

CATECHIST HANDBOOK

Forming Intentional Disciples of Jesus Christ

“The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ” (Catechesi Tradendae #5).

MOTHER OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE PREP AND IGNITE PROGRAM CATECHIST HANDBOOK

THIS HANDBOOK CONTAINS CERTAIN POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR CATECHISTS AND VOLUNTEERS SERVING IN THE PREP AND IGNITE PROGRAMS AT MOTHER OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE. THE PROGRAM MAY CHANGE ANY OF ITS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES AS NEEDED AND APPLY THEM AS CIRCUMSTANCES DICTATE.

IN THE EVENT OF SUCH A CHANGE STAFF WILL BE GIVEN PROMPT NOTIFICATION AND PROVIDED WITH AN ADDENDUM IF NECESSARY.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT A PARTICULAR POLICY OR PROCEDURE PLEASE CONTACT THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR.

CATECHISTS AND STAFF MUST ACCEPT AND ABIDE BY THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES CONTAINED IN THIS HANDBOOK IN ORDER TO SERVE IN MINISTRY WITH MOTHER OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

[Latest revision date: October 14,2020]

**MOTHER OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE PARISH
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION – CHILDREN’S FAITH FORMATION PROGRAM
CATECHETICAL STAFF HANDBOOK – revised October 2020**

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The purpose of this handbook is to set forth the guidelines for those that participate in Mother of Divine Providence Religious Education Program. This handbook and the policies contained within are subject to revision in which case volunteers will be notified in writing of any changes.



MOTHER OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE PARISH MISSION STATEMENT



“WE THE PARISH OF MOTHER OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE,
ARE OF THE ONE, HOLY, CATHOLIC AND APOSTOLIC CHURCH.
NOURISHED BY EUCHARIST AND GUIDED BY THE EXAMPLE OF
MARY OUR MOTHER,
WE ARE CALLED TO OPEN OURSELVES TO AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP
WITH OUR LORD, JESUS CHRIST.
AS A WELCOMING COMMUNITY, WE STRIVE TO LIVE OUR CATHOLIC FAITH
AND TO FOSTER AND SHARE THIS FAITH THROUGH WORSHIP,
EDUCATION AND SERVICE.”

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

*“Parents above others are obliged to form their children in the faith and practice of the Christian life by word and example; godparents and those who take the place of parents are bound by an equivalent obligation”
(Canon Law Can. 774 §2).*

The General Directory for Catechesis and the National Directory for Catechesis resound the same sentiment. Mother of Divine Providence Religious Education – Children’s Faith Formation Program recognizes and embraces parents in their role as the primary catechists of their children as they strive to fulfill this special role. Our mission is to assist parents in providing sound catechesis on the catechism and teachings of the Catholic Church so that their children will be formed in the faith of the Catholic tradition. This is accomplished by providing parents with a variety of resources and programs that will enable their children to cultivate a deep appreciation and understanding of what it means to be a Catholic Christian in today’s changing world. The Parish Religious Education Program provides children with ample opportunities to live and experience their faith through catechesis, service community and worship.

CORE PRINCIPLES

To achieve our mission, the core principles listed below form the foundation and strength of our Religious Education Programs. Through the application of these core principles, it is our hope that we assist parents in cultivating their hearts, minds and souls, and those of their children in order to become the person God has called and created them to be.

- To nurture and develop the dignity of the individual as a unique child of God who is created in His image and likeness and a reflection of His goodness.
- To instill in each individual a faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and foster a committed response to His love as intentional disciples.
- To present the doctrine of the Catholic faith as both knowledge to be learned and as life to be lived.
- To live in awareness that sacramental life is central to expressing our love for God and that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the Real Presence of our Lord in the Eucharist is the source and summit of our faith.
- To seek the Lord's infinite mercy, love, and the very gift of Himself in the sacraments of Penance (Reconciliation) and Eucharist (Communion).
- To cultivate a reverence for God's Word and an understanding of how God uses His Word to speak to us.
- To seek the example of Mary and the Saints as they model for us how we can become the Saint God has called and created each of us to be.
- To develop the individual's moral life through sound catechesis that properly forms the conscience through the practical application of the Gospel message, Commandments, Beatitudes, and the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy.
- To embrace the virtues as the key to living our daily life as Catholic Christians.
- To foster communion with God through Prayer and growth in the individual's spiritual life through the Mass, Rosary, personal prayer, and devotions that are experienced through participation in our programs.
- To realize the profound truth that God has created all things for His glory and honor and that the dignity of creation and especially the human person need to be respected accordingly.

In addition, the Religious Education Programs assist parents in their God given role as educators in the faith life of their children by:

- Providing religious education classes for children.
- Providing opportunities for prayer, adoration, service, liturgy, and stewardship within

- the program for students, parents, and families.
- Providing opportunities for families to participate in liturgies, seasonal activities, and works of mercy.
- Providing regular opportunities for families to become involved in participant assignments and projects.

POSITION REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Must be at least 18 years of age. Every volunteer is required to have a current State Police Background check and PA Child Abuse History Clearance check on file with the parish in order to be eligible to serve in the faith formation programs. Background checks must be on file within 30 days of beginning service in ministry. Volunteer are required to renew these background checks every five years.
- 2) Volunteers must also complete a federal background check. This background check must be on file within 30 days of beginning service ministry.
- 3) Certain enumerated offenses on the required background checks would preclude a person from being a volunteer.
- 4) All adult volunteers must complete the Archdiocesan mandated training program entitled, Protecting God’s Children Awareness Session for Adults.
- 5) All volunteers must abide by the Standards of Ministerial Behavior and Boundaries enacted by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.
- 6) Every catechist in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia is required to become certified within their first ten years of teaching.
 - A catechist is certified upon earning sixteen credits (8 required, 8 elective) approved by the Office for Catechetical Formation.

ROLE OF THE CATECHIST

The ministry of catechist is a vocation, an interior call of the Holy Spirit. It springs forth from the Sacrament of Baptism and is strengthened by the Sacrament of Confirmation. Commissioned by the Church, catechists participate in a divine calling to teach a Jesus did. Catechists need to be practicing Catholics who participate fully in the communal worship and life of the Church. They are prepared by the Church for their apostolate through appropriate catechetical training.

Although the Church recognizes parents/guardians as the first teachers of the faith, when a child reaches catechetical age, catechists assist them in their role. Therefore, the spiritual life of the catechist should be characterized by:

- Love of God and the Catholic Church
- Faithful practice of the Catholic faith
- Personal prayer and dedication to the evangelizing mission of the Church
- Missionary zeal by which they are fully convinced of the truth of the Catholic faith
- Enthusiastic proclamation of the faith
- Active participation in their local parish community
- Faithful attendance at Sunday Eucharist
- Devotion to Mary, the first disciple and model of catechists
- Devotion to the Most Holy Eucharist, the source of nourishment for catechists

It follows then that a catechist “must be a person of prayer, one who frequently reflects on the scriptures and whose Christlike living testifies to deep faith” (National Catechetical Directory, 207). Catechists should always model Christian behavior and values. As Christian witnesses, catechists are expected to uphold the teachings of the Catholic Church, not only while engaged in their catechetical ministry, but also in their everyday lives. Failure to do so may result in termination of ministry.

A catechist is

CALLED, CHOSEN, and COMMITTED to:

proclaim, to live, and to celebrate the Message of Christ in His Gospel, to create, to enter into, and to build community and the kingdom of God, which is at the heart of Christian education.

PERSONNEL POLICIES

1. Catechists are to teach what the Church teaches. Catechist Guides have a wealth of information and direct one to the Catechism of the Catholic Church for more background. The Director of Religious Education is always available to help answer questions and clarify information.
2. Catechists/volunteers are required to arrive at least 15 minutes prior to the beginning of the catechetical session. Catechetical sessions are to begin promptly at their appointed time.
3. If a catechist/volunteer is unable to attend a catechetical session at any time due to illness or personal matters, he or she must notify the program director with at least 12 hours notice.
 - ⤴ Ask the assistant to teach the class, or find a substitute from our substitute list.
 - ⤴ If the assistant teaches then a substitute assistant should be secured.
4. Follow the Scope and Sequence in conjunction with the Religion Guides established by the Office for Catholic Education. See Appendix A
5. All meetings will begin and end with a prayer (approved by the DRE)
6. Activates will be assigned to families at the end of each meeting. The catechist is to choose at least two activates from the student workbook. All other assignments must be approved by the DRE before given to the families.
7. **It is not the duty or obligation of a catechist/volunteer to provide transportation to or from the program/events for students or their families. Any catechist/volunteer that does provide transportation for students other than their own does so at their own peril and that individual’s insurance is solely applicable.**
8. Catechists/volunteers are not permitted to distribute any *personal* handouts or letters without the prior approval of the program director. This includes, but is not limited to, material

relating to personal or religious causes. The only exceptions are communiqués regarding tests and homework assignments.

9. Catechists/volunteers are not permitted to sell or solicit products to the program participants or their families without prior approval from the program director.
10. Catechists/volunteers are expected to dress and conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times when actively engaged in ministry.
11. Catechists must present themselves in appropriate clothing (no profane images or language, with a proper standard for modesty).
12. Catechists should attend all Zoom meetings with a professional background. This could be a virtual background or their own home. However, if it is their home, no profane images/language/items should be visible and they should not conduct meetings from their bedroom. **No bed can be visible in the background.**
13. Any supplemental material that the catechists chooses to purchase of their own accord will not be reimbursed by Mother of Divine Providence.
14. Upon return to in person classes: The program has adopted a **NO FOOD** policy. This policy also applies to catechists and program staff. Snacks and food items are not permitted during program hours. This includes the distribution of candy as a reward, or in celebration of holidays. Catechists and staff are asked to assist with the compliance of this policy and can expect full support from the program director. The **ONLY** exception that will be made is for medical necessity such as to accommodate a diabetic child or child with low blood glucose. A doctor's note will be required of families to obtain this exception.
15. **The Director of Religious Education is to be copied on all Parent / Guardian correspondence, please!**

As Christian witnesses, catechists are expected to uphold the teachings of the Catholic Church, not only during their catechetical sessions, but also in their everyday lives. Failure to do so may result in dismissal. Catechists should always model Christian behavior and values.

SUPERVISION OF CATECHISTS

1. The program director may sit in on a catechist's session in order to evaluate the catechist's performance. The purpose of such evaluations is to provide catechists with constructive feedback in written and verbal form that will better assist them in fulfilling their role. Catechists should expect at least two scheduled evaluation to take place during the year.
2. Catechists who are in their first year can expect additional evaluations and mentoring as part of their first year's training.

General Notes:

1. Children are not permitted in a classroom without adult supervision. In the event of an emergency that a catechist must leave the children without adult supervision, the adult assistant from an adjoining classroom must be notified so that the room can be monitored by an adult. If there are two classrooms and one adult, the adult monitor should please stand in the hallway to better keep an eye on both rooms.

Please note that teen assistants do not “count” as adults for legal and classroom management purposes. If the teen assistant is the only “authority” left in a classroom during an emergency, a neighboring catechist/assistant should be also standing in classroom or hallway to monitor the situation.

2. No child is to be without adult supervision in a zoom meeting, gym, classroom, hallway or bathroom. Walk children to the bathroom and wait in the hall. Only a few children should be in the bathroom at a time. If an emergency (medical, fighting, etc) requires you to enter a bathroom with minors, please call another adult to witness the incident and let the program director know about the situation as soon as possible.
3. For fire drills, the assistant leads the children out of the building and the catechist follows the end of the class line for safety. Make sure the children are following you quietly. Walk quickly but do not let them run.

PROFESSIONALISM

Child Abuse

1. According to PA State Law, every catechetical staff member is considered a mandated reporter of child abuse because they are responsible for the welfare of the children that they catechize in addition to forming them in the Catholic Faith. Suspected child abuse must be reported to the Director of Religious Education immediately. Together Director and Catechist will make the necessary phone calls.
2. Catechists must have a reasonable suspicion that child abuse has occurred. When in doubt, it is always better to report the suspected abuse and take the chance of being wrong.
3. Corporal punishment by a staff member is unacceptable and will not be tolerated in any form, including but not limited to, pushing, shoving, pulling hair or limbs, hitting, slapping, etc. Catechists or volunteers who engage in any form of corporal punishment will be dismissed immediately from services and the incident will be reported to the proper authorities.
4. Verbal abuse is also unacceptable. If a child needs to be reprimanded beyond a simple class reminder, he / she is to be separated from the other students (back of the room or hallway) and spoken to in a quiet, patient tone of voice. We are models of behavior for the children, and corrections are to be done in a way that respects the child while at the same time setting firm limits. Use God’s patience if necessary!

Catechists should take the necessary precautions to protect themselves from allegations of inappropriate behavior by exercising proper judgment and adhering to the Archdiocesan **Standards of Ministerial Behavior and Boundaries** (*see pg. 14 Appendix G*)

Confidentiality

1. Confidentiality is generally held to mean that an individual or individuals will keep private information that has been given to them, and will not reveal it. Generally, only confidential information may be shared with a volunteer if such information is needed for the proper administration of the program.
2. While some measure of confidentiality between catechists and students is needed to establish an open and trusting relationship in the classroom, catechists must inform students of the limits to confidentiality. Catechists are legally obligated to reveal information obtained in confidence if such information will prevent the direct or indirect harm of a student or others. Such information should be revealed to the program director who will then notify the parents/guardians, and proper authorities if necessary.
3. Divulging or withholding information revealed in confidence that leads to the direct or indirect harm of an individual will make the catechist liable and subject to possible lawsuit.

4. **Journaling**

CATECHISTS WHO UTILIZE STUDENT JOURNALING AS PART OF THEIR CATECHETICAL INSTRUCTION ARE OBLIGATED TO READ WHAT THE PARTICIPANTS WRITE. Participants should be informed of this at the time of the assignment. If the catechist cannot read the assignment, then the assignment should not be made.

- a. Information revealed in journals that may pose a direct or indirect harm to an individual must be brought to the immediate attention of the program director.
- b. Any writing assignment of any kind must be first approved by the DRE and both the DRE and Catechist will be required to read every word written by the student. Students and parents should be informed of this policy. There is no expectation of student confidentiality when writing is a part of an assignment. If the catechist and DRE cannot read the assignment immediately, then the assignment should not be made.

Sharing our experience of faith is a major part of our formation in faith. Catechists should establish and enforce firm ground rules for sharing such experiences and for dealing with student confidences.

5. *Please note custody information and rights of non-custodial parent. Be aware of this especially at dismissal time.*

6. **Copyrights**

Photocopying may be done of materials on which is stated that the purchaser has the right to make copies to use in the teaching of your students.

NO other printed material may be photocopied unless one has first gotten copyright permission from the publisher.

COMMUNICATIONS

Effective communication in the program is vital for the program's success. The program director is ultimately responsible for all correspondence, which includes correspondence between program staff and students or their family members. When corresponding with parents or guardians, please keep the following in mind:

- *Comments to parents/guardians should pertain to their own children **ONLY**.*
- *Communication should be made **ONLY** to those persons who have a legitimate right to know. Only those who have **Legal Custody** have a legitimate right to know about their own children. Legal custody of a particular child should be known to the program director and communicated to the catechist/volunteer.*
- *The program director **ALWAYS** has a right to know if an incident in anyway involved a student, staff person, or parent during the operation of any parish program.*
- *Recording information on students must be objective and factual. Therefore, all written information should be behavior specific, behaviorally oriented, verifiable, and free from personal opinion.*
- *If a parent desires to speak with a catechist, arrangements should be made to meet with the parent prior to the start of the program or immediately following the program. The program director should be informed of such arrangements once they are made with a parent. The program director may be present for the meeting.*
- *If a catechist or volunteer has a need to speak with a parent, every effort should be made to do so prior to or after the program. The program director should be informed of the desire for and nature of such a meeting prior to arrangements being made by the catechist. The program director may be present for the meeting.*
- *The program director should be included in all discipline related matters and those of a sensitive nature.*
- *Catechists and volunteers should not contact parents or students via any methods listed under **Inappropriate Methods of Communication**.*
- *Catechists should make sure they are familiar with the directives of the Technology Addendum to the Standards of Ministerial Behavior.*

CORRESPONDENCE: INCOMING & OUTGOING

- *At the start of the school year, catechists and group leaders will receive a director-assigned email address which they will use for ALL communications to parents. Catechists are not to use their own personal email address.*
- *They are never to contact the student directly, unless given express permission by the DRE.*
- *All communications between catechists and parents must copy the DRE and any material distributed by catechist must first be approved by the DRE.*

INAPPROPRIATE FORMS/METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

The following list contains methods of communication that should not be used to contact a student or parent. The list is by no means exhaustive and the catechist or volunteer should assume that other methods of communication similar to those listed below would also be deemed inappropriate.

- *Cell phone*
- *Text messaging*
- *Instant messaging*
- *Twitter*
- *Facebook*
- *Skype*
- *Emails using a personal email account*
- *Any social networking website*
- *Chat rooms*

Use of such methods not only violates the program policies established for volunteers and catechist, but can also place the volunteer/catechist at greater risk for accusations of inappropriate behavior by students or their families.

*Catechists and volunteers should **NOT** accept “friend” requests or invitations for social networking websites from students.*

PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

Communication is key to a successful program. Please keep the following contact information on file in your cell phone for easy access at any time.

Program Director: 610-337-2173

Office Phone: 610-265-4178

Cell Phone: 610-500-0072

Email: alamastra@mdpparish.com

CLASS LISTS

All catechists/small group leaders will be provided with a roster of their students’ names as well an email address for a parent/legal guardian. The catechist is **only to contact the parent/legal**

guardian with the contact information provided on their roster. Additionally, the catechist must copy the DRE on all communications. The catechist is **not** to contact any student directly, unless they have received permission to do so by the DRE.

FORMATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Archdiocesan Religion Guidelines and Scope and Sequence

The Religion Guidelines are the same for all the children in the Archdiocese. (See Appendix A for an overview) A complete set of guidelines and the Scope and Sequence for each grade level is available at the following website: <http://phillyocf.org/religion-guidelines/>

Children With Special Needs

*Our Parish Religious Education – Children’s Faith Formation Program does its best to provide for children of all abilities. Children with cognitive, sensory, physical or social disabilities are welcome and encouraged to attend weekly classes. All children develop at their own pace and at various times need individual attention. If a child has difficulty seeing, hearing, delayed reading skills, ADD / Hyperactivity, has an IEP at school, etc. **This information is considered confidential by the catechetical staff.***

Children with special needs are individually assessed and will be accommodated to the best of our ability through classroom site selection, catechist, a personal class assistant or Parent / Guardian’s presence as needed. We strive to offer the best Christian environment for each child to learn about the Catholic Faith and to develop his / her personal relationship with Jesus.

Homework Assignments

All catechists are expected to assign activities at each meeting. This is a vital part of the formational and instructional component of the program as it helps students and families reinforce and broaden classroom learning. Listed below are the expectations of catechists with regard to homework assignments

- All catechists are expected to assign activities each week.
- Activities should come from the Activity textbook provided. All other activities and supplemental educational material must be approved by the DRE.
- It is most appropriate to issue assignments that engage the whole family.
- Activities should come from the Activity textbook provided. All other activities and supplemental educational material must be approved by the DRE.

Keeping God’s Children Safe

Keeping God’s Children Safe is the name of the Protecting God’s Children lesson component for our children. One age-appropriate lesson is taught by the catechist once a year, usually in January. Same grade level classes may join together to teach the students. An introductory

DVD is shown to the students as a large group before the classes go to their rooms for the individual lessons.

These lessons help protect our children in all parts of society. It is always the hope that our children will grow up more aware of their surroundings and the power they have over a perpetrator.

The positive effects of these lessons have been demonstrated across the Archdiocese by the courage children have shown in reporting abuse received at home and elsewhere.

PROGRESS OF STUDENTS

When a catechist becomes aware that a child is not doing well in class, the parent / guardian should be contacted so that the child receives the help needed. The Director of Religious Education is to be copied on all correspondence.

In an effort to ascertain students' understanding of the concepts and doctrine being presented to them in the program we ask the following of all our catechists:

Catechists will be required to keep a record of student/family attendance at all of the PREP or IGNITE meetings. Additionally, they will be required to keep a record of all assignments/activities submitted by the students and families.

NON-FORMATIONAL DUTIES

Absentee Policy

More than 3 absences in the entire year is considered excessive, equivalent to a child missing a full month in regular school. Please notify the Director of Religious Education who will contact the family to see if there is an unusual situation. The determination if an age and curriculum appropriate project needs to be completed by the student, in addition to regular missed class work, will then be made at the Director's discretion.

1. The children are to be given make-up work to be completed under the guidance of a parent.
2. The parent / guardian is responsible to read and explain any missed lessons to their children. The Catechist / Assistant should check any written work and discuss basic points of the lesson with the child as a follow-up. For example – ask the child to tell you about the lesson. Be brief!
3. Shared custody: If the situation arises that a child misses every other week due to visitation rites please use the following procedure:
 - a. Advise me of the situation so that I can meet with the responsible parent.
 - b. Together we will work with that parent by supplying information concerning lessons and work missed, and by giving support as needed.

- c. It is the responsibility of the parent to work with their child on missed lessons.
- d. It is the responsibility of the catechist to see that all work is completed.
- e. It is the responsibility of the director to assess the readiness of the child for Sacraments.

SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN

1. Children are not permitted in zoom meetins, the gym or classrooms unsupervised. This is to insure the safety of the children as well as to insure that personal and school property is respected. Children are to bring their own pencils and supplies and are not to borrow anything that does not belong to them. Children are not permitted to touch anything on the teacher's desk. Please do not have your class congregate around you there.

CONTRABAND / SEARCH AND SEIZURE

Bullying, contraband, vandalism, and harassment (sexual and other forms) will not be tolerated in the program. Items considered contraband include but are not limited to: drugs, alcohol, tobacco products, and weapons of any kind. It is both unlawful for minors to be in possession of them, and forbidden on Mother of Divine Providence Church Property. These behaviors may result in immediate dismissal from the program.

It is the policy of Mother of Divine Providence to respect the privacy of its participants. Unnecessary intrusions into persons and possessions are to be avoided.

However, in the event that a student is suspected of having contraband in his / her possession the Director of Religious Education will conduct a search with an adult staff member as a witness.

If such items are found, the following *Policy Procedures* apply.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Any child who is disruptive or causing a disciplinary problem will be corrected. This correction or disciplinary action will take the form of Christian correction and guidance, being for the good of the child. Our purpose is to help the child learn that he / she must act respectfully and responsibly toward self, others and other people's property.

For repeated disruption in class or other behavioral issues, a child is to be brought to the Director. At the discretion of the Director of Religious Education the Parent / Guardian may be contacted regarding the matter. In some cases, a conference with parent, child, catechist and director will afford the best opportunity to help a child. Sometimes it is necessary for the Parent / Guardian to be present in the classroom during class. This will be decided during the conference.

Depending on the severity of the issue, the *Policy* procedures below may be initiated. In the event of **property damage**, students involved will compensate for the damage.

The program has a **NO TOLERANCE** for behaviors that are contrary to Catholic faith and morals, or the Gospel, including but not limited to ongoing acts of obstinacy, improper language, fighting, physical, emotional or psychological intimidation, bullying, vandalism, demeaning behavior such as name-calling, obscene language or gestures, and harassment. Such behaviors violate the central teaching of our faith and should not be tolerated in any form from students or their family members.

The above behaviors will not be tolerated in students or adults. If the adult's behavior is incompatible with the educational and religious mission of the parish it may be grounds for disciplinary action. This includes but is not limited to possible dismissal of the participant, as well as reporting the incident to the appropriate legal authorities where appropriate (e.g., a parent threatens a staff member).

"The Program reserves the right to supersede the forgoing course of action depending on the particular circumstances of any given situation."

INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

Prohibiting Harassment, Intimidation, Hazing or Bullying, etc.

A safe, secure and respectful educational environment is necessary for students to learn about their faith, develop Christian behavior and build relationships with God and appropriately with others.

The Mother of Divine Providence Religious Education Program strives to provide a safe environment and therefore, refuses to accept any such behaviors such as and not limited to acts of harassment, hazing, intimidation and bullying (including cyber bullying and the like). These behaviors are unacceptable and are prohibited in our religious education program. The religious education program personnel cannot monitor the activities of students at all times and eliminate all incidents of bullying between students, particularly when students are not under their direct supervision. However, to the extent such conduct affects the educational environment of the religious education program and the rights and welfare of the students and is within the control of the religious education program in its normal operations, it is the Mother of Divine Providence Religious Education Program's intent to prevent bullying and thus, must take action to investigate, respond, discipline and remediate those acts of bullying. Administrators and catechetical staff are to demonstrate appropriate behavior by treating others with civility and respect, and being aware of and not tolerating harassment, intimidation, hazing and bullying, etc. If incidents do occur, students should be able to report and know that the inappropriate behavior will be dealt with promptly and effectively. There will be no retaliation against a victim, reporter or witness.

Policy

Bullying involves actions or words against another for the purpose of inflicting physical or emotional harm or discomfort or damage to a person's reputation that is intimidating or

threatening and affects the learning and school environments. The following describes types of bullying but is not an exhaustive list.

- Hitting, kicking, shoving, spitting, hair pulling, or throwing something
- Getting another person to hit or harm a student
- Teasing, name-calling, making critical remarks or threatening in person or by other means
- Demeaning and making another the victim of jokes
- Making rude and/or threatening gestures
- Excluding or rejecting the student
- Intimidating (bullying), extorting or exploiting
- Spreading harmful rumors or gossip

If the bully is threatening harm, a student should tell a catechist, adult volunteers and / or the Director of Religious Education immediately.

MANDATED REPORTER

WHO IS A MANDATED REPORTER?

Pennsylvania State Law defines a mandated reporter as any person who comes into *direct* contact with children in the course of his or her employment, occupation, or professional practice. These individuals, who include CCD staff, catechists, and volunteers, must make a report.

In the state of Pennsylvania a mandated reporter who fails to report a case of suspected child abuse commits a felony of the 3rd degree if the mandated reporter willfully fails to report, the child abuse constitutes a felony of the 1st degree of higher, and the person has direct knowledge of the nature of the abuse (maximum sentence of 7 years if convicted). An offense that does not meet the above criteria is a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree (maximum sentence of 2 years if convicted).

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

Child abuse under the new Child Protective Services Law is defined under five categories:

- Bodily Injury
- Sexual Abuse or Exploitation
- Creating the likelihood of bodily or sexual abuse or exploitation
- Serious Mental Injury
- Serious Physical Neglect

A child is defined as any individual under the age of 18. The requirement to report abuse applies to all suspected child abuse, not just abuse that has been perpetrated by clergy, church officials, parish employees or volunteers.

REPORTING PROCEDURES

If a child is in imminent danger, call 911 immediately!

- Contact ChildLine if you have a suspicion that a child is being neglected or abused sexually, physically, or mentally
- By Phone at 1-800-932-0313 or

o Online at <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home>

Complete and file a CY-47 Form (Report of Suspected Child Abuse Form) with the County Children and Youth Services where the alleged abuse occurred within 48 hours of calling ChildLine and submit it to **Philadelphia Department of Human Services**.

Department of Human Services 1515 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102

- o Only required for reports made by phone
- o Online Reporting Option above includes submission of this form

Notify your Head of Institution (HOI) In addition, while not required under the new CPS law, it is strongly recommended by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and law enforcement agencies to contact local police and notify the District Attorney's Office.

It is not your responsibility to attempt to identify the perpetrator in a case of suspected abuse, and the identity of the perpetrator does not need to be known by the Mandated Reporter for him/her to make a report. In addition, the child need not come before the Mandated Reporter in person in order for a report to be made.

PROPER SUPERVISION

- **At NO TIME may participants be left unattended or placed in the hallway unsupervised! This applies to zoom meetings as well – there must always be at least 2 certified adults (this includes a parent/legal guardian) present in the meeting room with the child.**
- In the event of an emergency, catechists or volunteers must make every reasonable effort to contact another adult or catechist to supervise their classroom in their absence.

Sexual Harassment

Allegations of sexual harassment can be avoided by discussing with the children the fair treatment and respect of others as part of the classroom rules. Catechists should promptly correct demeaning and intimidating behavior inflicted by one child upon another. Persistent cases of such behavior should be directed to the attention of the program director. **See Discipline Procedures**

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Fire Drills

Please review the fire drill instructions in your RED folder with the children. Familiarize yourself with the location of the Exit you will use. Let the children know that when the alarm sounds they are to QUIETLY line up at the door closest to the exit route. TAKE THE FLASHLIGHT IF YOU HAVE ONE.

Lights are to be left on for firefighters. Windows and doors should be closed. A fire drill will be scheduled early in the year. The staff will be alerted in advance.

The assistant will lead the children (walking) outside to their assigned area. The Catechist should be the last one out of the room, and should bring the attendance folder.

Catechist closest to the bathrooms on each floor is to check for students.

All classes will gather on the grass toward the turnpike, in the vicinity of the old basketball courts. Attendance should be taken again when your class has reached its destination outside.

REPORT ANY MISSING CHILD TO THE DIRECTOR IMMEDIATELY.

Intruder in the Building

If at all possible we will give a signal over the PA system:

All students are to sit with their backs to the wall between the doors of the classroom, as close to the center of that wall as possible. Do the best you can with room furnishings.

Both doors are to be closed and locked. Back doors in the junior high wing must be closed first and then push in the lock button in order for it to be locked.

If your students are ok with the dark, turn off your room lights. Lights in the hallway will make it difficult for an intruder to see into the room.

Keep children calm. Remain in this position until you hear the director's voice on the PA system giving an all-clear.

Sudden Weather Related

Move all students into the hallway and close classroom doors. Sit with backs to wall, knees up and heads down. Try to stay away from hallway windows upstairs.

Close all windows and latch tight. Lower shades, if there is time, to help contain any glass that might be broken.

Keep children calm. Remain until all clear is given.

If we know before the program starts that there is a possibility of a dangerous storm, the program will be cancelled that night.

SNOW EMERGENCY NUMBER / CLOSURES

Closings for ice and snow will follow Upper Merion School District. If the schools are closed or dismiss early because of inclement weather our classes are automatically cancelled for that night. Our program closing number is #1069 on KYW – www.kyw1060.com. An automated phone message will be sent to staff and families.

The number for Mother of Divine Providence School is #340 (if this building would be closed for a non-weather related situation and the district is open). Parent meetings, evenings of reflection, etc. would also be cancelled if there is no school. An automated phone message will be sent to staff and families.

If Upper Merion School District is closed on a Wednesday because of a Jewish Holiday we will still have class that night.

UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS

1. Catechists may be provided with information regarding the existing medical conditions of the children that they catechize as it may affect a child's performance in class and within the scope of information that has been provided by the parents of such children. Any medical information thus presented to catechists is **confidential and may not be discussed or divulged to anyone**, including the catechist's family members.
 - ⤴ Catechists should not touch any open or seeping wounds without first applying latex gloves over his or her hands. This is to protect you, as well as the child.
 - ⤴ Catechists/Volunteers must report any minor injury, illness, or accident that occurs during a session to the program director at the conclusion of the session. In the event of a serious injury, the catechist/volunteer should immediately notify the program director.
 - ⤴ **See *Appendix H* for detailed information regarding universal precautions.**

SHELTER IN PLACE PROCEDURES

Shelter in Place is an emergency response plan to the release of hazardous materials into the air. This response can only be called by the police or fire department. If our program were instructed to shelter in place, we would initiate our plan to protect the children. If a shelter in place is called, no one is permitted to leave or enter the building. It becomes our responsibility to care for the basic needs of the children until we are given permission to safely dismiss the program participants to their parents.

APPENDIX A

Archdiocesan Religion Guidelines

The Religion Guidelines are the same for all the children in the Archdiocese. (See Appendix A for an overview) A complete set of guidelines for each grade level is available at the following website:

<http://phillyocf.org/religion-guidelines/>

Kindergarten

Prayer, Mary, Christian Community, Feasts, Traditional Prayer, Creation, The Bible, The Liturgical Year; Sacraments, the Holy Family, Worship, the Trinity, Easter Season, Ordinary Time

Prayers: Sign of the Cross, Grace before meals, simple Morning Offering, Hail Mary, Our Father, Glory Be

Level One

God the Father, Creation, Living in God's World; God the Son, Jesus Christ; God the Holy Spirit, Sacraments of Initiation

Mary: Titles of Mary, Days in Honor of Mary, Prayers to Mary, May Devotions

Prayers: Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, Simple grace before and after meals, Simple Morning offering, Angel of God, Introduction to the Rosary

Level Two

Blessed Trinity, Sacraments (Initiation, Healing, and at the Service of *Communio* – (the covenant People of God / one body in Christ); the Mass: Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of the Eucharist, Topics Related to Mass, Mass and Eucharist.

Mary: Titles of Mary, Days in Honor of Mary, The Rosary, May Devotions

Prayers: Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, Act of Contrition, Grace before and after meals, Morning Offering, simple Acts of Faith, Hope and Love, the Rosary, Angel of God

Because the children are preparing to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion this year, it is imperative that they participate at Sunday Mass every weekend.

Level Three

The Trinity, Sacraments: the Sacraments of Initiation, Sacraments of Healing, Sacraments at the Service of *Communio* [God's Covenant People – one Body in Christ]; God's Law, Christian *Communio*

Mary: Titles of Mary, Days in Honor of Our Lady, Prayer to Our Lady, May Devotions

Prayers: Sign of the Cross, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, Act of Contrition, Grace before and after meals, Morning Offering, Simple Acts of Faith, Hope and Love, The Rosary, Angel of God, Apostles Creed, introduction to the Hail, Holy Queen

Level Four

God the Father, Commandments, Grace, Sin, Conscience; Jesus Christ our Redeemer, The Beatitudes, Works of Mercy, Virtue

Mary: Example of Faith, Example of Holiness, Prayers, Apparitions, Days in Honor of Mary, Titles of Mary
Prayers: Hail Mary, the Hail, Holy Queen, The Rosary, the Angelus / Regina Coeli, The Litany of the Blessed Virgin

Level Five

Sacraments, Sacraments of Initiation, Sacraments of Healing, Sacraments at the Service of *Communio* [God's Covenant People – one Body in Christ]
Mary: Major Beliefs, Mary and Christian Devotion, Days in Honor of Mary, Prayers, Titles of Mary, Shrines of Our Lady, Symbols of Mary
Prayers: The Rosary, the Hail Holy Queen, the Angelus and Regina Coeli, the Memorare

Level Six

The Bible, Old Testament: Choosing a Special People, Moses, Exodus, and the Covenant; Joshua, Judges, Kings, Important Queens, Prophets, Biblical Women; Christ Fulfills the Old Testament
Mary: Dogmas believed, Days in Honor of Mary, Prayers, Biblical Places and Mary, Prayer (Mysteries of the Rosary)
Prayers: Hail Mary, the Hail, Holy Queen, the Joyful, Luminous, Sorrowful and Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary, the Memorare, the Angelus / Regina Coeli, the Magnificat, Come Holy Spirit

Level Seven

New Testament, Jesus, Jesus the Christ, Jesus is Lord, Liturgy and Worship, the Liturgical Life of the Church
Mary: Mary in the Gospels, the Virginal Conception, Always a Virgin, Days in Honor of Mary, Prayers, Blessedness of Mary, Mother of God
Prayers: the Our Father, the Angelus / Regina Coeli, the Hail, Holy Queen, the Mysteries of the Rosary, and Come, Holy Spirit

Level Eight

The Church: Concepts, Marks, Development; Liturgy, Sacraments and Sacramentals, the dignity of the Human Person: Human Freedom, Human Conscience, the Virtues, Sin, Mercy, Law, Grace and Christian Holiness; the Tradition of Prayer, Expressions of Prayer, Challenges to Prayer, the Lord's Prayer "Our Father"; Morality
Mary: Marian Churches and Shrines, Mary in Art, Titles of Mary, Mary and Christian Devotions, Days in Honor of Mary, Prayers
Prayers: The Memorare, the Mysteries of the Rosary, Angelus / Regina Coeli, the Hail, Holy Queen, the Magnificat

Special Focus Topics

Liturgical Year – Advent, Christmas, Christmas Season, Lent, Holy Week, The Triduum, Easter Season, Ordinary Time, Feasts

Prayers – The “Jesus Prayer,” Prayer in Common, Song and Gesture, and Shared Prayer

Sacramentals – blessed objects that remind us of the sacraments. Teachings on sacramentals are presented and developed in various years.

Social Justice - Life and Dignity of the Human Person, Call to Family, Community and Participation, Rights and Responsibilities of the Human Person, Care of God’s Creation, Option for the Poor and Vulnerable, Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers, and Solidarity of the Human Family

Saints, Feasts, Special People – 120+ Witnesses to our Faith

“Project Disciple” (Levels 1 – 6) is a page at the end of each chapter that focuses on the “*Six Tasks of Catechesis: Learn, Pray, Celebrate, Choose, Share, Live-out*”. This page is to be done as a family. Catechists may begin class with a recap of how students and their families worked on each assignment.

Weekly participation in Mass and frequent Confession are to be encouraged. Never underestimate children’s spirituality and their personal relationship with God. Help them think of safe ways that they can participate in Mass.

Prayers to know by heart are to be learned at home within the family environment, and will be reviewed in class. A complete copy is provided to each new family, and every child has their grade level copy stapled inside the front cover of their textbook.

Parish Missions and 40 Hours Devotions are just two of the religious devotions that are celebrated in the parish during the year. Encourage your students to participate in at least 2 nights of these devotions.

Eucharistic Adoration takes place all day every Tuesday throughout the year. Encourage you children to spend some quiet time in prayer before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament exposed in the Monstrance on the Altar and to receive His blessing during Benediction.

Scope and Sequence

A Scope and Sequence for each grade level can be downloaded from:

<http://phillyocf.org/religion-guidelines/>

Appendix B

Catechetical Certification Policy

A catechist is certified upon earning sixteen (16) credits (8 required, 8 elective) approved by the Office for Catechetical Formation (OCF).

Required Credits (8) are earned through successful completion of each of the core courses offered by the Archdiocesan Catechetical Institute. Courses, held in local catholic high schools and available online, include:

Overview of the Old Testament
Overview of the New Testament
The Person of Jesus
Foundations of the Church
Sacraments of Initiation
Sacraments of Healing & Vocation
Christian Anthropology
Catholic Moral Teaching

Elective Credits (8) are earned through the successful completion of the requirements associated with a variety of program, seminars and workshops that are offered through the Archdiocese / OCF, such as Catholic Life Congress (November), the Catechetical Forum (March), Theological Update (June), etc. In addition, parish catechists must complete Catechist Orientation Course within the first two (2) years of teaching.

This requirement fulfills one (1) elective credit for those who already completed the Basic I and II courses.

Professional Updating: To maintain certification after achieving the required 16 credits, catechists must earn one (1) credit each year.

All Assistants and other catechetical staff members are encouraged to take these courses and attend Archdiocesan / OCF workshops for personal development.

More information can be found here: <http://phillyocf.org/certification/>