

KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE

We have implemented many procedures, programs, and safety measures to ensure the safety of the students in the Religious Education Program at IHM.

SCREENING TEACHERS, AIDES, AND OTHER VOLUNTEERS:

APPLICATION FORMS: All of our new teachers and aides complete a three page application form provided by the Diocese which asks for identification and background information.

BACKGROUND CHECKS: All adults who work directly with the students in the Religious Education Program go through a background check run by the Office of Safe Environment Programs at the Diocese. These checks are done through the Vermont Criminal Information Center and the Vermont Child Abuse & Neglect Registry.

CODE OF CONDUCT: All adults who work directly with the students in the Religious Education Program read and sign the "Roman Catholic Diocese of Burlington Code of Conduct." Similarly, the High School students who volunteer in the program, read and sign the "Standards of Conduct for Junior High and High School Youth Volunteering or Working with Minors." Copies of these documents are available through the Parish Office (878-4513) for anyone who wishes to read them.

TRAINING TEACHERS, AIDES, AND OTHER VOLUNTEERS:

VIRTUS PROGRAM - PROTECTING GOD'S CHILDREN: All adults who have contact with children in our parish participate in the Virtus Program. This program, designed to heighten awareness of student safety, consists of a three hour "live training" session followed by a monthly on-line component. Through this process participants learn to recognize signs of abusive situations and to take appropriate steps if abuse is suspected.

SUPPORT FOR PARENT/GUARDIANS:

VIRTUS PROGRAM - PRACTICAL ADVISE FOR PARENTS HANDBOOK: This handbook has been provided by the Diocesan Office of Safe Environment Programs to help parents/guardians and caretakers understand and minimize the risk of child abuse as well as recognize the signs that the abuse may be occurring.
<http://www.virtus.org/virtus/ParentHandbook.pdf>

VIRTUS PROGRAM - PROTECTING GOD'S CHILDREN: This program, directed toward parents/guardians, is now being offered at various sites in the area. Watch the bulletin for dates, times, and locations.

<http://www.virtus.org/virtus/>

FORMATION IN CHRISTIAN CHASTITY PROGRAM: This parent/guardian centered program is provided for Grades 1 through 8 and 2nd Year Confirmation. Some parts of this program are taught in the classroom, however, most of the instruction (and all intimate or very personal information) is given by the families. Students bring home a letter explaining the details of the program for their grade level and information to assist parents/guardians in discussions with their children. A handout with general safety information from the Office of Safe Environment Programs can be found in the [IHM Parishioner Handbook. \(Appendix I\)](#)

In addition to working with their parents/guardians at home, students in the first four years of our program will learn about staying safe as part of their regular classes. The goals include learning rules for keeping people safe, understanding the difference between good touch and bad touch (any touch that makes a person uncomfortable,) and remembering that God loves and respects us, so we love and respect ourselves and others.

Students in Grades 5 through 8 and 2nd Year Confirmation will also be provided with one or two classes with lesson plans specific to moral and spiritual development. The goals in these classes include learning to recognize and avoid dangerous or harmful activities, understanding the importance of implementing a “buddy” system, developing a safety plan, and practicing assertive body language.

For specific lesson plans, more information for implementing discussions, and support for the challenges of single parent/guardian households, contact the Parish Office (878-4513).

SAFE ENVIRONMENT WEB PAGE: For additional, information including [USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People](#), go to www.vermontcatholic.org and follow the links to the Safe Environment webpage.

SAFETY IN THE CLASSROOM: In addition to the steps listed above to screen and train volunteers working with students, we have implemented many safety precautions to ensure a safe learning environment. These include, but are not limited to:

- Keeping staff areas off limits to students and supervising students who use the kitchen area.
- Having two adults in each classroom or with each group of students for supervision.
- Leaving the door to the classroom open any time one adult is alone with the children.

- Encouraging parent/guardians to sit in on their child's class at any time without prior notification needed.
- Requiring parent/guardians to call the teacher if their child will be absent and following up, during class time, any unexplained absences to verify that the parent/guardian is aware that the student did not arrive.
- Releasing students only to a parent/guardian (or designated adult with written permission from a parent/guardian). In grades 1 through 5 the parent/guardian or designated adult must pick up the child at the classroom door.
- Monitoring of all classes by the Pastor and/or a Director of Religious Education on a regular basis.
- Following up on and documenting all concerns.