



# DIOCESE OF GREAT FALLS-BILLINGS

## OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

P.O. Box 1399 \* Great Falls, Montana 59403 \* (406) 727-6683

www.diocesegfb.org



## MEMORANDUM

To: Pastors, Parochial Vicars, PLCs, School Principals, DREs, Catechists, Volunteers  
From: Bishop Jeffrey Fleming  
Date: January 8, 2024  
Subject: Safe Environment Training for Children

In 2002, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops promulgated the Charter for Protection of Children and Young Adults. This Charter is a solemn commitment on behalf of the bishops to the people of God to establish and maintain in all dioceses Safe Environment programs to responsibly educate and train children, youth, parents, ministers, educators, and volunteers about ways to make and maintain a safe environment of children. As Bishop of the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings, I mandate safe environment training for all children in accord with the USCCB Charter and Norms for the Protection of Children and vulnerable populations.

These are not just “hoops” that we jump through. These are part of our call and commitment to ensure the safety of our children. It is our moral obligation and duty! A duty and obligation that we cannot ignore or take lightly.

We will again utilize the same programs that we have used in the past couple of years for the Children’s Learning Program: “Circle of Grace” and “Circles of Care”.

I am not only asking, but requiring, that this program be positively promoted and utilized throughout our diocese, in all parishes and schools. This is for the safety and wellbeing of those most vulnerable. We have a sacred duty to ensure our children are safe and know how to respond when they might find themselves in uncomfortable situations or faced with inappropriate behavior. Simply not presenting the program is an injustice to our children.

Please remember that all employees and volunteers of the Diocese are **mandatory** reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect.

Barbara Haacke is the Director of Safe Environment for our diocese and is happy to answer questions anyone may have. Attached to this memo are instructions for completing the requirements for the 2023-2024 year. Parishes that do not offer religious Education are required to submit proper paperwork as well. Please read the instructions carefully, complete your training sessions with the children in your parish and submit the pertinent documentation by:

**DEADLINE: FRIDAY, MAY 10, 2024**

I ask your full cooperation in adhering to these policies for the safety of all. **The Pastor/Administrator/Principal is ultimately responsible for adherence to this policy!** However, I know that it would not be possible without the help of all involved.

Thank you for your diligent work toward complying with this sacred duty to ensure a safe environment for all.

In June 2022 the bishops of the United States approved the seventeen articles of the Charter for the Protection of Young People, which are the basis for the protection, healing and support of our children. This is the commitment we make to our young and vulnerable populations to maintain safe environments in all dioceses in the country.

The following are instructions for completing the Children’s Learning Program. You will complete *either* Section 1: NO religious education (R.E.) provided at your location, or Section 2: for parishes and schools who DO provide this R.E.

**Section 1: Religious Education is NOT Provided at your parish:**

If your parish is NOT providing any religious education training for the year July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024, you must send a letter to the Bishop stating this fact and give a reason why. A sample letter follows that you may copy and paste onto your church letterhead. The deadline is May 10, 2024. **Attachment D.**

Please note that you are signing a document that will be reported to the USCCB. Part of this letter states that all employees participate in the Safe Environment program. If any of your employees are not yet in the Safe Environment database, it is the responsibility of the parish Priest to be sure they will register, take the background check and complete the training course.

**Sample Letter Advising Diocese of No Religious Education held in the Parish**

<p data-bbox="230 993 673 1039">&lt;Place on Parish/School Letterhead&gt;</p> <p data-bbox="1193 1039 1274 1081" style="text-align: right;">&lt;Date&gt;</p> <p data-bbox="230 1102 641 1228">Most Reverend Jeffrey M. Fleming Diocese of Great Falls-Billings PO Box 1399 Great Falls, MT 59403-1399</p> <p data-bbox="230 1249 495 1291">Dear Bishop Fleming,</p> <p data-bbox="230 1312 1386 1417">With this letter I am officially advising that _____ parish has not provided any religious education training for the July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024 year. The reason for this is _____</p> <p data-bbox="230 1459 1386 1564">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.</p> <p data-bbox="230 1585 1274 1648">In accordance with Diocesan policy, we have properly posted contact information for our Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator.</p> <p data-bbox="230 1669 1386 1837">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 <i>Revised 2005 Charter and Norms for the Protection of Children and Young Persons</i>. 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.</p> <p data-bbox="230 1858 422 1900">Yours in Christ,</p> <p data-bbox="230 1942 812 1984">_____ Pastor Signature</p>
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**Section 2: Religious Education IS provided at your parish and/or school.**  
**Instructions for completing the Safe Environment Children's Program**  
**Period: July 1, 2023- June 30, 2024**

**NOTES**

- 1) All religious educators are required to be compliant in the Safe Environment Adult Training Program BEFORE working with children. Religious Educators are considered mandatory reporters and therefore, are required to have:
- a) a current background check on file at the diocese
  - b) a current training certificate in the Adult Training Program.
- 2) The Safe Environment Coordinator is required to make copies of training certificates for each presenter of your program which will be sent to the diocese with your audit form due May 10, 2024. This includes the certificate for the pastor and the DRE.

The two program options that approved for children's training in 2023-2024 are:



**Option 1: Circle of Grace**, Offered by the Archdiocese of Omaha  
Website: [www.cogpartners.org](http://www.cogpartners.org)

The Goal of the Circle of Grace Program is to educate and empower children and young people to actively participate in a safe environment for themselves and others.

Circle of Grace® is a copyrighted program and we ask that you only share the username and password with those leaders who you would normally have access to the full curriculum. Examples would be parents, principals, religious formation directors, youth ministers and theology teachers. As partners, you have the right to make as many copies of the lessons and materials as you need for use in your programs. Lessons and resources can be downloaded and emailed to those teaching the lessons, as well as parent letters for each grade. No part of the Circle of Grace® curriculum (lessons, resources or any materials) can be posted or shared on any website or platform that is not secured or password protected.

Your licensed Circle of Grace® login information:

Website: [www.cogpartners.org](http://www.cogpartners.org)

Username: [GreatFalls-BillingsDiocese](#)

Password: [PartnersCOG\\*GFB65!](#)

Partner dioceses have the right to make as many copies of the lessons and materials as you need for use in your programs. Lessons and resources can be downloaded and emailed to those teaching the lessons, as well as parent letters and resources to parents.

**NOTE: No part of the Circle of Grace curriculum (lessons, resources, or any materials) can be posted or shared on any website or platform that is not password protected.**

A principal's thoughts...

*"Circle of Grace is not a program. It is the 'way' we interact, the 'way' we care for each other and the 'way' we connect to God's love for us. Everything we do connected to Circle of Grace is supported and guided by our Catholic faith. 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."*  
Archdiocese of Omaha



## Option 2: Circles of Care Lesson Plans

This program was originally developed by the Diocese of Manchester and is available with their permission.

This program may be accessed on our website: [www.diocesegfb.org](http://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.
- **1<sup>st</sup> 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.*
- **2<sup>nd</sup> 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.*
- **3<sup>rd</sup> Grade lesson**
- **4<sup>th</sup> Grade lesson**
- **5<sup>th</sup> Grade lesson**
- **6<sup>th</sup> Grade lesson**

#### Middle School

- **7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grade lesson**

#### High School

- **Ice Breaker Activities**
- **9<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> Grade lesson** (an initial lesson for high school students)

Additional topics for High School if 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade lesson above has already been presented to the students in the past.

- **Relationships with Relationships Handouts**
- **Bullying**
- **Hazing**
- **Sexting**

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 2<sup>nd</sup> graders and one 3<sup>rd</sup> grader—present the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade course).

**NOTE:** *Religious Educators are considered mandatory reporters and therefore, are required to have:*

- 1) *a current background check on file at the diocese*
- 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. If needed, secure opt-out forms from parents opting their children out (**Attachment B**). **Originals** will be sent to the 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. Opt-outs. If parents opt their child(ren) out of the Childrens’ Learning Program, the parish must present the printed materials to the parent(s) so that the parent has the materials and may use them for instruction at home. In other words, copies of the materials being presented will be given to the parents. They will sign **Attachment B** indicating that they have received the age-appropriate materials from you.
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.
- 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 Fleming.

**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 the forms are complete and that parents have listed a reason for opting out.

- **NEW this year.** If a parent opts their child out of the program, be prepared to give them the training materials so that they can present the materials at home. They will sign a form saying that they have received the age-appropriate materials.

***Note:** often times parents will opt their children out of the program because they do not know what is being presented. Offering the program materials to the parents ahead of time will give them the opportunity to review what is being presented.*

- 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**

I encourage you to provide the training materials to parents before presenting them to the children. You may invite the parents to join the class as well.

- The Circle of Grace program has developed a “Parents First” handout. Copies of these age-appropriate handouts may be made and given to parents – to those who opt-out **AND** to those whose children will be taking the class. This is not mandatory but will give the parent(s) the opportunity to read about age-appropriate topics. “Parents First” is not intended for children.
- Provide the age-appropriate training session. Establish a designated time and place for each age group.

The approved programming materials in the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings are: 1) Circle of Grace, and 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. Completed forms may be emailed to Barbara Haacke at the Chancery.

- **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 age-appropriate copies of the presentation being taught and give them to the parents when necessary and/or requested.

### **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. Most schools and parishes have placed this poster in multiple locations (school/parish office, bathrooms, counseling office, school announcement bulletin boards, etc.) This attachment may be utilized. However, all parishes/schools should have the poster sized fliers prominently displayed.

- *This poster was updated in October 2023 and was distributed during Parish Leadership Day. All diocesan locations must have the new poster. Please contact Barbara Haacke if you need posters.*

### **Step 7: Compliance with Audit (Attachment F)**

Once steps 1-4 have been completed the *Pastor Letter – Compliance with Audit* 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 them with age-appropriate training materials so they may make the presentation at home.
- 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.**

The provision for parents to opt-out their children from the program 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. We are all a part of the Ministry of Safe Environment.



**Enclosures:**

- \*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: DEADLINE: Monday, May 10, 2024**

1. NO R.E.: Attachment D: "Letter of NO Religious Ed Being Held"
2. Yes, we have R.E.: remit Attachment C: Audit Form; Attachment B, where applicable (opt-out forms, signed by parents)
3. Attachment F "*Pastor Letter – Compliance with Audit*"
4. Adult Training Certificates for all the presenters/teachers need to be sent 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



**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]**

“The Diocese of Great Falls-Billings and I take very seriously the responsibility of ensuring that our parishes and schools are safe, open, welcoming, and protective of all people, especially our children. It is a shared responsibility with you. The U.S. Bishops’ **Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People** and our own safe environment policies require that all children in our parishes and schools receive age-appropriate safety training on an annual basis. We are using the *Circle of Grace* program which helps children and young people understand their own sacredness, the sacredness of others, and how to seek help through their relationships with trusted adults. The *Circle of Grace* program is strongly rooted in our Catholic moral teaching. It is NOT a sex education program. These are not easy subjects to talk about, but our program can aid parents in discussing these sensitive issues directly with their children. Parents can review the content of this curriculum by contacting your parish’s director of religious education, the school principal, or the diocesan safe environment coordinator.

In Christ,



Jeffrey Fleming  
Bishop of Great Falls-Billings”



2023/2024  
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 regarding 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!

"The Diocese of Great Falls-Billings and I take very seriously the responsibility of ensuring that our parishes and schools are safe, open, welcoming, and protective of all people, especially our children. It is a shared responsibility with you. The U.S. Bishops' **Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People** and our own safe environment policies require that all children in our parishes and schools receive age-appropriate safety training on an annual basis. We are using the *Circle of Grace* program which helps children and young people understand their own sacredness, the sacredness of others, and how to seek help through their relationships with trusted adults. The *Circle of Grace* program is strongly rooted in our Catholic moral teaching. It is NOT a sex education program. These are not easy subjects to talk about, but our program can aid parents in discussing these sensitive issues directly with their children. Parents can review the content of this curriculum by contacting your parish's director of religious education, the school principal, or the diocesan safe environment coordinator.

In Christ,

  
Jeffrey Fleming

Bishop of Great Falls-Billings"

**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.

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.  
***I have received the age-appropriate teaching materials from the religious educator at our parish.***

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.**



# Audit Form Data Submission Annual Location Audit Data Entry Form

Use this form to enter your annual safe environment audit data for **July 1, 2023- June 30, 2024.**

- 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: submit data for each location separately by completing this form one time for each location unless your locations report together.*

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- 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 (through 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 opt-out forms with your audit report.

8.\* **Children and Youth:** Number Absent: \_\_\_\_\_

- 9.\* Select the program(s) used in this training period in your location.
  - Circle of Grace
  - Circles of Care

10.\* Name(s) of Adults presenting the Safe Environment Program in your parish/school. **Please remit copies of the Adult Training Program training certificate for each presenter, including the pastor** (training certificate, NOT background check).

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11.\* 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

<Place on Parish/School Letterhead>

<Date>

Re: Letter Advising Diocese of No Religious Education held in the Parish

Most Reverend Jeffrey M. Fleming  
Diocese of Great Falls-Billings  
PO Box 1399  
Great Falls, MT 59403-1399

Dear Bishop Fleming,

With this letter I am officially advising that \_\_\_\_\_ parish has not provided any religious education training for the July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024 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-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

PROMISE TO  
PROTECT



PLEDGE TO  
HEAL

**The Diocese of Great Falls-Billings is committed to the care and protection of children, young people, & vulnerable adults.**

**If you or someone you know has been or is at risk of being abused by a member of the clergy, a church employee, or volunteer, please contact our  
Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator.**

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

Please note:

If it is an emergency situation or someone is in immediate danger, please call 911.  
If you are a mandated reporter, it is necessary to report suspected physical abuse to the State Department of Child & Family Services at (866) 820-5437.



**Diocese of  
Great Falls-Billings**

121 23rd Street South,  
Great Falls, MT 59401  
(406) 727-6683

Safe Environment Polices for the  
Diocese of Great Falls-Billings are  
available at: [www.diocesegfb.org](http://www.diocesegfb.org).



**Diocesan Victim Assistance  
Coordinator:**

**Teresa Schmit**

**Confidential: (406) 750-2373**

## **Attachment F**

### **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. Jeffrey M. Fleming  
Diocese of Great Falls-Billings  
P O Box 1399  
Great Falls, MT 59403

Dear Bishop Fleming,

I am writing to inform you that \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_, MT has/have completed training for the July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024 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
- 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.

I thank all involved in this important ministry.

Sincerely,

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Pastor/Principal Signature