

Child Protection at Holy Trinity

As the new school year begins and children return to the Holy Trinity School and the Religious Education Program, we want to remind parishioners what Holy Trinity does to protect the children of the parish.

To protect the children in our parish, ALL of us must think of ourselves as stakeholders. It is every person's responsibility to speak up. When you see someone behaving in a way that leaves a child unattended with an adult or you are worried about boundary violations, let a parish staff member or the pastor know. You can, for example, also "stick around" to make sure that all children are picked up by parents. In a circumstance when you believe a child is being abused, you should report to Child Protection (in the jurisdiction where the abuse is occurring). Finally, when in doubt, ask someone or say something. Abuse is more likely to occur when we remain silent.

Holy Trinity Church, the local Jesuit province, and the Archdiocese of Washington comply with the directives of the USSCB's *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, the Conference of Major Superiors of Men's *Instruments of Hope and Healing*, and District of Columbia laws for regarding the protection of children. These documents and laws guide the parish and school's specific policies and procedures for protecting children. Holy Trinity's policies and procedures cover various different areas:

Staff/Volunteer Screening: All parish staff (administrative and school staff) and all volunteers that have any interactions with children (CYO coaches, classroom volunteers, catechists, school lunch servers, and others) have completed VIRTUS training (child abuse awareness/prevention training), as well as a criminal background check and fingerprinting. Staff are required to complete regular updates to their VIRTUS training. This prevents anyone with a criminal conviction for any abuse or sexual charge from being hired or volunteering. If you are interested in volunteering with youth in our parish, please contact ??? to begin this screening process.

Mandated Reporting: A mandated reporter is an adult who, because of their role, are required under DC law to report reasonable suspicion of child abuse. Certain staff members and volunteers are mandated reporters including school officials, school teachers, and coaches. Clergy are not mandated reporters under District of Columbia law. However, the Archdiocese mandates clergy to report child abuse unless it is learned under the seal of the sacrament of Reconciliation.

Clergy Training: In addition to the standard training and screening for staff and volunteers, the Maryland Province of the Jesuits is accredited by Praesidium, a

company that accredits various organizations such as the YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, hospitals, resorts, and other settings where children are present. This accreditation requires additional training for priests and brothers in child abuse awareness and prevention, focusing clergy-specific areas such as community life and self-care.

Awareness Training for Children: At Holy Trinity School, students at all grade levels are taught a curriculum appropriate to their age, following the guidelines provided by the Archdiocese of Washington. In the RE program, teachers use the "Circle of Grace" program to teach the concept of the sanctity of their bodies and the concept of boundaries. In the seventh grade and beyond, RE students learn about attending to boundary violations, the importance of trusted adults, and the need to alert an adult if an adult violates their personal boundaries. Both at HTS and in the RE program, content and methodology matures as children age. Content, methods, and other data are reported to the Archdiocese to document compliance.

Risk Management Policies and Behaviors: As part of the training and accreditation process, parish staff follow policies to eliminate times when children are alone with adults. These include not being alone in a classroom or office with a child behind a closed door. For example, meetings with children and adolescents are always conducted with an open door and/or the presence of a second adult. The sacrament of reconciliation is administered in settings where the child can speak privately but interactions between priest and the child are visible to others. Confessions with children are never held in a confessional with a closed door. Additional best practices include structural changes to the parish facilities. The recent remodeling of the school included such elements as windows in all doors to further protect children by allowing all interactions between a teacher and student to be observed by someone else if needed.

Resources:

Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People (Dallas Charter, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops): <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/charter.cfm>

Instruments of Hope and Healing (Conference of Major Superiors of Men):
<http://www.sjpccommunications.org/images/uploads/documents/StandardsforAccreditation.pdf>

Jesuit USA East province's child protection page:
<https://www.jesuitseast.org/about-us/protecting-children/>

Archdiocese of Washington's Child protection page: <http://adw.org/childprotection/>

Circle of Grace materials: <http://adw.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Vol-2-204-COG-teen-alternative-REALLY-2013-Final-Other-Arch.pdf>

Annual Report: Findings and Recommendations on the Implementation of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People (USCCB; May 2016):

<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/upload/2015-Annual-Report-Revised.pdf>

The Nature and Scope of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests and Deacons in the United States, 1950-2002 (John Jay Study):

<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/upload/The-Nature-and-Scope-of-Sexual-Abuse-of-Minors-by-Catholic-Priests-and-Deacons-in-the-United-States-1950-2002.pdf>

VIRTUS: <https://www.virtusonline.org/virtus/> VIRTUS Parent Handbook:

<https://www.virtus.org/virtus/ParentHandbook.pdf>

Local Child Protective Services Hotlines:

DC: 202-671-SAFE

Montgomery Co: 240-777-4417

Arlington Co: 703-228-1500

Alexandria City: 703-746-5800

Fairfax County: 703-324-7400

Virginia State Hotline: 1-800-552-7096