

## **CHURCH OF ST. ISIDORE SAFETY AND WELL BEING POLICY**

The safety and well being of all children and elders who use our parish facilities is of paramount importance to us. Every new volunteer who works with or has potential contact with children or elders in our parish must complete the Archdiocese's *Protecting God's Children* (VIRTUS) Training as well as complete yearly CORI checks. Every volunteer is also asked to read and sign the "Ministerial Code of Behavior" (see "Documents" section of this manual) which outlines the responsibilities and expected codes of conduct for both volunteers and paid staff in the Archdiocese.

Guidelines have been established to insure, to the best of our ability, that no child from St. Isidore is placed into a situation of risk:

- No volunteer should be alone with a child in a room with a closed door.
- Volunteers assisting a child in a restroom must be accompanied by another adult.
- No child is allowed off parish property without two adults present.
- A signed permission slip from the parents or legal guardians are necessary to conduct ministries or field studies off the St. Isidore campus.

Although volunteers are not legally mandated reporters, we ask them to consider themselves morally mandated reporters. Paid parish staff members and members of the Child Abuse Prevention (CAP) Team are legally mandated reporters and **MUST**, under penalty of law, report any suspected case of abuse that they witness or are made aware of. Should a volunteer suspect a case of child abuse, it is critical that the allegation be reported to the Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS) (see section on Reporting Procedures). Volunteers should also report it to a staff member or member of the Child Abuse Prevention Team. If they are not comfortable making this report themselves, they should report it immediately to a member of the parish staff or

CAP Team whose responsibility to follow up with civil and church authorities is outlined in the section "Reporting Child Abuse to Civil and Church Authorities".

## **Safe Environment Guidelines**

The following guidelines offer direction for St. Isidore Parish Child, Adolescent and Elderly Ministry Volunteers. Creation of a safe environment is critical for the personal safety of children as well as for the protection of adult Ministry Volunteers. It is the intent of these guidelines to eliminate the possibility of unsafe situations, to create safe settings where ministry to the children of St. Isidore Parish takes place and to set specific safety protocols. These guidelines apply to all educational, social, Ministerial programs and parish sponsored events such as Cub Scouts.

### **1. Public Arena Activities**

It is advised that ministry to children occurs in an open and public setting. Examples of public areas of St. Isidore Parish include:

- The lower church hall where other persons are present or likely to be present
- The main church
- The sacristy with doors open

### **2. Two Adult Rule**

No child is to be alone in a closed area or private room with one adult. Two adults must be present at all times. Spaces at St. Isidore that would be considered closed or private include:

- Bathrooms
- Area behind the altar
- Rooms and offices within the rectory
- Vehicles
- Supply closets

### **3. Transportation of Children**

Ministry volunteers are never to be alone with a child, including in a motor vehicle.

- Ministry Volunteers may not transport a child alone under any circumstance
- Two volunteers must wait with a child. If a parent is late for pick up, a call should be made to the parent.
- If an emergency exists, the volunteer must call **911**.

### **4. Ministry Volunteer/Children Ratio**

Adequate adult supervision is necessary to allow for a safe environment for children.

- 2 adults for every 6-10 preschoolers
- 2 adults for every 8-12 children under age 18

### **5. Ministry Volunteer Age Requirements**

All Ministry Volunteers at St. Isidore Parish must be at least 17 years of age. Only Ministry volunteers may organize or supervise activities for children and must always be present during the activities. Assistants, who are between ages 12-17, may support the Ministry Volunteer in an activity, but always under the direct supervision of the adult.

### **6. Ministry Observation by Parents and Supervisory Staff**

Parents may visit any educational or social activity at any time without notice. The Director of Religious Education, clergy or other supervisory staff are encouraged to visit any Ministry involving children.

## **Procedures to Follow in an Unsafe or Threatening Situation**

Every Ministry Volunteer must be alert to the environment around the children in his or her care. Circumstances can occur that may threaten those in a particular setting. Examples include:

- Fire
- Intruder
- Out of control behavior of a child or parent

### **1. Fire**

- Know each building exit locations
  - Know locations of fire extinguishers
  - Know locations of building telephones
    - Ushers' Room in Church Lobby
    - Side entrance hallway in lower church
- Remove children from immediate danger
- Call **911**.

### **2. Intruder**

- Doors to church should be monitored.
- Close doors, lock if possible. Call **911**.
- Keep children down low, behind locked door.
- Remove children to safe place if possible
- No child is to travel alone to bathroom or other destination away from his group and adult leader.

### **3. Out of control behavior of a child or parent**

- Stop any activity that is deemed unsafe
- Remove the out of control child to a safe place.
- Call parent.
- Attempt may be made to calm child.
- Call **911**, if necessary, to protect child or others
- Notify DRE or other supervising adult
- Utilization of other adult Ministry Volunteers to remain with other children and assist in care of out of control child

- The out of control parent should be removed from the presence of children if possible.
- Call **911**, if situation is not able to be de-escalated

## Procedures to Follow in a Medical Emergency

Injuries and medical emergencies may occur. The Adult Ministry volunteer remains in charge until parent and or EMT's have arrived. All persons are to be treated with Universal Precautions in order to protect both the victim and the caregiver. First Aid Kits are located in the Parish Hall kitchen and in the Usher's closet at the entrance to the church.

- Stay with the child.
- **Do Not** move child if the child has suffered a fall
- Call another adult or adolescent to bring First Aid Kit
- Call **911** as indicated by the severity of the situation
- Call parent
- Follow Universal Precautions

## Universal Precautions

Universal precautions protect both the victim and the caregiver from the transmission of bloodborne pathogens present in blood and other body fluids that can cause disease in humans. Examples of circumstances which may occur in the church setting in which Universal Precautions should be used are:

- Cuts and scrapes
- Nosebleeds
- Vomitus
- Human biting

Protocols to follow would include:

- Vinyl gloves used as a protective barrier. Found as the top item inside the First Aid Kit.
- Hand gauze pads, tissues, paper towels to the child to hold against the wound or bloody nose.

- Place gloves on hands before assisting the child or cleaning up vomitus.
- Wash hands immediately with soapy water when gloves are removed.
- Clothing stained with blood or vomitus should be changed. Soiled clothing should be placed in a plastic bag.
- Keep all other children away from the area.
- Report all injuries and illnesses to parent and DRE.

## **Procedures for Guideline Violations**

When, due to unforeseen circumstances, guidelines have been violated, the responsible Ministry Volunteer is to report the incident to the CAP Team and/or the Director of Religious Education at St. Isidore by telephone or e-mail.

- Telephone: (978) 897-9790
- E-mail: [capteam@applevalleycatholic.org](mailto:capteam@applevalleycatholic.org)

This communication should take place at the earliest and no later than 24 hours.

When protocol violations are witnessed, it is the Ministry volunteer's responsibility to:

- Speak to the person who may have acted in violation of safety guidelines, explaining your concern for the volunteer's protection along with that of the child.
- When any doubt about reporting exists, it is always advised to report.

## **POLICIES FOR OFF SITE EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES**

St. Isidore Parish requires that all off-site activities that involve children, adolescents or teens under the age of 18 require a consent form (see Documents Section) to be filled out by a parent/guardian before participating. All chaperones must be trained and have a current and completed CORI check.

Occasionally through the Generations of Faith program, there may be occasions when groups of children and/or teens meet independently. They will be supervised by adult facilitators that are VIRTUS trained and CORI'd.