Director of Religious Education (DRE's)/Pastoral Assistants for Faith Formation (PAFF) by March 31st.

7. Where are the opt out forms and is it necessary to offer that form to parents?

The opt out form can be located at:

<http://www.seattlearchdiocese.org/SEP/FaithFormation.aspx>. This page is dedicated to both parents and Catechetical Leaders. It is necessary that you notify parents that they have the opportunity to opt their child out of the sex abuse prevention class.

8. Why would a parent decide to opt their child out of the sexual abuse prevention class?

Most parents who opt their child out of sexual abuse prevention courses do so because they believe their child will be taught sex education. While these topics do have similar names, they are completely different subject matter. **Sexual abuse prevention** courses teach and give our youth the tools they need to protect themselves from those who may try to harm them. **Sex Education** is curriculum designed to examine issues relating to human sexuality, including relations, responsibility, sexual anatomy, sexual activity, reproduction, etc. While this is often the reason, it is not the only reason parents opt out their children. As a result we are required to provide the opportunity for each parent to make that decision on their own. The lesson plans are available for their review on the website and parents are most welcome to use the lesson plan as a spring board for presenting the material to their own children, should they choose to opt out or are out of town on the designated Sunday.

9. What do we do with the opt out forms?

Similar to the recording form, you will also hand any opt out forms to your PAFF/DRE prior to March 31st.

10. Is there a possibility that we can combine grades and lessons?

Yes, the lessons that VIRTUS has created has been done so in a way that can be grouped. In other words, lessons are developmentally appropriate for age groups to be combined. We suggest that if you are going to be grouping the lessons you use the following system:

- K-2: (If the youth fall between grades k-2 grade, please use 1st grade material)
- 3-5: (If the youth fall between grades 3-5 grade, please use 4th grade material)
- 6-8: (If the youth fall between grades 6-8 grade, please use 7th grade material)

If you decide that grouping your youth will be most effective for you, you will simply make note of that on the “Recording Form”

11. Is there training for the Pre-K children?

Currently, there is no formal Pre-K Lesson from Virtus. While providing preschool aged children sexual abuse prevention training is not a requirement, we recommend that if you so desire to provide this information to them, you group them with the Kindergarten class. This will be the most developmentally appropriate lesson for them.

12. How do we address family catechesis where parents teach their youth the faith? Will they be required to also teach sexual abuse prevention to their youth?

It is important that all children be taught lessons of sexual abuse prevention. We understand not all catechesis programs are the same. For those programs in which families teach their youth about the faith, we suggest that you consider the following approach:

- 1.) Provide the parents with the lessons (located on the Faith Formation/Safe Environment Website) for their appropriate age group. You can direct them to the website and instruct them that they must not only teach the lesson but also fill out the “Recording Form” to be handed to the DRE/PAFF by March 31st.
 - a. You will need to gather all parents prior to the lessons being taught and explain to them the purpose and mission of providing sexual abuse prevention material to their youth.
 - b. If parents opt out of the lesson, they will need to fill out the “Opt Out” form to indicate they have done so.

13. Are there recommended best practices when teaching this lesson?

We highly recommended and advise that two people be in the classroom when teaching this material. We recommend this practice to ensure that any individual teaching the material is

comfortable if a child reports that they are being abused. If a child comes forth in response to the training and one adult needs to leave to assist the child, having two adults in the classroom will help relieve any stress or and allow one adult to leave with the child and the other to stay in the classroom.

14. Will the lessons change from year to year?

No, the lessons will remain the same each year. The purpose of this was not only to help those teaching the lessons become familiar with the materials, but it was also intended to reinforce the same message to the youth receiving the lesson.

15. What do we do if a Catechetical Leader/Youth Ministry Coordinator cannot teach the material for reasons that include past experience of sexual abuse?

It is important that those individuals know that they will not be forced to present sexual abuse prevention material to the youth. Instead, we recommend that you take their place or search for other educators within your location that could potentially teach on their behalf. Some parishes, with schools attached, ask for volunteers from within the teaching staff at the school.

16. Will Catechetical Leaders/Youth Ministers and Guardians have an opportunity to provide feedback during this first year of implementation?

The Safe Environment Office encourages that anyone who has recommendations or comments fill out the "Feedback Form" listed on the Safe Environment: Faith Formation website. All concerns and recommendations will be taken into consideration. It is our intention to make sure that Catechetical Leaders, Youth Ministry Coordinators and parents/guardians feel included while we integrate and implement sexual abuse prevention into both ministries. Please email, scan or fax the form to: sep@seattlearch.org | 206.382.4267 | 710 9th Ave., Seattle, WA 98104.

17. Is the material being translated into other languages?

The material has been translated into Spanish and is available on the website.

18. Is there a program for the Special Needs population?

At this time, we are recommending that each location use their best judgment on which lesson is developmentally appropriate for each individual who may be special needs. This population is especially vulnerable and we need to make sure that they are receiving the tools and vocabulary that they need to protect themselves.

19. Is there a link or USB option for the Introductory Videos?

Not at this time. Virtus currently only has the DVD option. Although Virtus may be implementing the use of USBs sometime in the future.

Recording Questions

1. What about students who are absent? Will we be required to provide the lesson to each student who did not attend when we presented the material?

It is likely that there may be students who are absent from your class on the day you present the material. You will NOT be required to play catch up with every student. You will only teach those who are in attendance the day the material is presented.

2. Do we need to record or make note that we have provided the lesson?

Yes. The Catechist (or any other individual who has taught the lesson) will be asked to record attendance numbers on a specific form. This form will be located on the Safe Environment: Faith Formation page: <http://www.seattlearchdiocese.org/SEP/FaithFormation.aspx> under "RECORDING THE LESSON." This form will indicate your compliance with these new requirements. *This is your only requirement for recording.* You will need to turn the form in to your DRE/PAFF.

3. How will we record those students who were absent at the time the material was presented?

If there were students absent from the class on the day you presented the material you will make note of those absences when you record the information. You will be asked to record attendance (along with other logistical information) on a form which you can find at: <http://www.seattlearchdiocese.org/SEP/FaithFormation.aspx> under "RECORDING THE LESSON." There is a specific line dedicated to recording those students who were absent.

4. When will the "Recording the Lesson" form be due, and to whom do we give this information?

The Catechist (or any other individual who has taught the lesson) will need to give the (recording) form to your DRE/ PAFF by **March 31st of each year**. Your DRE/PAFF will ensure that everyone has turned in the form at which time they will hand the forms over to the Safe Environment Coordinator at your local school or parish. Every year, the Safe Environment Office undergoes an audit by the United States of Catholic Bishops Conference (USCCB). The audit is conducted in the Spring each year. Having a deadline of March 31st will ensure ample time to comply with the mandates of Safe Environment.

5. How should a parish count children and youth who are already receiving training in a Catholic School? Is it acceptable for them to be counted twice?

Yes. It is acceptable that children and youth may be counted twice. The Safe Environment office is more concerned that every child and youth receives this training rather than the number of times an individual receives the training.

Furthermore, the objective of sexual abuse training is the same in both Catholic schools and through our Faith Formation programs. It is the format in which the child/youth receives the information that is different. For instance, while our Catholic schools use the faith based lessons directly from Virtus, our Faith Formation and Youth Ministry classes are receiving the lessons through the lens of their Catholic faith. They receive the objective of the abuse prevention material in a very different manner.

Communication Questions

1. How do we notify guardians that their youth will be provided Safe Environment curriculum during one of their Faith Formation classes?

We have unequivocally found that using parish and school bulletins has historically been the best means of communicating to parents. We suggest that two weeks prior to hosting the class you advertise in the parish bulletin the fact that youth will be provided sexual abuse prevention curriculum on (list the date.) You should also note that *parents have the right to opt their youth out of this lesson*. They can read all about VIRTUS and the sexual abuse prevention training under "Parent Resources," where they will also find the opt out form in which they will need to edit: <http://www.seattlearchdiocese.org/SEP/FaithFormation.aspx>.

2. Will the Safe Environment Office be providing sample bulletins or flyers to help us communicate a message?

Yes, the Safe Environment Office has posted both a sample bulletin and a sample flyer for the purpose of educating and communicating with parents/guardians regarding the purposes and extent of this initiative. Bulletins and sample announcements are posted on the website: <http://www.seattlearchdiocese.org/SEP/FaithFormation.aspx>.

3. How has the Archdiocese of Seattle communicated these new standards to PAA's, Priests, and other Safe Environment Coordinators?

Safe Environment Coordinators have been notified of the new standards within Faith Formation and Youth Ministry via a communication memo that is sent out every month. For the past year the Safe Environment Office has emphasized that new standards will be implemented within those ministries in the near future. This month, Safe Environment Coordinators were notified of how these standards are being implemented and how their role may be affected.

Similarly, on November 4, 2016 Denise Aubuchon (Human Resources Director) presented material to the Presbyteral Council explaining the changes and standards that are being implemented within Faith Formation and Youth Ministry. Deanery representatives have been given context around the reasons why Archbishop Sartain believes in the efforts of educating our youth in sexual abuse prevention, along with how the program will look for Catechetical Leaders and Youth Ministry Coordinators.

Reporting Questions

1. What steps do we take if a child/youth comes forth to say that they have been abused while lessons are discussing the material?

It is statistically likely that there will be children within your class who have been abused. It is your responsibility to provide ministry care and support to young people, and that includes listening to them when they come to you for help. Part of being a caring adult means embracing a transparent environment any time you are interacting with youth. This means that you may not be in an isolated environment with the youth as they communicate with you. If a child comes forward during one of your lessons, thank them for speaking up and say to them, "Thank you _____ for bringing this up. Let's talk after class about what you have said."

Inform the child that for safety reasons you will listen to them in an environment where others know where you are and can at least see your interaction-such as in a classroom with an open door. When the child speaks, listen carefully, showing respect to the child by taking the information seriously, offering a supportive, non-judgmental response and demonstrating empathy through your tone and facial expression. Avoid reacting very strongly by maintaining a calm demeanor. Tell the child that he or she is not to blame and that they did the right thing by talking to you about it. Let the child explain the situation without interruption or interrogation and instead take notes after the fact, when the child is no longer with you. In limiting the quantity and length of questions, be more concerned with who has committed the abuse, do not attempt to determine credibility and ensure that the questions and statements are not accusatory. Do not promise confidentiality, since you will need to report the abuse to the proper authorities as soon as possible." (*Protecting God's Children*, Facilitator Manual.)

Remember, it is not your job to investigate, only to get enough information that gives you a reason to believe that abuse has occurred.

If the guardian is involved in the abuse, we strongly advise you not to talk to the guardian. *Instead called CPS, or if the child is in immediate danger call 911.*

The child needs to know that he or she is safe.

2. What do we do if a minor or vulnerable adult discloses an incident and further communicates that another adult, or CPS, has already been contacted?

Please see question number one under Reporting Questions.

Even if the disclosure has allegedly been reported, as a mandated reporter you must make the call to CPS within 48 hours. If the contents of the disclosure signifies that the individual is in immediate danger, call 911.

3. What is the CPS number?

1-866-END-HARM

4. Are there additional resources for reporting suspected abuse?

Yes, for additional information on reporting suspected abuse please visit the Safe Environment website: <http://www.seattlearchdiocese.org/SEP/Reporting.aspx>.

5. What steps do we take if a child/youth comes forth to say that they have been abused but the abuse did not happen within the Archdiocese of Seattle?

As we mentioned before, it is statistically likely that there will be children within your class who have been abused. Along with following the steps we mentioned in question 1, in the Reporting section, we also suggest that you contact the Archdiocese of Seattle. While the abuse may not have happened within the Archdiocese of Seattle, the Safe Environment Office has resources that can be provided to the individual and their family to help them in the healing process. Although the Archdioceses cannot take responsibility or provide advocacy on the individual's behalf, it is an important mission of the office that all victims are provided and guided to the best of our abilities with resources that we can provide.