



# CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT IN THE DIOCESE OF CHEYENNE

---

*As a faith-filled people, we respect and value each and every individual, as we are created in the image and likeness of God. The Diocese of Cheyenne is committed to creating safe environments, free from all form of abuses where children, young people, parents, adults, parish and school personnel, volunteers, clergy and chancery staff will be able to work, live, and play in an environment where healthy and responsible relationships prevail.*

---

## THE CHARTER FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (CHARTER)

The *Charter* is a comprehensive set of norms established by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in June 2002 that addresses allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy. The *Charter* also includes guidelines for reconciliation, healing, accountability and prevention of future acts of abuse. *The Charter's policies and procedures were reviewed and revised in 2011 and 2018.*

### ARTICLE 12

“Dioceses/eparchies are to maintain “safe environment” programs which the diocesan/eparchial bishop deems to be in accord with Catholic moral principles. They are to be conducted cooperatively with parents, civil authorities, educators, and community organizations to provide education and training for minors, parents, ministers, employees, volunteers, and others about

ways to sustain and foster a safe environment for minors. Dioceses/eparchies are to make clear to clergy and all members of the community the standards of conduct for clergy and other persons with regard to their contact with minors.”

### ARTICLE 13

“The diocesan/eparchial bishop is to evaluate the background of all incardinated priests and deacons. Dioceses/eparchies are to evaluate the background of all their respective diocesan/eparchial and parish/school or other paid personnel and volunteers whose duties include contact with minors. Specifically, they are to utilize the resources of law enforcement and other community agencies. Each diocese/eparchy is to determine the application/renewal of background checks according to local practice. In addition, they are to employ adequate screening and evaluative techniques in deciding the fitness of candidates for ordination.”

---

## MAINTAINING COMPLIANCE WITH *THE CHARTER*

**For Children:** All children in grades K-12 in Catholic schools and religious education programs are required to receive safe environment education. This is NOT sex education. Because of the value and dignity of human life, it is important that children are taught about personal safety, awareness and boundaries.

**For Adults:** The following requirements must be met prior to employment or volunteer service for those who interact with minors and/or vulnerable adults:

- Safe environment education
- State and national background checks, repeated at least every five years
- Acknowledge that they have received and read:
  - ✓ *Norms for Responding to Reports of Sexual Abuse of Minors and Vulnerable Adults*
  - ✓ *Instructions Concerning Interactions with Minors and Vulnerable Adults*



# INITIATIVES AND ACTIONS IMPLEMENTED BY THE DIOCESE OF CHEYENNE SINCE 2002

- No cleric with a substantiated allegation of sexual abuse of a minor serves in public ministry, in any way, in the Diocese of Cheyenne.
- All diocesan personnel and volunteers are bound by the mandatory reporting laws of the State of Wyoming. Wyoming state law (statutes 14-3-205 & 35-20-103) mandates that any person who suspects child/vulnerable adult abuse, neglect or exploitation is required to report.
- The Diocese of Cheyenne has a Zero-tolerance policy. No cleric can serve in public ministry, in any capacity, if there is reasonable cause to believe that he has sexually abused a minor at any time.
- No cleric with a credible allegation of sexual abuse will be transferred to any other ministerial assignment, here or elsewhere.
- The Diocesan Review Board reviews the investigation results of sexual abuse allegations. The Board makes recommendations to the Bishop on appropriate action in regard to allegations and reviews related diocesan policies.
- Criminal background checks are required for all adults, including clergy, staff, and volunteers who work with vulnerable adults or have regular interaction with minors in a Church setting.
- Abuse awareness and prevention education is required in the Diocese of Cheyenne for all children grades K-12 in schools and religious education programs, as well as for employees and volunteers who interact with children and vulnerable adults. Each year over 4,000 children receive safe environment education.
- All employees and volunteers must read and sign *Norms for Responding to Reports of Sexual Abuse of Minors and Vulnerable Adults and Instructions Concerning Interactions with Minors and Vulnerable Adults*.
- The diocese is audited every year by an outside firm to ensure compliance with the USCCB *Charter*. The diocese has always been found to be in full compliance.
- In 2018, the diocese partnered with Catholic Mutual Group to create a user friendly platform that incorporated adult safe environment education needs in one location.
- Following a reassessment of the current safe environment education program, diocesan leaders became aware of the need to review the current safe environment program. After consulting with various others in the diocese, including teachers and catechists, the Circle of Grace curriculum was purchased for every school and religious education program.

---

PARISH OR SCHOOL PERSONNEL WITH **SAFE ENVIRONMENT** QUESTIONS PLEASE CONTACT:

**Patti Loehrer, Safe Environment Coordinator:**

ploehrer@dioceseofcheyenne.org or 307-638-1530 x105

**Tammy Skala, Administrator of Safe Environment Training:**

tskala@dioceseofcheyenne.org or 307-638-1530 x113

- General question about Safe Environment
- Responsibilities of pastors, principals, DREs, YMs. etc., in coordinating the program
- Questions about compliance
- Other issues about the safe environment program