



DIOCESE OF FAIRBANKS

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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

3 June 2020

Safe Environment Training Mandates

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We are all made in God's image and likeness. That means we possess a profound dignity that makes us sacred, from the child in the womb to the elderly. This sacredness is why the Church teaches us that every life must be protected from birth to death. It is also why we insist that any abuse is wrong, because it violates that sacred image.

Churches, schools, and youth organizations must ensure that all who worship, study, or participate in activities sponsored by a parish can do so in the safest and most secure setting possible. After all, it is at the parish where the Church's clergy, employees, educators, and volunteers interact with children, and it is where the Church's children worship, socialize, and are catechized. The parish that has implemented its safety policies with fidelity is also one of the most likely places that an adult or child who has been (or is being) victimized will be identified or come forward.

Annually, each diocese is audited for Safe Environment compliance and training through a third-party, which in turn reports the outcome to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The annual rating period begins on 1 July and concludes on 30 June. As the bishop, I am responsible to make sure we comply, and I need your assistance in making that happen!

Therefore, it has been a long-standing diocesan policy that all who minister to the people of God through the Church, must complete a background check and safe environment training prior to the start of work or volunteering. In order to better track and facilitate this training, the diocese has partnered with an online training program called, *Safe and Sacred*. You may access the training at: <https://safeandsacred-fairbanks.org>. This training will help you recognize boundary violations, which are often subtle and can lead to abuse. You will also learn what to do if you witness this behavior and how to report any concerns. ***All diocesan employees and volunteers must have an account and complete training on the Safe and Sacred website no later than 1 October 2020.***

If you do not have a current background check and have not completed mandatory Safe Environment training, then you are ***not authorized to work or volunteer until this is accomplished. If you are currently an employee with a current background check but have not yet completed the mandatory annual training, please do so immediately! As a volunteer, you need both the background check and completed training to volunteer.*** Please contact your priest, administrator or safe environment point of contact within your parish if you require assistance.

The Church relies on the wisdom and expertise of the Catholic faithful, the clergy, religious, and laity, who contribute immensely to confronting the effects of the crisis of abuse and take steps to resolve it. I am filled with gratitude for your great faith, generosity and for being part of the solution to this devastating crisis. Thank you for sharing in Christ's ministry to the people of northern Alaska. May God bless you for your desire to serve in our diocese.

Sincerely in Christ,

†Most Reverend Chad W. Zielinski
Catholic Bishop of Northern Alaska
Diocese of Fairbanks

