

Spotlight on Safe Environment

2020 Issue 6

Circle of Care:

Circle of Care is the Adult Safe Environment curriculum that all clergy, religious, staff and volunteers must complete in order to work with minors/vulnerable adults in the Archdiocese of Omaha. All of us as “Ambassadors” for Christ, bear the responsibility to care and protect the most vulnerable. For first time certification, all people must attend a live training class, acknowledge the Archdiocesan code of conduct and submit consent for a background check. A recent change is that certification is now good for six years instead of five! Recertification, as long as completed 60 days post expiration, can be done online.

Archdiocesan Safe Environment Policy:

After months of hard work by the Vicar for Clergy, the Chancellor, the Office for Victim Outreach and Prevention, the GRACES committee, the Review Board and the Archdiocesan lawyer, the Archdiocese of Omaha Safe Environment policies have been updated. There are policies now in place to reflect the changes that have happened in our world, for example social media usage and communication via text messaging. All clergy, parish/school leadership and curia employees will be required to acknowledge these updates. The policies will be accessible in mid-November for everyone to read at archomaha.org under the Safe Environment tab. We encourage everyone to take some time and look at these policies.

Did you know?

The Victim Outreach and Prevention/Safe Environment office is in the midst of conducting our yearly onsite audits. We are visiting 35 parishes/schools this year. During these visits, we are able to advise and learn about the many best practices that are used to implement safe environment policies and procedures. It is always wonderful to meet all the people at the parishes and school throughout the Archdiocese. We are grateful for all their efforts to keep kids safe.



How has Circle of Grace become part of your school culture?

Lynn Schultz, principal of St. Bernadette School, Omaha:

“It is the ‘way’ we interact, the ‘way’ we care for each other and the ‘way’ we connect to God’s love for us. Circle of Grace helps us in educating our students, their families and our staff about what it truly means to have a safe environment, for all. Everything we do connected to Circle of Grace is supported and guided by our Catholic Faith beliefs. God loves each of us infinitely. As we care for each other and provide environments that are safe for learning and growing, we too are showing God’s love to everyone who crosses our path. We are grateful for the ‘way’ of Circle of Grace.”

Safe Environment Champion:

Lisa Seidl

Lisa is the Safe Environment Coordinator at Saint Patrick’s in Elkhorn. She manages a volunteer/employee safe environment database of around 1050 people. She accomplishes this actively monitoring all employee and volunteer certification statuses and informing people when they need to recertify. Her efforts to keep kids safe and adults informed are truly appreciated.



YOUTH, BOTH MALE AND FEMALE, ARE BEING SOLICITATED ON SOCIAL MEDIA IN TO “TALK” TO MEN (SUGAR DADDIES) AND WOMEN (SUGAR MOMMIES)

Incidents have been reported in the Archdiocese!

The scheme works by connecting with the person via social media or word of mouth among the kids about how easy money can be made by “talking” to these older adults. As you can imagine this “talking” is not innocent repartee. Many times this leads to in person meeting and sexual exploitation. The best way to help your child avoid this is by having an honest and frank conversation with your child about responsible social media usage and by making sure you know what apps and social media platforms your child uses.



Circle of Grace Corner:

Why is it important to help our children understand the Circle of Grace?

Respectful, nurturing, loving relationships increase our understanding of own value and help us to love others. This is a guiding premise of the Circle of Grace curriculum that each Catholic school, Religious Education and Youth Ministry student are taught each year. It is never too early to help children and young people understand how very special they are and how relationships in life are called to be sacred. These lessons lead to an improved sense of self respect and consideration for others. Parents and

caregivers are vital in helping to reinforce these concepts and ideas.

The content in each grade level has been written in collaboration with religious, educators, and mental health professionals among others. The goals of each lesson are to help educate and empower children and young people to create a self environment for themselves and others.

Ask your child about their *Circle of Grace*. In kindergarten they learn that they have a *Circle of Grace* as do their friends. In this “Circle” God’s love surrounds them and doesn’t want anything that hurts them in this “circle”. All the lessons through 12th grade age appropriately expand on this simple concept. Interested in learning more? Ask your child’s teacher.

Blessing from our Circle of Grace to yours!

Office of Victim Outreach and Prevention/Safe Environment

Mary Beth Hanus, L.C.S.W., L.M.H.P.

Victim Outreach and Prevention Director

402-827-3798 mbhanus@archomaha.org

Cathi Snyder
Safe Environment Coordinator
402-557-5561
cmsnyder@archomaha.org

Mary Maguire
Safe Environment Specialist
402-557-5562
mkmaguire@archomaha.org

Fay Sampson
Administrative Assistant
402-827-3794
fcsampson@archomaha.org