**SAFE ENVIRONMENT TRAINING

FOR TEEN AIDES

(Persons not yet 18 years old)

Prince of Peace Catholic Community



“You are the salt of the earth…

You are the light of the world”

*Matthew 5:13-14*

**

SAFE ENVIRONMENT TRAINING FOR TEEN AIDES

At Prince of Peace Catholic Community

**INTRODUCTION**

As Catholics, we know that Jesus commanded us to love one another. He taught us that whatever we did in His name we did for Him. We also know that God has blessed each of us with many talents-- gifts that He expects us to share with others.

Each time we receive the Eucharist, we take Jesus into our body and He stays with us there as we leave Mass. And at the end of each Mass, we hear the priest tell us to “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.”

One way we answer God’s call to serve Him is by spending some of our time in our parish community serving others. Our parish has many programs and ministries and we could not offer these programs if adults and teens like you did not share their “time and talents” with others.

But when we serve others, especially children and vulnerable adults, we need to make sure we understand the responsibility we have accepted as we work with the children, youth, and vulnerable adults entrusted to our care. It is our duty to look out for their well-being and safety. To do this, both adults and teen need to be adhere of the rules and guidelines, both written and unwritten, that the church expect us to follow when we supervise others. In our Catholic communities, we call the programs that teach us about these rules and guidelines our “Safe Environment Program.”

**So…What is the purpose of the *Safe Environment Program*?**

The purpose of this program is to make sure that all clergy, employees, and volunteers know how to work with children so that they can make sure children and youth are safe and protected while they participate in activities at the church or school.

The program requires everyone who is at least age 18 to complete a process called, *“Screening”*. This process requires that they complete forms, read a manual about the program, have a criminal background check and an interview, have references checked, and attend a training session. If a person completes all these requirements and we do not find anything in their background that seems to indicate they would NOT work well with children, we say they are “*cleared*” to serve.

**

*Only adults who complete the screening process and are cleared are eligible to volunteer and work with children and youth.*

(1)

Young volunteers (those not yet age 18) are called “*teen aides*” under the Safe Environment Program. Teen aides often work with cleared adults by serving in the ministries and programs in our parish and therefore, they too need to complete a *Teen Screening Process.*

However, for teens, this process is different than it is for adults. Teens must (1) Complete a Youth Code of Conduct form and (2) attend Teen Training or review the training packet with a parent.

***The Youth Code of Conduct***  is a form that requests certain information about the teen aide and sets out the behavioral requirements that each teen aide agrees to meet, and requires the signature of the parent to evidence the parent’s permission for the teen aide to participate in volunteer activities.

***Teen Training*** - Each teen aide must also attend a Safe Environment Program Teen Training session, or review this packet with parent, in order to learn and understand what their role is in providing a safe and nurturing environment for children and youth.

*Only teen aides who complete the Youth Code of Conduct and attend a training session either at POP or with parent, are eligible to volunteer and work with children and youth in our parish.*

**

**

The following information pertains to learning more about this program, your responsibilities, and about various rules and procedures that must be followed:

**Why aren’t’ “teen aides” screened and cleared just like adults”?**

One reason is that by law, records of criminal behavior of juveniles, if any, are confidential and therefore, would not show up on a criminal background check. Also teen aides have less experience than adults and are still learning about many things, and adults are responsible for looking after teen aides to make sure they are safe and protected. Teen aides at our parish (and many other parishes) must meet certain requirements in order to serve as a volunteer.

**What procedures does the Youth Code of Conduct require teen aides to follow?**

There are TEN basic rules teen aides agree to follow when working with children and youth.

*1) I agree to treat other participants, leaders, and staff with respect. I understand that all adult leader has the authority to discipline me, and I will abide by their decisions.*

*2) I will always follow the schedule and guidelines given to me.*

*3) I understand that alcohol, weapons, fireworks, tobacco products of any kind, illegal drugs and profanity or abusive language are NOT allowed. (prescription drugs must be checked and administered by an adult.)*

(2)

*Basic Rules Continued…*

*4) I agree to behave in a Christian and positive manner at all times. I further agree to dress appropriately (No short-shorts, halter/tank tops or torn clothing).*

*5) Use of cell phones, cameras, computers, or any other technology in any way is prohibited. No pictures may be taken of the children.*

*6) Sexual indiscretion (including inappropriate touching, language, jokes, etc.) is prohibited at all times and in all cases.*

*7) No participant is allowed to leave without permission of the coordinator/director.*

*8) In the event of an emergency or other need to contact any participants, staff must know where I am and therefore I agree to stay on the premises and with at least one other person at all times.*

*9) I understand that I may be working with children and I agree to take whatever duties I am assigned seriously and responsibly, especially whenever a child’s safety is concerned. Therefore, I understand that I may NEVER carry a child.*

*10) I understand that if I fail to adhere to any part of this “Code of Conduct” I run the risk of having my parents notified by phone or in person, and I run the risk that I will be sent home if I refuse to follow the guidelines.*

**

**What rules do adults have to follow when they supervise children and youth?**

The diocese’s Safe Environment Program Booklet sets out various “supervision procedures” and “behavioral guidelines” that adults must follow when working with children and youth. Listed below are some of these:

* *Have adequate number of adults present at events involving children and youth. Have two or more adults present for event involving children or youth in higher risk settings.*
* *Release children only to parent or guardian.*
* *Always obtain parental approval before permitting any minor to participate in athletic events of any other activity that involves potential risk.*

**

*Teen Aides may not serve by themselves—they may only volunteer in activities or events at which at least two cleared adults are present.*

(3)

Here are a few of the guidelines the Safe Environment Program sets out for adults as ***BEHAVIORAL GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN OR YOUTH:***

* *Do not provide minors with alcoholic beverage, tobacco, drugs or anything that is prohibited by law.*
* *Touching should be age appropriate and based on the need of the minor and not the need of the adult. Avoid physical contact when alone with a minor. If a minor initiates physical contact, and appropriate, limited response is proper.*
* *Do not engage in the physical discipline of a minor. Discipline problems should be handled in coordination with your supervisor and /or the parents of the minor.*
* *Do not be alone with a minor in a locker room, restroom, dressing facility or other closed room or isolated area that is inappropriate to a ministry relationship.*
* *Topics, vocabulary, recordings, film, games or the use of computer software or any other form of personal interaction or entertainment that could not be used comfortably in the presence of parents should not be employed with minors. Sexually explicit or pornographic material is never appropriate.*
* *Do not administer medication of any kind without written parental permission.*
* *Do not permit minors to cross a road by themselves while they are in your custodial care.*

**If you are aware of any violation of these guidelines, you should report this **immediately** to an adult that is present.

**Are these the only rules that we must follow?**

**No**. It would be impossible to list all the ways we each must behave, because new situations and circumstances can occur at any time. Therefore, we must all rely on “general guidance” to assure we each act **reasonably** when we work with children and youth. Said another way, to act “reasonably,’ we must use “common sense.” Common sense requires we stop and think about the possible consequences of our actions, so that we make good decisions.

Sometimes, things you might safely do and /or have permission to do with children outside the church such as giving a child a piggy-back ride may NOT be okay to do in the church setting. This is because the church must take extra care to make sure that it provides as **safe** a place as it can for all children.

**

*Some things you may do outside the church while caring for children whom you know my NOT necessarily be safe actions to do in the church setting where there are many children you do not know.*

(4)

**What is the General Guidance” for how we must act when working with children and youth?**

USE COMMON SENSE, USE REASONABLE CARE!

Anyone who supervises or is responsible for a child or children has a duty to use **reasonable care** to protect the child or children from injury and harm.

The care you use when working with children must be what is necessary to prevent them from harm that you could “reasonably” have foreseen if you thought about it *before* doing it.

*Each volunteer must always use reasonable care (common sense) when working with children and youth.*

**

**What is “reasonable care”?**

*Reasonable care is the kind of care that most people think is “reasonable” when caring for a child or children.*

*To act “reasonably” a person needs to understand that some activities only require us to* ***“generally”*** *look after children, while other activities are more* ***“risky”*** *– that is the chance of harm or danger to a child is greater, so we have to* ***“closely”*** *supervise children.*

Can you give an example of **“general”** supervision and **“close”** supervision?

**Example:** *Your job is to watch or look after children as they eat a snack while sitting at a table in the cafeteria*

**General supervision is appropriate for this activity.**

You need topay **“general”** attention and watch that children stay in their seats, don’t throw things, don’t get up and walk or run with food or drink in their hands, don’t climb on tables, etc.

Eating a snack is considered a low risk activity because you can observe many children at one time.

**

*General supervision is appropriate for low risk activities—activities where the likelihood of children being harmed is LOW.*

(5)

**Example:** *Your job is to assist the adults as they supervise children making crafts.*

**Close supervision is appropriate for this activity.**

You need to focus your attention “closely” on one or two children’s behavior to make sure they are behaving in a safe manner. Making craft is considered a higher risk activity because the children may be using scissors, pins, other sharp object. Because you can observe only a few children at one time.

For example: You will need to watch carefully to make sure the children you are watching remain seated while working, are not reaching over desks to get open containers that might spill. If they are using scissors, make sure they are using them correctly and cautiously and are not waiving them about or pointing them at others. Make sure they aren’t putting items in their mouths such as crayons, glue, etc. Do not assume that children will be careful – you must watch ***closely*** to make sure they are. You cannot watch 10 children doing this activity—most people would say it is not *“reasonable”* care. Each person supervising should watch 1-4 children only.

*Close supervision is appropriate for high risk activities—activities where the likelihood of children being harmed is HIGH due to the type of activity, the location, the age or number of children, the objects, toys, or equipment being used, etc.*

**

**Because teen aides don’t have as much experience working with children as adults do, what examples can you give of what we as teen aides should look for, as we learn how to decide if something is “reasonable care”?**

In order to decide if an action is “*reasonable*”, you must think about what could or might happen as a result or consequence of an action.

*Have you ever done something that was seen by or make known to you or parent, teacher, or other adult, and they said to you, “What were you thinking!”? If so, they likely asked you this question because they thought that you had not used* ***reasonable care*** *in deciding what to do!*

*To decide if something is “risky” or “not risky” we ask ourselves “what might happen” and we try to think of what might go wrong and be harmful to a child or youth.*

**

(6)

Here are some simple behaviors that we see as **“unnecessarily risky “**and therefore not reasonable, in the church setting:

1. ***It isn’t “reasonable”*** *to encourage or permit children to run indoors (other than in a supervised gym activity) Why? Because when running, children are more likely to fall down, run into something or someone, knock someone down, etc. In other words, running is risky and should not be permitted indoors, except for supervised gym activities.*
2. ***It isn’t “reasonable”*** *to pick up one or more children and carry them somewhere. Why? Because when carrying others, you and the child are more likely to fall, you might drop the child and with your hands full, you’d be unable to use your hands to prevent falling, etc. Also it simply isn’t necessary to carry children. You can take children by the hand and walk with them instead. (NOTE: if there were a crisis of some sort and it was important to quickly get all children out of the building, then of course the situation is different. In such a case, it would be “reasonable care” for you to carry a child that was unable to move, or too slow to move to safety.)*
3. ***It isn’t “reasonable”*** *to give a young child a candy lifesaver. Why? Because the child may be too young for this type of candy, may have difficulty chewing or swallowing it, and my choke, also their parent(s) may not want their child to have such candy. Adults must supervise all activities involving food.*
4. ***It isn’t “reasonable”*** *(even for a moment) to let children stay in a room by themselves without an adult present. Why? Because if something happens like the lights go out, window gets broken, a stranger intruder, etc. there is no one there to prevent or handle the situation. Also children may hurt themselves by putting fingers into electrical sockets, fall when jumping of furniture, etc.*
5. ***It isn’t “reasonable”*** *to let three year olds play with Lego’s. Why? Because there are many small pieces that children can quickly put in their mouths, swallow and/or choke. Games and play need to be appropriate to a child’s age. If in doubt, ask an adult. Ask adults for help in deciding if a game or toy is appropriate.*
6. ***It isn’t “reasonable”*** *to tell your friends to stop by and visit you. Why? Because they have not met the requirements for serving as a teen aide, they haven’t completed the Youth Code of Conduct and therefore do not know what rules they are expect to follow. They have not attended training to learn about caring for and supervising children in the church setting. Also, their presence will interrupt your supervision of the children and their activities. Yu could be distracted from your supervisory responsibilities to children. Your focus must always be on the children you are supervising.*
7. ***It isn’t “reasonable”*** *to give a child that says he doesn’t feel well an aspirin. Why? Because all medications may only be dispensed by a parent, or with the parent’s permission, by an adult.*

(7)

**What are some of the general guidelines our parish follows for working with children and youth?**

The Safe Environment Program has certain requirements that anyone working with children must follow. And **“reasonable care”** means there are other unwritten rules we must follow.

**Here are a few things the SEP requires:**

* *There must be a minimum of two or more cleared adults present at any event of program. Adults are responsible for determining how many adults are required to “adequately supervise” the children present. It would not generally be thought “adequate” for 2 adults to supervise 50 children.*
* *Doors to rooms should be open or have windows. If that is not possible, adults should conduct random checks every 15 minutes or so of rooms and area where children are present.*
* *Teen aides may not supervise children without an adult present.*

In addition to the examples of **“reasonable care”**, some other general rules that involve using reasonable care:

* *An adequate number of adults/teen aides should be present for activities with children. The circumstances dictate what is “adequate”. Also, sometimes, what may be adequate at the start of an activity may become inadequate, as circumstances change.*

**Example:** Two adults and one teen aide supervising a group of 30 three –year old children on a playground may not be **“reasonable”** because the type of activities on the playground, children can easily be harmed-such as falling off swings or slides, hitting head on equipment, falling from high places, etc. Adequate playground supervision may require that there be more adults available to **“closely watch”** children as they play. Too few adult supervisors mean that not all children can be carefully watched and some may get hurt. But two adults and one teen aide supervising a group of 20 three –year old children listening to a story being read would generally be considered reasonable. And two adults and one teen aide supervising a group of 5 three-year-old children on the playground would be reasonable.

* *It is best for children to make restroom visits in a group, rather than have a teen aide or adult take a child to the restroom one at a time. In situations where a child need help, and adult should be present.*
* *It is generally best for children over age 3 not to be held on your lap – instead, it is recommended that you sit side by side in chairs or have the children sit on the floor with their lets crossed, while you sit in a chair – similar to haw teachers and students participate in such activities.*

A good general rule for teen aides to remember in all situations is:

**WHEN IN DOUBT, ASK AN ADULT!**

(8)

***SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS***

1. Only adults who complete the screening process and are cleared are eligible to volunteer and work with children and youth.
2. Only teen aides who complete the Youth Code of Conduct and attend a training session (or with parent) are eligible to volunteer and work with children and youth in our parish.
3. *Teen Aides may not serve by themselves—they may only volunteer in activities or events at which at least two cleared adults are present.*
4. *Some things you may do outside the church while caring for children whom you know my NOT necessarily be safe actions to do in the church setting where there are many children you do not know.*
5. *Each volunteer must always use reasonable care (common sense) when working with children and youth.*
6. *General supervision is appropriate for low risk activities—activities where the likelihood of children being harmed is LOW.*
7. *Close supervision is appropriate for high risk activities—activities where the likelihood of children being harmed is HIGH due to the type of activity, the location, the age and/or number of children present, the objects, toys, and/or equipment being used, etc.*
8. *To decide if something is “risky” or “not risky” we ask ourselves “what might happen” and we try to think of what might go wrong and be harmful to a child or youth.*

**

(9)

*Prince of Peace Catholic Community*

*SAFE ENVIRONMENT AWARENESS TRAINING*

*FOR TEEN VOLUNTEERS*

**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRAINING**

I have participated in a Prince of Peace training session or with my parent and have read the Safe Environment Packet on the Safe Environment Program of the Diocese of Dallas and Prince of Peace, specially designed for teens Volunteers.

I understand it is my responsibility to become familiar with and adhere to the guidelines and procedures discussed at the training session or in the packet provided to me.

*Today’s Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*Print Teen Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

 *(teen signature)*

*Presenter/Parent name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

 *(Presenter/Parent signature)*

*We sincerely thank all our youth who share their time and talents as volunteers in the programs and activities at Prince of Peace.*

*Please return this form after completion*

Prince of Peace

Youth Code of Conduct Agreement

*Youth’ Name: (please print) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Age \_\_\_\_\_\_\_DOB \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*Primary Address \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(city)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(zip)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*Parent Cell \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Teen cell \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*Name of School entering upcoming school year: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Grade\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

**

*1) I agree to treat other participants, leaders, and staff with respect. I understand that all adult leader has the authority to discipline me, and I will abide by their decisions.*

*2) I will always follow the schedule and guidelines given to me.*

*3) I understand that alcohol, weapons, fireworks, tobacco products of any kind, illegal drugs and profanity or abusive language are NOT allowed. (prescription drugs must be checked and administered by an adult.)*

*4) I agree to behave in a Christian and positive manner at all times. I further agree to dress appropriately (No short-shorts, halter/tank tops or torn clothing).*

*5) Use of cell phones, cameras, computers, or any other technology in any way is prohibited. No pictures may be taken of the children.*

*6) Sexual indiscretion (including inappropriate touching, language, jokes, etc.) is prohibited at all times and in all cases.*

*7) No participant is allowed to leave without permission of the coordinator/director.*

*8) In the event of an emergency or other need to contact any participants, staff must know where I am and therefore I agree to stay on the premises and with at least one other person at all times.*

*9) I understand that I may be working with children and I agree to take whatever duties I am assigned seriously and responsibly, especially whenever a child’s safety is concerned. Therefore, I understand that I may NEVER carry a child.*

*10) I understand that if I fail to adhere to any part of this “Code of Conduct” I run the risk of having my parents notified by phone or in person, and I run the risk that I will be sent home if I refuse to follow the guidelines.*

*I have read, agree with, and will adhere to the “Code of Conduct” described above.*

*Teen Signature\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_DD/MM/YYYY\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*Please return this form after completion*