



School of Evangelization

ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE OF BROOKLYN

ADMINISTRATIVE MANUAL

FOR

**PARISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN**

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INTRODUCTION

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.

CATECHESI TRADENDAE,
ON CATECHESIS IN OUR TIME, JOHN PAUL II

I am glad to have the opportunity to provide you with this important manual. The staff of the Office of Faith Formation/School of Evangelization has prepared this *Administrative Manual for Parish Religious Education Programs for Children* in order to assist those charged with organizing the parish programs of Religious Education. It is the revision of a work that has been in place in the Diocese of Brooklyn for many years. Please be certain to review all the policies contained in this manual and use them for the safety and well-being of those you serve.

The parish conducts a Religious Education Program for students in kindergarten through grade twelve. This manual, which can be adopted by the parish and adapted to meet its particular needs, is intended to provide guidance to leaders in the operation of the parish religious education program.

Thank you to those who were involved in preparing this document.

May Christ, our Teacher, help us in our mission to lead all to Himself.



Theodore J. Musco, Director
Office of Faith Formation
Executive Director
School of Evangelization



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CHAPTER 1

OFFICE MISSION STATEMENT AND STRATEGIC PLAN

101 MISSION STATEMENT OF THE OFFICE OF FAITH FORMATION/SCHOOL OF EVANGELIZATION

The Office of Faith Formation in the School of Evangelization of the Diocese of Brooklyn offers lifelong and comprehensive formation in the Catholic Faith to all persons so that they may become disciples of Jesus and witnesses to the Gospel. We realize this mission through servant leadership that promotes faith formation for children, youth, adults, families, and all persons of special needs in a variety of settings in our multi-cultural and totally urban diocese. Through our ministry, we collaborate with other diocesan offices and agencies and pastoral leaders in forming genuinely holy people actively engaged in the New Evangelization.

102 TEN ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS FOR VIBRANT PARISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The Ten Essential Components that have been identified as part of every vibrant parish religious education program are:

- Safe Environment mandates (Code of Conduct, Virtus Training, Background Check, Child Lures Program, etc.)
- Graded religious education programs (kindergarten through grade eight, and eventually through grade twelve) with parent involvement as a priority
- At least forty-five hours of religious education per year for every grade (at least 30 classes of 90 minutes each; at least two reserved for the Family Life Program)
- A diocesan calendar that can be adapted for local use (this helps to avoid having people shop around for a parish with fewer days, shorter hours, etc.)
- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) approved religion textbooks
- Religious Education Assessment Program (assessing groups for program improvement) for students in grades 3, 5, and 7
- RCL-Benziger Family Life Program for students in grades 5, 6, 7, and 8 (separate Parents' Booklet for Human Sexuality issues)
- Special Needs Religious Education Initiative (parish and diocesan programs)
- *Living and Leading by Faith Formation Program for Catechetical Leaders and Catechists* (at least 10 hours per year is required for each catechist and catechetical leader)
- Sacramental Proximate Preparation Program (4-6 sessions for Penance and Holy Eucharist and 4-6 sessions for Confirmation) and Confirmation Enhancement Program



103 LOCAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The uniqueness of the Church is explicitly reflected in the uniqueness of each local parish. Mindful of this diversity and in light of local needs, each parish is encouraged to develop clearly a stated strategic plan for its religious education programs. Goals, objectives, and specific strategies to accomplish the goals of the local religious education programs should serve to further the mission of the Church which is to lead all to know and love Christ.



CHAPTER II

FAITH FORMATION AT THE DIOCESAN LEVEL

201 DIOCESAN BISHOP

Ultimate responsibility for faith formation and religious education in the Diocese rests with the Diocesan Bishop, “herald of the faith” and authentic teacher. As such, the Diocesan Bishop offers direction and support to the work of faith formation through his leadership, his actions, and the work of his staff and Diocesan offices and agencies.

202 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE DIOCESAN SCHOOL OF EVANGELIZATION

The Executive Director of the Diocesan School of Evangelization supervises the Office of Faith Formation and the Diocesan Pastoral Institute. The Executive Director reports to the Vicar for Evangelization and the Diocesan Bishop.

203 DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF FAITH FORMATION

The Director of the Office of Faith Formation is responsible for effective advocacy and communication of the catechetical mission of Catholic education in Brooklyn and Queens. The Director oversees the Office of Faith Formation and assists Pastor/Administrator and catechetical leaders in furthering the catechetical mission of the Church. The Director is appointed by and accountable to the Diocesan Bishop and reports to the Secretary for Catholic Education and Formation.

204 STAFF OF THE OFFICE OF FAITH FORMATION

The Office of Faith Formation is comprised of the Director, Coordinators, and Administrative Assistants who provide service in the areas of: childhood faith formation; youth and young adult faith formation; Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) and RCIA adapted for children; adult faith formation; Pre-Cana Preparation and Marriage Enrichment; Family Ministry; and Respect for Life Ministry.

The Office supports programs which enhance evangelization, catechesis, worship, ministry, and community building for the people of the Diocese of Brooklyn. The Office also coordinates the *Living and Leading by Faith Catechetical Leader and Catechist Formation Program* which provides on-going formation and professional development for catechetical leaders and catechists in parish programs of religious education and faith formation and in the Catholic schools and academies within Brooklyn and Queens.

205 SCHOOL OF EVANGELIZATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The School of Evangelization Advisory Committee is composed of representatives of the local community as well as members of the Office of Faith Formation and other diocesan offices and agencies. It is responsible for identifying and expressing goals and objectives of the office and formulating policies they deem necessary as suitable to achieve these objectives and goals.



The Executive Director of the Office of Faith Formation serves as the Chairperson of the School of Evangelization Advisory Committee.



CHAPTER III

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AT THE PARISH LEVEL

301 PASTOR/ADMINISTRATOR

The Pastor/Administrator, by appointment of the Diocesan Bishop in accord with Canon Law, has responsibility for providing religious education for those entrusted to his care. Thus, the Pastor/Administrator is the chief administrative officer of the total parish religious education program. As such, he has the responsibility for setting and maintaining the spiritual tone of the parish. He also directs the religious education programs in collaboration with the parish clergy and staff, Director of Faith Formation/Coordinator of Religious Education, the catechists, and parents. He is primarily responsible for seeing that the catechetical needs are articulated and met.

302 PAROCHIAL VICAR

The role of priests in the catechetical effort of the parish is a special source of leadership. Parochial Vicars exercise their leadership through their encouragement, their liturgical-sacramental ministry, and their involvement in planning, catechizing, and providing liturgical celebrations for the religious education programs, in collaboration with the Director/Coordinator of Religious Education.

303 DEACON

Deacons, under the guidance of their Pastor/Administrator and in collaboration with the Parochial Vicars and other members of the parish staff, also share in the catechetical mission of the parish through their preaching, teaching and witness to Christian service. Their involvement in the catechetical mission of the parish is highly encouraged.

304 DIRECTOR OF FAITH FORMATION/COORDINATOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The Director of Faith Formation (DFF) or Coordinator of Religious Education (CRE) shares in the parish catechetical ministry and functions as a member of the parish staff as designated by the Pastor/Administrator. **The DFF/CRE is responsible for the implementation of the total parish religious education catechetical program and the coordination of the sacramental programs of both the school/academy and the religious education program.** In this capacity, the DFF/CRE works in collaboration with the other parish staff members: Parochial Vicars, Pastoral Associates, Principal(s), Deacon, Music Director, etc. All DFFs and CREs are to participate in the Diocesan *Living and Leading by Faith Catechetical Leader and Catechist Faith Formation Program*. In as much as each parish is unique, the specific relationships need to be clarified locally by the Pastor/Administrator. The general focus is on mutual planning, support, and personal involvement. The DFF/CRE should endeavor to keep the staff and parishioners informed about the parish religious education program, diocesan initiatives and the Strategic Plan.



The DFF/CRE serves as an *ex officio* member of the Parish Pastoral Council. In addition, the DFF/CRE interacts collaboratively with other parish organizations/societies.

305 PARISH CATECHIST

The role of the catechist in assisting the Church to fulfill its responsibility to hand on the gift of Faith is most important. Indeed, the quality of the catechetical and pastoral activity is at risk if it does not rely on competent, trained, and well-formed personnel who are people of Faith.

All catechists must be at least eighteen years of age before being eligible to work in a parish program without direct supervision, appropriately trained according to diocesan norms, and practicing Catholics.

All catechists are to participate in the Diocesan *Living and Leading by Faith Catechetical Leader and Catechist Faith Formation Program*.

306 CATHOLIC SCHOOL/ACADEMY PRINCIPAL

The Catholic school/academy plays a critical role in realizing the goals of Catholic education. Certain functions relating to catechesis are basic and relate directly to the internal development of the school community and are the principal's responsibility, assisted by the School/Academy Religion Coordinator.

The school/academy is an integral part of the parish. There are certain areas of its life which call for collaborative efforts between the principal and the parish DFF/CRE. In all matters involving the teachers and/or the students in the Catholic school/academy related to the religious education programs, the DFF/CRE should be in dialogue with the principal. When programs affect both the school/academy and the religious education program, especially sacrament programs, the DFF/CRE and the principal should attempt to reach a consensus of opinion in their decision-making. The Pastor/Administrator is the final arbiter in situations where there is no obvious consensus.

All school/academy principals are responsible for providing each DFF/CRE, by October 15 of each year, a list of students who attend the school/academy from a particular parish.

307 ACADEMY RELATIONS

The DFF/CRE should be in dialogue with the academy principal so that collaborative processes may be established for ensuring the religious education and ongoing faith formation of the children and their full initiation into the life of the Church.

308 OTHER PARISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PERSONNEL – CATECHETICAL LEADERS

Parishes may employ other individuals to serve as Youth Minister, RCIA Coordinator, Adult Faith Formation Coordinator, Pastor Associate, etc.. These individuals share in the catechetical ministry of the parish and function as members of the parish staff as designated by the Pastor/Administrator. They should have a written job description which identifies the scope of their responsibilities with regard to the parish religious education programs and the area within which they exercise their pastoral and catechetical leadership role.



CHAPTER IV

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

401 RATIONALE – PARISH COMMUNITY

Parish religious education programs do not operate in isolation but are an integral part of the parish community. A good relationship with this community enhances the effective operation of the religious education program and foster opportunities for life-long faith formation.

402 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents (hereinafter the term parents shall include legal guardians and legal custodians) are the primary religious educators of their children. The parish religious education program provides an organized curriculum to assist parents in developing a full and complete process of faith formation for their children. Parents work in partnership with the DFF/CRE and catechist because of a common interest in the faith formation of the child. This partnership is expressed in many ways, such as participation in and/or support of the parish religious education program activities. The Church places a high priority on the faith formation and religious education of adults; therefore, parents must be encouraged to participate in educational and spiritual activities to increase their knowledge and adherence to the faith.

The Eucharist is the center of our faith life and parents must realize that attendance at Mass on Sunday and on Holy Days of Obligation is required. Other parental responsibilities include, but are not limited to, attendance at parent meetings, developing family faith rituals and other evangelizing activities and experiences at home, and ongoing communication with the catechist and DFF/CRE.

403 FEES

An articulated and reasonable policy regarding registration fees and other program fees is a matter for local determination. Fees are determined by the DFF/CRE in consultation with the Pastor/Administrator. Every attempt should be made to itemize program fees prior to the spring program registration period. **The policy for the collection of fees should be clearly communicated to the parents prior to or at the time of registration and be included in the Parent Handbook.** However, no student should be refused religious education or sacramental preparation because of inability to pay the fees.

404 LOCAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The DFF/CRE should keep lines of communication open with the public school officials in the local school districts. Attendance at district meetings and participation in programs which can benefit the students in the religious education programs are encouraged. Visits to the local public school to meet with the principal are encouraged as is the sharing of the program's annual calendar and schedule with the local public school.

Adherence to the Chancellor's Regulations for Released Time should be strictly observed.



Students in the released time program are issued a card, to be countersigned by their parent and addressed to the public school principal, requesting the release of the student from school for purposes of religious instructions. These cards are available from the Office of Faith Formation.

405 PARENT HANDBOOK

The DFF/CRE will develop and disseminate a Parent Handbook which comprehensively outlines the rights and responsibilities of all persons in the religious education program. Such a handbook would include, among other things, the Mission Statement of the program as well as policies and procedures regarding attendance, discipline, emergency situations, and the evaluation and reporting of student progress developed after careful review and consideration of this Manual.



CHAPTER V

STUDENT RECORDS AND SAFETY CONCERNS

501 STUDENT RECORDS

All student records are the property of the parish and are strictly CONFIDENTIAL. The parish must designate and maintain an office in which the records are kept safely.

The DFF/CRE is responsible for maintaining all permanent records of students in the religious education program. The DFF/CRE is also responsible for the preparation, privacy, transcription, and dissemination of such records.

It is the DFF's/CRE's responsibility to ensure that all records are kept in a secure place.

Parishes must use the standardized permanent record cards that are available from the Office of Faith Formation.

501.1 ACCESS TO RECORDS

Parents have a right to receive copies of all of their child's record. All persons, except appropriate parish program authorities, should be denied access without written parental permission or pursuant to appropriate judicial process, i.e., court order, subpoena, etc.

501.2 STATEMENT OF RECORD RETENTION

All student records, including the permanent record card and the attendance registers, shall be maintained permanently in a safe location from the date the student leaves the program.

502 ATTENDANCE REGISTER

An attendance register is maintained for each class by the catechist. It must be legible, updated, and include each student's record of both absences and tardiness. If attendance is maintained on computer, a hard copy must also be kept. Computer records should be maintained in a secure "password" protected program. The Pastor/Administrator is responsible for the maintenance of the password.

The attendance register is never taken from the parish premises. At the end of the year, the total number of absences and instances of tardiness is transferred to the student record.

Attendance Registers are available from the Office of Faith Formation.

503 STUDENT REGISTRATION AND THE PERMANENT RECORD CARD

A single standard permanent record card shall be kept for each student enrolled in the religious education program. Student information is recorded at the time of registration and updated each year that the student is in the program.

Parents should present an original Baptismal certificate for the student at registration. Once



the information is recorded on the record card, the original certificate is returned to the parent. Programs must keep a photocopy of the Baptismal certificate with the student's record card. The date of reception/initial reception of any sacrament should be recorded on the record card. When a student transfers to another program, the DFF/CRE of the receiving program should request a copy of the record card before the student is placed in a class. The sending program retains the original record. **Parishes must keep these records permanently.**

Permanent Record Cards are available from the Office of Faith Formation.

504 STUDENT EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Emergency information is completed by the parent at the time of the student's initial registration in the program and updated annually. Any changes to this record are made in writing by the parent.

Emergency cards are available from the Office of Faith Formation.

505 STUDENT DISCIPLINE RECORDS

Student discipline records are viewed as internal documents to which only parents and appropriate parish program authorities have access. Discipline records are not sent with the copy of the student's permanent record card if a student transfers to another religious education program.

506 PROVISION FOR SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS

Every effort must be made to accommodate children with special educational needs. The Office of Faith Formation's Coordinator of Special Needs Religious Education is available to assist the DFF/CRE.

507 CODES OF CONDUCT (BEHAVIOR)

Each religious education program should implement a code of conduct which reflects Christian values. This code of conduct should be reasonable, fair, compassionate, and of a nature that it takes into account the developmental level of understanding and ability of the students. The goal of this code is to assist the students in understanding themselves as being made in the image of God and enabling them to develop into individuals who are self-disciplined and self-actualized.

This code of conduct should be published in communications to parents, students, and catechists so that all concerned know what is expected. Local handbooks are the preferred means of communication.

STUDENT CONSIDERATIONS

1. All corporal punishment is not only unacceptable but is strictly forbidden, illegal, and punishable by law.



2. Adequate and proper supervision of students must be maintained at all times. Students should not be in classrooms, hallways, or other parts of the building unsupervised.
3. Instances of consistently inappropriate behavior should be communicated to the parents. Every effort should be made to work with the parents to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution. The Pastor/Administrator is the final arbiter when mutually acceptable solutions are not achieved.

508 HEALTH CONCERNS

At the time of registration, the DFF/CRE should request that the parent notify the DFF/CRE of any pertinent medical conditions or health concerns impacting the student. This information should be shared with the catechist pursuant to applicable law.

At all times, only the parent of the child is allowed to dispense medicine of any type. The DFF/CRE, catechist, and parent should make proper arrangements to be certain that the parent is available to administer any required medication as needed.

509 ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Parents must be given information clearly stating the expected time of arrival and dismissal for the program and the procedures to follow.

Parents should be told where the students are to meet the catechists, where they will be dismissed, and where they will be taken if no one meets the students at dismissal. Regard for student safety must be upheld while students are on school/church premises.

510 TRAFFIC SAFETY

Before the opening of the school year, the DFF/CRE must be in contact with the local police regarding any necessary arrangements for the protection of the students during arrival and dismissal. Local police will be given a copy of the program's calendar and will be informed in advance about any changes in schedule.

511 RELEASE OF STUDENTS FROM PROGRAM

Students are expected to be in attendance for the full class session. If for any reason a student must leave class before the regular dismissal hour, a parent or an adult authorized by the parent must come to the religious education office, sign the student out of the program for the day, and accompany the student out of the building.

In instances where an authorized adult is escorting the student, such authorization must be in writing from the parent and presented to the DFF/CRE. In extreme emergency cases where such written authorization is not possible, a phone call directly from the parent to the DFF/CRE may constitute authorization.

Since no student of any age is ever to be dismissed from the building unescorted, except at regular dismissal time, a student may never be sent home for assignments, books, or for disciplinary reasons, or sent on errands for anyone.



512 STUDENT ACCIDENTS AND ACCIDENT REPORTS

In case of accident, the DFF/CRE will contact the parent or the individual identified on the student's emergency information. If the parent cannot be reached at the emergency number, the DFF/CRE should call 911 and follow police instructions. **A written accident report giving date, time, circumstances, witnesses and actions taken should be kept on file.**

513 INSURANCE

The parish is insured through the Peter Turner Insurance Company for claims arising out of any action pertaining to the Religious Education Program.

The Parish Services Corporation should be informed immediately of any accidents. The DFF/CRE should prepare an incident report on the form provided by the Parish Services Office. The report should be sent to the Director of Parish Services Corporation and a copy kept on file at the Parish. All forms can be downloaded from the Parish Services Corporation website at <http://psc.diobrook.org>.

It should be made clear to parents that the parish insurances does not cover injuries or medical expenses resulting from accidents in which no negligence is involved or alleged.

514 CHILD LURES PREVENTION

For children enrolled in Religious Education Programs the Diocese provides safety awareness training. Child Lures Prevention is a program used to empower children to keep themselves safe from all predators who might harm them. **All Religious Education programs are required to present this program to every child, every year.** All parishes should have a copy of the program (DVDs and manual) in their possession. If a DFF does not have one or is not comfortable presenting the program, the Safe Environment Office has a list of Diocesan-trained Presenters who can come in and present the program to the children. Once the program is completed, the DFF is required to send in a completed Child Lures Compliance Form to the Safe Environment Office. For a more detailed description of the requirements for presenting the Child Lures Prevention Program, please refer to the section titled "Child Lures Prevention – Religious Education" in the back of this manual. If you have any questions regarding the Child Lures Prevention Program, please call 718-281-9674.

515 CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

The abuse or maltreatment of children is against the law. Local Law creates a child protective system with five fundamental components:

1. detection through third party recognition of children in danger, including mandatory and permissive reporting of suspected child abuse and maltreatment
2. emergency protective custody of children in "imminent" danger
3. State Central Register of reports of suspected child abuse and maltreatment
4. child protective services a) to verify reports, b) to provide immediate protection of children and c) to begin the process of helping families by providing rehabilitation and ameliorative services



5. when necessary, Family Court action to remove a child, or to impose treatment, and/or Criminal Court action for prosecution of the perpetrator

515.1 REPORTING

New York State Law requires school officials to report any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. The DFF/CRE as the administrator of religious education program should follow these guidelines for children under the age of 18 in parish religious education programs.

Both the Education Law and the Social Services Law of the State of New York clearly and forcefully mandate such reporting. The statute refers to “reasonable suspicion” of child abuse; therefore any suspicion must be reported by the DFF/CRE to the State Central Registry. This preliminary report must be followed by a written report, DSS2221-A. The law provides no excuse for failure to report any reasonable suspicion of child abuse. Subsequent to the written report, the DFF/CRE should notify both the Pastor/Administrator of the parish and the Director of the Office of Faith Formation that a report has been made to the Central Registry.

To make a report, call the statewide Central Registry at 1-800-635-1522. It is desirable to have the following information available when phoning in a report:

1. Name and address of the child and parents/legal guardians or other person responsible for care, if known
2. The child’s age, sex and race
3. The nature and extent of the child’s injuries, abuse or maltreatment, including any evidence of prior injuries, abuse, or maltreatment to the child or siblings
4. The name of the person(s) responsible for causing the injury, abuse, or maltreatment, if known
5. Family composition
6. Source of the report
7. Person making the report and where that person can be reached
8. Any action taken by the reporting source, including the taking of photographs and X-rays, removal or keeping of the child, or notifying the medical examiner’s office or coroner
9. Any additional information which may be required by regulation or which may be helpful

A written report (Form DSS2221-A) should be completed within 48 hours.



IMMUNITY FROM LIABILITY

Any person, official, or institution participating in good faith in the making of a report, taking of photographs, placing a child in protective custody, or providing a service pursuant to the duties of the child protective service pursuant to the law has immunity from any liability, civil or criminal, which might otherwise result from such actions. Conversely any person, official, or institution required to report a reasonable suspicion of child abuse, and who willfully fails to do so, may be guilty of a crime and might be held civilly liable for proximate damages caused by the failure to report.

515.2 DEFINITION OF CHILD ABUSE

“Abused Child” is a child under 18 whose parent or other person legally responsible for his care:

1. inflicts or allows to be inflicted upon such child physical injury by other than accidental means which causes or creates a substantial risk of death, or serious or protracted disfigurement, or protracted impairment of the physical or emotional health, or protracted loss or impairment of the function of any bodily organ, or
2. creates or allows to be created a substantial risk of physical injury to such child by other than accidental means which would be likely to cause death or serious or protracted disfigurement, or protracted impairment of the physical , or emotional health, or protracted loss or impairment of the function of any bodily organ, or
3. commits, or allows to be committed, a sex offense against such child, as defined in the penal law, or allows such child to engage in acts or conducts described in the penal law. These acts include but are not limited to: using a child in a sexual performance and promoting a sexual performance by a child.

515.3 DEFINITION OF CHILD NEGLECT

“Neglected Child” means a child less than 18 years of age:

1. whose physical, mental or emotional condition has been impaired or is in imminent danger of becoming impaired as a result of failure of the child’s parents or other person legally responsible for the child’s care to exercise a minimum degree of care
2. in supplying the child with adequate food, clothing, shelter, or education in accordance with the provisions of part one of article 65 of the Education Law, or medical, dental, optometric or surgical care, though financially able to do so, or offered financial or other reasonable means to do so; or



3. in providing the child with proper supervision or guardianship, by unreasonably inflicting or allowing to be inflicted harm, or substantial risk thereof, including the infliction of excessive corporal punishment; or by misusing a drug or drugs; or by misusing alcoholic beverages to the extent that he loses self control of his actions; or by any other acts of similarly serious nature requiring the aid of a court; provided, however, that where the respondent is voluntarily and regularly participating in a rehabilitative program evidence that the respondent has repeatedly misused a drug or drugs or alcoholic beverages to the extent that he loses self control of his actions shall not establish that the child is a neglected child in the absence of evidence establishing that the child's physical, mental or emotional condition has been impaired or is in imminent danger of becoming impaired; or
4. has been abandoned, in accordance with the Social Services Law, by his parents or other persons for his care.

516 SUBSTANCE ABUSE

The Program for the Development of Human Potential (PDHP) is a prevention and drug abuse intervention program funded through the New York State Division of Substance Abuse Services and sponsored by the Department of Education of the Diocese of Brooklyn.

All religious education programs should have a policy which informs students, parents and catechists of the procedures to be followed when a student is found to be using drugs/alcohol. This policy should include a clear and simple explanation of the respective rights and responsibilities of all those involved in an incident of drug/alcohol use. The written policy should reflect the administrator's serious concern for the student who uses drugs/alcohol, as well as for those students who may be influenced by their peers to experiment with these substances.

An administrator who would like assistance in formulating a policy tailored to the needs of a particular religious education program population should contact the regional coordinator of the PDHP program.

The PDHP program provides individual, group, and family counseling for children referred through the schools and parishes. The program offers educational and referral services for students, faculties, and parents.

All parishes are eligible to participate and should contact the regional coordinator to learn more about the program.

517 SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICIES

As a response to the Diocesan Bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People established in 2002, Diocesan Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio has set forth the following mandates for all employees in every parish and/or school/academy. This mandate also applies to any person in a parish and/or school/academy who volunteers with children.

All persons must fulfill three requirements before they begin their service or employment.



They are:

1. Attendance at a VIRTUS – “Protecting God’s Children for Adults” workshop
2. Signing a Code of Conduct
3. Authorize a Criminal Background Screening

VIRTUS – “PROTECTING GOD’S CHILDREN FOR ADULTS”

The VIRTUS program for adults is a three-hour live awareness session instructing adults of the Church that to protect children you must have continuous awareness and vigilance. This awareness session makes trainees understand the signs of child sexual abuse, the methods and means by which offenders commit abuse, and five empowerment steps one can use to prevent child sexual abuse.

There are VIRTUS workshops held at the two diocesan locations, 310 Prospect Park West in Brooklyn and the Immaculate Conception Center in Douglaston on a monthly basis. A current schedule of workshops can be found on the VIRTUS website, www.virtus.org. Any parish, school/academy can also host their own workshop. For more information please see the section titled “Hosting a VIRTUS Workshop”.

CODES OF CONDUCT

The Code of Conduct is a document which acknowledges the importance of legal, professional and responsible conduct of those who work with children and young people. All clergy, employees and volunteers are required to read the Code of Conduct and to sign a Statement of Acknowledgement Form. The Code of Conduct is distributed at all VIRTUS sessions. Members of the clergy should read the Code of Pastor/Administratoral Conduct, copies of which can be obtained from the Office of Clergy Personnel as well as the Diaconate Formation Office. Copies can also be found on the Diocesan website and DioNet.

BACKGROUND SEARCH AUTHORIZATION

All employees and volunteers are also required to have a criminal background screening completed before they start their employment or service. These forms are also distributed at all VIRTUS sessions. All background screenings (employees and volunteers) will be done through the Safe Environment Office. The searches are done through LexisNexis (volunteers) or HireRight (employees). All information is kept confidential and if a positive result is returned, the Pastor/Administrator/administrator will be notified and appropriate steps will be taken.



CHAPTER VI

INSTRUCTION

601 APPROVED CALENDAR

Annually, the Office of Faith Formation distributes an approved calendar including released time dates. Parish religious education programs should follow this calendar.

602 LOCAL CALENDAR

Each Parish issues a local calendar modeling the approved calendar. **A copy of the local calendar should be sent to the Diocesan Director of the Office of Faith Formation by August 1st of each year.** Variations from the calendar are to be reported to the Diocesan Director and Pastor/Administrator when they occur.

603 PROGRAM HOURLY REQUIREMENTS

Each parish is expected to schedule *at least* thirty (30) ninety (90) minute classes per catechetical year for a total of forty-five (45) hours of instruction per catechetical year. At least two sessions must be dedicated to the Family Life curriculum.

604 STAFF MEETINGS

The DFF/CRE is encouraged to hold staff meetings with the catechists at least monthly. These meetings provide an opportunity for program planning and evaluation and for professional formation and spiritual growth.

605 EMERGENCIES

605.1 UNSCHEDULED CLOSINGS

It is the responsibility of the DFF/CRE to determine the necessity of canceling classes. All parents and volunteers should know where information may be obtained when the Religious Education Program classes are canceled.

605.2 FIRE DRILLS

The DFF/CRE must be aware of the fire drill procedures for all facilities being used for religious education classes. It is important that the DFF/CRE communicate specific procedures to the catechists. A practice fire drill should be held within a month of starting classes each year and at least every other month thereafter.

605.3 KNOWLEDGE OF EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

It is the DFF's/CRE's responsibility to see that all personnel associated with the religious education program know exactly what to do in an emergency. In addition, the DFF/CRE should ensure that written emergency procedures are posted in a conspicuous place in all the areas in use for religious education classes. These procedures



should include written instructions and appropriate phone numbers for the Police Department and the Fire Department.

605.4 CHAIN OF COMMAND

It is impossible for the DFF/CRE to be on hand at all times. An appropriate chain of command to act in an emergency situation should be established and published.

605.5 CRISIS MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Every parish religious education program should have a crisis management plan in place. There should be a copy of this plan in the religious education office and the parish rectory. A copy of this plan should also be sent to the Office of Faith Formation for the parish file.

In parishes with schools/academies, the existing School Crisis Management Plan may be expanded, adopted, or adapted to address crisis situations involving the parish religious education program.

This plan would be used in the following situations (but is not limited to):

1. death of a student, catechist, Pastor/Administrator, etc.
2. serious illness of a student, catechist, Pastor/Administrator, etc.
3. violence or violent death
4. bomb threat
5. bio-hazard threat
6. suicide

Procedures to be followed:

1. Selection of the crisis response team
2. Identifications of family liaison person
3. Organization of staff/telephone network
4. Identification of crisis consultant/counselor
5. Identification of community response people
6. Designation of a security person
7. Identification of media liaison person
8. Development of suggestions for classroom discussion
9. Identification of crisis center and counseling room
10. Formation of parish policy on funerals



11. Formulation of policy for parish memorials
12. Interface with student leaders
13. Availability of readings on death
14. Plan for calling in substitute catechists
15. Plan for future catechist meetings
16. Identification and contact with at-risk students
17. Drafting a letter for parents
18. Plan for parent/community meeting
19. Plan for evaluation

606 CURRICULUM

606.1 PRIMARY GOAL

The primary goal of the program of religious instruction in parishes of the Diocese of Brooklyn is to provide learning experiences which will develop the knowledge, concepts, attitudes, and skills necessary for an individual's faith formation and personal encounter with Christ.

606.2 GUIDELINES

The diocesan norm for catechetical tasks, standards, and outcomes is found in *The Seed is the Word of God—A Resource for Catechetical Planning* (School/Academy version and Parish version). Outlined in this document is the course of study for the education and formation of all children and youth in the Diocese of Brooklyn.

606.3 LOCAL CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Local curriculum development for the parish religious education program is the responsibility of the DFF/CRE. The curriculum should be evaluated in light of the parish's religious education goals and Strategic Plan by the Pastor/Administrator and the DFF/CRE in conjunction with catechists on an annual basis.

606.4 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ASSESSMENT INITIATIVE

Parishes and schools/academies will implement the Religious Education Assessment according to the schedule provided by the Office of Faith Formation.

606.5 FAMILY LIFE CURRICULUM

Parents are the first and most important educators of their children. They clearly educate by word and example. Their role is irreplaceable. Many Catholic parents and guardians look to the religious education programs and resources of the Catholic School/Academy and parish religious education program for assistance, particularly in the area of education in human sexuality and family life. The Family Life Curricu-



lum is a curriculum that offers an understanding of basic life issues that is consistent with Catholic teaching. Family and sexuality education though a Catholic perspective seeks to foster family values, to promote the right to life and the dignity of each human person, to stress the importance of wholesome relationships and personal responsibility, to teach the values of conscience formation, and to give inspiration for living lives that are moral and chaste.

607 INSTRUCTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

607.1 MATERIALS

The responsibility for the selection of religion textbooks and instructional materials for the parish religious education program rests with the DFF/CRE in accordance with Diocesan norms. The religion textbooks for the elementary school program should be selected collaboratively by DFF/CRE and the school/academy principal in consultation with the catechists. Parishes should only use texts that are listed with the *Conformity Listing of Catechetical Texts and Series* issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Parishes may check this information at www.usccb.org/catechismlindex.htm.

607.2 COPYRIGHT PROCEDURES

The use of music during liturgies and special prayer services is essential to prayer and catechesis. Words and music may not be reprinted from a text book, song book, record, tape, etc. without the written permission of a publisher. Reprinting music without the proper permissions is both a legal and justice issue. Ignoring copyrights violates a composer's and a publisher's right to income and recognition. Copyright infringement may subject the parish to a legal liability.

The following guidelines have been developed by the Liturgy Office:

1. No words or music may be reprinted without permission of the publisher.
2. Permission is obtained by writing to publishers for an annual license or one time use.
3. When music is reprinted with permission, the following process should be used: Only words and /or melody may be reprinted. (No arrangements or chords may be included). Failure to comply with this term could cause the license to be terminated.
4. Title of song and name of composer must be included above each song.
5. Publishers prefer that credit be noted after each song as follows: Copyright © (correct date) by (name and address of publisher).
All rights reserved or used with permission.
6. The license number must be printed after or under "used with permission or reprinted with permission"



7. A copy of the music or program must be sent to the publisher for their files.
8. Any additional guidelines sent by the publisher must be followed.

607.3 RETREATS AND FIELD TRIPS

Any retreats and/or field trips should be definite extensions of the religious education process appropriate to the students' age/grade. Students should be prepared for the retreat/trip in order to derive the greatest benefit. Only a licensed public carrier, fully insured, should be used to transport students. The staff is entrusted to protect the students from harm.

A permission slip signed by the parent is necessary for each student participating in an offsite retreat and/or activity. An adequate number of responsible adult chaperones must accompany students. Chaperones should take copies of the permission slips, which include emergency telephone numbers for each student, on the trip. The original written permission slips should be kept pursuant to the record retention schedule.

The DFF/CRE should offer advanced notification of retreats or program trips to the local public schools that the religious education students attend when those trips will be held during the school day.

608 EVALUATION OF STUDENT PROGRESS

608.1 COMMUNICATING STUDENT PROGRESS

Since the parent is recognized as the primary educator of the child, it is the responsibility of the DFF/CRE to clearly communicate to the parent the requirements necessary for the student's successful advancement in the parish religious education program. In the true spirit of the New Evangelization, it is important that adequate and continuous communication with the parent take place to enable each student to have the opportunity to succeed in the program.

In instances where the student is experiencing difficulties, it is advised that the DFF/CRE maintain a written record of these communications with the parents. Criteria for student advancement within the religious education program are locally determined and enforced.

608.2 DOCUMENTATION

At the conclusion of each term of the religious education program, each student should receive a copy of the Student Report Card supplied by the Office of Faith Formation. The class catechist completes the report card.





CHAPTER VII

PHYSICAL PLANT

801 BUILDING ARRANGEMENT ISSUES

The complete physical plant of a parish may comprise several buildings. In situations where the parish religious education programs and the school/academy use common space, the DFF/CRE and the school/academy principal should develop an amicable working arrangement for use of the premises. The arrangement would address issues such as areas to be used, scheduling, access to phones and public address systems, and allocation of costs. Such a working arrangement must meet with the approval of the Pastor/Administrator.

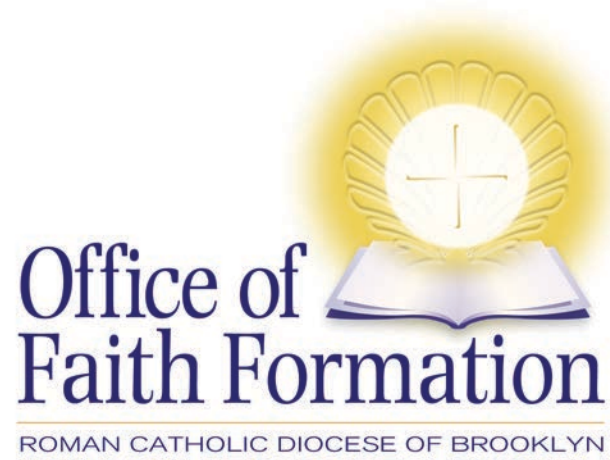
802 BUILDING SAFETY

Any building that houses a religious education program must meet the building, safety, and occupancy requirements of the City/State of New York.

1. The building(s) must always be secure. A responsible person should be stationed at the designated entrance while the program is in session.
2. No one should be allowed to impede exits while classes are in session.
3. **All exit doors must be fitted with panic bars and be unlocked from the inside.**
4. Exits (doors and interior gates in the surrounding yards) must not be obstructed or locked during program hours, inclusive of gates on outdoor areas.
5. Chains, padlocks, etc. put on doors for security when the building is closed, must be removed before students enter the building and may not be replaced until all classes have left the building.
6. Storage space should be away from routes of egress and should be ventilated and fire resistant.
7. Stairways must not be obstructed and space under stairways should never be used for storage.
8. Seats in gymnasiums, auditoriums and lunchrooms should be spaced to provide definite aisles for prompt exiting; aisles that terminate at exits should be clearly marked.
9. Electrical equipment should be checked regularly to be sure that it does not present a hazard.
10. Cleaning supplies and other potentially hazardous materials must be stored in locked areas out of reach of students.







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