



ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF PATERSON

OFFICE OF CHILD & YOUTH PROTECTION
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“Empowering God’s Children” Program Overview Catholic Schools

Policy Mandate

In 2002, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issued the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* (“Charter”). Article 12 of the *Charter* provides as follows:

Dioceses/eparchies will establish “safe environment” programs. They will cooperate with parents, civil authorities, educators, and community organizations to provide education and training for children, youth, parents, ministers, educators, and others about ways to make and maintain a safe environment for children.

The job of ensuring children’s safety is a challenging undertaking. The prevention of child sexual abuse requires more than adult awareness, education and training about the nature and scope of the problem. We must also give our children the tools they need to overcome advances of someone who intends to harm them.

In accepting this responsibility, the parishes of the Diocese of Paterson provide for collaboration among parents, principals and educators in our Catholic schools. The school principal and educators role is to assist and complete the work of the parents. Empowering God’s Children is a program we are using in our catholic schools curriculum that requires parents and other caring adults to help children learn appropriate relationship boundaries and how to protect themselves from violators. Through Empowering God’s Children we can empower children to respond in the best possible ways when those boundaries have been violated. Empowering God’s Children is NOT a sex education program.

The Diocese’s “Empowering God’s Children” Program Synopsis:

Children in grades K through 12 will be given 2 lessons each year of the Virtus Empowering God’s Children Program. There are age appropriate versions of every lesson for every grade. For example, Lesson One is entitled “Physical Boundaries: Safe & Unsafe Touching Rules”. Students will learn simple rules about what to do and how to react when someone’s touch is confusing, scary, or makes the child or young person feel uncomfortable. Young people start to deal with the real risks they face when they are out in the world and on their own, and they begin to learn where to draw boundary lines in relationships. Children, young people, and their parents establish basic guidelines for working together to make certain which friends and other adults in their environment can be trusted to act safely and in the best interest of each child or young person.

For more information, you may visit www.virtusonline.org. Any questions, please feel free to contact the Diocesan Office of Child Protection at 973-777-8818 ext. 257.