What are we at St. Francis of Assisi doing?

As of July 1, 2021 Bishop Robert McManus has requested that all Religious Education programs and Catholic schools in the Diocese of Worcester use the faith-based program *Circle of Grace* for the mandatory Safe Environment Education. We at St. Francis of Assisi will be implementing the *Circle of Grace* program for grades 1 – 10. Parents will still have the right to opt-out. All parents will be kept informed with letters, worksheets and educational materials. All parents are welcome to sit in on classes.

The goal of the *Circle of Grace* program is to educate and empower children and young people to actively participate in a safe environment for themselves and others.

Important Numbers

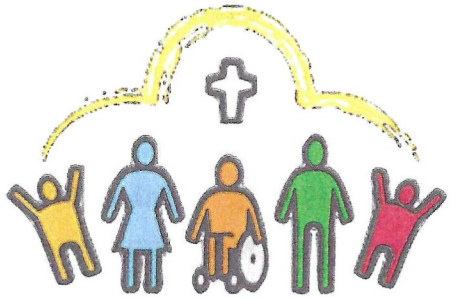
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St. Francis of Assisi Parish

South Barre, MA



Keeping Children & Youth Safe

Safe Environment Program

Information and Procedures

2026-2027

Questions and Answers about Safe Environment

What does "Safe Environment" mean?

"Safe Environment" refers to the setting that we create and maintain for the children and young people at St. Francis of Assisi Parish. We are committed to keeping our children "safe" whenever they participate in any parish sponsored activities.

How do you go about creating a "Safe Environment"?

Through various safety checks: Code of Ministerial Conduct, Safe Environment Workshop, Parent Education and the C.O.R.I. review.

How can you be sure that the two conditions are met?

Parish staff and volunteers are not allowed to participate in any parish activities (other than parish wide events) unless they have attended a Safe Environment Workshop and submitted to a C.O.R.I. review.

What is a C.O.R.I. review?

A C.O.R.I. review is a review of criminal records to verify that the person has never been convicted of a crime.

How much does a C.O.R.I. review cost?

The Diocese of Worcester pays for the review. It is free of charge to the person whose record is being reviewed.

Summary of the Code of Ministerial Conduct

- The public and private conduct of clergy, staff and volunteers can inspire and motivate people, but that conduct can also scandalize and undermine people's faith.
- We have a responsibility to witness in all relationships the chastity appropriate to our state in life, whether celibate, married or single.
- This includes seductive speech or gestures as well as physical contact that sexually abuses, exploits or harasses another person.
- We are to provide safe environments in parishes, schools and institutions where children and others can be assured that their boundaries will not be violated.
- We must show prudent discretion before touching another person, since we cannot control how physical touch will be received.
- We must intervene when there is evidence of or reasonable cause to suspect that children are being abused in anyway.
- We must report violations of misconduct to the appropriate civil and ecclesial authorities and then do what we need to see that justice is served for the victim, the offender and the community from which the victim and offender came.

What the Bishop says about Parent Education

Parents are the primary educators for their children in all matters. The bishops want all children to be given instructions on proper boundaries. Bishop McManus has directed each parish to provide educational materials to parents and to give instruction to all children and young people if "Personal Safety Instructions" are not being provided in the local schools. Parents are to be informed before any parish gives such instructions and given the opportunity to opt-out.