

ST. STANISLAUS KOSTKA FAITH FORMATION



They who supply the seed will find that it multiplies, increasing the harvest of righteousness.

They will be enriched in every way for their generosity, for they administer public benefit and see to the needs of the Church. Their generosity overflows in much gratitude to God.

-2 Corinthians 9

Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you. And know that I am with you always.

-Matthew 28:20

**CATECHIST HANDBOOK
2019-2020**

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Faith Formation Philosophy/Mission Statement/Vision

At St. Stanislaus Kostka we regard Faith Formation as a total parish experience involving not just the child, but also parents, families, Catechists, clergy and religious that form our parish community of faith. We believe that Faith Formation is getting to know Jesus and learning what is expected of one who chooses to follow him in the Catholic tradition. Our program reflects an integrated learning experience composed of learning, catechesis, prayer, sacramental preparation, traditional Catholic doctrine, biblical studies, liturgy, community building and other dimensions of a vibrant Church life. Through the light of faith we hope to develop in those entrusted to our care a deeper relationship with God.

Nondiscriminatory Policy

The Catechetical Program represents the belief that each person is made in the image and likeness of God and endeavors to bring the Gospel message to all who come for instruction. Therefore, it is completely antithetical to its mission to discriminate because of age, race, color, national origin, sex, marital status (except as it affects one's status as a practicing Catholic), or disability of any individual. The Catechetical Program does reserve the right to act on the basis of its religious principles at all times including to admission to service of volunteers and other like activities relating to their supervision.

Requirements of the Safe Environment Office for Catechists

Each prospective Catechist must:

- complete and submit Catechist Application to the Director of Religious Education;
- complete and submit Background Check form to the Director. (Catechist cannot work with children until background check has been done and approved by Safe Environment Office.)
- sign acknowledgement that she/he has read the Archdiocesan policy relating to sexual misconduct and the appropriate Code of Conduct;
- complete the *Safer Spaces Training Program* on site or online. The training is taken after the Background Check has cleared and within the limit of 45 days of beginning their ministry in the parish. If a program is scheduled to last for less than 45 days (e.g., vacation bible schools, summer camps,), all new Catechists must complete the Safe Environment requirements before the program begins.

The on-site *Safer Spaces Training Program* is 40 minutes long and is facilitated by the Director of Religious Education. It consists of a presentation on DVD supported by a facilitator's guide and a master copy of the training booklet.

If any Catechist fails to satisfy the Safe Environment requirements by the appropriate date, they may not come into contact with minors in any program or activity of the Archdiocese or any of its parishes or institutions until they complete the Safe Environment requirements.

The Background Check Forms consist of the following:

- *Archdiocesan Policy on Background Checks* (kept by Catechist)
- *Fact sheet on Background Checks* (kept by Catechist)
- *Summary of Rights under Fair Credit Reporting Act* (kept by Catechist)
- *Sexual Misconduct Policy, both Summary & Full Policy* (kept by Catechist)
- *Code of Conduct* (kept by Catechist)
- *Authorization & Disclosure for Background Check* (filled out by Catechist, copy sent to Safe Environment Office & original copy kept in Parish files)
- *Catechetical Office Volunteer Application* (filled out by catechist, kept in Religious Education Office files)

These forms are available both in Spanish and English in the *Safe Environment Resource Manual* and on the Safe Environment web page. (archny.org/screening-procedures)

Designated Safe Environment Reporters for the Parish Community

Archdiocesan policy requires that the Pastor, the Director of Religious Education, the Catechists and the staff of the Religious Education Program report all incidents of suspected child abuse following the procedure outlined below. Although these personnel are not “Mandated Reporters” under New York State Social Services Law section 413, by virtue of their role in the Religious Education program, they are required to report all incidents following the policy of the New York Archdiocese and the directions of the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Office.

The Pastor is the legal head of the parish and thus is ultimately responsible for what happens there. Thus, he must be notified of all incidents and should be made aware of all developments.

When Archdiocesan policy requires that a report be made on an abuse incident and the Pastor does not or is unable to make the report, the Director of Religious Education will be directed by the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Office to make the report, or the Safe Environment Office itself will make the report.

Because a parish commitment to protecting its children and helping its families is much broader than its Religious Education Program, its response plan should also be broader.

See page 31-32 for Characteristics of the Abused Child and of the Abusive Caretaker

Process to be Followed in Response to Suspected Child Abuse

Internal to Religious Education Program and Involving a Parish Employee/Volunteer

An “internal incident” is an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor made against any person within the parish Religious Education Program (i.e. priest, deacon, sister, brother, layman, laywoman, employee, volunteer).

In response the following is done:

- The person(s) receiving the information immediately informs the Director.
- The Director immediately informs the Pastor.
- Either the Pastor or the Director immediately calls the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Office (646- 794-2897). (If Safe Environment Office cannot be reached, the Office of Legal Affairs is called.) The Safe Environment Office will direct the parish leadership through the situation according to Archdiocesan policy.
- If there is a real and imminent threat to the security or safety of the child, the Pastor or Director must call the police immediately. In an emergency, they should not wait to speak to the Safe Environment Office before dialing 911. The first priority is to ensure child’s safety.
- Guided by the Safe Environment Office, the Pastor informs the parents of the complaint.
- The Director of Religious Education informs the Archdiocesan Catechetical Office.
- The Pastor advises the person making the complaint (or their parent) to notify the District Attorney of the appropriate county.
- If the Pastor judges the complaint to be credible, i.e. judges that there is “reasonable cause to believe”, he places the accused person on leave at once.
(Employee continues to receive salary/benefits until there is a resolution of the complaint or an investigation shows that improper custodial conduct occurred, at which time salary/benefits may cease and employee is placed on unpaid leave pending the outcome of the investigation.)
- If the employee/volunteer admits to the alleged abuse of a minor, he/she is to be terminated. If found guilty in civil court, the employee/volunteer is to be terminated and is not to be considered for future work or service in the Archdiocese.
- To protect the reputation and good name of both the accused and the victims, anyone having information about an incident or case of child abuse is not to share that information with anyone except the appropriate authorities.

Process to be Followed in Response to Suspected Child Abuse

**External to Religious Education Program
and not Involving a Parish Employee/Volunteer**

An “external incident” is something that happens to a child/youth outside of the Religious Education Program and not committed by a member of the parish staff. The report is typically a self-report by a child /youth to a Catechist.

In response the following is done:

- The Catechist immediately notifies the Director.
- The Director immediately informs the Pastor.
- Either the Pastor or the Director immediately calls the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Office (646- 794-2807) which will direct the parish leadership through the situation according to Archdiocesan policy.
- If there is imminent danger to the child, the Director or Pastor must call the police immediately. They should not wait to speak to the Safe Environment Office before dialing 911. The first priority is to ensure the child’s safety.
- The Director of Religious Education informs the Director of the Archdiocesan Catechetical Office.
- In all cases, if there is **reasonable suspicion**, with some specific signs, that child abuse/neglect/ is occurring, the Safe Environment Office will direct the Pastor or Director to call the **N.Y. Child Abuse Register (800-342-3720)** and report it. Then Parish leadership is to fully cooperate with the investigation of the N.Y. authorities.

It is not advisable to wait to be absolutely certain that abuse/neglect is occurring. Reporting in good faith protects the complainant from any liability, even if the report proves unfounded. Reporting is the first step in bringing help to both the abused child and the abusive families.

- If the family/abuser tries to contact the parish leadership or Catechist about the report, the parish leadership or Catechist must not have any conversation about the matter. Rather they must let the appropriate authorities know about any contact or harassment.
- Further specific instructions which the Safe Environment Office will provide to the Pastor and Director will depend on the circumstances in each case.
 - e.g. If a child’s parent or someone in the home is the offender, the child cannot be sent back to the abuser. Therefore, the Pastor/Director would be instructed to call the police immediately and cooperate fully with the authorities. If the abuser is a non-family member, the Pastor/Director would be instructed to notify the child’s parent unless that would create a risk for the child.

CATECHISTS

I. *The Role of the Catechist*

A Catechist is a person of faith whose primary mission is to communicate God's love by proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ and creating an atmosphere for the Holy Spirit to bring about growth in faith among believers. Catechists minister to adults, youths, and children in a variety of locations and parish faith formation programs.

The six fundamental tasks of a Catechist¹ are to:

- Promote the knowledge of faith;
- Give moral formation;
- Provide liturgical education;
- Teach how to pray;
- Educate for community life;
- Initiate into the missionary dimension.

The person of the Catechist is essential to the catechetical mission of the parish. The *General Directory for Catechesis* states:

“No methodology, no matter how well tested, can dispense with the person of the catechist in every phase of the catechetical process. The charisma given to the Catechist by the Spirit, a solid spirituality and transparent witness of life, constitutes the soul of every method. Only his own human and Christian qualities guarantee a good use of texts and other catechetical instruments.”

II. *Basic Requirements for acceptance as a Catechist or Catechist Assistant*²

The applicant must be a practicing Catholic who is faithful to and living a lifestyle consistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church. Personal prayer life is fundamentally important in the life of the Catechist. This is fostered through regular Mass attendance, reception of the Sacraments, daily prayer, scripture reading and participation in retreat opportunities.

The prospective catechist must be willing to participate in the Archdiocesan Catechist Formation Program as well as in the Catechist formation opportunities provided by the parish. Catechists are also expected to attend the Archdiocesan Catechetical Congress and other meetings designated by the Parish Faith Formation Coordinator.

The prospective catechist must be ready to spend time each week preparing the catechetical session using the Catechist's manual selected by the parish program and the Archdiocesan Guidelines for Catechists.

The applicant must agree to know and abide by the policies and directives as outlined by the Coordinator and described in this handbook. Applicants for the role of Catechist or Catechist Assistant are selected by the Coordinator and must receive final approval from the Pastor.

III. *Application for Volunteer Catechetical Personnel*

¹From the *Handbook For Parish Directors and Coordinators of Faith Formation*

²From the *General Directory For Catechesis (GDC) #16.*

All those who volunteer (Catechist, Catechist Assistant, Clerical Assistant, Hall Monitor, and any volunteer in the program who interacts with the children) must complete an application form and submit it to the Coordinator prior to their involvement in the program. It will include the following information: personal, catechetical, educational, and Faith Formational background and two references. The disclosure of previous termination or conviction of a criminal offense is required by the Archdiocese of New York of anyone who will be associated with children and youth in the Parish Catechetical Programs. An explanation of this confidential information must also be given. This form must be signed by the volunteer applicant, the Coordinator and the Pastor. The signatures validate the form. This form may be updated each year, as necessary.

Interview

Upon receipt of the application, the Coordinator will meet with the prospective Catechist to give an overview of the program and to speak with the individual about his/her life experiences and reasons for wanting to share the faith. Information about formation and training requirements will be explained to the prospective Catechist. The Coordinator will ascertain the readiness of the prospective Catechist and schedules of formation and training will be arranged as well as Safer Spaces instruction.

IV. Orientation of New Catechists

Prior to the beginning of his/her ministry each Catechist is required to participate in an introductory formation program designed to:

- Introduce the ministry as a vocation.
- Introduce the curriculum.
- Teach age-appropriate formation process.
- Introduce ways to maintain an effective catechetical environment.
- Introduce lesson planning skills.
- Acquaint the Catechist with resources.
- Review the policies and procedures for catechesis in the parish and Archdiocese.
- Introduce the process for continuing Catechist formation and certification in the Archdiocese.

This orientation to the parish catechetical program usually takes place prior to the opening day of the Faith Formation program. Orientation offers the new Catechist an opportunity to meet fellow Catechists, become familiar with parish facilities and visit the classroom he/she will occupy.

V. Responsibilities of the Catechist

Planning and Preparation

- Establishing long range and immediate teaching goals and objectives;
- Familiarity with Archdiocesan Guidelines and textbooks provided by Coordinator;
- Appropriate lesson planning including review, presentation of new materials and reinforcement;
- Requesting and obtaining materials, audiovisual equipment and supplies for specific needs;
- Preparing questions for discussion;
- Structuring lessons to meet individual needs;
- Correlating home assignments with lessons taught.

Instructional

- Creating a joyful, loving and caring Christian learning environment;
- Giving witness to the Gospel by word and example;
- Developing a faith community;
- Manifesting an attitude of enthusiasm for learning;
- Fostering an attitude of mutual respect and understanding;
- Helping children to become creative, cooperative and self disciplined;
- Guiding children as they attempt to apply knowledge of their faith to real life situations;
- Setting high expectations and encouraging individual growth.

Evaluating and Reporting

- Administering tests (written and oral) provided in textbooks or supplied by Coordinator;
- Acquiring a knowledge of each student's personality, background and social influences that affect a student's faith development;
- Monitoring and evaluating each student's growth on a short and long term basis;
- Referring children with academic or behavioral problems to the Coordinator.
- Writing an introductory letter to parents stating goals and objectives as well as expectations of the children;
- Holding informal conferences with parents as needed.

The Responsibilities of an Assistant Catechist

- Assisting with small group discussions;
- Helping individuals or groups with projects;
- Possible presentation of all or part of a lesson;
- Assisting with recording of attendance;
- Helping to maintain discipline and order;
- Assisting with the distribution or collection of class and home activities.

Professionalism

Catechists and other staff members by their appearance, dress and all their actions should reflect their role as religious educators entrusted with the sacred task of handing on the faith.

Information regarding the Faith Formation Program, children who attend the classes and other parish staff should be kept confidential. Professionalism should also be reflected in the Catechist's preparation for class, interaction with the children, parents and other Catechists. Record keeping should be neat, accurate and timely made.

Inappropriate Behavior or Unsatisfactory Performance of Catechetical Personnel

The Coordinator will advise a Catechist of any behavior that is inappropriate or unacceptable. The Catechist will also be advised of the evaluation of his/her performance indicates and unsatisfactory teaching/learning situation. The Coordinator will give suggestions for improvement. In either of these cases, a written account of the notifications will be made and placed in the Catechist's file. If the unsatisfactory behavior or performance persists, the Coordinator advises the Pastor of the situation. The Coordinator specifies, in writing, the behavioral changes that are necessary.

VI. *Reasons for Dismissal of a Catechist*

Volunteers can be dismissed just as paid employees can be and the procedure is similar.

Allegations of child abuse or molestation result in *immediate suspension*. Any allegation of child abuse or molestation must be reported to the Coordinator who will inform the Pastor and the Regional Director of the Catechetical Office.

Some of the reasons for considering the dismissal of a Catechist are:

- Consistently demonstrating a failure to maintain control in a group or catechetical session.;
- Consistent failure to follow the Archdiocesan Guidelines or the designated curriculum;
- Consistent resistance to the leadership, directives and guidance of the Coordinator;
- Excessive absence from the program;
- Behavior that fosters divisiveness and a spirit of negativity among the other Catechists and staff;
- Physical or mental incompetence in carrying out the supervisory and educational responsibilities;
- A lifestyle that seriously and obviously violates Catholic morality.

If improper behavior/performance occurs, the Catechist is warned in writing that a failure to change the behavior or improve the performance may result in a change of area of service or even dismissal as the situation warrants. If the behavior/performance continues to be unsatisfactory, the Coordinator will change the Catechist's area of responsibility or dismiss the Catechist.

VII. *Catechist Formation*

“Catechesis needs to consider, as its primary task, the preparation and formation of Catechists in the deep riches of the faith... The Quality of any form of pastoral activity is placed at risk if it does not rely on truly competent and trained personnel. The instruments provided for catechesis cannot be truly effective unless used by trained Catechists. Consequently, Diocesan pastoral programs must give absolute priority to the formation of lay Catechists.”³

The Bishops of New York have *mandated* that all Catechists who teach in the Archdiocese should be actively pursuing catechetical certification.⁴

Catechetical Sunday

³GDC 33,234

⁴*The Catechist of the Third Millennium*

Catechetical Sunday recognizes in a special way all those involved in parish catechetical ministry. It is celebrated nationally the third Sunday in September. At a designated Mass on this day, Catechists are called forward to be commissioned by the celebrant and the parishioners.

Catechetical Convocation

The Catechetical Convocation is an annual Archdiocesan event that brings together all those involved in the catechetical ministry. The Convocation includes Mass, workshops, exhibits of catechetical publications, resources and a prayer service. Admission tickets are available through the parish Coordinator. The Congress is traditionally held on a Saturday during the month of September or October. Information concerning the venue for the event and a schedule of workshops is distributed to each catechist.

Catechist Certification

Certification is a two level process by which a Catechist acquires a basic knowledge of the theological, spiritual and catechetical principles that should be known by a person entrusted with the catechetical formation of children. The Archdiocesan Catechetical Office publishes twice a year a schedule of Level I and Level II Catechist Formation Sessions, which is provided by the Coordinator along with periodic listings of sessions taking place locally.

The preparation of the Catechist through Catechist Formation is not only required by the Bishops of New York, but is essential to effective parish catechesis. Catechists and anyone interested in Faith Formation are welcomed and encouraged to attend these sessions without cost or obligation.

A record of attendance and an application for certification for both Level I and Level II will be kept in the Catechist's file. These forms will record the session, site, date and/or equivalency taken. It is the responsibility of the Catechist to give the Coordinator the Level I cards (20 sessions), and the Level II cards (5 courses) received upon completion of each session.

Observation and evaluation will also follow this by the Coordinator. When all requirements have been completed, a copy of the evaluation will be sent to the Regional Director of the Catechetical Office. Upon approval by the Regional Director, the Catechetical Office of the Archdiocese of New York will grant certification, which is valid for five years.

Observation and Evaluation by Coordinator

The Archdiocesan Catechetical Office requires an evaluation to be completed for every Catechist during the first year in ministry and every two years thereafter. At the Coordinator's discretion, an evaluation can be done annually. The Catechist is notified of the observation date at least two weeks in advance. Items include: number of years as a Catechist, number of children in the class, length of session, textbook used, concepts explained, materials used, skills exercised, climate checklist, lesson plan checklist, commendable aspects and recommendations or suggestions for implementation. Following the observation and evaluation, the Coordinator and Catechist meet to review the evaluation. Once reviewed and signed, a copy is given to the Catechist and the original is placed in his/her file. When the Catechist applies for certification, a copy of this evaluation report is sent to the Regional Director along with the Application for Certification.

Self Evaluation by Catechist

At the end of the year, the Catechist will complete a self-evaluation. This gives the Catechist an opportunity to assess progress made during the year via teaching skills, lesson planning, classroom management, communication skills, organization, formation, etc., and can be very helpful as the Catechist begins planning for the next year.

Ongoing Formation

All Catechists are encouraged to continue their formation. A schedule of Catechist Formation classes is available from the Faith Formation Office. The *Institute for Religious Studies* located at St. Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers offers Masters level courses at several sites in a range of subjects for individuals who wish to pursue a graduate degree or to enhance their knowledge. Tuition is very reasonable and evening courses are available. The *New York Catholic Bible School* offers courses in sacred scripture, hermeneutics and other subjects at several sites throughout the Archdiocese for individuals who wish to pursue an in-depth study of the Bible.

Application for Renewal Level II

An application for Renewal Level II certification is filed, documented with record of attendance, program, date, hours, and then is submitted. The programs and events that may fulfill requirements for recertification are:

- Catechetical Congress
- Adult Faith Formation Classes
- Scripture Programs
- Retreat, Day of Prayer
- Other religious enrichment programs.

Each certification is valid for five years. The catechist is encouraged to attend ongoing formation.

CLASSROOM

I. Supervision

The Catechist's responsibilities include supervision of the children designated to his/her class. Supervision is a mental as well as a physical act. Therefore, the Catechist must be attentive to those in his/her care as well as being physically present with them.

To provide such supervision the Catechist is expected to adhere to the following:

- Have the classroom and lesson set up prior to the children arriving.
- Meet and lead the children from the arrival site to the classroom.
- **NEVER** leave the class unattended by the Catechist or Catechist assistant.
- If the Catechist must leave the room (emergency, illness, etc.) And there is no assistant catechist ...
- ask the hall monitor or other responsible adult to watch the class.
- Send one or two children to the Faith Formation Office with a message for assistance.
- Depending on the urgency of need, if no alternate supervision is available, bring the entire class to the office or to another Catechist's classroom.
- Early in the year explain to the children what should be done in case of an emergency:
- Stay calm and seated;
- Quietly read from the textbook;
- Designate a specific child (e.g. the one nearest the door) to go to the Coordinator's office for help;
- Tell the children that should a fire alarm go off during an emergency when the Catechist is not in the room, they **MUST** leave the room in a quiet, orderly way and leave the building according to Fire Drill Rules.
- At the end of class, the Catechist is to lead the children, in line, out to the dismissal site.

II. Treatment of Confidential Information

The Coordinator will inform each Catechist about any child who has special needs which could affect the teaching/learning environment (e.g. medical conditions, learning disabilities, custody issues, etc.) This information is to be kept strictly confidential and must be used with discretion.

III. Curriculum

The Faith Formation Program of St. Stanislaus conforms to the requirements of the Catechetical Office of the Archdiocese of New York and its published *Guidelines for Catechesis*. Our program ensures for all the children of our parish a clear and uniform presentation of the faith in concepts appropriate to each age level. The Faith Formation Program is designed to assist parents in their sacred responsibility to educate their children in the faith. It complements, but can never replace parents in carrying out their responsibilities. "Parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children."⁵

In addition to enlightening our children in doctrines and tenets of our faith, our Faith Formation Program welcomes the opportunity to aid parents in teaching children to walk along the path of faith. This can only be achieved when we, through word and example, place Jesus Christ and His teachings at the

⁵From the *National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States*

center of our student's lives through liturgical worship, frequent prayer, and communication of Christian values and attitudes. In this way we make meaningful their professions of belief and nurture faith in our children by showing them the richness and beauty of lived faith.

The themes, objectives and appropriate prayers of each grade level can be found in the *Archdiocesan Guidelines for Catechesis Grades K-6 & Grades 7&8*.

Doctrine

Catechists are commissioned to teach the truths of the Catholic faith. At no time should Catechists offer their personal opinion about matters of faith or morals. If a situation arises where you are unsure about Catholic doctrine, consult with your Coordinator.

Catechetical Program Approaches to Family Centered Catechesis

Sensitivity to the needs and desires of families must permeate all the dimensions of the parish catechetical program and indeed, of all parish life. "The care of the family always remains central, since it is the primary agent of an incarnate transmission of the faith."⁶

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* warmly recommends the home as the first school of prayer.⁷ Parish support for the "domestic church" (the family) includes the work of religious educators who help parents fulfill the role of "first heralds of the faith" to their children.

As early as by the age of three, most children are ready to take part in a preschool catechetical program. In such a program the role of the Catechist is different from, yet complements, the unique role as parents.

IV. Parent/Catechist Communication

Ongoing communication with parents/guardians may include: an introductory letter stating goals and objectives, as well as class rules; informal conferences on an "as needed" basis; weekly or monthly curriculum updates if necessary; written report card comments or in-person report card conference.

All communications to the parents from the Catechist must be reviewed and approved by the Coordinator, in advance. All conversations should be documented as to date, time, and nature of communication and with whom the Catechist spoke. Keep a log for record purposes. If a parent claims not to have been notified of something in particular the log can be reviewed for verification.

⁶From the *GDC 207*

⁷From the *CCC #2685*

HOMEWORK, TESTING & PROGRESS REPORTS

I. Homework Policy

Homework reinforces classroom learning and can provide opportunities for independent study, creative thinking and service.

There are two types of homework:

- **Short Term:** Assignments that are given and are required to be completed and submitted at the following class;
- **Long Term:** Assignments spread over a number of weeks which may include such activities as projects, research, extended reading or independent study.

II. Testing

Since there will be formal testing at each grade level, a certain amount of knowledge will be expected to be retained by each child participating in the program; therefore, some study at home is necessary. The objective of testing is to not only monitor the growth of each child but also to see how a given class is progressing as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of the Faith Formation Program. Testing may take be either oral or written.

If a child does not fulfill grade level requirements, a meeting will be arranged with the parents, the Catechist, and the Coordinator of Faith Formation to discuss the situation. The Coordinator will determine the appropriate course of action.

III. Progress Reports

Religious formation of the child takes place in the home, church and in the class setting. Progress Reports for the Faith Formation Program reflect class performance only and are issued twice yearly to indicate the strengths and weaknesses each child is demonstrating. The broad areas of evaluation are: effort and attitude, class participation and knowledge of lessons. The grading scale is: Excellent (E), Good (G), Satisfactory (S) and Needs Improvement (NI). Each child's record of attendance on the progress report includes days present, days absent and times late for both the first and second semesters.

Catechists are encouraged to write positive yet constructive comments in the space provided on the progress report for each child in the class. Begin your comments with the positive and then describe the behavior, not the child. Consult the Coordinator concerning anything of a sensitive nature.

It is important to be vigilant of the students' academic and behavioral record and beneficial to address and document these interrelated areas as soon as issues arise. Keep all records of the deficiency of homework and testing opportunities. Send all copies of discipline form to the Coordinator.

LESSON PLANNING

I. The Importance of Lesson Planning

A lesson plan is a guide for the Catechist. It helps a Catechist make decisions about how to instruct the lesson, what experiences and activities they want to create and use and how these activities will help promote learning objectives. Having a lesson plan gives the Catechist a sense of the overall flow of things and helps them to budget their time in order to keep focused on their objectives. Most lesson plans contain at least three elements:

- A set of objectives, what you would like the children to accomplish;
- Directions for conducting the learning activities of the lesson;
- A list of materials and resources needed to teach the lesson;

A good lesson planner is a person who examines the blueprint for the lesson, knows how it is built, proceeds to build it effectively and tries to prepare for every possible scenario. Without proper lesson planning you are vulnerable to boredom, poor discipline, lackluster performance and poor participation.

II. Tips for Lesson Planning

Look ahead. The lesson you are planning is only a part of a larger plan for the whole year. You need to get a picture of the whole program calendar year and see how much time you to accomplish your goals. Get a good feel for how this lesson can build off the previous one and lay the foundation for the next.

Get to know your primary teaching resources. They are the following:

- *Archdiocesan Guidelines for Catechesis K-6, 7&8.* The Archdiocesan Guidelines present a clear and uniform presentation of faith concepts appropriate to each age level, correlated with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and provide an easy reference tool for the Catechist.
- *Catechist Teaching Manual/Guide*

Examine the teacher's notes in the instructor's manual/guide. Instructor's manuals are often a Catechist's best friends. The lay out of the lesson is like a blueprint and offers step-by-step instructions.

Visualize yourself teaching the lesson. Visualization is the practice of using your imagination to experience specific situations on hopes of learning behaviors that can be incorporated into your real life repertoire. Good lesson planning involves visualizing yourself teaching the class.

Make adjustments to fit your particular class. No lesson plan is ironclad. Think of your class' readiness (or lack thereof) for what your lesson calls for and make the necessary adjustment. Keep the following in mind when developing your lesson plan: interest, ability and needs of the children; teacher ability and talent; time allotment; resources available; practicality; adaptability.

Know your goals and learning outcomes (objectives). It is crucial that you know what the purpose of your lesson is. Goals and learning outcomes are statements you include in your lesson plan that state concretely and in measurable terms, what it is you hope to accomplish.

Get your materials ready. Before you go into the classroom be sure you have all of the materials you will need to complete the lesson properly.

Have plan “B” ready. Consider the possibility that what you are hoping to accomplish may not work. Always have an option ready in case something falls flat or just is not working the way you had hoped.

Adolescent Catechesis. The following process can be incorporated into all lesson planning but is especially helpful for catechists of children who are middle-school aged:

- Ice breaker/community building.
- Gathering prayer.
- Catechesis.
- Small group sharing/activity with the help of older adolescents for junior high age and young adults of high school age
- Application to life.
- Insertion into parish.
- Closing prayer experience.

Long Range Lesson Planning: Before a Catechist can make plans for a specific lesson or topic he/she must have an idea of the scope and sequence of the course. In other words, a Catechist must first look at the whole picture and then fill in the details of it.

The entire faith community of the parish shares the responsibility for an adolescent’s faith development. Faith is fostered in “youth friendly” parish communities, where adolescents have a prominent presence. All ministries with adolescents must be directed toward presenting young people with the Good News of Jesus Christ, inviting and challenging them to be disciples side-by-side with the adults of the community.

Adolescent Catechesis is developed within the context of youth ministry. The most successful catechesis with adolescents is given in the context of the wider pastoral care of young people.⁸

If there is a written description of the course be sure to study it carefully. Sometimes all a Catechist has is a copy of the Catechist’s manual and the student text for the course. By reading the table of contents, one is able to get an idea of the scope of the course. Most textbook companies provide a scope and sequence chart, which outlines the courses for each grade level and sequences the topics. Sometimes this chart can be found in each copy of the Catechist’s manual/guide. This type of chart or overview is very helpful for long range planning.

Short Range Planning: Units usually consist of a number of lessons that focus on different aspects of the same topic. Short range planning usually entails taking a closer look at the next several lessons. Lessons are never taught in isolation. They are related to past lessons and to those that will follow. Catechists doing short range planning should see each unit as a whole before attempting to plan for a single chapter or part. By doing this, Catechists are able to decide:

- What aspects of the whole should be emphasized?
- The pace to set for a particular lesson.
- Anything that can be eliminated, combined, or reviewed.
- What adaptations must be made for their particular group?
- What adaptations must be made for any children in particular?
- What resources, ideas and talents can be shared with other Catechists of the same grade level?
- What needs to be prepared for each lesson of the unit?

⁸From *GDC 184*

Immediate Planning: Immediate plans are made for a particular lesson. This is a much easier task if some serious thought has been given to long and short range plans. Catechists' manuals provide lesson plans for each lesson. They must approach these suggested lesson plans with flexibility. They must also have an awareness that these plans are an aid and should be considered before a Catechist uses a prepared lesson plan from a manual.

Putting the Lesson Plan on Paper: Whether using a plan from a manual or an individually designed one, Catechists should always write out their plans. Depending upon the confidence and the experience of the Catechist, plans can be done on index cards, in a plan book or on a piece of paper. The written plan should include key words or phrases to remind the teacher of sequence, content and method of the lesson. There are a variety of lesson plan formats. The following is a suggested format:

- Topic (subject or theme of the lesson).
- Aim (goal and objectives).
- Materials, resources and equipment needed.
- Method or methods of presentation.
- Procedures.
- Summary.
- Preview of next lesson.

Some Final Reminders for Catechists Regarding Lesson Planning:

1. A lesson plan is like a road map containing a number of routes, any one of which may be appropriate on a given day with a particular group.
2. One danger associated with lesson planning is a tendency for beginning Catechists to stick too rigidly to a plan.
3. Don't feel "duty bound" to cover every point in the exact order, no matter what.
4. Never risk teaching without a lesson plan.
5. Prepare alternate approaches to the same lesson. If one fails, switch quickly.
6. Determine the attention span of your class. Vary your presentations, activities and methods frequently enough during the course of the lesson to meet the needs of your class.
7. There is no one correct way of teaching. The approach you choose must be comfortable for you and the group with which you are working.
8. Evaluate each lesson after the session. Adjust your plans for the next session according to your honest assessment of your lesson.
9. Prepare in advance all the materials you need for the lesson. e.g. If you do not know the proper response to a question, research it for the following class.
10. Be prepared for the unexpected.
11. Keep your sense of humor.

Safe Environment Lessons

At least two weeks' notice must be given to coordinator when planning to teach the Archdiocesan lesson on Safe Environment. This allows parents to be notified of the date in advance, and have the option of keeping their child out of class and covering the material at home.

III. *Manuals for Catechists*

Each Catechist will be given a manual/guide. These books assist Catechists in lesson preparation. Catechist's editions include the student text and the manual/guide in one volume. Catechists should acquaint themselves with the manual/guide well in advance of the beginning of classes. New Catechists will be introduced to the manual/guide and the text by an experienced Catechist or the Coordinator.

Catechists are encouraged to use the manual as a guide, adapting lessons and projects to their particular group. Manuals & guides are designed as an aid. For a personalized lesson plan, prepare with a manual/guide before class and then write the key words on index cards and refer to them during the lesson.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT & DISCIPLINE

I. Some General Comments regarding Classroom Management

Seating Plan: It is a good idea to establish a classroom seating plan. This provides order and consistency, assists in early identification of each child and is a reference check should an incident arise over misuse of the room.

Late Arrival and Early Dismissal: Catechists are to dismiss classes **only** at the scheduled times. At no time should a Catechist cancel a class or dismiss a class early without the approval of the Coordinator.

Early dismissal of a child should be rare and only if the Coordinator has notified the Catechist that the parent/guardian has submitted a written note to this effect including: name of the child and the person picking up the child, date, time and reason for early dismissal and the signature of the parent/guardian.

Classroom Maintenance: The Catechist should briefly check classroom condition before the children arrive. Note anything that is out of order or things that require special care (e.g. display projects). All supplies (paper, pencils, etc.) are to be obtained by the Catechist prior to class from the Faith Formation Office. Clearly inform the children that any damage, loss, etc., will have to be repaired, replaced, and paid for by those responsible (This is outlined in the Parent Handbook; each family should have a copy). Those children responsible for any damage, etc. are to be brought to the Coordinator **before** leaving the building; the Catechist is to write up an account of the incident.

At the end of class, the children should assist the Catechist in straightening up the classroom. The Catechist is to check that windows, shades, lights, desks, blackboards, floor are in good condition before leaving the room. Any condition that needs attention should be reported to the Coordinator.

Parties/Snacks: Generally, it is recommended that food not be served during the classes, especially given some students' medical restrictions to certain foods or ingredients. If a special class includes food (e.g. pretzels for Lent), check each child's medical information in the Coordinator's office file and call parents/guardians to obtain approval.

Classroom Visitors: In view of Diocesan Fire regulations and insurance regulations, only children on the class Attendance Register should be in the classroom. No visitors, parents/guardians, cousins, friends, etc., are to be in the room without the permission of the Coordinator. Any parent who is interested in registering his/her child should contact the Coordinator for registration information.

Rest rooms and Water Fountains: Children should not be wandering the halls once classes have begun. All rest room and water fountain needs should be taken care of before class.

II. Discipline

It is expected that in the Faith Formation Program, Jesus' Gospel values of charity, kindness, honesty, respect, sharing, obedience to legitimate authority, etc. that are being learned in class are to be practiced "right now". Therefore, **no violence, prejudice, or abuse** by words or actions will be tolerated by anyone.

Establish Good Discipline Procedures

Most times if the Catechist is well prepared and each child is drawn into the lesson and activities, discipline will be good. However, situations arise that can lead to discipline problems. Therefore, we suggest that the Catechist use the following to establish and maintain good discipline:

- Establish a classroom routine in the first class session and adhere to it;
- Establish several basic behavior rules and consequences with the children in your class;
- Do not allow children to walk or run around the classroom, throw objects, call out of turn, make fun of other's mistakes, etc. Speak to the issue at the time it occurs;
- Direct children not to bring to the classroom such items as toys, games, beepers, cell phones, and other items that could disturb the class. If brought to the classroom, have the child put them in a designated place, to be picked up after class;
- Try to be aware of some of the general family, peer and social influences that might be affecting a child's faith development. If you become aware of such problems, notify the Coordinator. Early attention to minor misbehavior has a better chance of positive learning outcomes;
- Be aware of various positive discipline approaches.

Use of Discipline

Affirm both good and improving behavior to the child and to the parents. Use minor misbehavior as positive "teachable moments" in the class, where possible -- no physical discipline or humiliation is ever permitted.

When Discipline Problems Persist

When a serious problem occurs, or a situation persists, send the Catechist assistant (or a responsible child) to the Coordinator for assistance. Follow the directions of the Coordinator with regard to completion of any necessary reports. If the Catechist suspects a young person in his/her class is in possession of a weapon (or other potentially dangerous items), or appears to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, do not become confrontational -- notify the Coordinator as soon as practical.

Some Final Comments Concerning Discipline

The Catechist Handbook gives basic instructions for maintaining good discipline and group management. It mandates that under no circumstances should physical contact be used as a form of discipline. The Catechist handbook also stresses that humiliation must never be used as a form of discipline.

If a Catechist is allowed to keep a child after the session for reasons such as misbehavior, lateness, or additional instruction, this should be stated as a program policy in the Parent Handbook, along with the procedure for carrying this out. This procedure should include the manner in which advance notice will be given to the parent.

The Parent Handbook states that the Catechetical Program reserves the right to remove a child from the group sessions for one or more reasons as outlined below (one or more of these reasons may apply to a given case):

- If it is believed that the child would benefit significantly from an individual or smaller group situation;
- If the child's behavior is seriously inhibiting the learning of others in the group;
- As a disciplinary measure for serious and/or persistent disruptive behavior.

Such action should be preceded by a consultation involving the child, the family, the Catechist and the Coordinator.

PRAYER / CHURCH VISITS / LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS

I. Planning For Liturgical Seasons, Feasts and Holidays

Be sure to note free days and seasonal lessons. Frequently a liturgical season, feast, holiday will dictate when a particular lesson should be taught. Be aware of liturgical seasons and feasts so the lesson plan corresponds to the respective season or feast. Common sense dictates these decisions, but long range planning will help avoid last minute plan changes or adjustments.

II. Liturgical Celebrations

Liturgical prayer is our public prayer when we assemble as a community to profess and celebrate what we believe. We praise, thank, and ask pardon, and petition God as on body. Participating in this prayer strengthens our bonds with God and with one another. Through words, actions and symbols we connect with God. It is essential for Catechists to prepare the children to fully join with God's people as they pray in the liturgy, the Eucharist, the Liturgy of the Hours (Christian Prayer), prayer services and sacramental celebrations.

III. Prayer

Prayer is faith coming alive. It is plugging into the energy and power of God, both for the Catechist and the children. Prayer is needed to sustain oneself and the level of creativity and commitment. We all need prayer because without the power of God in our own lives, all the doctrine in the world would be meaningless.

Hints and Suggestions about Prayer

- Pay special attention to prayer in the Catechist's manual/guide or Catechetical Guidelines suggested in the regular curriculum and other catechetical resources.
- Introduce ritual prayers – both traditional and liturgical – into the class.
- Occasionally use a recorded song as a form of prayer, or as a centering exercise that leads to prayer.
- Provide the children with opportunities to design prayers and religious activities.
- Encourage gestures for particular prayers or songs.

Kinds of Prayer

Meditation	Contemplation
Centering Prayer	Spontaneous prayer
Vocal Prayer	Liturgical Prayer
Communal Prayer	Prayers to Mary and the Saints
Spiritual Reading	Scriptural Reading
Liturgical Prayer	The Eucharist

Purpose of Prayer

1. **Petition:** We ask for our needs.
2. **Adoration:** We worship God and acknowledge God's greatness.
3. **Contrition:** We express sorrow for our sins and failings and ask forgiveness.
4. **Thanksgiving:** We show appreciation and gratitude for God's gifts.

Tips on How to use Prayer

- *Pray before you plan a lesson.* Ask the Lord to guide your ministry.
- *Make your planning powerful work.* Make your work and act of prayer.
- *Pray before class begins.* Ask the Holy Spirit to inspire and guide you.
- *Build prayer moments at the beginning, during and end of your lesson.* Provide the opportunity for children to offer spontaneous prayer and petitions.
- *Ritualize.* Include experiences in your prayer celebrations that "ritualize" the topic or experience you are covering.
- *Make sure that prayer is more than talking to God.* We need to get beyond talking to and listen, use our bodies, and open up to the many symbols and metaphors through which God speaks to us.

RESOURCES

I. Audiovisual Materials & Equipment

The use of audiovisuals can help bring variety to your classes. They can be used to introduce a topic, review a theme or introduce a new concept. The Faith Formation Office has a collection of videotapes and CD's available for your use. Each region has a Regional AV Library located at their offices. The Archdiocesan Adult Media Library is located at the Central/Southern Westchester Regional Catechetical Office in Rye at Resurrection Parish. Parish membership in the AV Library makes available to each Catechist a wealth of video resources (over 800 videos) for personal enrichment and instructional purposes *at no charge to the Catechist*. A catalog listing available titles is kept in the parish Faith Formation Office. See the Coordinator if you would like advice on what video to use for a particular topic and to reserve or borrow videotapes. If you would like to show a video that we do not own, you may request it through the Faith Formation Office.

Each classroom in the school has a television and VCR. There is also one TV/VCR/DVD player available for your use. Audiocassette and CD's players are available through the Faith Formation Office.

III. Resources & Activities to Consider

Resources from various publishers on topics such as the liturgical year, saints and the rosary, as well as other textbooks are available for use by the Catechists.

Bibles: Learning scripture is an essential part of our program; we use the Bible as often as possible. A supply of Bibles for the Catechist's use in the classroom is kept in the Faith Formation Office. Please return them to the same place when you are finished using them.

Classroom Supplies: Classroom supplies such as pencils, crayons, markers, scissors, glue sticks and various types of paper may be obtained in the Faith Formation Office. If you need supplies which the office doesn't normally stock, submit a requisition form or if you need to purchase them, first discuss the cost of the items with the Coordinator prior to purchase, then submit your receipt for reimbursement.

Catechetical Resources: A wealth of information on matters of faith can be found in the Catechist's Guide and the *Archdiocesan Guidelines for Catechesis*, which the Coordinator will provide for each Catechist. The *Bible*, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *National Guidelines for Catechists* are recommended resources for the Catechist's home library. Copies of these as well as other resources, including current periodicals, are available in the Faith Formation Office.

Guest Speakers: It is beneficial to your class to have an occasional guest speaker. If you would like a priest, deacon, sister or lay person involved in a particular ministry to speak to your class, contact the Coordinator.

Field Trips & Field Trip Permission: If a Catechist wishes to take a class on a field trip, the Coordinator must be notified in advance so that permission slips can be issued and arrangements made.

Great care is taken to ensure the safety of the children during the entire course of the trip; this includes the provision of adequate supervision and proper insurance. If field trips are taken, only hired busses, vans, etc., which provide properly covered insurance by the owner should be used. If a situation arises where a Catechist agrees to use his/her own vehicle to transport children from various Catechetical program activities, it must be understood that the Catechist's automobile insurance policy responds first in the event of an accident. (Insurance follows the vehicle, not the driver.) If a field trip is planned for the Catechetical Program, the "Parish Sponsored Trip Form" must be completed by the parent/guardian of every minor who will participate. This form must be taken along on the trip by the Catechist, along with the students' Medical Emergency Information. Telephone calls **will not** be accepted in lieu of written permission forms. These written permission forms must be kept on file for one year after the trip.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

I. Guidelines for Meeting the Catechetical Needs of Children with Disabilities

The universality of Jesus' mandate to teach all people includes those who are marginalized because of their disabilities. The Church is responsible to nourish the faith of the baptized person to the degree that the individual is capable of growing in that faith. The Church continuously reaffirms the sacredness of all human life and places special emphasis on the respect due those who are fragile in mind, spirit, and body. Catechetical programs reflect the love and concern of Jesus and the Church for persons with disabilities.

Special Faith Formation is a ministry that responds to the religious and spiritual needs of persons with physical, mental, or emotional disabilities which might impair their functioning in a regular catechetical session. Because of that disability a child may require small group or individualized instruction or may be mainstreamed into the regular program with individual assistance provided.

II. Categories of Disabilities

In order to meet the needs of children with disabilities, it is necessary to have at least a general understanding of the kinds of disabilities. The following definitions are broad. Within each category of disability there are wide ranges of ability, of acceptance of the disability, and of willingness to learn:

- **Children who are developmentally disabled:** Mental retardation refers to significantly sub-average intellectual functioning which interferes with the child's ability to grasp concepts, make judgments and apply information to their own experience. This impaired ability requires simplification and repetition of content through activity-oriented lessons.

- **Children who are learning disabled:** Learning disabled children have average, or above average intellectual ability, but experience difficulty in the process of acquiring, integrating, recalling or expressing information. The impairment may be a difficulty in listening, thinking, speaking, reading or writing, or in fine or gross motor body movements. Children with learning disabilities can, for the most part, be mainstreamed into the regular catechetical program. Mainstreaming can be accomplished if:
 - extra assistance is provided;
 - the Catechist uses a multi-sensory approach;
 - the Catechist uses a variety of teaching styles and testing techniques;
 - the necessary adjustments are made in the quantity and kind of material learned.

- **Children who are behaviorally disturbed:** These children exhibit one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree:
 - An inability to build and maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers or adults;
 - Inappropriate type of behavior or feelings in normal circumstances;
 - A general or pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression;
 - Withdrawal, lack of interest and involvement with people and within the environment.

Catechists of children with behavioral disabilities should:

- Be competent in the general principles of behavior management;
 - Have knowledge of the pressures, abuses, and family situations, which may affect these children;
 - Discuss with the Parish Coordinator the situation of any child whose behavior frequently disrupts a class. Some children with behavioral problems may need to be placed in a one-on-one, or small group situation.
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- **Children who are physically challenged**
 - Children with physical disabilities may or may not need special Faith Formation, depending on the nature and complexity of the disability. Where there is no intellectual impairment, every effort should be made to mainstream the physically disabled child.
 - Children who are visually and physically challenged, as well as those who are hearing impaired or deaf, can be mainstreamed if special materials, resources, and Catechist assistants are utilized, and if parish buildings are accessible. Although physically challenged children are often eligible to mainstreaming, conflicts in special bus scheduling often necessitate special sessions be arranged to accommodate these children.

III. *Special Faith Formation Program and Administration*

The Special Faith Formation Program of the Parish is a component of the total Parish Catechetical Program and is developed and administered within the content of the *Guidelines for the Coordination of the Catechetical Program*.

IV. *Identifying Children with Special Needs*

Repeated efforts are often necessary to locate special needs children. Many parents of children with disabilities need to be informed of their child's right to, and their need for, Faith Formation.

V. *Environment*

Faith Formation sessions for children with special needs should be held in rooms that are attractive, comfortable and adequately furnished. Whenever possible these sessions should be held at the same time and in the same location as the regular sessions of the catechetical program so that the children in these classes do not feel isolated from the other classes.

VI. *Curriculum Resources*

Modified developmental curricula are available for the child whose disability precludes the use of a religion textbook. The Catechetical Office maintains updated information on Special Faith Formation materials and the Catechetical Office Director of Special Faith Formation is available to assist in choosing appropriate curricula. Resources for assisting those who are blind or visually impaired are available from the Xavier Society for the Blind, located in New York City (212-473-7800). The Archdiocesan Catholic Deaf Center will provide resource materials, sign language interpreters and Catechists for those who are deaf.

VII. *Sacramental Catechesis for First Penance, First Eucharist, and Confirmation*

In the *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities*, the US Bishops provide the norms for bringing persons with disabilities into the sacramental life of the Church.

In the case of severe disability, the decision as to whether or not a child may receive the Sacraments of Eucharist, or Penance should be made according to these guidelines.

Simplified lesson plans are available from the Catechetical Office to prepare for the reception of the Sacraments of Penance, Eucharist and Confirmation.

OFFICE PROCEDURES

I. Catechist Attendance and Tardiness

Each Catechist should plan to arrive approximately 15 minutes before the class session is to begin. In case of illness in the day of class, call the Coordinator immediately in order that proper arrangements can be made for a substitute. If a class is to be missed due to personal reasons, ample notification is to be given to the Coordinator and a lesson plan is to be left for the substitute. If a Catechist is going to be late for a class, a call must be made to notify the Coordinator so that appropriate plans can be made until the Catechist arrives.

II. Volunteer Staff and Grade Level Meetings

The Catechist is expected to attend regularly scheduled staff meetings. Active participation at these meetings provides for continuous program evaluation, cooperative planning, problem solving and a mutual exchange of ideas. Participation at grade level meetings is also encouraged as a means of assuring a consistent programmatic approach to catechesis as well as a sense of team work among those responsible for a particular segment of the K – 8 curricula.

III. Volunteer Staff's Expectations of the Coordinator

Catechists, Catechist Assistants and Coordinator's Assistants should expect the Parish Coordinator of Faith Formation to guide, affirm and support them in their catechetical ministry, to pray for them, to explain policies to them, to communicate with them on a regular basis and to be available to them and provide supplies and resources when needed.

IV. Coordinator's Assistants

Volunteer Assistants help supervise the program and manage the Faith Formation Office during class time. They monitor the corridors, take charge of attendance registers, make photocopies for Catechists, distribute supplies, answer phone calls, call parents of children who become ill while in class, handle discipline problems and assist in supervising arrival and dismissal. This affords the Coordinator the opportunity of spending time observing the classes and getting to know the Catechists, children and parents.

V. Other People to Consult

Don't overlook the human resources that are available to you. In addition to the Coordinator, seek out other Catechists to brainstorm, plan and develop ideas. Catechists at grade level are often the best resources since they are following the same instructional plan and can provide a benchmark for the new Catechist. Remember, too, the parish priest, deacon, school principal as well the heads of various parish ministries who may be able to offer some advice or counsel. Look also to the artists in your parish community as sources of enrichment for the children in your class. When we take opportunities to expose children to sacred music, religious art, creative writing or play acting, lessons become more interesting and lively.

VI. Office Communications

Communication with the Coordinator is essential. As the Catechist's main resource, the Coordinator should be consulted regularly. Flyers, articles and bulletins will be distributed to the Catechists via their mailboxes or folders which should be checked weekly. Handouts should be given out on the appropriate day so that the children can bring them home in a timely fashion.

VII. Newsletter

A newsletter containing items of interest to families in the Faith Formation Program will be sent home monthly either by hand or by mail.

VIII. Communication with Parents

All communications to the parents from the catechist must be reviewed and approved by the Coordinator, in advance. Document all conversations as to date, time and nature of communication, and with whom the catechist spoke. Keep a log for record purposes. If a parent claims not to have been notified of something in particular, refer to the log for verification.

IX. Attendance Registers

An attendance register is a legal document and must be maintained by each Catechist. It must always be legible and updated and include each student's record of both absences and tardiness. The official attendance register must be kept in the Faith Formation Office at the parish. Entries should be recorded in ink. At the end of the year, the information is transferred to each student's permanent record card by the Faith Formation Office staff. Attendance should be taken within the first fifteen minutes of class.

X. Miscellaneous Items

Permanent Record Cards: There is a permanent record card for each child enrolled in the program which includes dates and places of sacramental celebrations and other pertinent information. These are kept on files in the Coordinator's office.

Staff Directory: A staff directory will be distributed to all catechetical volunteers.

Calendar: Each Catechist will be given a calendar for the year which indicates class dates, meetings, the Catechetical Congress and other special events.

Weather Closings/Class Cancellations: In the event of inclement weather, announcement of class cancellations may be heard on the local radio stations. A message will also be left on the office answering machine if classes are canceled.

LEGAL ISSUES

I. Introduction

The following Guidelines promote the safety and well-being of the children and youth in Parish Catechetical Programs of the Archdiocese of New York.⁹

These Guidelines are not, in themselves policy statements. They are written to assist parishes in making policies to fit the needs of the local situations. Within these Guidelines reference is made to handbooks for Catechists (called Catechist Handbook), and for parents/guardians (called Parent Handbook). These handbooks are written by the parish Coordinator of Faith Formation and approved by the Pastor. The Catechist and Parent Handbooks should contain policies and procedures which reflect the content of these Guidelines. In addition, they should contain and be reflective of the Parish Mission Statement.

Both the Catechist and Parent Handbooks should be accompanied by a signature card. When signed and filed with the Coordinator of Faith Formation, this card serves as the written agreement of Catechist or Parent/Guardian that they have read, understood and agree to abide by the policies and procedures specified in the Handbook.

The Archdiocesan Catechetical Office takes an active role in advising Directors/Coordinators on the development of their handbooks and on the implementation at the parish level of both these Guidelines and the handbooks.

The Coordinator who develops the Parent and Catechist Handbooks is responsible for carrying out the provisions set forth in these handbooks. An annual review and updating of these handbooks is advisable.

In order to provide greater understanding in using these Guidelines, it is recommended that one consult the following resources: *Faith Formation and the Law: A Handbook for Parish Catechetical Leaders* and *Faith Formation and the Law: A Catechist Handbook*, both by Sr. Mary Angela Shaughnessy, SCN and published by the *National Catholic Education Association*.

⁹From the *GDC 1-21*

II. *Child Abuse and Child Neglect*

Child abuse and child neglect are complex problems that are not confined to any one family, racial, ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic, or religious group. They represent a serious breakdown in the family structure, and both the Gospel Message and the legal system of this country call upon the assistance of the wider community in addressing the problem. The parish community, therefore, has a moral responsibility to develop a well planned mode of response to the suspicion of child abuse or neglect.

All studies indicate that children rarely make false allegations of abuse. If a child speaks of abuse it should be taken very seriously. If a Catechist suspects abuse, he/she should immediately bring these suspicions to the Coordinator who, in turn, should consult the Pastor. The utmost confidentiality must be exercised and any involvement of other people on the parish staff must be left to the discretion of the Pastor.

Never contact the parents of the child, even if you think that speaking to the non-suspected offender would help to clarify the validity of suspected abuse. This could further endanger the child and also have legal repercussions.

Characteristics Of The Abused Child

There are four main categories of abuse:

Physical abuse is any non-accidental injury to a child caused by a parent or caretaker which results in, or threatens serious injury to the child. This may include excessive corporal punishment.

Sexual abuse occurs when and adult, a youth or another child in a position of power, uses a child for sexual gratification or allow another to do so.

Emotional abuse is characterized by verbal harassment, threats, and the systematic destruction of the child's esteem.

Neglect means depriving a child of conditions necessary for normal development including but not limited to food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education, and supervision.

Physical Abuse:

Physical Indicators

- Unexplained bruises or welts; these may be in various stages of healing or in clusters of unusual patterns or on several different areas;
- Unexplained burns; in the shape of cigarette, rope, iron, or caused by immersion, which may appear sock or glove like;
- Unexplained lacerations to mouth, lips, arms, legs, or torso;
- Unexplained skeletal injuries, stiff swollen joints, or multiple fractures;
- Missing or loosened teeth;
- Human bite marks;
- Unexplained abrasions or bald spots;
- Appearance of injuries after school absence, weekend, or vacation.

Behavioral Indicators:

- Easily frightened or fearful of adults/parents, of physical contact, or when other children cry;
- Destructive to self and/or others;
- Extremes of behavior – aggressive, withdrawn;
- Poor social relations;
- Learning problems – poor academic performance, short attention span, language delayed;
- Runaway or delinquent behavior;
- Complaints of soreness or moves awkwardly;
- Accident prone;
- Wears clothing that clearly is meant to cover the body when not appropriate;
- Seems afraid to go home.

Indicators of Abusive Caretaker:

- Describes the child in a consistently negative manner;
- Is a harsh disciplinarian;
- Conceals or misleads a provider about a child's injuries.

Sexual Abuse:

Physical Indicators:

- Difficulty walking/sitting;
- Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing;
- Genital/anal itching, pain, swelling, burning;
- Genital/anal bruises or bleeding;
- Frequent urinary tract or yeast infections;
- Pain on urination;
- Vaginal/penile discharge;
- Poor sphincter control;
- Venereal disease;
- Pregnancy;
- Chronic unexplained sore throats;
- Frequent psychosomatic illnesses;
- Loss of appetite.

Behavior Indicators:

- Sudden radical behavior change;
- Destructive to self and/or others;
- Extremes in behavior – aggressive, withdrawn;
- Poor social relations;
- Refuses to change for gym;
- Does artwork depicting sexual themes;
- Behaves seductively and has sexual knowledge beyond age;
- Compulsive use of language referring to genitals;
- Sexually acts out or attempts to force or coerce other children to be sexual;
- Regressive behavior;
- Runaway or delinquent behavior;
- Complains of soreness or moves or sits awkwardly;
- Wears clothing that covers body when not appropriate;
- Depressed, apathetic or suicidal;
- Compulsive bathing;
- Nightmares.
- Is extremely protective of family privacy.
- Child is not allowed to be involved in extracurricular or developmentally appropriate activities such as being with friends or dating.

Emotional Maltreatment:**Physical Indicators:**

- Failure to thrive;
- Developmental lags;
- Wetting of bed/pants;
- Thumb sucking;
- Appears sad;
- Speech disorders – stammering or stuttering;
- Health problems – ulcers, asthma, skin disorders, severe allergies, obesity, extreme weight loss;
- Poor appearance;
- Drug or alcohol abuse.

Behavioral Indicators:

- Habit disorders – sucking, biting, rocking, etc.;
- Destructive to self and/or others;
- Extremes in behavior – aggressive, withdrawn;
- Phobias, sleep disorders, etc.;
- Developmental lags – mental, emotional;
- Learning problems;
- Inhibition to play;
- Cruelty, vandalism, stealing, cheating, fire setting, etc.;
- Sadomasochistic behavior toward animals and/or other children;
- Overly adaptive behavior – inappropriately adult or infantile;
- Depression;
- Suicidal ideation.

Indicators of Emotionally Abusive Caretaker:

- Rejects, ignores, terrorizes, or isolates child.

Neglect:**Physical Indicators:**

- Poor growth pattern;
- Constant hunger;
- Malnutrition;
- Dark circles under the eyes;
- Poor hygiene – body odor, lice;
- Inappropriate clothing;
- Constant fatigue;
- Listlessness;
- Falls asleep in school;
- Consistent lack of supervision, especially for long periods or in dangerous activities;
- Unexplained bruises or injuries as a result of poor supervision;
- Unattended physical problems or medical needs such as lack of proper immunizations, gross dental problems or the needs for glasses or hearing aids.

Behavioral Indicators:

- Developmental lags;
- Begs or steals food, forages through garbage;
- Always hungry;
- Destructive to self and/or others;
- Extremes in behavior – aggressive, withdrawn;
- Hyperactive;
- Assumes adult responsibilities or acts in pseudo-mature fashion;
- Exhibits infantile behavior;
- Delinquent behavior;
- Depressed/apathetic – states “no one cares”;
- Frequent school absences or chronic tardiness;
- Seeks attention and/or affection;
- Hypochondria.

Indicators of Neglect from Caretaker:

- May be substance abuser;
- Has chaotic lifestyle which might include loss of job, income, housing;

SAFETY ISSUES AND PROCEDURES

I. Emergency Procedures

It is the responsibility of the Coordinator to make certain that all Catechists know exactly what to do in an emergency. There should be a brief, clear statement of emergency procedures, including fire, weather and bomb threats. There should also be clear statements concerning use of such materials as candles or other potentially dangerous materials in the classroom. Fire and Police telephone numbers **should be posted** in various conspicuous places on the premises. In **each** area where catechetical sessions are held, a diagram of emergency exit routes **must** be on display.

A record of each evacuation of the premises, including fire drills, is kept on file in the Faith Formation Office and includes the date, time and duration of the fire drill or evacuation.

In the event of an emergency (e.g., accident involving a child, catechist illness, etc.):

- Ask a hall monitor or other responsible adult to watch the class if the Catechist must leave the room;
- Send one or two children to the Faith Formation Office with a request for assistance;
- If no alternate supervisor is available, take the entire class to the Office or to another Catechist's classroom, depending on the urgency of the need.

Early in the school year explain to the children in your class what they should do in case of an emergency. It is suggested that they:

- Stay calm and in their seats;
- Read quietly from their books;
- Designate a specific child (the one nearest the door) to go to the Faith Formation Office for help;
- Give specific instruction as to what to do if a fire alarm goes off during an emergency, and the Catechist is not in the room – i.e., they must leave the room in a quiet, orderly way and leave the building according to fire drill rules.

II. Liability Insurance

The Archdiocese of New York maintains liability coverage for negligent act resulting in bodily injury or property damage. The Coordinator, the Catechist, and other volunteers are covered as long as they are acting within the scope of responsibilities assigned to them by the parish and as long as the act was neither intentional nor criminal.

III. Medical Emergencies

If a relatively **minor accident or illness** occurs to a child while attending the catechetical program, the following steps are taken:

- The Catechist reports the accident immediately to the Coordinator;
- If bleeding is involved, the procedures outlined under “Blood Borne Pathogens” are followed;
- The Coordinator notifies the parent.

In case of **serious accident or illness**:

- The Catechist reports the accident immediately to the Coordinator;
- Calls 911 or the local police/emergency rescue squad, immediately.

Blood Borne Pathogens

While the fear of Blood Borne Pathogens is real, they present social as well as medical problems and require sensitive and Christian responses. The following are guidelines for dealing with persons who suffer from HIV, AIDS, HBV, or for that matter, any physiological, mental, or emotional condition.

The Coordinator and the Catechist teach the message of Jesus, and therefore, are held to a higher standard of compassion in responding to persons with HIV, AIDS, or any other illness or disability.

Everyone, including people with HIV or AIDS, is protected against discrimination. Children with HIV or AIDS shall not be excluded by reason of the infection with HIV unless the following conditions are evident as determined by the student's physician and parent, together with the Coordinator of Faith Formation:

- the child is not toilet trained or is incontinent;
- the child is unable to control drooling;
- the child is unusually physically aggressive, with a documented history of biting or harming others.

All medical information relating to HIV infection of children is confidential and only people with a legal right to know may be granted access to it (e.g. Certain judicial and health care authorities with proper authorization, or upon court order).

Catechetical Programs must have a well planned way of responding to injuries in order to safeguard the health of the helping adult while caring for the injured child. This plan of action should be based on the assumption that any person could be a carrier of a Blood Borne Pathogen, or other communicable disease. In addition, **every** classroom should be provided with the kit described in the Blood Borne Pathogens Instruction Sheet.

Blood Borne Pathogens Instruction Sheet for Catechists

When a Catechist or volunteer needs to intervene and implement "universal precautions," they do so from an informed, voluntary response under the "Good Samaritan Act" and use prudent public health protective procedures. Bring your Catechist Kit with you to each catechetical session.

Direct or help individuals involved with a blood/body fluid incident to care for themselves with minimal contact for you. If an accident involving a blood spill occurs, encourage the individual to tend to their own injury. For example, if a child has a bloody nose, hand the child the tissues and instruct him/her to pinch his/her nose; if a child has a cut, hand the child clean paper towels to hold over the cut. When you need to intervene and provide assistance that requires contact, always place a barrier between yourself and the individual. When providing assistance be sure to:

- Wear medical grade disposable latex gloves.
- Use disposable towels/tissues for each injury.
- Keep other children away from the area of blood/body fluid spill. Cover spill with paper towels.
- Place any blood/body fluid stained materials in a **sealable** plastic bag.
- Remove gloves following proper procedures and place in **sealable** plastic bag.
- Wash hands thoroughly with antibacterial soap, using proper hand washing procedures.

As soon as possible, notify the Coordinator who will call a custodial person for immediate clean up. If no one comes to clean up, the 10% bleach solution in the Catechist Kit can be used temporarily as a disinfectant.

Contents of Catechist Kit includes the following items:

Disposable latex gloves.	Band-Aids.
Paper towels.	Alcohol towelettes.
Sealable plastic bags.	10% bleach solution.
Sterile Gauze pads.	These instructions.

Medication

No medication of any kind (including both prescription and over-the-counter) should be administered to, or taken by, any child during the Parish Catechetical Program. If an exception has to be made, the parent must provide a **written** request and directives to the Coordinator.

IV. Bomb Threat

If a bomb threat is received by telephone or in writing, inform the local police department immediately and accept their advice with respect to the action which should be taken.

V. Fire Drills

At least once a semester a fire drill is held. Primary and secondary escape routes are indicated on the building floor plan posted by the classroom door.

In the event of a fire drill or other situation requiring an evacuation of the building, catechists should:

- Insure that all children are out of the room and then lead them to the assigned place of safety;
- Have the last person out of the room close the door;
- Bring the attendance register to verify that members of the class are accounted for and out of the building.

A staff member is appointed whose responsibility is to check the bathrooms and see that any children there exit the building. Provisions must be made for the safety of disabled children. For each disabled child in the program, a staff member (an adult), other than the Catechist, should be assigned to assist that child.

ANTI-SEXUAL HARASSMENT

I. Introduction

Sexual harassment in the workplace is unacceptable behavior in the part of any employee of the Archdiocese of New York. It is behavior that is not only disrespectful to another person, it is against Federal, State, and Local law.

When it exists, it is a problem that affects everyone, at all levels and in all types of work. It contributes to a hostile, nonproductive work environment and affects work productivity and performance. It is unacceptable behavior by supervisors and managers, as well as by staff members.

Each one of us is responsible for compliance against sexual harassment. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring a work environment that is free of all forms and types of discrimination, harassment, and sexual harassment.

II. Policy

The Archdiocese of New York is committed to providing a work environment reflecting the highest standards of respect for the personal dignity of every employee. The Archdiocese neither condones nor permits sexual harassment and undertakes to address, prevent and correct any sexually harassing behavior in the work environment. Staff members are prohibited from initiating or engaging in sexually harassing conduct or behavior.

III. Definition

Sexual harassment is defined as any **unwelcome or unwanted** conduct of a sexual nature, whether verbal, nonverbal or physical, when:

- Submission, acquiescence or rejection of such conduct is explicitly or implicitly made a condition of employment;
- Submission, acquiescence or rejection of such conduct is used as a factor in employment decisions, including but not limited to evaluation, training, promotion, compensation, duties, transfers, privileges and other terms or conditions of employment;
- Such conduct substantially interferes with employment by creating a hostile, intimidating or offensive work environment.

IV. Grievance Procedure

Staff members who personally experience sexual harassment, or witness it, are required to report such incidents to the Director of Human Resources or to their supervisor¹⁰ who will inform the Director of Human Resources. Immediate reporting ensures prompt response and resolution of objectionable conduct.

The Director of Human Resources, in coordination with the Department Director will promptly conduct and document an investigation of each grievance reported. The Director of Human Resources will submit a recommendation to the Department Director.

Such recommendation may include, but is not limited to:

- Formal warning;
- Suspension with pay;
- Termination of employment.

V. Sexual Harassment Complaint Procedure

If you think you are being sexually harassed in your workplace, the following procedure should be followed:

- When appropriate, make your displeasure known to the person harassing you. See if the behavior stops;
- If the inappropriate behavior continues, either inform your supervisor who will contact the Office of Human Resources or the Archdiocesan Office of Human Resources directly;
- Interviews will be conducted in a timely fashion;
- Confidentiality will be maintained; only those directly named by the complainant will be interviewed;
- If harassment is determined to be present, appropriate action will follow;
- The situation will be monitored to insure there is not further harassment.

¹⁰*In the parish Faith Formation setting, the “supervisors” or “Coordinators” are the Coordinator of Faith Formation, the Pastor, The Regional Catechetical Director or the Director of Archdiocesan Catechetical Office*

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- A Catechist may duplicate a single copy to use in preparing or in teaching his/her class;
- A Catechist may duplicate a short printed item for each of the children in the class, but the distribution must be limited to that particular class and time period, and the copies **must** include the notice of copyright.

Music for use in class or program liturgies may **not** be reproduced without securing the permission of the holder of the copyright. The Regional Catechetical Office has available the copyright policies for the major publishers of liturgical music. Audiovisual materials, such as videotapes, are also protected by copyright laws and may not be copied for classroom use.