



DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH THE BISHOP'S OFFICE



A Statement from Bishop Kevin W. Vann “On Victim Assistance Ministry & Safe Environment Training” June 9, 2011

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

The Office of Victim Assistance Ministry was created in the Diocese of Fort Worth in 2002 in response to the U.S. Bishops' document, *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* (2002, 2005). The director of this office meets with and coordinates pastoral care and services for victims of sexual abuse and their families. This assistance is an outgrowth and a reminder of the Church's responsibility to provide for the healing of victims of sexual abuse. Today, this call is extended to each one of us, working together to ensure the safety of every person in our parishes and related ministries.

The assistance provided by the office of Victim Assistance Ministry is aligned with the work of the Office of Child and Youth Protection which oversees our Safe Environment Programs. Safe Environment Programs include training, education, and screening for all clergy, staff members, and volunteers in the diocese. It also includes age-appropriate education for parents of Pre-school children, children in kindergarten through 6th grade, and youth in grades 7 through 12. The child and youth programs focus on respect, appropriate boundaries, and self-protection. Programs for adults are aimed at safeguarding our children and youth by training adults to understand the effects of sexual abuse, to recognize the signs of sexual abuse, and to learn effective ways to keep our parishes and programs safe for all people.

In 2008, I extended the Safe Environment Training requirement to include every individual involved in a recognized ministry in the diocese. The Initial Training, “Called to Protect: Keeping Children Safe,” is offered throughout the diocese in live sessions staffed by Safe Environment Trainers and their Coordinators. In addition to the training, all individuals are required to complete a Criminal Background Check and to review and sign an agreement to abide by the Diocesan Code of Conduct. Every three years, clergy, staff, and volunteers are required to renew their initial training through online or live advanced level training and an updated Criminal Background Check.

A statement from the *Preamble* of the *Charter* describes our shared mission: “As we work to restore trust, we are reminded how Jesus showed constant care for the vulnerable. In Matthew 25, the Lord, in his commission to his apostles and disciples, told them that whenever they show mercy and compassion to the least ones, they show it to him.” Only through our joint prayers and actions, now and going into the future, can we promote and achieve a culture where *all* individuals will safely – and joyfully – grow in faith and commitment to life in Jesus Christ.

+ Bishop Kevin W. Vann

THE CATHOLIC CENTER

800 West Loop 820 South • Fort Worth, Texas 76108-2919 • (817) 560-3300 • Fax (817) 244-8839 • www.fwdioc.org