



## DIOCESE OF SAN JOSE

### OFFICE FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

Dear Parish Catechetical Leaders,

Welcome to the 2020/2021 academic year! We understand that there is much uncertainty as we face re-openings and distance learning, 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** curriculum as the designated youth safe environment program. Please read below to learn about new modifications for this academic year.

#### **VIRTUS® Protecting God's Children Curriculum (K-8<sup>th</sup>)**

We understand that your religious education program may be facing unique challenges ranging from access to resources, personnel, computer literacy concerns, and COVID-19 related restrictions. Further, amidst the strains of the pandemic, we're aware that our community can easily feel stressed and overwhelmed. With that in mind, we have modified this year's youth safe environment program to help simplify the process.

First, rather than having two lessons for each grade level, we have adapted a simple Modified *VIRTUS Protecting God's Children* lesson that can be presented to any student (K-8<sup>th</sup>). Further, we are offering two options to complete the VIRTUS® Protecting God's Children requirement:

- 1) Led by a catechist in class (either virtually or in person)
- 2) Led by a parent/guardian at home with a signed Electronic Parent Verification Form

*If led by a catechist in class (either virtually or in person):*

Prior to presenting the Modified *VIRTUS Protecting God's Children* lesson to your class virtually or in person, please review the [Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide](#) included in this packet.

The Modified *VIRTUS Protecting God's Children* lesson includes three simple activities: Introductory Video, Safety Terminology Review, and Touching Safety Rules.

Please remember to take attendance on the day of the lesson so students may be counted in the *VIRTUS Audit Reporting Form*.



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*If led by a parent/guardian at home with a signed Electronic Parent Verification Form:*

Please provide families the following documents either electronically or hard copy, included in your packet in English and Spanish:

1) *VIRTUS Letter to Families (if led by parent)*

\*Please note that this is a different from *VIRTUS Letter to Families (if led by catechist)*

2) *Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide*

3) *Modified VIRTUS Protecting God's Children Lesson*

4) *VIRTUS Parent Verification Form- Paper Copy*

**IMPORTANT:** If VIRTUS lesson is completed at home by a parent/guardian, we must capture parent verification for audit purposes via the [Electronic Parent Verification Form](#). Parents are given instructions to complete the Electronic Verification Form in the *VIRTUS Letter to Families* and in the *Modified VIRTUS Protecting God's Children* lesson. However, remind your families frequently to please submit the Electronic Parent Verification Form once they have completed the lesson. If parents do not have internet access and are unable to submit the Electronic Verification Form, please provide them with a *VIRTUS Parent Verification Form- Paper Copy* that can be returned to the parish.

Parish Catechetical Leaders will be responsible for keeping record of the families who complete the Electronic Parent Verification Form or return the paper copy. To assist in that effort, OPCVA will provide DREs a monthly Excel spreadsheet listing the families that have submitted the electronic form. When it is time to complete the *VIRTUS Audit Reporting Form*, please only count the students as having completed the training if they submitted a verification form.

### **VIRTUS® Healthy Relationships for Teens 2.0 (9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>)**

For the 2020/2021 academic year, in lieu of the *VIRTUS® Protecting God's Children* lesson, high school students will complete the *VIRTUS® Healthy Relationships for Teens 2.0* online training and provide a certificate of completion to their faith formation program ([www.virtusonline.org](http://www.virtusonline.org)).

### **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* lesson.



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For VIRTUS lessons led by catechists, at least two weeks prior to the presentation, please distribute the *VIRTUS® Letter to Family (if led by catechist)* and *VIRTUS Parent Opt-Out Form*. If families return an opt-out form, please offer the Modified *VIRTUS Protecting God's Children* lesson electronically or hard copy. Please keep all opt-out forms on file at your parish for a minimum of three years. Absent students are considered Opt-Outs and should be offered the Modified VIRTUS Protecting God's Children lesson.

For VIRTUS lessons led by a parent/guardian at home, any family that does not submit an Electronic Parent Verification Form (or paper copy) will be considered an Opt-Out.

Students, ninth to twelfth grade, who do not submit a certificate of completion for the *VIRTUS® Healthy Relationships for Teens* online training will be considered an Opt-Out.

Total number of opt-outs are documented in the *VIRTUS Audit Reporting Form*.

### **Documentation**

Faith Formation Programs must complete and submit the *VIRTUS® Audit Reporting Form*. The audit form asks for three key pieces of data: total number of students enrolled in program (K-12), total number of students who received VIRTUS lesson, and total number of students who opt-out.

The VIRTUS® Audit Reporting Form will count the following students as having received the VIRTUS lesson: 1) students who completed the lesson with their catechist, 2) students who completed the lesson with their guardian and submitted an Electronic Verification Form (or paper copy), and 3) students who presented a certificate of completion for the *Healthy Relationships for Teens* online training.

Please submit the VIRTUS® Audit Reporting Form no later than **April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021**, by email to [griselda.cervantez@dsj.org](mailto:griselda.cervantez@dsj.org).

### **Youth Volunteers**

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



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To be eligible to volunteer at a parish or Catholic school, high school students - 9<sup>th</sup> grade up to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday - will need to complete the *VIRTUS® Healthy Relationships for Teens 2.0* training available at [www.virtusonline.org](http://www.virtusonline.org). Further, as highlighted previously, the *VIRTUS® Healthy Relationships for Teens 2.0* course satisfies the *VIRTUS® Protecting God's Children* requirement. Students need only complete the online training module once in 2020/2021 to satisfy both volunteering and youth safe environment requirement.

### Questions?

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

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**The Office for the Protection of Children & Vulnerable Adults thanks you for your continued partnership in maintaining a safe environment for our most vulnerable. Together, we will face the uncertainty of the new school year with hope, determination, and prayer.**