



To: All participants in the *Protecting God's Children* Program
From: Bishop Daniel Mueggenborg
Regarding: The importance of Training and Background checks

I wish to express my thanks to you for committing yourself to participating in the Virtus program *Protecting God's Children*. This is an excellent program and one that will assist all of us in being more aware of the problem of child abuse and what we can do to make our facilities and programs safe for children, young people, and vulnerable adults. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) requires a program like this in all Catholic Dioceses across the country. This program was developed by professionals in consultation with people knowledgeable about sexual abuse of minors and those who habitually lack the use of reason.

I have directed all paid personnel of the Diocese and all volunteers to complete this program. Because of the great value of this program, all parents will benefit from it and should take the training.

- Awareness Session: A *Protecting God's Children* Awareness Session can now be taken online, or a live training program directed by a trained facilitator can be taken.
- Bulletins: All those trained have the option of receiving bulletins online if they have a computer or receiving them by mail. If received by mail, bulletins will need to be returned to the Diocese to receive credit for completing the bulletin(s). Each bulletin ends with a question to ensure the reader understands the main point of the material.
- The purpose of the bulletins is to provide reinforcement of the original material provided in the initial training and to remind people of the problem of child sexual abuse and ways to prevent it.
- Diocesan Employees, Clergy, Parish Employees, Directors of Religious Education, Youth Ministers, and School faculty and staff are required to complete bulletins for the duration of their employment or service and complete a recertification training after two years, and every five years thereafter.
- Other volunteers and trainees are required to complete a follow-up process of reading one bulletin each month for a total of twenty-four and a recertification review after two years, and every five years thereafter.
- Electronic criminal history background checks are required for all employees and volunteers and will be renewed every five years. In addition, fingerprint background checks are required for school employees and some school and religious education volunteers (contact your school principal or parish administrator for more information).

Thank you again for committing yourself to the completion of this program. The safety of our children, teens, and vulnerable adults requires our vigilance. Recognizing we must also give our children the tools they need to overcome the advances of someone who intends to do them harm, we offer the *Teaching Safety – Empowering God's Children* program. *Teaching Safety* is an age-appropriate platform through which parents, teachers, catechists, and youth ministers give children and young people the tools they need to protect themselves from those who might harm them.

I pray the actions taken by the USCCB, coupled with the commitment of our employees and volunteers will create an environment where adults will be alert and children and vulnerable adults will be safe. Your participation is greatly appreciated and valued.

May God bless you and the ministry you perform in His name.