



## DIOCESE OF ST. PETERSBURG

Office of the Bishop

### **DIOCESE OF SAINT PETERSBURG SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM**

In the wake of the 2002 implementation of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), the Diocese of Saint Petersburg established its safe environment training program in order to ensure proper training for all members of the clergy, religious, lay employees, volunteers, and all those entrusted with the care, responsibility, and supervision of minors within our diocesan boundaries. In keeping with the requirements of the aforementioned *Charter*, a background evaluation was also established.

Since that time, all elements of our diocesan safe environment program have remained in place. All of these elements are required by the USCCB *Charter* and the *Essential Norms* deriving from the *Charter*, as most recently revised in 2018. The essential norms, having received *reognitio* of the Holy See, are particular law in the dioceses of the United States. In addition to children and youth, all dioceses in the Province of Miami also apply the protections of the *Charter* and *Norms* to vulnerable adults as defined in Florida law.

**By this letter, I hereby promulgate as official diocesan policy our current safe environment program. This letter supersedes all previous letters of promulgation.**

The Safe Environment Program for the Diocese of Saint Petersburg consists of the following component parts:

- An FDLE Level II background screening program for clergy, religious, lay employees, educators, and covered volunteers. When required, background screenings must be completed before the person assumes his/her position or begins volunteer service; there can be no compromises or exceptions regarding this aspect of our Safe Environment Program.
- The Catholic Mutual Group Safe Environment Program training is designed to educate clergy, religious, employees, educators, and volunteers in ways to establish and maintain a safe environment for children and youth. Training must be completed in full.
- A minimum of one annual age-appropriate training session, designed to help children and youth to cooperate in maintaining their own personal safety, is also required. For our parishes and missions, the *Circle of Grace* children's safety curriculum from the Archdiocese of Omaha is to be used. For our Catholic Schools and Early Childhood Centers, the students are trained through the school's or center's ongoing curriculum. It is of vital importance that every child and youth in our Catholic schools, parish faith formation programs and parish youth programs be given an opportunity to take part in this critical element of our Safe Environment Program. Here, there can be no shortcuts taken.

All of the above component parts of our diocesan program are in full compliance with the requirements of the USCCB Office of Child and Youth Protection and I direct that they continue to be fully implemented in each parish, school, and agency of this Diocese.

Finally, we will continue to evaluate all of the components of our Safe Environment Program. Whenever changes are necessary or improvements are possible, we will strive to promptly implement them.

Given at Saint Petersburg, Florida this 1<sup>st</sup> day of April 2025.

+ 

---

Most Reverend Gregory Parkes  
Bishop of Saint Petersburg



---

Deacon Rick Wells, J.C.L.  
Chancellor for Canonical Affairs

