

Archdiocese of Detroit
Office for Faith Formation/Catechetics

TOPICS FOR CATECHIST HANDBOOK

Revised by the DRE Advisory Council 2007

The Office for Faith Formation/Catechetics recommends that every parish create and promulgate a Handbook for Catechists. Catechists are asked to sign a Catechist Acknowledgment Form—acknowledging that he/she has read the Catechist Handbook and agrees to carry out its directives.

Suggested steps for creating and promulgating a Handbook for Catechists:

- **Create Catechist Handbook:** The Catechist Handbook is not the work of one person, but should be done and reviewed by many – the DRE, catechetical staff, pastor, pastoral staff, Education Commission, etc
- **Obtain approval of Handbook:** It is essential that the Pastor give final approval to the Handbook before printing and distribution to catechetical staff. Note especially any issues about finances.
- **Review of Handbook:** Since circumstances are always changing, the handbook should be reviewed each year for additions, deletions and changes for the safety, efficiency, and caring ministry of all.

AREAS TO BE DEVELOPED BY THE PARISH

A. The Mission and Ministry of Catechesis

1. The aim of catechesis (*General Directory of Catechesis, GDC, #80, National Directory for Catechesis*, NDC, pp. 56-59)
2. The six tasks of catechesis (GDC #85-87, NDC # 20)
3. Parish Mission Statement
4. Religious Education Mission Statement

B. Catechetical Programs

1. Diocesan Curriculum Guidelines
2. Parish Curriculum Guidelines: Themes and goals for each age level (Available upon request from the OFF/C)
3. Sacramental preparation

4. Catechesis in Human Sexuality (Optional)

*If there is a program, it must be implemented according to Archdiocesan Guidelines¹.
(These guidelines are available upon request from the OFF/C)*

5. Faith Formation Options (Possible Options)

- Adult Scripture studies, RCIA, Welcome Home, and other faith sharing gatherings as groups form
- Generations of Faith: a whole-community and inter-generational approach to faith formation

C. Support and Services for Catechists

1. What catechists can expect from parish and catechetical staff
2. Spiritual Benefits
3. Provided services
4. Parish opportunities
5. Resources available: videos, reading material, etc.
6. Discount tuition for children of catechists, if offered
7. Reimbursement procedures for supplies
8. Catechist formation—fee paid by the parish
9. Compensation policies (stipend) if offered
10. Substitutes: (Method of providing substitutes)

D. Code of Conduct for Volunteers

Mandated by the Archdiocese of Detroit:

- Code of Ethics – See *Code of Pastoral Conduct for Priests, Deacons, Pastoral Ministers, Administrators, Staff and Volunteers*. Archdiocese of Detroit. September, 2004. Note especially part IV, Code of Conduct for Volunteers, on pp. 14-15. www.aodonline.org

E. Safety Policies

1. Arrival/Dismissal Procedures
2. First Aid
3. Dispensing Medications: no medicines including over-the-counter meds are to be given to a child (under 18 yrs.) without the written permission of the parent/guardian.
4. Food/Snacks concerns about allergies
5. Fire/Weather/Bomb practice drills to be scheduled
6. Lock Down (in event of an intruder, power failure, etc.) to be discussed at a catechist meeting.

F. Expectation of Catechists

1. Lesson Planning and preparation for each session
2. Catechist Formation

¹ Archdiocese of Detroit, *Guidelines for Implementation of Catechesis in Human Sexuality*, Updated 2004.

3. Archdiocesan Catechist Certification
4. Participation in Protecting God’s Children™: Attendance is required within six months of hire or assignment date for anyone who may have contact with children.
5. Criminal Background Check: Anyone who may have contact with children, the elderly or persons with disabilities must submit to a background check before starting work or volunteer assignment.
6. Attendance at parent and catechist meetings
7. Notification of absence by catechist
8. Arrival time prior to beginning of religious education sessions
9. Discipline/Behavior Policies must emphasize the prohibition against physical discipline.
10. Reporting suspected abuse—Current law requires school personnel and clergy to report suspected abuse. Catechetical personnel, whether paid or volunteer, may report suspected abuse, but are not required by law to do so.

G. Policies and Procedures

1. Placement of catechist’s own children
2. Policy about guests attending religious formation sessions.
3. Prior approval by DRE for any communication sent to parents/guardians
4. Food and snacks policy – including allergy issue
5. Plans for substitute catechists
6. Pick up and drop off procedures
7. Procedure if child is still left at the parish more than fifteen minutes after the ending of the session
8. Cancellation of classes
9. Early dismissal policy
10. Records that state to whom child is released
11. Respect for classroom space; Housekeeping
12. First aid policies
13. Photographing of Children (*See Policies and Procedures, A 7 below*)

H. Directory

Parish name and Address
 Phone, Fax, E-mail, Website
 Staff names and phone numbers
 Office Hours

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF DETROIT

A. General

1. Privacy Issues²
2. Attendance and record keeping³
3. Observance of copyright laws⁴
4. Field Trips/Transportation⁵

² Karen L. Piper, “Most Frequently Asked Legal Questions,” Summer 2006, p. 13. (Available from Office for Faith Formation/Catechetics).

³ Ibid., pp. 6, 7.

⁴ Mary Angela Shaughnessy, SCN. *Religious Education, Parish and Youth Ministry: Legal Issues for Catechetical and Youth Leaders*. Washington, D.C.: NCEA Publications, 2006, also “Copyright Guidelines for Catholic Schools and Catechetical Program”. (Available on the DRE Extranet at www.aodonline.org)

⁵ AOD, *Policies and Procedures for Catechetics/Religious Education in Parishes and Catholic Schools*, pp. 23, 24.

5. Parent Permission Form for Field Trip Participation⁶
6. Drivers form⁷
7. Video/Photographing Utilization (If photos will be published and names used, parental permission should be obtained. *(Will be in the Appendix of the AOD Policies and Procedures Handbook)*)
8. Discipline/Behavior policies—Refer to *Volunteer Code of Conduct*, p 15. *(Make special note of prohibition against physical discipline)*

B. Safety

1. Dispensing Medications: no medicines, including over-the-counter meds, are to be given to a child under 18 years without the written permission of the parent/guardian. See Dispensing Medication: Release Form available at www.chsl.org under Forms & Administration.
2. Fire drills⁸
3. Floor plan of where fire alarms are located and procedures for what to do if alarm is set
4. Tornado and storm drills⁹
5. Lockdown procedures¹⁰
6. Blood-borne pathogens and other health issues – ex. epi pen usage¹¹
7. Accident reporting form¹²
8. Bomb threat procedures

C. Safe Environments

1. Criminal Background Check¹³
2. Protecting God’s Children™¹⁴
3. Keeping Kids Safe Brochure (Office for Safe Environments, Archdiocese of Detroit)
4. Orientation Guide For Our Employees & Volunteers (Office for Safe Environments, Archdiocese of Detroit)
5. Harassment policies¹⁵
6. Relaying threats of suicide or other dangerous behavior to supervisor – *Take threat seriously.*

⁶ Ibid., (revised January, 2003) p. 32.

⁷ Ibid., (March 2004) p. 33.

⁸ Ibid., p. 21.

⁹ Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁰ <http://www.ed.gov/emergencyplan/> If the program meets in a school building, follow the procedures already established by that school. Otherwise, contact the local police department for their evaluation of this site.

¹¹ “OSHA Standard on Prevention of Exposure to Blood borne Pathogens”. (Available from Office for Faith Formation/Catechetics)

¹² AOD, *Policies and Procedures for Catechetics/Religious Education in Parishes and Catholic Schools*, (July 2001)p. 47

¹³ “Archdiocesan Safe Environments Policy”, April 2006. (www.aodonline.org see Offices and Ministry/Safe Environments).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ *AOD, *Policies and Procedures for Catechetics/Religious Education in Parishes and Catholic Schools* (Detroit: Office for Catechetics/Religious Education, 1991), pp. 41-46. Note: Schools are specifically mentioned in Sections XI and XV of that Appendix because they clearly fall under the “educational institutions” definition of federal law Title IX. Note also the following....

*Piper, *ibid*, pp. 3-4.

**Code of Pastoral Conduct For Priests, Deacons, Pastoral Ministers, Administrators, Staff and Volunteers.* Archdiocese of Detroit. September, 2004, p.8.

HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR CATECHETICAL LEADERS

Congregation for the Clergy. *General Directory for Catechesis*. Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1997.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *National Directory for Catechesis*. Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005.

Archdiocese of Detroit:

- Communications Department: *Policies and Procedures Regarding Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests, Deacons and Other Church Personnel*. May, 2003.
Also available online at www.aodonline.org.
- Archives Department: *Guidelines Concerning Sacramental Records*. 2001.
- Office for Faith Formation/Catechetics:
 - “Copyright Guidelines for Catholic Schools and Catechetical Programs”
 - Guidelines for Implementation of Catechesis in Human Sexuality*. Updated 2004.
 - “OSHA Standard on Prevention of Exposure to Blood borne Pathogens”
 - Policies and Procedures Manual and DRE Handbook for Catechetics/Religious Education in Parishes and Catholic Schools*. 1999.
- Other Resources Available from the Office for Faith Formation/Catechetics:
 - Piper, Karen L., “Most Frequently Asked Legal Questions.”-Updated 2006.
 - School Safety Response Guide: One Component of a Safe School Plan*. Compiled by the Michigan State Police

Shaughnessy, Mary Angela, SCN. *Religious Education, Parish and Youth Ministry: Legal Issues for Catechetical and Youth Leaders*. Washington, D.C.: NCEA Publications, 2006.

Shaughnessy, Mary Angela, SCN. *Religious Education Parish Youth and Campus Ministry: Legal Issues for Catechists, Ministers and Volunteers*. Washington, D.C.: NCEA Publications, 2006.

U.S. Department of Education. www.ed.gov/emergencyplan/ In Related Resources, click on Emergency Planning for America’s Schools. March 2003.