



DIOCESE OF GREAT FALLS-BILLINGS
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: January 15, 2022
TO: Pastors, Parochial Vicars, PLC's, School Principals, DRE's, Catechists
FROM: Bishop Michael Warfel
SUBJECT: Safe Environment Training for Children

DEADLINE: Friday, May 6, 2022



In 2002 the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops promulgated the Charter for Protection of Children and Young Adults. The Charter was a commitment on behalf of the bishops to the people of God in which all dioceses would establish Safe Environment programs to responsibly educate and train children, youth, parents, ministers, educators, and volunteers about ways to make and maintain a safe environment for children. Upon my installation as Bishop of the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings in 2008 I mandated safe environment training for all children in accord with the USCCB Charter and Norms for the Protection of Children and Young People.

The same two programs utilized last year are approved for children's training in 2022:

- Children's Learning Program <https://diocesegfb.safeenvironment.org>
- Circles of Care www.diocesegfb.org ("Safe Environment Training" tab)

The forms you complete and remit to the Diocese indicate our compliance in the Safe Environment program and our commitment to the safety of children. Please read the instructions carefully, complete your training sessions with the children in your religious education classes and submit the pertinent documentation by **Friday, May 6, 2022**.

I **require** this program to be positively promoted at all parishes and schools. This initiative is not just so we can conform with the Charter but is truly a service to all children who may have faced inappropriate behaviors in their lives or children that may find themselves in uncomfortable situations. We are called upon as Catholics to practice our faith, to honor and cherish life from birth to natural death. Employees and volunteers of the Diocese who work with children are **mandatory** reporters of child abuse and neglect. The Safe Environment program was developed to provide the tools that children need to defend themselves against inappropriate behaviors, and for adults to recognize the signs of abuse. My hope is that these situations can be deterred. Simply not presenting the program is an injustice to children.

Barbara Haacke is the Director of Safe Environment for our diocese and would be happy to answer questions anyone may have. Attached to this memo are instructions for completing the requirements for the 2021-2022 year. Parishes that do *not* offer religious ed are required to submit proper paperwork per the attached instructions. I ask your full cooperation in adhering to the policy for the safety of our children.

The Pastor/Administrator of the parish or Principal in the case of schools is ultimately responsible for adherence to this policy. However, I know it would not be possible without the help of all those involved.

I extend my thanks to all parishes and schools who worked diligently toward complying with the Safe Environment program.

**Instructions for completing the
Safe Environment Children's Program
Period: July 1, 2021- June 30, 2022
Deadline: May 6, 2022**

Safe & Sacred Children's
Learning Program



The Children's Learning Program brings safety training to children of all ages. Themes are covered in this curriculum including safety rules, trust, responding to unsafe situations, understanding intuition, internet and phone safety, and predators. Children learn age appropriate concepts introduced in the early years, and built upon in the upper years.

Note: *All religious educators are required to be compliant in the Safe Environment Adult Training Program BEFORE working with children. Be prepared to make copies of training certificates for each presenter of your program to be sent to the diocese with your audit form.*

The same two programs utilized last year are approved for children's training in 2022:

1) **Children's Learning Program**
<https://diocesegfb.safeenvironment.org>

This program can be found on the Safe & Sacred site. You will need to log in using the same username and password utilized for the Adult training.

2) **Circles of Care Lesson Plans**
This program was originally developed by the Diocese of Manchester and is available with their permission.
www.diocesegfb.org (under "Safe Environment Training")

Important: In order to present the children's material all facilitators must:

- be compliant in the Adult Safe Environment program.
- have a current certificate of completion (if you are using the "Children's Learning Program" offered by the Safe and Sacred program. Follow the steps on the following page).

Note: If your parish is NOT providing any religious education training for the year July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022, proceed to: "**Attachment D: Letter Advising Diocese of No Religious Education**".



(Continued, next page)

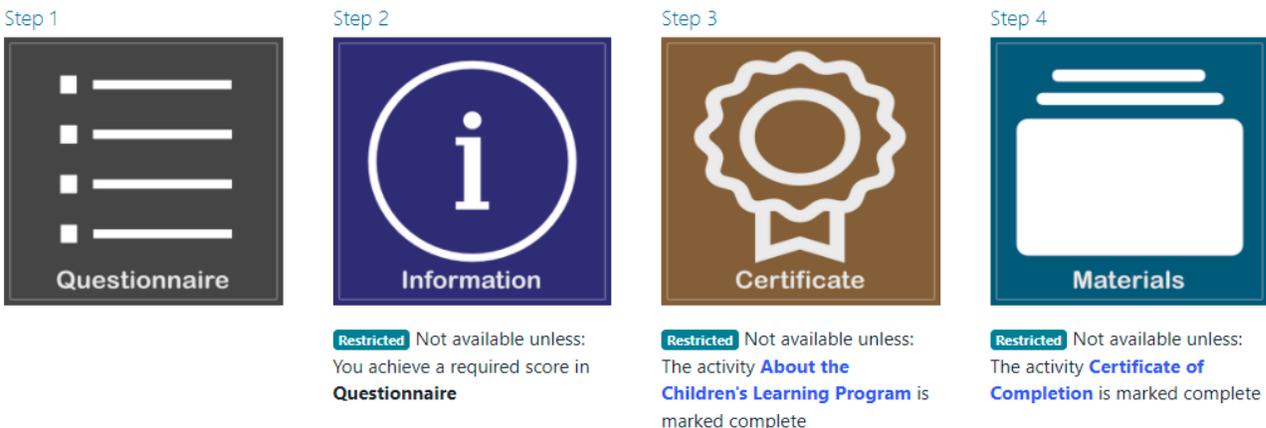
Program #1: "Children's Learning Program"

Follow these steps:

1. Log into your account at the Safe and Sacred site and scroll down until you see, "Children's Learning Program". The training course is only 4 pages long and must be completed by each presenter and/or trainer.
2. Click on the link to take you into the program (Children's Learning Program).



3. This will forward you to the following screen. Click on the "**Step 1: Questionnaire**" button. You will be asked to answer the same 4 questions that you do when accessing the adult training regarding whether you have been accused of a misdemeanor or felony. If you answer "Yes" to any of the last 3 questions you will be stopped and not able to access the program. This requires an override from the Pastor or Principal who should send an email to bhaacke@diocesegfb.org requesting an override or advising of non-approval.



4. After you have completed the questionnaire, you will be able to click on "**Step 2: Information**" to access the training materials.

The course is four (4) pages long and must be reviewed to access the teaching materials. Click through the course using the arrow buttons on the right side of the screen.

If you have previously completed the training, the button **Go to Certificate of Completion** will display and you will be able to print your certificate.

5. After you have completed the training course click on the box that indicates you agree to the terms of use.
6. Click "Get your certificate". Print your certificate.
7. Click "**Go to Materials - GRADES Pre-K to 12**" to access the grade level curriculum materials you desire.

All the materials are available for downloading, including the Facilitators Materials: Activity Book; Parent Handbook (including feedback form) and Power Point Presentation.

Course titles are as follows:

- | | |
|--|---|
| P-Kindergarten: Personal Safety | Grade 6: Appropriate Online Behavior |
| Kindergarten: God Made Me Special | Grade 7: Boundaries |
| Grade 1: Gift from God | Grade 8: Modesty and Reputation |
| Grade 2: Safe People and Places | Grade 9: Bullying |
| Grade 3: Head and Heart | Grade 10: Cyberbullying |
| Grade 4: Personal Space Zones | Grade 11: Predators Around Us |
| Grade 5: Staying Safe | Grade 12: Connecting Online |

Children’s Learning Program, sample page from Safe and Sacred:

Materials - GRADES Pre-K to 12

[View](#)

Please click on the links below to access materials.

	Presentation Materials	Activity Book	Parent Handbook	PowerPoint	All Materials
Pre-Kindergarten					
Kindergarten					
Grade 1					
Grade 2					
					
Grade 12					



Program #2:



This program may be accessed on our website: www.diocesegfb.org.
Follow the path: *Offices and Ministries/ Safe Environment/S.E. Training/ Circles of Care Lesson Plans*.

Lesson Plans include:

Elementary School

- PreK / Kindergarten lesson. Note: uses a book that must be ordered ahead of class time: (<https://www.amazon.com/When-Feel-about-Myself-Books/dp/0807589012>) Or, may be ordered from any retailer. The Diocese does not stock this book.
- **1st Grade lesson.** Note: uses a book that must be ordered ahead of class time: (<https://www.amazon.com/Incredible-Ways-greatness-shine-through/dp/1401907822>) Or, may be ordered from any retailer. *The Diocese does not stock this book.*
- **2nd Grade lesson.** Note: uses a book that must be ordered ahead of class time: (<https://www.amazon.com/Officer-Buckle-Gloria-CALDECOTT-MEDAL/dp/0399226168>) Or, may be ordered from any retailer. *The Diocese does not stock this book.*
- **3rd Grade lesson**
- **4th Grade lesson**
- **5th Grade lesson**
- **6th Grade lesson**

Middle School

- **7th and 8th Grade lesson**

High School

- **Ice Breaker Activities**
- **9th–12th Grade lesson** (an initial lesson for high school students)
- Additional topics for High School if 9th – 12th grade lesson above has already been presented to the students in the past.
 - **Relationships with Relationships Handouts**
 - **Bullying**
 - **Hazing**
 - **Sexting**

Once the facilitator is certified, present the material one session per age level from pre-school through high school. Use your discretion if classes are a combination of grades, i.e. two 2nd graders and one 3rd grader—present the 2nd grade course).

NOTE: ALL religious educators are required to have: 1) a current background check on file at the diocese, and 2) a current training certificate in the Adult Training Program.

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In summary:

1. Set a date for the training.
2. Provide parent letter with the date of the session (**Attachment A**).
3. Secure opt-out forms from parents opting their children out (**Attachment B**) (**originals** to be sent to diocese with your final report). If a child attends a Catholic School and receives the training at school, please submit an Opt-out form indicating “the training was received at school.”
4. If parents opted their children out, please submit their names and addresses to the diocese for follow up from our office.
5. Submit required materials to the diocese.

NOTES:

- Please be ready to communicate with parents that there is a difference between safe environment education and sex education. Safe Environment deals with appropriate boundaries with other people. It is **NOT** sex education.
- Parents of children in Catholic Schools may **not** opt out of the Training.
- Do **not** provide the Opt-out Form to parents with the initial letter – parents must request the form.
- Training can be provided with parents present (preferred) or without parents in attendance.

Step 1: Parent Letter Advising of Training Dates (Attachment A).

This **sample letter** outlines the program’s purpose and content as well as the annual requirement for children PreK-12, and when and where this year’s training sessions will be held. Note the addition of comments from Bishop Warfel.

Step 2: Opt out Form (Attachment B) NOT AVAILABLE FOR SCHOOL USE

The *Parent Opt-out Form* must be requested by the parent(s) in order to opt their child/children out of the training. Please be sure forms are complete and that parents have listed a reason for opting out.

- If a child attends a Catholic School and receives training there, please note this on the form.
- The form must also be signed by the parent(s).
- Return the **original** form to the Diocese along with your reporting form.
- Complete the deadline notice at the bottom of the form. If the form is not received back by the specified date, the child should receive the training with the rest of the class. If no opt-out form is received and the child is not present for the class, they should be counted as absent.

Step 3: Training Sessions

Provide the age-appropriate training session. There should be a designated time and place for each age group.

The approved programming materials in the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings are:

- 1) Safe & Sacred Children’s Learning Program
- 2) Circles of Care

Step 4: Report to the Diocese / Tracking Form – (Attachment C)

A copy of this form is enclosed with these materials. After the parish or school training is complete, the individual providing the training or the DRE if applicable must fill out the tracking form and submit it to the diocese.

- **Parent Opt-out Form.** Please be sure to have additional copies of the Parent Opt-Out Form available. **Original**, completed and signed opt-out forms **must** be **returned to the diocese** along with the tracking form.
- **Letter advising of no religious education training (Attachment D).** If your parish does not have a religious education program, send a copy of this letter to the diocese printed on parish letterhead.

Step 5: Follow up for those who Opt-out or are Absent.

Please provide the diocese with the names and addresses for parents of children who were opted-out or absent for the training (for other than received it at school). A follow-up letter will be sent from the Bishop providing parents with options for in-home use.

Step 6

Ensure that your parish and/or school has posted the ***How to Report Child Abuse and File a Complaint (Attachment E)*** poster in parish/school buildings where it can be viewed easily by the public. This attachment may be utilized however, all parishes/schools should have the poster sized fliers prominently displayed. Please contact the diocese if you need posters.

Step 7: Compliance with Audit

Once steps 1-4 have been completed the *Pastor Letter – Compliance with Audit (Attachment F)* must be placed on parish/school letterhead to create a final message to the Bishop. This letter is required as part of the audit process and **must be signed by the Pastor or Principal only**. Letters signed by individuals who conducted the training will be returned for appropriate signature.

Final Important Notes:

- The pastor or principal must provide **specific** numbers of students for each grade level.
- The parish **must** be able to demonstrate for **each** child that the child attended an age-appropriate session, or the parent opted the child out of the program.
- Remember that if a parent opted out, you need to provide the diocese with their name and address for a follow-up letter from the Bishop.
- All of this information must be reported accurately (through proper paperwork) to the Diocese.
- **Children attending Catholic schools may not be opted out of the program.**

There is a provision for parents to Opt their children out of the program. The Opt-out feature is **not** left to the discretion of the parish. Only parents may opt out their children as they are the primary teachers of their children.

Thank you! I am grateful for your cooperation in meeting the requirements. Though this process is not always easy, it is required to fulfill our commitment to the Church to protect all of God's children.



(Continued, next page)

Enclosures ([also available on Diocesan web site](#)):

- *Parent Letter Advising of Training Dates ([Attachment A](#))
- *Opt-Out Form ([Attachment B](#))
- *Tracking Form ([Attachment C](#))
- *Letter Advising of no Religious Education Training in a parish ([Attachment D](#))
- *How to Report Child Abuse and File a Complaint ([Attachment E](#)) or call the Diocese for posters.
- *Pastor Letter – Compliance with Audit ([Attachment F](#))

Items that must be turned into the diocese:

1. Attachment C “Audit Form”, OR Attachment D “Letter of NO Religious Ed Being Held
2. Attachment B, where applicable (opt-out forms, signed by parents)
If you have parents who opt-out of the program, please remit their address(es) to the diocese.
3. Attachment F “*Pastor Letter – Compliance with Audit*”
4. NEW this year: Adult Training Certificates for all the presenters/teachers need to be sent in to the diocese as part of the documentation.

Return required documents to:

Diocese of Great Falls-Billings
ATTN: Director - Safe Environment
PO Box 1399
Great Falls, MT 59403-1399

DEADLINE: [Friday, May 6, 2022](#)



Parent Letter Advising of Training Dates

<Place on Parish/School Letterhead>

RE: Safe Environment Program

<Date>

Dear Parent,

Out of concern for all God’s people and in response to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, we will be presenting a safe environment curriculum for our children and young people which is supported and mandated by the Bishop of the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings.

“Dioceses will establish ‘safe environment’ programs. They will cooperate with parents, civil authorities, educators, and community organizations to provide education and training for children, youth, parents, ministers, educators, and others about ways to make and maintain a safe environment for children. Dioceses will make clear to clergy and members of the community the standards of conduct for clergy and other persons in positions of trust with regard to sexual abuse.” - Article 12 of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People

We have taken many steps in recent years to do our part in ensuring that your children are in a safe place when they participate in our program. All of our staff and volunteers have received the required background checks and training. The goal of our age-appropriate lessons is to equip our children and young people by arming them with essential knowledge and skills grounded in the richness of our faith. This program helps children and young people to understand their own and other’s dignity in mind, body, and spirit.

The program for children in grades _____ will be held:

Date: _____

Time: _____

Place: _____

Sincerely yours in Christ,

[Pastor/Principal]

NOTE FROM BISHOP WARFEL:

Parents,

“As Bishop I insist that our parishes and schools be as safe as we can possibly make them for our children. This is a responsibility that I take seriously and insist upon, not simply to fulfill the requirements as set forth in the **Charter for Protection of Children and Young People**, but because I want to ensure the safety of all children. Safe Environment training is **not** a sex education program, but a program designed to talk to children about relationships, character development, and sexual abuse. For most people, these are not easy subjects to navigate. Therefore, the program includes engaging, age-appropriate processes to help parents discuss these sensitive issues directly with their own children. This program and others like it are supported by the Bishops of the US as well as the Holy Father, Pope Francis.”

In Christ,



Michael W. Warfel
Bishop of Great Falls-Billings



Parent Opt-out Form

Safe Environment Presentations/Training

Each year parishes in the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings offer safe environment training designed to educate young people with regard to safe environments and how to protect themselves. Our Diocese recognizes that parents are the primary educators of their children. As a parent, you have the right to allow your children to participate in the safe environment training offered by the parish, or to utilize the programming materials yourself. If you choose to exclude your child/children from this training, please complete this form but before you do so, please read the following statistics:

Before the age of 18

- 1 out of every 4 girls is sexually abused.
- 1 out of every 6 boys is sexually abused.
- 1 in 5 children are solicited sexually while on the internet.
- Nearly 70% of all reported sexual assaults (including assaults on adults) occur to children ages 17 and under.
- The median age for reported child abuse is 9 years old.
- 85% of child abuse victims never report their abuse.
- Nearly 50% of all victims of forcible sodomy, sexual assault with an object, and forcible fondling are children under 12.
- More than 90% of abusers are people children know, love and trust.
- 30-40% of victims are abused by a family member.
- 50% are abused by someone outside of the family whom they know and trust.
- Evidence that a child has been sexually abused is not always obvious, and many children do not report that they have been abused.
- Young victims may not recognize their victimization as sexual abuse.
- Nearly 70% of child sex offenders have between 1 and 9 victims...at least 20% have 10 to 40 victims.
- An average serial child molester may have as many as 400 victims in his lifetime.
- Nearly 50% of women in prison state that they were abused as children.
- Over 75% of serial rapists report they were sexually abused as youngsters.
- The way a victim's family responds to abuse plays an important role in how the incident affects the victim.
- Sexually abused children who keep it a secret or who "tell" and are not believed are at greater risk than the general population for psychological, emotional, social, and physical problems often lasting into adulthood.
- Women who report childhood rape are 3 times more likely to become pregnant before age 18.
- An estimated 60% of teen first pregnancies are preceded by experiences of molestation, rape, or attempted rape. The average age of their offender is 27 years.
- Victims of child sexual abuse are more likely to be sexually promiscuous.
- More than 75% of teenage prostitutes have been sexually abused.
- An estimated 42 million survivors of childhood sexual abuse exist in America today.

Consequences of child sexual abuse begin affecting children and families immediately. They also affect society in innumerable and negative ways. These effects can continue throughout the life of the survivor so the impact on society for just one survivor continues over multiple decades. Try to imagine the impact of 42 million survivors--the number of survivors in America today. Prevention education is proven to be effective in reducing these statistics. We can all play a role in protecting children! Together we can make a difference!



Please return this form to your parish religious education director; our diocese must comply with the USCCB Office of Child Protection in tracking every child.

To: Parish Religious Education Director

From: _____
(please print name)

I am requesting that my child/children be out of the classroom when Safe Environment training takes place. I understand that instructional materials for home use are available.

1. The name(s) of my child/children I am requesting **not** receive this instruction:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Classroom Teacher</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

2. Please provide a reason(s) why you have chosen to have your child/children opt-out of this training. check here if your child(ren) received this training at school

3. I prefer to present these materials to my child/children in our home. Please contact me with instructions on securing the materials available.

You will receive a letter from the Bishop with instructions on how to access training from home.

Mailing address: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

If this form is not returned by _____, we will assume you support your child's attendance at this parish/school training.

NOTE FROM BISHOP WARFEL:

“As Bishop I insist that our parishes and schools be as safe as we can possibly make them for our children. This is a responsibility that I take seriously and insist upon, not simply to fulfill the requirements as set forth in the *Charter for Protection of Children and Young People*, but because I want to ensure the safety of all children. Safe Environment training is **not** a sex education program, but a program designed to talk to children about relationships, character development, and sexual abuse. For most people, these are not easy subjects to navigate. Therefore, the program includes engaging, age-appropriate processes to help parents discuss these sensitive issues directly with their own children. This program and others like it are supported by the Bishops of the US as well as the Holy Father, Pope Francis.”

In Christ,

Michael W. Warfel
Bishop of Great Falls-Billings



Audit Form Data Submission Annual Location Audit Data Entry Form

Use this form to enter your annual safe environment audit data for **7/1/2021 – 6/30/2022**.

- 1.* Please enter your name: _____
- 2.* List the primary location for which you are reporting safe environment audit information (parish/city): _____
- 3.* List all the **ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS** for which you are submitting audit data on this submission only. *Note: you should submit data for each location separately by completing this form one time for each location unless your locations report together.*

- 4.* Select all grade groups included in this report for your location.

<input type="checkbox"/> PreK – K	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 – 2
<input type="checkbox"/> 3 – 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 – 6
<input type="checkbox"/> 7 – 8	<input type="checkbox"/> High School
- 5.* **Children and Youth:** Enter total number of children and youth, include all students (though high school) enrolled in parish/school religious education classes: _____
- 6.* **Children and Youth:** Number Trained: _____
Note: this only applies to children trained by religious educators at the parish or school. It does NOT include children taught at home by their parents.
- 7.* **Children and Youth:** a. Number of Opt-outs* (**Schools may NOT opt-out**): _____
b. Number of children who received training at school: _____
*Opt-outs: Please attach separate sheet listing parent(s) name & address & child (ren) name.
- 8.* **Children and Youth:** Number Absent: _____
- 9.* Select the program(s) used in this training period in your location.
 - Safe & Sacred Children’s Learning Program
 - Circles of Care
- 10.* Name(s) of Adults presenting the Safe Environment Program in your parish/school:

- 11.* Total Number of Trained Adults in this Audit Period (**7/1/21 – 6/30/22**) who have received a Certificate of Completion for your parish/school: _____
- 12.* I certify that the numbers included in this report for the selected location are correct and accurate for the time period specified.
 - Yes No

Signature

Date

Printed Name

Letter Advising Diocese of No Religious Education held in the Parish

<Place on Parish/School Letterhead>

<Date>

Most Reverend Michael W. Warfel
Diocese of Great Falls-Billings
PO Box 1399
Great Falls, MT 59403-1399

Dear Bishop Warfel,

With this letter I am officially advising that _____ parish has not provided any religious education training for the July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022 year. The reason for this is

_____. As such, the requirement for child protection training is not necessary. I further state there will be no children receiving the Sacraments of First Communion and Confirmation from our parish this calendar year.

In accordance with Diocesan policy, we have properly posted contact information for our Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator. All employees and volunteers with access to children or vulnerable adults have participated in the Safe and Sacred Safe-Environment Program training as required by the *Revised 2005 Charter and Norms for the Protection of Children and Young Persons*. All employees and volunteers have agreed to abide by the Diocesan Code of Conduct, and a current background check is on file with the diocesan office.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Signature

This form is
available in
Poster size
by
contacting
the Diocese

HOW TO REPORT CHILD ABUSE AND FILE A COMPLAINT

To report allegations of sexual abuse or to obtain information
regarding
the implementation of the USCCB
Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People

please contact:

Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator
Teresa Schmit
at:

Victim Assistance Confidential Line:
406-750-2373
or

E-mail: victimassistancecoord@gmail.com

Diocese of Great Falls-Billings
Safe Environment Policies
available at:

www.diocesegfb.org

**All information received will be treated with confidentiality. All victims are
advised of their right to report the alleged abuse to public authorities.**

Please note: If you are a mandated reporter, it is necessary to report suspected physical abuse to the State Department of Child & Family Services at 1-866-820-5437.

Sample Pastor Letter – Compliance with Audit

Use this letter as your cover letter to the Bishop. All other attachments and forms will be attached to this letter.

*This letter does not need to be completed IF you completed Attachment D (letter that advises of NO religious ed.

<Place on Parish/School Letterhead>

<DATE>

Most Rev. Michael W. Warfel
Diocese of Great Falls-Billings
P O Box 1399
Great Falls, MT 59403

Dear Bishop Warfel,

I am writing to inform you that _____ in _____, MT has/have completed training for the July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022 audit year and is/are in compliance with the *Revised 2005 Charter and Norms for the Protection of Children and Young Persons*.

In accordance with Diocesan policy, we have properly posted contact information for our Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator. All employees and volunteers have participated in the Safe and Sacred Safe-Environment Program, all employees and volunteers have agreed to abide by the Diocesan Code of Conduct, and a current background check is on file with the diocesan office.

Children and youth enrolled in religious education programs, and/or children and youth enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12, have participated in the annual age-appropriate training in compliance with standard Diocesan policy.

Thanking all involved in this important ministry, I am

Sincerely,

Pastor/Principal Signature (only)