Dear Educators,

Welcome to the 2021/2022 academic year! We understand that there may be much uncertainty as we start the new school year, but it is important that the Church’s commitment to the safety and well-being of our children remains a priority. As such, and in accordance with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, the Diocese of San José will continue to present the VIRTUS® Protecting God’s Children 2.0 curriculum as the designated youth safe environment program.

As you may recall, we introduced the new version of the VIRTUS® Protecting God’s Children 2.0 curriculum two years ago. The lessons are organized in a three-year cycle so students receive the full range of information from the Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide in small, “digestible” bites, over a three-year period. Unfortunately, the second year of the cycle was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, but we are grateful to renew the three-year cycle this academic year. Please read on for more information.

**VIRTUS® Protecting God’s Children Curriculum (K-12th)**

Prior to presenting the VIRTUS® Lessons to your class, please review the Overview of the Teaching Safety Empowering God’s Children™ Program (Spanish) and the Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide (Spanish) included in this packet.

The 2021/2022 academic year is Year 2 of the three-year cycle. This year, you will be presenting:

- Lesson 3 - Boundaries: You Have Rights!
- Lesson 4 - Secrets, Surprises, and Promises

To access the lesson plans, please visit [https://www.dsj.org/protecting-gods-children/virtus-resources-for-teachers-catechist/](https://www.dsj.org/protecting-gods-children/virtus-resources-for-teachers-catechist/), and choose lessons 3 & 4 for your grade level (K-2nd, 3rd – 5th, 6th- 8th, or 9th-12th). Your school may choose to present the lessons separately or combined.

**Opt-Outs**

Parental disclosure is critical to the success of this program. All families will be given the opportunity to opt-out of the VIRTUS® Protecting God’s Children curriculum. At least two weeks prior to the presentation, please distribute the VIRTUS® Parent Letter and VIRTUS® Parent Opt-Out Form. If families return an opt-out form, please offer the VIRTUS® Protecting God’s
Children lessons to be completed at home. Please keep all opt-out forms on file at your school. Absent students are considered Opt-Outs and should be offered the VIRTUS® Protecting God’s Children lesson plans.

Documentation

Schools must complete and submit the School VIRTUS Audit Reporting Form. The audit form asks for three key pieces of data: total number of students enrolled in the school, total number of students who received VIRTUS lesson, and total number of students who opt-out (including absences). Please submit the VIRTUS Audit Reporting Form before April 30th, 2022.

Youth Volunteers (K-8th)

To be eligible to volunteer at a parish or Catholic school, students up to thirteen-years-old must complete the VIRTUS® Protecting God’s Children lesson and review the Diocesan Youth Code of Conduct (available English and in Spanish).

High School Students (9th-12th)

To be eligible to volunteer at a parish or Catholic school, high school students - 9th grade up to their 18th birthday - must complete the VIRTUS® Healthy Relationships for Teens training available at www.virtusonline.org (you may share the VIRTUS Registration Instructions with your students). The training must be renewed every two years.

PLEASE NOTE: The VIRTUS® Healthy Relationships for Teens online training fulfills the VIRTUS® Catholic Safe Environment Curriculum requirement for one academic year. Thus, if a student completes the VIRTUS® Healthy Relationships for Teens online training course, they have satisfied the VIRTUS® Catholic Safe Environment Curriculum lessons for that academic year. Suggested training schedule for high schools:

- 9th & 11th Grade - VIRTUS® Healthy Relationships for Teens (completed online)
- 10th & 12th Grade - VIRTUS Catholic Safe Environment Curriculum (presented by teacher in class)
Questions?

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Griselda Cervantez, Victim Assistance Coordinator and Prevention Advocate, via email Griselda.Cervantez@dsj.org or by phone at 408-983-0225.

The Office for the Protection of Children & Vulnerable Adults thanks you for your continued partnership in maintaining a safe environment for our most vulnerable.