



Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

*Office of Child and Youth Protection*

## **SAFE ENVIRONMENT POLICY**

The Archdiocese strives to implement policies, procedures, and training that may help protect the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults who are enrolled in our parish schools, religious education classes, and other programs. Priests, deacons, clergy, employees, and volunteers are called at all times to engage in Christ-Centered and professional behavior. The background screening and Safe Environment training of all priests, deacons, clergy, employees, and volunteers is a requirement of the Archdiocese and assists in upholding our Safe Environment Policies.

Abuse of children is immoral and reprehensible and will not be tolerated by the Archdiocese. The law requires that anyone who has cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect must report his or her suspicions to the Texas Department of Human Services or a local state law enforcement agency. When Archdiocesan personnel are involved in child abuse, the Archdiocese's ability to carry out its mission is undermined.

All Archdiocesan personnel must comply with applicable laws regarding incidents of actual or suspected child abuse including abuse involving child on child conduct.

Failure to report suspected physical or mental abuse or neglect of a child in Texas is a crime punishable by fine, imprisonment, or both.

**PERMISSION TO MAKE A REPORT IS NOT REQUIRED OR EXPECTED. ERR ON THE SIDE OF MAKING A GOOD FAITH REPORT RATHER THAN FAILING TO DO SO. The following is the link to the Archdiocese reporting policy for child abuse.**

**<https://www.archgh.org/media/5184/reporting-policy-for-child-abuse-english.pdf>**

Education is a key element of the Safe Environment program. All clergy, employees, contracted school personnel, and volunteers are required to complete the Archdiocesan Safe Environment Training and submit to a criminal background check **before they may begin employment or volunteer with ministries, groups, movements, and organizations.** All clergy, employees, contracted school personnel, and volunteers must complete required continuing education training upon the 5 year anniversary of the prior training.