

CATECHIST HANDBOOK

**Catechetical Office
Archdiocese of New York**

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Religious Education Philosophy/Mission Statement/Vision

[*This must be adapted to fit your particular Parish and Program.*]

We at the parish of [*Name of Your Parish*] look upon religious education as a total parish experience involving not just the child, but also parents, families, Catechists, clergy and religious that form our parish community of faith. We believe that religious education is getting to know Jesus and learning what is expected of one who chooses to follow him in the Catholic tradition. Our program reflects an integrated learning experience composed of learning, catechesis, prayer, sacramental preparation, traditional Catholic doctrine, biblical studies, liturgy, community building and other dimensions of a vibrant Church life. Through the light of faith we hope to develop in those entrusted to our care a deeper relationship with God.

Non-Discriminatory Policy

The Catechetical Program represents the belief that each person is made in the image and likeness of God and endeavors to bring the Gospel message to all its students. Therefore, it is completely antithetical to its mission to discriminate because of age, race, color, national origin, sex, marital status (except as it affects one's status as a practicing Catholic), or disability of any individual. The Catechetical Program does reserve the right to act on the basis of its religious principles at all times including the admission to service of volunteers and other like activities relating to their supervision.

I. CATECHISTS

1. The Role of a Catechist

A Catechist is a person of faith whose primary mission is to communicate God's love by proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ and creating an atmosphere for the Holy Spirit to bring about growth in faith among believers. Catechists minister to adults, youth and children in a variety of locations and parish faith formation programs, youth ministry programs, sacramental preparation, Christian initiation processes and family programs.

The six fundamental tasks of a Catechist¹ are to:

1. Promote the knowledge of faith.
2. Give moral formation.
3. Provide liturgical education.
4. Teach how to pray.
5. Educate for community life.
6. Initiate into the missionary dimension.

The person of the Catechist is essential to the catechetical mission of the parish. The *General Directory for Catechesis* states:

¹ *Handbook For Parish Directors and Coordinators of Religious Education, ANY*

“No methodology, no matter how well tested, can dispense with the person of the Catechist in every phase of the catechetical process. The charism given to the Catechist by the Spirit, a solid spirituality and transparent witness of life, constitutes the soul of every method. Only his own human and Christian qualities guarantee a good use of texts and other catechetical instruments.”

2. Basic Requirements for Acceptance as a Catechist or Catechist Assistant²

The applicant must be a practicing Catholic who is faithful to and living a lifestyle consistent with the teachings of the Catholic Church. Personal prayer life is fundamentally important in the life of the Catechist. This is fostered through regular Mass attendance, reception of the Sacraments, daily prayer, scripture reading and participation in retreat opportunities.

The applicant must be willing to participate in the Archdiocesan Catechist Formation Program as well as in the Catechist formation opportunities provided by the parish.

The applicant must agree to regularly attend faculty meetings, the Archdiocesan Catechetical Congress and other meetings designated by the Parish Religious Education Director/Coordinator.

The applicant must be ready to spend time each week preparing the catechetical session using the Catechist’s manual selected by the parish program and the *Archdiocesan Guidelines for Catechesis*.

The applicant must agree to know and abide by the policies and directives of the Director/Coordinator and the Catechist Handbook. Applicants for the role of Catechist or Catechist Assistant are selected by the Director/Coordinator and must receive final approval from the Pastor.

Application for Volunteer Catechetical Personnel

All those who volunteer (Catechist, Catechist Assistant, Clerical Assistant, Hall Monitor, and any volunteer in the program who interacts with the students) must complete an application form and submit it to the Director/Coordinator prior to their involvement in the program. It will include the following information: personal, catechetical, educational and religious educational background and two references. The disclosure of previous termination or conviction of a criminal offense is required by the Archdiocese of New York of anyone who will be associated with children and youth in the Parish Catechetical Programs. An explanation of this confidential information must also be given. This form must be signed by the volunteer applicant, the Director/Coordinator and the Pastor. The signatures validate the form. (*See Appendix.*) This form may be updated each year, as necessary.

Interview

Upon receipt of the application, the Director/Coordinator will meet with the prospective Catechist to give an overview of the program and to speak with the individual about his/her life experiences and reasons for wanting to share the faith. Information about formation and training requirements will be explained to the prospective Catechist. The Director/Coordinator will ascertain the readiness of the prospective Catechist and schedules of formation and training will be arranged.

3. Orientation of New Catechists

² (GDC) #16.

Prior to the beginning of his/her ministry each Catechist is required to participate in an introductory formation program designed to:

- Introduce the ministry as a vocation
- Introduce the curriculum.
- Teach age-appropriate formation processes.
- Introduce ways to maintain an effective catechetical environment.
- Introduce lesson planning skills.
- Acquaint the Catechist with resources.
- Review the policies and procedures for catechesis in the parish and Archdiocese.
- Introduce the process for continuing Catechist formation and certification in the Archdiocese.

This orientation to the parish catechetical program usually takes place prior to the opening day of the religious education program. Orientation offers the new Catechist an opportunity to meet fellow Catechists, become familiar with parish facilities and visit the classroom he/she will occupy.

4. Responsibilities of the Catechist

Some of the responsibilities associated with the catechetical ministry include:

Planning and Preparation

- Establishing long range and immediate teaching goals and objectives.
- Familiarity with Archdiocesan Guidelines and textbooks provided by Director/Coordinator.
- Appropriate lesson planning including review, presentation of new materials and reinforcement.
- Requesting and obtaining materials, audio-visual equipment and supplies for specific needs.
- Preparing questions for discussion.
- Structuring lessons to meet individual needs.
- Correlating home assignments with lessons taught.

Instructional

- Creating a joyful, loving and caring Christian learning environment.
- Giving witness to the Gospel by word and example.
- Developing a faith community.
- Manifesting an attitude of enthusiasm for learning.
- Fostering an attitude of mutual respect and understanding.
- Helping students to become creative, cooperative and self-disciplined.
- Guiding students to apply knowledge of their faith to real life situations.
- Setting high expectations for students and encouraging individual growth .

Evaluating and Reporting

- Administering tests (written and oral) provided in textbooks or supplied by Director/Coordinator.
- Acquiring a knowledge of each student's personality, background and social influences that affect a student's faith development.
- Monitoring and evaluating each student's growth on a short and long term basis.
- Referring students with academic or behavioral problems to the Director/Coordinator.
- Writing an introductory letter to parents stating goals and objectives as well as expectations of the children.

- Writing progress, academic and behavioral reports as required.
- Holding informal conferences with parents as needed.
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The Responsibilities of an Assistant Catechist

- Assisting with small group discussions.
- Helping individuals or groups with projects.
- Possible presentation of all or part of a lesson.
- Assisting with recording of attendance.
- Helping to maintain discipline and order.
- Assisting with the distribution or collection of class and home activities materials.

5. Professionalism

Catechists and other staff members by their appearance, dress and all their actions should reflect their role as religious educators entrusted with the sacred task of handing on the faith.

Information regarding the Religious Education program, students and parish staff, should be kept confidential. Professionalism should also be reflected in the Catechist's preparation for class, interaction with students, parents and other Catechists. Record keeping should be neat, accurate and timely made.

F. Inappropriate Behavior or Unsatisfactory Performance of Catechetical Personnel

The Director/Coordinator will advise a Catechist of any behavior that is inappropriate or unacceptable. The Catechist will also be advised if the evaluation of his/her performance indicates an unsatisfactory teaching/learning situation. The Director/Coordinator will give suggestions for improvement.

- In either of these cases, a written account of the notification will be made and placed in the Catechist's file.
- If the unsatisfactory behavior or performance persists, the Director/Coordinator advises the Pastor of the situation.
- The Director/Coordinator specifies, in writing, the behavioral changes that are necessary.

G. Reasons For Dismissal Of A Catechist

Volunteers can be dismissed just as paid employees can be and the procedure are similar.

Allegations of child abuse or molestation result in *immediate suspension*. Any allegation of child abuse or molestation must be reported to the Director/Coordinator who will inform the Pastor and the Regional Director of the Catechetical Office.

Some of the reasons for considering the dismissal of a Catechist are:

- Consistently demonstrating a failure to maintain control in a group or catechetical session.
- Consistent failure to follow the Archdiocesan Guidelines or the designated curriculum.
- Consistent resistance to the leadership, directives and guidance of the Director/Coordinator.
- Excessive absence from the program.
- Behavior that fosters divisiveness and a spirit of negativity among the other Catechists and staff.

- Physical or mental incompetency in carrying out the supervisory and educational responsibilities.
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- A lifestyle that seriously and obviously violates Catholic morality.

If improper behavior/performance occurs, the Catechist is warned in writing that a failure to change the behavior or improve the performance may result in a change of area of service or even dismissal as the situation warrants.

If the behavior/performance continues to be unsatisfactory, the Director/Coordinator will change the Catechist's area of responsibility or dismiss the Catechist.

H. Catechist Formation

As the *General Directory For Catechesis* states:

“Catechesis needs to consider, as its primary task, the preparation and formation of Catechists in the deep riches of the faith... The quality of any form of pastoral activity is placed at risk if it does not rely on truly competent and trained personnel. The instruments provided for catechesis cannot be truly effective unless well used by trained Catechists. Consequently, Diocesan pastoral programs must give absolute priority to the formation of lay Catechists.”³

The Bishops of New York have *mandated* that all Catechists who teach in programs in the Archdiocese should be actively pursuing catechetical certification. (*The Catechist in the Third Millennium*)

Catechetical Sunday

Catechetical Sunday recognizes in a special way all those involved in parish catechetical ministry. It is celebrated nationally the third Sunday in September. At a designated Mass on this day, Catechists are called forward to be commissioned by the celebrant and the parishioners.

Catechetical Forum

The Catechetical Forum is an annual Archdiocesan event that brings together all those involved in the catechetical ministry. The Forum includes Mass, workshops, exhibits of catechetical publications, resources and a prayer service. Admission tickets are available through the parish Director/Coordinator. The Forum is traditionally held on two Saturdays during the month of October in Monroe and the Bronx. A schedule of workshops is distributed to each catechist.

Catechist Certification

Certification is a two-level process by which a Catechist acquires a basic knowledge of the theological, spiritual and catechetical principles that should be known by a person entrusted with the catechetical formation of children. The Archdiocesan Catechetical Office publishes twice a year a schedule of Level I and Level II Catechist Formation Sessions which is provided by the Director/Coordinator along with periodic listings of sessions taking place locally.

The preparation of the Catechist through Catechist Formation is not only required by the Bishops of New York, but is essential to effective parish catechesis. Catechists and anyone interested in religious education are welcomed and encouraged to attend these sessions without cost or obligation.

³ GDC# 33,234

A record of attendance and an application for certification for both Level I and Level II will be kept in the Catechist's file. These forms will record the session, site, date and/or equivalency taken. It is the responsibility of the Catechist to give the Director/Coordinator the Level I cards (20 sessions), and the Level II cards (5 courses) received upon completion of each session. (*See appendix*)

Observations and evaluation will also follow this by the Director/Coordinator. When all requirements have been completed, a copy of the evaluation will be sent to the Regional Director of the Catechetical Office. Upon approval by the Regional Director, the Catechetical Office of the Archdiocese of New York will grant certification which is valid for five years.

Observation And Evaluation By Director/Coordinator

The Archdiocesan Catechetical Office requires an observation and evaluation to be completed for every Catechist during the first year in ministry. At the Director/Coordinator's discretion, an evaluation can be done annually. The Catechist is notified of the observation date at least two weeks in advance. Items include: number of years as a Catechist, number of students, length of session, textbook used, concepts explained, materials used, skills exercised, climate checklist, lesson plan checklist, commendable aspects and recommendations or suggestions for implementation. Following the observation and evaluation, the Director/Coordinator and Catechist meet to review the evaluation. Once reviewed and signed, a copy is given to the Catechist and the original is placed in his/her file. When the Catechist applies for certification, a copy of this evaluation report is sent to the Regional Director along with the Application for Certification. (*See Appendix*)

Catechist Formation Review

After attending all required sessions, the Catechist will complete the Catechist Formation Review. This gives the Catechists an opportunity to assess their progress regarding theology and spirituality.

On-Going Formation

All Catechists are encouraged to continue their formation and many parishes offer in-service development opportunities for the Catechist. [*Parish-specific information can be inserted.*]

The *Institute for Religious Studies* located at St. Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers offers Masters level courses at several sites in a range of subjects for individuals who wish to pursue a graduate degree or to enhance their knowledge. Tuition is very reasonable and evening courses are available.

The *New York Catholic Bible School* offers courses in sacred scripture, hermeneutics and other subjects at several sites throughout the Archdiocese for individuals who wish to pursue an in-depth study of the Bible.

Application for Renewal Level II

An application for Renewal of Level II certification is filed, documented with record of attendance, program, date, hours, and then is submitted. The programs and events that may fulfill requirements for re-certification are:

- Forums
- Adult Religious Education Classes
- Scripture Programs
- Retreat, Day of Prayer
- or other religious enrichment programs.

Each certification is valid for five years. The catechist is encouraged to attend ongoing formation.(See Appendix)

II. CATECHETICAL SESSION

A. Supervision of Students

The Catechist's responsibilities include supervision of the students designated to his/her class.

Supervision is a mental as well as a physical act. Therefore, the Catechist must be attentive to those in his/her care as well as being physically present with them.

To provide such supervision the Catechist is expected to adhere to the following:

- Have the room and lesson set up prior to students' arrival, so full attention can be given to the students.
- Meet and lead students from arrival site to the room.
- **NEVER** leave the class unattended by the Catechist or Catechist assistant.
- In the event of an emergency (e.g. Student accident / Catechist illness): (See appendix)
 1. If Catechist must leave the room, ask hall monitor or other responsible adult to watch the class.
 2. Send one or two students to the Religious Education Office with a message for assistance.
 3. Depending on the urgency of need, if no alternate supervision is available, bring the entire class to the office or to another Catechists's room.
- Early in the year explain to students what they should do in case of an emergency:
 1. Stay calm and in your seats.
 2. Quietly read from your books.
 3. Designate a specific student (e.g. the one nearest the door) to go to the Director/Coordinator's office for help.
 4. Tell students that should a fire alarm go off during an emergency when the Catechist is not in the room, they **MUST** leave the room in a quiet, orderly way and leave the building according to Fire Drill rules.
 5. At the end of class, the Catechist is to lead the students, in line, out to the dismissal site.

B. Confidential Information About Students

The Director/Coordinator will inform each Catechist about any student who has special needs which could affect the teaching/learning environment (e.g. medical conditions, learning disabilities, custody issues, etc.) This information is to be kept strictly confidential and must be used with discretion.

C. Curriculum

[Name of Parish] Religious Education Program must conform to the requirements of the Catechetical Office of the Archdiocese of New York and its published *Guidelines for Catechesis*. Our program ensures for all the children of our parish a clear and uniform presentation of the faith in concepts appropriate to each age level. The Religious Education Program is designed to assist parents in their sacred responsibility to educate their children in the faith. It complements, but can never replace parents

in carrying out their responsibilities. "Parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children."⁴

In addition to enlightening our children in doctrines and tenets of our faith, our Religious Education Program welcomes the opportunity to aid parents in teaching children to walk along the path of faith. This can only be achieved when we, through word and example, place Jesus Christ and His teachings at the center of our student's lives through liturgical worship, frequent prayer, and communication of Christian values and attitudes. In this way we make meaningful their professions of belief and nurture faith in our children by showing them the richness and beauty of lived faith.

The themes, objectives and appropriate prayers of each grade level can be found in the *Archdiocesan Guidelines for Catechesis Grades K-6 & Grades 7&8*.

D. Doctrine

Catechists are commissioned to teach the truths of the Catholic faith. At no time should Catechists offer their personal opinion about matters of faith or morals. If a situation arises where you are unsure about Catholic doctrine, consult with your Director/Coordinator.

E. Student Evaluation

Homework Policy [*to be modified according to parish program*]

Homework reinforces classroom learning and can provide opportunities for independent study, creative thinking and service.

There are two types of homework:

1. **Short Term:** Assignments that are given and are required to be completed and submitted at the following class.
2. **Long Term:** Assignments spread over a number of weeks which may include such activities as projects, research, extended reading or independent study.

Testing

Since there will be formal testing at each grade level, a certain amount of knowledge will be expected to be retained by each student involved in our program. Home study is absolutely necessary. The objective of testing is to monitor student growth, group progress and effectiveness of our Religious Education Program. Students will be tested on a regular basis, orally or written.

If a child does not fulfill grade level requirements, a meeting will be arranged with the parents, the Catechist, and the Director/Coordinator of Religious Education to discuss the situation. The Director/Coordinator will decide the appropriate course of action.

Report Cards, Progress Reports, Students Evaluations

[*This is based on the format of the Archdiocesan Progress Reports. If you have developed your own evaluation tool, please modify to meet your specific needs. The Religious Education Program Policy on grading and evaluations should be stated and explained here*] (See Appendix)

Religious formation of the child takes place in the home, in church and in the class setting. Report Cards for the Religious Education Program reflect class performance only. They are issued twice yearly to indicate the strengths and weaknesses students are demonstrating. The areas of evaluation are:

⁴ *National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States*

1. Achievement
2. Class Participation
3. Assignments
4. Effort
5. Behavior

The grading scale is:

- Excellent;
- Good;
- Satisfactory;
- Needs Improvement.

The Record of Attendance includes: Days Present, Days Absent and Times Late for both First and Second Semester.

Space is allotted for the Catechist to write constructive comments for each period. Comments by the Catechists are encouraged to be positive yet instructive. Begin your comments with the positive and then describe the behavior, not the student. Consult the Director/Coordinator concerning anything of a sensitive nature.

Discipline

It is important to be vigilant of the students' academic and behavioral record. It is beneficial to address and document these inter-related areas as soon as issues arise. Keep all records of the deficiency of homework and testing opportunities. Send all copies of discipline forms to the Director/Coordinator. (See Appendix)

6. Lesson Planning

A lesson plan is a guide for the Catechist. It helps a Catechist make decisions about how to instruct the lesson, what experiences and activities they want to create and use and how these activities will help promote learning objectives. Having a lesson plan gives the Catechists a sense of the overall flow of things and helps them to budget their time in order to keep focused on their objectives. Most lesson plans contain at least three elements:

1. A set of student objectives.
2. Directions for conducting the learning activities of the lesson.
3. A list of materials and resources needed for teaching the lesson.

A good lesson planner is a person who tries to prepare for every possible scenario. A good lesson planner is a person who examines the blueprint for the lesson, knows how it is to be built, and proceeds to build it effectively.

Tips For Lesson Planning

1. **Look ahead.** The lesson you are planning is only part of a larger plan for the whole year. You need to get a picture of the whole program calendar year and see how much time you have to accomplish your goals. Get a good feel for how this lesson can build off the previous one and lay the foundation for the next.

2. **Get to know your primary teaching resources.** They are the following:

- *Archdiocesan Guidelines For Catechesis K-6, 7-8.* The Archdiocesan Guidelines present a clear and uniform presentation of faith concepts appropriate to each age level, correlated with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and provide an easy reference tool for the Catechist.
- *Catechist Teaching Manual / Guide.*

3. **Examine the teacher's notes in the instructors manual / guide.** Instructor's manuals are often a Catechist's best friend. They lay out the lesson like a blueprint and offer step-by-step instructions.
4. **Visualize yourself teaching the lesson.** Visualization is the practice of using your imagination to experience specific situations in hopes of learning behaviors that can be incorporated into your real life repertoire. Good lesson planning involves visualizing yourself teaching the class.
5. **Make adjustments to fit your particular class.** No lesson plan is ironclad. Think of your class' readiness (or lack thereof) for what your lesson calls for and make the necessary adjustment.
6. **Know your goals and learning outcomes (objectives).** It is crucial that you know what the purpose of your lesson is. Goals and learning outcomes are statements you include in your lesson plan that state concretely and in measurable terms, what it is you hope to accomplish.
7. **Get your materials ready.** Before you go into the classroom be sure you have all of the materials you will need to complete the lesson properly.
8. **Have plan "B" ready.** Consider the possibility that what you are hoping to accomplish may not work. Always have an option ready in case something falls flat or just is not working the way you had hoped.
9. **Adolescent Catechesis.** The following process can be incorporated into all lesson planning:
 - Ice breaker / community building;
 - Gathering prayer;
 - Catechesis;
 - Small group sharing / activity with the help of older adolescents for junior high and young adults of high school age;
 - Application to life;
 - Insertion into parish;
 - Closing prayer experience.

Without proper lesson planning you are vulnerable to boredom, poor discipline, lackluster performance and poor participation.

Long Range Lesson Planning

Before a Catechist can make plans for a specific lesson or topic he/she must have an idea of the scope and sequence of the course. In other words, a Catechist must first look at the whole picture and then fill in the details of it.

The entire faith community of the Parish shares the responsibility for an adolescent's faith development. Faith is fostered in "youth friendly" parish communities, where adolescents have a prominent presence. All ministry with adolescents must be directed toward presenting young people with the Good News of Jesus Christ, inviting and challenging them to be disciples side-by-side with the adults of the community.

Adolescent Catechesis is developed within the context of youth ministry. The most successful catechesis with adolescents is given in the context of the wider pastoral care of young people.⁵ If there is a written description of the course be sure to study it carefully. Sometimes all a Catechist has is a copy of the Catechist's manual and the student text for the course. By reading the table of contents, one is able to get an idea of the scope of the course. Most textbook companies provide a scope and sequence chart which outlines the courses for each grade level and sequences the topics. Sometimes this

⁵ GDC# 184

chart can be found in each copy of the Catechist's manual / guide. This type of chart or overview is very helpful for long range planning.

Short Range Planning

Units usually consist of a number of lessons that focus on different aspects of the same topic. Short range planning usually entails taking a closer look at the next several lessons. Lessons are never taught in isolation. They are related to past lessons and to those that will follow. Catechists doing short range planning should see each unit as a whole before attempting to plan for a single chapter or part. By doing this, Catechists are able to decide:

- What aspects of the whole should be emphasized for their students.
- The pace to set for a particular lesson.
- Anything that can be eliminated, combined, or reviewed.
- What adaptations must be made for their particular group?
- What adaptations must be made for particular students; for individual students?
- What resources, ideas and talents can be shared with other Catechists of the same grade level?
- What needs to be prepared for each lesson of the unit?

Immediate Planning

Immediate plans are made for a particular lesson. This is a much easier task if some serious thought has been given to long and short range plans. Catechists' manuals provide lesson plans for each lesson. They must approach these suggested lesson plans with flexibility. They must also have an awareness that these plans are an aid and should be considered before a Catechist uses a prepared lesson plan from a manual.

- Student interest, ability and need.
- Teacher ability and talent.
- Time allotment.
- Resources available.
- Practicality.
- Adaptability.

Whether using a plan from a manual or an individually designed one, Catechists should always write out their plans. Depending upon the confidence and the experience of the Catechist, plans can be done on index cards, in a plan book or on a piece of paper. The written plan should include key words or phrases to remind the teacher of sequence, content and method of the lesson. There are a variety of lesson plan formats. The following is a suggested format:

- Topic (subject or theme of the lesson).
- Aim (goal and objectives).
- Materials, resources and equipment needed.
- Method or methods of presentation.
- Procedures.
- Summary.
- Preview of next lesson.
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Reminders for Catechists Regarding Lesson Planning

1. A lesson plan is like a road map containing a number of routes, any one of which may be appropriate on a given day with a particular group
2. One danger associated with lesson planning is a tendency for beginning Catechists to stick too rigidly to a plan.

3. Don't feel "duty bound" to cover every point in the exact order, no matter what.
4. Never risk teaching without a lesson plan.
5. Prepare alternate approaches to the same lesson. If one fails, switch quickly.
6. Determine the attention span of your students. Vary your presentations, activities and methods frequently enough during the course of the lesson to meet the needs of the students.
7. There is no one correct way of teaching. The approach you choose must be comfortable for you and your students.
8. Evaluate each lesson after the session. Adjust your plans for the next session according to your honest assessment of your lesson.
9. Prepare in advance all the materials you need for the lesson. *Eg.* If you do not know the proper response to a question, research it for the following class.
10. Be prepared for the unexpected.
11. Keep your sense of humor.

G. Manuals For Catechists

Each Catechist will be given a manual/guide. These books assist Catechists in lesson preparation. Catechist's editions include the student text and the manual/guide in one volume. Catechists should acquaint themselves with the manual/guide well in advance of the beginning of classes. New Catechists will be introduced to the manual/guide and the text by an experienced Catechist or the Director/Coordinator.

Catechists are encouraged to use the manual as a guide, adapting lessons and projects to the students in a particular course. Manuals/guides are designed as an aid. For a personalized lesson plan, prepare with a manual/guide before class and then write the key words on index cards and refer to them during the lesson.

H. Seating Plan

It is a good idea to establish a student seating plan. This provides order and consistency, assists in early identification of each student and is a reference check should an incident arise over the misuse of the room.

I. Late Arrival and Early Dismissal

Catechists are to dismiss classes **only** at the scheduled times. At no time should a Catechist cancel a class or dismiss a class early without the approval of the Director/Coordinator.

Late arrival of student must be recorded on the weekly Attendance Register. Repeated lateness should be brought to the attention of the Director/Coordinator.

Early dismissal of a student should be rare and only if the Director/Coordinator has notified the Catechist that the parent/guardian has submitted a written note to this effect including:

- Name of the student.
- Name of person picking up the student.
- Date and time of early dismissal.
- Reason for early dismissal.
- Signature of parent/guardian.

J. Restrooms and Water Fountains

Students should not be wandering around the halls once classes have begun. Direct the students to take care of all restroom and water fountain needs before class.

K. Discipline

It is expected that in the Religious Education Program, Jesus' Gospel values of charity, kindness, honesty, respect, sharing, obedience to legitimate authority, *etc.* that are being learned in class are to be practiced "right now." Therefore, **no violence, prejudice, or abuse** by words or actions will be tolerated by anyone.

Establish Good Discipline Procedures

Most times if the Catechist is well prepared and each student is drawn into the lesson and activities, discipline will be good. However, situations arise that can lead to discipline problems. Therefore, the Catechist is directed to use the following to establish and maintain good discipline.

1. Establish a classroom routine in the first class session and adhere to it.
2. Establish several basic behavior rules and consequences with your students.
3. Do not allow students to walk or run around the classroom, throw objects, call out of turn, make fun of other's mistakes, *etc.* Speak to the issue at the time it occurs.
4. Direct students not to bring to the classroom such items as toys, games, beepers, cell phones, and other items that could disturb the class. If brought to the classroom, have student put them in a designated place, to be picked up after class.
5. Try to be aware of some of the general family, peer and social influences that might be affecting a student's faith development. If you become aware of such problems, notify the Director/Coordinator. Early attention to minor misbehavior has a better chance of positive learning outcomes.
6. Be aware of various positive discipline approaches.

Use of Discipline

- Affirm both good and improving behavior to the student and to the parents.
- Use minor misbehavior as positive "teachable moments" in the class, where possible.
- **No physical** discipline or humiliation is ever permitted.

When Discipline Problems Persist

- When a serious problem occurs, or a situation persists, send the Catechist assistant (or a student) to the Director/Coordinator for assistance. Follow the directions of the Director/Coordinator with regard to completion of any necessary reports. (See *Supplement Forms*)
- If the Catechist suspects a student is in possession of a weapon (or other potentially dangerous items), or appears to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, do not become confrontational with the student. Notify the Director/Coordinator as soon as practical.
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- More specific discipline issues and procedures should be supplemented on the local parish level as appropriate.

12. Classroom Maintenance

The Catechist should:

- Briefly check classroom condition before students arrive. Note anything that is out of order, or things that require special care (*e.g.* display projects).
- When sharing classrooms in a Catholic School, direct students that under **NO** circumstances are they to use items from the classroom. All supplies (paper, pencils,

etc.) are to be obtained by the Catechist prior to class from the Religious Education office.

- Clearly inform students that any damage, loss, etc. will have to be repaired, replaced, paid for by the student(s) responsible. (This is written in the Parent Handbook, and signed by the parents and students.) Students responsible for any damage, etc. are to be brought to the Director/Coordinator **before** leaving the building. Catechist is to write up an account of the incident.
- At the end of class, Catechist and students are to straighten up the classroom.
- The Catechist is to check that windows, shades, lights, desks, blackboards, floor are in good condition before leaving the room. Any condition that needs attention should be reported to the Director/Coordinator.

Parties / Snacks

Generally, it is recommended that food not be served during the classes, especially given some students' medical restrictions to certain foods or ingredients. If a special class includes food (e.g. pretzels for Lent), check each student's Medical Information in the Director/Coordinator's office file and call parents/guardians to obtain approval.

Student Visitors

In view of Diocesan Fire regulations and insurance regulation, only children on the class Attendance Register should be in the classroom. No visitors, parents/guardians, cousins, friends, *etc.*, are to be in the room without the permission of the Director/Coordinator .

Any new child wishing to register in our program is most welcome, but must meet with the Director/Coordinator, as well as the child's parents/guardians in order to consider registering.

13. Prayer/Church Visits/Liturgical Celebrations

Planning For Liturgical Seasons, Feasts, and Holidays

Be sure to note free days and seasonal lessons. Frequently a liturgical season, feast, holiday will dictate when a particular lesson should be taught. Be aware of liturgical seasons and feasts so the lesson plan corresponds to the respective season or feast. Common sense dictates these decisions, but long range planning will help avoid last minute plan changes or adjustments.

Liturgical Celebrations

Liturgical Prayer is our public prayer when we assemble as a community to profess and celebrate what we believe. We praise, thank, and ask pardon, and petition God as one body. Participating in this prayer strengthens our bonds with God and with one another. Through words, actions and symbols we connect with God. It is essential for Catechists to prepare students to join fully with God's people as they pray in the liturgy, the Eucharist, the Liturgy of the Hours (Christian Prayer), Prayer services and Sacramental celebrations.

Prayer

Prayer is faith coming alive. It is plugging into the energy and power of God, both for the Catechist and the students. Prayer is needed to sustain oneself and the level of creativity and commitment. Students need prayer, because without the power of God in their own lives, all the doctrine in the world would be meaningless.

Hints and Suggestions About Prayer

1. Pay special attention to prayer forms in the Catechist's manual / guide or Catechetical Guidelines suggested in the regular curriculum and other catechetical resources.

2. Introduce ritual prayers -- both traditional and liturgical -- into the class.
3. Occasionally use a recorded song as a form of prayer, or as a centering exercise that leads to prayer.
4. Provide the students with opportunities to design prayers and religious activities.
5. Encourage gestures for particular prayers or songs.

Kinds Of Prayer

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1. Meditation | 7. Scriptural reading |
| 2. Contemplation | 8. Centering prayer |
| 3. Spontaneous prayer | 9. Eucharist, the greatest prayer |
| 4. Vocal prayer | 10. Liturgical prayer |
| 5. Communal Prayer | 11. Marian prayer and prayer to the saints |
| 6. Spiritual Reading | |

Purpose of Prayer

1. **Petition:** We ask for our needs.
2. **Adoration:** We worship God and acknowledge God's greatness.
3. **Contrition:** We express sorrow for our sins and failings and ask forgiveness.
4. **Thanksgiving:** We show appreciation and gratitude for God's gifts.

Tips On How To Use Prayer

1. **Pray before you plan a lesson.** Ask the Lord to guide your ministry.
2. **Make your planning prayerful work.** Make your work an act of prayer.
3. **Pray before class begins.** Ask the Holy Spirit to inspire and guide you.
4. **Build prayer moments at the beginning, during and end of your lesson.** Provide the opportunity for children to offer spontaneous prayer and petitions.
5. **Ritualize.** Include experiences in your prayer celebrations that "ritualize" the topic or experience you are covering.
6. **Make sure that prayer is more than talking to God.** We need to get beyond talking and listen, use our bodies, and open up to the many symbols and metaphors through which God speaks to us.

14. Guest Speakers

1.

It is beneficial for the student to have a priest, deacon, sister / brother visit and speak with the students occasionally. Fill out the required form to request a classroom visit stating the specific day, time and topic you would like addressed. (See *Appendix*)

15. Resources

Audio/Visual Materials

The Regional A.V. Library and the Archdiocesan Adult Media Library are located at the Central/Southern Westchester Regional Catechetical Office in Rye at Resurrection Parish. Parish membership in the A.V. Library makes available to each Catechist a wealth of video resources (over 800 videos) for personal enrichment and instructional purposes *at no charge to the Catechist*. A catalogue, providing available titles is kept in the parish Religious Education Office. It is important to use audio visuals when teaching; it brings diversity to the classes. They can be used to introduce a topic, review a theme or introduce a new concept. See the Director/Coordinator for more information. Consult the Director/Coordinator to review catalogues, to reserve and arrange to borrow videotapes using the AV Request Form. [*Insert information on parish library resources here.*] (See *Appendix*)

Audio Visual Equipment

The VCR's, tape recorders, CD players and projectors are stored in _____. The videotapes, CD's, audio cassettes that we have at our Parish are located in _____. It is necessary to reserve the use of the VCR and projector in advance. Audio Visual requisition forms are located in the Religious Education Office in _____. Please fill out form and leave it in _____.

Instructional Resources

Catechists' resources from various publishers regarding the liturgical year, saints, rosary, and other texts, *etc.*, are available to the Catechist for their use.

Bibles

Learning scripture is an essential part of our program; we use the Bible as often as possible. A supply of Bibles for the Catechist use in the classroom is kept in Room _____. Please return them to the same place when you are finished using them.

Classroom Supplies

Every Catechist has a basket/bin with age appropriate classroom supplies and materials: pencils, crayons, markers, scissors, glue sticks, loose leaf paper, etc. These are located in _____ Room. Each Catechist's name is on it. As the need arises, Catechists may take other supplies (such as construction paper, poster boards, etc.) from the _____ closet / shelf in Room _____. For supplies needed which are not available, please submit a requisition form for them, or if you need to purchase them, first discuss the cost with the Director/Coordinator prior to buying them; then submit your receipt for reimbursement.

Catechetical Resources

A wealth of information on matters of faith can be found in the Catechist's Guide and the *Archdiocesan Guidelines for Catechesis* which the Director/Coordinator will provide for each for Catechist. The *Bible*, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the U.S.* are recommended resources for the Catechist's home library. Copies of these and other resources are available in the Religious Education office. The Director/Coordinator can loan or provide a copy.

16. Parent/Catechist Conference

Catechists are expected to be present for annual parent meetings or conferences. In addition, ongoing communication with parents/guardians may include:

- An introductory letter stating goals and objectives, as well as class rules.
- Informal conferences on an "as needed" basis.
- Weekly or monthly curriculum updates.
- Written report card comments or in-person report card conference.
- End-of-year summary of student's progress.

All communications to the parents from the Catechist *must be reviewed and approved* by the Director/Coordinator in advance.

All conversations should be documented as to date, time, nature of communication and with whom the Catechist spoke. Keep a log for record purposes. If a parent claims not to have been notified of something in particular the log can be reviewed for verification.

17. Special Religious Education

Guidelines for Meeting the Catechetical Needs of Students with Disabilities

The universality of Jesus' mandate to teach all people includes those who are marginalized because of their disabilities. The Church is responsible to nourish the faith of the baptized person to the degree that the individual is capable of growing in that faith. The Church continuously reaffirms the sacredness of all human life and places special emphasis on the respect due to those who are fragile in mind, spirit, and body. Catechetical programs reflect the love and concern of Jesus and the Church for persons with disabilities.

Special Religious Education is a ministry that responds to the religious and spiritual needs of persons with physical, mental, or emotional disabilities which might impair their functioning in a regular catechetical session. Because of that disability a student may require small group or individualized instruction or may be mainstreamed into the regular catechetical program with individual assistance provided.

Categories of Disability

In order to meet the needs of students with disabilities, it is necessary to have at least a general understanding of the kinds of disabilities. The following definitions are broad. Within each category of disability there are wide ranges of ability, of acceptance of the disability, and of a willingness to learn:

1. **Students Who Are Developmentally Disabled:** Mental retardation refers to significantly sub-average intellectual functioning which interferes with the student's ability to grasp concepts, make judgements and apply information to their own experience. This impaired ability requires simplification and repetition of content through activity oriented lessons.
2. **Students Who Are Learning Disabled:** Learning disabled students have average, or above average intellectual ability, but experience difficulty in the process of acquiring, integrating, recalling or expressing information. The impairment may be a difficulty in listening, thinking, speaking, reading or writing, or in fine or gross motor body movements. Students with learning disabilities can, for the most part, be mainstreamed into the regular catechetical program.

Main streaming can be accomplished:

- If extra assistance is provided;
 - If the Catechist uses a multi-sensory approach;
 - If the Catechist uses a variety of teaching styles and testing techniques; and
 - If the necessary adjustments are made in the quantity and kind of material learned.
3. **Students Who Are Behaviorally Disturbed:** These children exhibit one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree:
 - An inability to build and maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers or adults.
 - Inappropriate type of behavior or feelings in normal circumstances.
 - A general or pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
 - Withdrawal, lack of interest and involvement with people and within the environment.

Catechists of students with behavioral disabilities should:

- Be competent in the general principles of behavior management.
 - Have knowledge of the pressures, abuses and family situations which may affect these students.
 - Discuss with the Parish Director/Coordinator the situation of any student whose behavior, frequently disrupts a class. Some students with behavioral problems may need to be placed in a one-on-one, or small group situation.
4. **Students Who Are Physically Challenged:**
 - Students with physical disabilities may or may not need special religious education, depending on the nature and complexity of the disability.
 - Where there is no intellectual impairment, every effort should be made to mainstream the physically disabled student.

- Visually impaired students, students who are hearing impaired or deaf, and orthopedically impaired students can be mainstreamed if special materials, resources, and Catechist assistants are utilized, and if Parish buildings are accessible.
- Although physically challenged students are often eligible for mainstreaming, conflict in special bus scheduling often necessitates that special sessions be arranged for these students.

Special Religious Education Program and Administration

The Special Religious Education Program of the Parish is a component of the total Parish Catechetical Program and is developed and administered within the content of the *Guidelines for the Coordination of the Catechetical Program*.

Identifying Students

- Repeated efforts are often necessary to locate special needs students.
- Many parents of children with disabilities need to be informed of their child's right to, and their need for religious education.

Environment

- Religious education sessions for students with special needs should be held in rooms that are attractive, comfortable and adequately furnished.
- Whenever possible these sessions should be held at the same time and in the same location as the regular sessions of the catechetical program so that the special education students do not feel isolated from the rest of the students.

Curriculum Resources

- Modified developmental curricula are available for the student whose disability precludes the use of a religion textbook.
- The Catechetical Office maintains updated information on Special Religious Education materials and the Catechetical Office Director of Special Religious Education is available to assist in choosing appropriate curricula.
-
- Resources for assisting blind or visually impaired students are available from the Xavier Society for the Blind, located in New York City (212-473-7800).
- The Archdiocesan Catholic Deaf Center will provide resource materials, sign language interpreters and Catechists for students who are deaf.

Sacramental Catechesis for First Penance, First Eucharist, and Confirmation

In the *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities*, the U.S. Bishops provide the norms for bringing persons with disabilities into the sacramental life of the Church.

In the case of severe disability, the decision as to whether or not a student may receive the Sacraments of Eucharist or Penance should be made according to these guidelines.

Simplified lesson plans are available from the Catechetical Office to prepare for the reception of the Sacraments of Penance, Eucharist and Confirmation.

18. Catechetical Program Approaches to Family Centered Catechesis

Sensitivity to the needs and desires of families must permeate all the dimensions of the parish catechetical program and indeed, of all parish life. "The care of the family always remains central, since it is the primary agent of an incarnate transmission of the faith."⁶

⁶ GDC# 207

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* warmly recommends the home as the first school of prayer.⁷ Parish support for the “domestic church” (the family) includes the work of religious educators who help parents to fulfill the role of “first heralds of the faith” to their children.

As early as by the age of three, most children are ready to take part in a preschool catechetical program. In such a program the role of Catechist is different from, yet complements, the unique role as parents.

III. OFFICE

1. Catechist Attendance and Tardiness

The Catechist should arrive approximately 15 minutes before the class session is to begin. [*Insert Program policy on arranging a substitute*] In case of illness on the day of class, call the Director/Coordinator immediately in order that proper arrangements can be made for a substitute. If a class is to be missed due to personal reasons, ample notification is to be given to the Director/Coordinator and a lesson plan is to be left for the substitute. If a Catechist is going to be late for class, a call must be made to notify the Director/Coordinator so that appropriate plans can be made until the Catechist arrives.

2. Volunteer Staff and Grade Level Meetings

1.

The Catechist is expected to attend regularly scheduled staff meetings. Active participation at these meetings provides for continuous program evaluation, cooperative planning, problem solving and a mutual exchange of ideas. Participation at grade level meetings is also encouraged as a means of assuring a consistent programmatic approach to catechesis as well as a sense of team work among those responsible for a particular segment of the K - 8 curricula.

3. Volunteer Staff's Expectations of the Director/Coordinator

Catechists, Grade Level Coordinators, Catechist Assistants and Director/Coordinator's Assistants should expect the Parish Director/Coordinator of Religious Education to guide, affirm and support them in their catechetical ministry, to pray for them, to explain policies to them, to communicate with them on a regular basis and to be available to them and provide supplies and resources when needed.

4. Grade Level Coordinator

Grade Level Coordinators for Grades K-8 are asked to arrange grade level meetings at least once a semester and when necessary throughout the semester in order to plan lessons and evaluate the program for that grade level. Responsibilities include: scheduling and facilitating the meeting, following the agenda (prepared in consultation with the Director/Coordinator), communicating what was discussed with those Catechists who were not in attendance, mentoring new Catechists on that grade level and discussing any problems, successful activities, projects and endeavors. The Grade Level Coordinator reports a summary of the Grade Level Meeting to the Director/Coordinator of Religious Education.

5. Director/Coordinator's Assistant

Volunteer Assistants help supervise the program and manage the Religious Education Office

⁷ CCC #2685

during class time. They monitor the corridors, take charge of attendance registers, make photo copies for Catechists, distribute supplies, answer phone calls, call parents of children who become ill while in class, handle discipline problems and assist in supervising arrival and dismissal. This affords the Director/Coordinator the opportunity of spending time observing the classes and getting to know the Catechists, children and parents.

6. Human Resources

Don't overlook the human resources that are available to you. In addition to the Director/Coordinator, seek out other Catechists to brainstorm, plan and develop ideas. Catechists at grade level are often the best resources since they are following the same instructional plan and can provide a benchmark for the new Catechist.

Remember, too, the parish priest, deacon, program moderator, school principal as well as others such as heads of various parish ministries who may be able to offer some advice or counsel. Look also to the artists in your parish community as sources of enrichment for your students. Exposure to sacred music, religious art, creative writing or play acting can bring a lesson to life for the student.

7. Office Communications

Communication with the Director/Coordinator is essential. As the Catechists' main resource, the Director/Coordinator should be consulted regularly.

Flyers, articles and bulletins will be distributed to the Catechists via their "mailboxes/folders," which should be checked weekly. Handouts should be given out on the appropriate day so that the students can bring them home in a timely fashion.

Newsletter

A newsletter containing items of interest to students and parents will be sent home (e.g. monthly, bimonthly, once a semester). These will be distributed or mailed to all families.

Communication With Parents

- All communications to the parents from the catechist must be reviewed and approved by the Director/Coordinator, in advance.
- Document all conversations as to date, time, nature of communication, and with whom the catechist spoke. Keep a log for record purposes. If a parent claims not to have been notified of something in particular, refer to the log for verification.

8. Attendance Registers

An attendance register is a legal document and must be maintained by each Catechist. It must always be legible and updated and include each student's record of both absences and tardiness. The official attendance register must be kept in the Religious Education Office at the Parish. Entries should be recorded in ink. At the end of the year, the information is transferred to each student's permanent record card. *[Record cards are updated by either the Religious Education Office staff or by each Catechist. Each Director/Coordinator will determine whose responsibility this is and it should be stated here.]*

Attendance should be taken within the first fifteen minutes of class. *[Indicate the manner in which attendance slips will be collected and how late arrivals are recorded. Indicate manner in which records are to be handled in the event of an emergency, e.g., fire alarm.]*

1. Permanent Record Cards

There is a permanent record card for each student in the program which includes dates and places of sacramental celebrations and other pertinent information. These are kept on file in the Director/Coordinator's office.

10. Staff Directory

A Staff Directory will be distributed to all catechetical volunteers.

11. Calendar

Each Catechist will be given a calendar for the year which indicates class dates, meetings, the Catechetical Congress and other special events.

12. Weather Closings / Class Cancellations

[Indicate the manner in which Catechists, parents, students are notified. Example: radio station announcements, telephone relays, door notices, public school announcements.]

13. Telephone Relay

Each volunteer staff member will be given a copy of the telephone relay. The relay will list the person or persons each staff member is to call. In the event that you do not reach someone, leave a message on the machine and proceed to call the next person on your list. Advise the Director/Coordinator of any one you did not reach.

14. Field Trips

If Catechists wish to take a class on a field trip, the Director/Coordinator must be notified in advance so that the appropriate permission slips can be issued and arrangements can be made.

Field Trip Permission

Great care must be taken to ensure the safety of the students during the entire course of the trip, including the provision of excellent supervision and proper insurance. If field trips are taken, only hired busses, vans, *etc.*, which provide properly covered insurance by the owner should be used. If a situation arises where a Catechist agrees to use his/her own vehicle transport children from various Catechetical program activities, it must be understood that the Catechist's automobile insurance policy responds first in the event of an accident. (Insurance follow the car, not the driver.) If a field trip is planned for the Catechetical Program, the Parish-Sponsored Trip Form must be completed by the parent / guardian of every minor who will participate. This form must be taken along on the trip by the Catechist, along with the students' medical emergency information. Telephone calls should **not** be accepted in lieu of written permission forms. These written permission forms must be kept on file for one year after the trip.

(See Appendix)

IV. LEGAL ISSUES

Introduction

The following Guidelines promote the safety and well-being of the children and youth in Parish Catechetical Programs of the Archdiocese of New York.⁸

These Guidelines are not, in themselves, policy statements. They are written to assist parishes in making policies to fit the needs of the local situations. Within these Guidelines reference is made to handbooks for Catechists (called Catechist Handbook), and for parents/guardians (called Parent Handbook). These handbooks are to be written by the parish Director/Coordinator of Religious Education and approved by the Pastor. The Catechist and the Parent Handbooks should contain policies and procedures which reflect the content of these Guidelines. In addition, they should contain and be reflective of the Parish Mission Statement.

⁸ GDC# 1-21

The Guidelines have been carefully reviewed and approved by the Archdiocesan lawyers and Insurance Department so that parish Directors and Coordinators of Religious Education can confidently make use of their directives and language.

Both the Catechist and Parent Handbooks should be accompanied by a signature card. When signed and filed with the Director/Coordinator of Religious Education, this card serves as the written agreement of Catechist or parent/guardian that they have read, understood and agree to abide by the policies and procedures specified in the handbook.

The Archdiocesan Catechetical Office takes an active role in advising Directors/Coordinators on the development of their handbooks and on the implementation at the parish level of both these Guidelines and the handbooks.

The Director/Coordinator who develops the Parent and Catechist Handbooks is responsible for carrying out the provisions set forth in these handbooks. An annual review and updating of these handbooks is advisable.

In order to provide greater understanding in using these Guidelines, it is recommended that each Director/Coordinator obtain the following:

Religious Education and the Law: A Handbook for Parish Catechetical Leaders ... and ...
Religious Education and the Law: A Catechist Handbook, both by:
Sr. Mary Angela Shaughnessy, SCN
and published by the *National Catholic Education Association*

1. Discipline

The Catechist Handbook gives basic instructions for maintaining good discipline and group management.

It mandates that under no circumstances should physical contact be used as a form of discipline.

The Catechist Handbook also stresses that humiliation must never be used as a form of discipline.

If a Catechist is allowed to keep a student after the session for reasons such as misbehavior, lateness, or additional instruction, this should be stated as program policy in the Parent Handbook, along with the procedure for carrying this out. This procedure should include the manner in which advance notice will be given to the parent.

The Parent Handbook states that the Catechetical Program reserves the right to remove a student from the group sessions:

- if it is believed that the student would benefit significantly from an individual or smaller group situation,
- if the student's behavior is seriously inhibiting the learning of others in the group,
- if temporary removal is used as a disciplinary measure for serious and persistent disruptive behavior.

Such action should be preceded by a consultation involving the student, the family, the Catechist and the Director/Coordinator.

2. Child Abuse and Child Neglect

Child abuse and child neglect are complex problems that are not confined to any one family, racial, ethnic, cultural, socio-economic, or religious group. They represent a serious breakdown in the family

structure, and both the Gospel Message and the legal system of this country call upon the assistance of the wider community in addressing the problem. The parish community, therefore, has a moral responsibility to develop a well planned mode of response to the suspicion of child abuse or neglect.

All studies indicate that children rarely make false allegations of abuse. If a child speaks of abuse it should be taken very seriously. If a Catechist suspects abuse, he/she should immediately bring these suspicions to the Director/Coordinator who, in turn, should consult the Pastor. The utmost confidentiality must be exercised and any involvement of other people on the parish staff must be left to the discretion of the Pastor.

Never contact the parents of the child, even if you think that speaking to the non-suspected offender would help to clarify the validity of the suspected abuse. This could further endanger the child and also have legal repercussions.

Characteristics Of The Abused Child

There are four main categories of abuse:

1. Physical Abuse.
2. Sexual Abuse.
3. Emotional abuse.
4. Neglect.

Physical abuse is any non-accidental physical injury to a child caused by a parent or caretaker which results in, or threatens, serious injury to the child. This may include excessive corporal punishment.

Sexual abuse occurs when an adult, a youth or another child in a position of power, uses a child for sexual gratification or allow another to do so.

Verbal harassment, threats, and the systematic destruction of the child's esteem are all part of the mental and emotional harm inflicted by emotional abuse.

Neglect means depriving a child of conditions necessary for normal development including food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education, and supervision.

1. PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical Indicators:

- Unexplained bruises or welts - may be in various stages of healing or in clusters of unusual patterns, or on several different areas.
- Unexplained burns - in shape of cigarette, rope, iron, or caused by immersion, which may appear sock or glove like.
- Unexplained lacerations to mouth, lips, arms, legs, or torso.
- Unexplained skeletal injuries, stiff swollen joints, or multiple fractures.
- Missing or loosened teeth.
- Human bite marks.
- Unexplained abrasions or bald spots.
- Appearance of injuries after school absence, weekend or vacation.

Behavioral Indicators:

- Easily frightened or fearful of adults / parents, of physical contact, or when other children cry.
- Destructive to self and / or others.

- Extremes of behavior - aggressive, withdrawn.
- Poor social relations.
- Learning problems - poor academic performance, short attention span, language delayed.
- Runaway or delinquent behavior.
- Complaints of soreness or moves awkwardly.
- Accident prone.
- Wears clothing that clearly is meant to cover the body when not appropriate.
- Seems afraid to go home.

Indicators of Abusive Caretaker:

- Describes the child in a consistently negative manner.
- Is a harsh disciplinarian.
- Conceals or misleads a provider about a child's injuries.
-

2. SEXUAL ABUSE

Physical Indicators:

- Difficulty walking / sitting.
- Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing.
- Genital / anal itching, pain, swelling, burning.
- Genital / anal bruises or bleeding.
- Frequent urinary tract or yeast infections.
- Pain on urination.
- Vaginal / penile discharge.
- Poor sphincter control.
- Venereal disease.
- Pregnancy.
- Chronic unexplained sore throats.
- Frequent psychosomatic illnesses.
- Loss of appetite.

Behavioral Indicators:

- Sudden radical behavior change.
- Destructive to self and / or others.
- Extremes in behavior - aggressive, withdrawn.
- Poor social relations.
- Refuses to change for gym.
- Does artwork depicting sexual themes.
- Behaves seductively and has sexual knowledge beyond age.
- Compulsive use of language referring to genitals.
- Sexually acts out or attempts to force or coerce other children to be sexual.
- Regressive behavior.
- Runaway or delinquent behavior.
- Complains of soreness or moves or sits awkwardly.
- Wears clothing that covers body when not appropriate.
- Depressed, apathetic or suicidal.
- Compulsive bathing.
- Nightmares.
- Is extremely protective of family privacy.

- Child is not allowed to be involved in extracurricular or developmentally appropriate activities such as being with friends or dating.

3. EMOTIONAL MALTREATMENT

Physical Indicators:

- Failure to thrive.
- Developmental lags.
- Wetting of bed / pants.
- Thumb sucking.
- Appears sad.
- Speech disorders - stammering or stuttering.
- Health problems - ulcers, asthma, skin disorders, severe allergies, obesity, extreme weight loss.
- Poor appearance.
- Drug or alcohol abuse.

Behavioral Indicators:

- Habit disorders - sucking, biting, rocking, *etc*
- Destructive to self and / or others.
- Extremes in behavior - aggressive, withdrawn.
- Phobias, sleep disorders, *etc*.
- Developmental lags - mental, emotional.
- Learning problems.
- Inhibition to play.
- Cruelty, vandalism, stealing, cheating, fire setting, *etc*.
- Sadoomasochistic behavior toward animals and other children.
- Head banging.
- Overly adaptive behavior - inappropriately adult or infantile.
- Depression.
- Suicidal ideation.

Indicators of Emotionally Abuse Caretaker:

- Rejects, ignores, terrorizes, or isolates the child.

4. NEGLECT

Physical Indicators:

- Poor growth pattern.
- Constant hunger.
- Malnutrition.
- Dark circles under the eyes.
- Poor hygiene - body odor, lice.
- Inappropriate clothing.
- Constant fatigue.
- Listlessness.
- Falls asleep in school.
- Consistent lack of supervision, especially for long periods or in dangerous activities.
- Unexplained bruises or injuries as a result of poor supervision.
- Unattended physical problems or medical needs such as:
 - a) Lack of proper immunizations.

- b) Gross dental problems.
- c) Needs glasses / hearing aids.

Behavioral Indicators:

- Developmental lags.
- Begs or steals food, forages through garbage.
- Always hungry.
- Destructive to self and / or others.
- Extremes in behavior - aggressive, withdrawn.
- Hyperactive.
- Assumes adult responsibilities or acts in pseudo-mature fashion.
-
- Exhibits infantile behavior.
- Delinquent behavior.
- Depressed / apathetic - states "no one cares."
- Frequent school absences or chronic tardiness.
- Seeks attention and / or affection.
- Hypochondria.

Indicators of Neglect from Caretaker:

- May be substance abuser.
- Has chaotic life style which might include loss of job, income, housing.

3. Safety Issues and Procedures

Accidents and Illness:

If a relatively minor accident occurs to a student while attending the catechetical program, the following steps are taken:

- The Catechist reports the accident immediately to the Director/Coordinator.
- If bleeding is involved, the procedures outlined under "Blood borne Pathogens" are followed.
- The Director/Coordinator notifies the parent.

In case of serious accident or illness:

- The Catechist reports the accident immediately to the Director/Coordinator.
- Calls 911 or the local police / emergency rescue squad, immediately.

Liability Insurance:

The Archdiocese of New York maintains liability coverage for negligent acts resulting in bodily injury or property damage. The Director/Coordinator, the Catechist, and other volunteers are covered as long as they are acting within the scope of responsibilities assigned to them by the parish and as long as the act was neither intentional nor criminal.

4. Blood Borne Pathogens

While the fear of Blood borne pathogens is real, they present social as well as medical problems and require sensitive and Christian responses. The following are guidelines for dealing with persons who suffer from HIV, AIDS, HBV, or for that matter, any physiological, mental, or emotional condition.

The Director/Coordinator and the Catechist teach the message of Jesus, and, therefore, are held to a higher standard of compassion in responding to persons with HIV, AIDS, or any other illness or disability.

Everyone, including people with HIV or AIDS, is protected against discrimination. Students with HIV or AIDS shall not be excluded by reason of the infection with HIV unless the following conditions are evident as determined by the student's physician and parents, together with the Director/Coordinator of Religious Education:

- The student is not toilet-trained or is incontinent.
- The student is unable to control drooling.
- The student is unusually physically aggressive, with a documented history of biting or harming others.
-

All medical information relating to HIV infection of students is confidential and the only people with a legal right to know may be granted access to it (*e.g.* Certain judicial and health care authorities with proper authorization or upon Court order).

Catechetical Programs must have a well planned way of responding to injuries in order to safeguard the health of the helping adult while caring for the injured child. This plan of action should be based on the assumption that any person could be a carrier of a Blood borne pathogen, or other communicable disease.

In addition, **every** classroom should be provided with the kit described in the Blood borne Pathogens Instruction Sheet.

Bloodborne Pathogens Instruction Sheet for Catechist:

When a Catechist or volunteer needs to intervene and implement "universal precautions," they do so from an informed, voluntary response under the "Good Samaritan Act" and use prudent public health protective procedures. Bring your Catechist Kit with you to each catechetical session.

Direct or help the individuals involved with a blood / body fluid incident to care for themselves with minimal contact to you. If an accident involving a blood spill occurs, encourage the individual to tend to their own injury. Example: If a child has a bloody nose, hand the child the tissues and instruct him to pinch his nose. If a child has a cut, hand the child clean paper towels to hold over the cut. When you need to intervene and provide assistance that requires contact, always place a barrier between yourself and the individual. When providing assistance:

- Wear disposable latex / vinyl gloves.
- Use disposable towels / tissues for each injury.
- Keep other children away from the area of blood / body fluid spill. Cover spill with paper towels.
- Place any blood stained materials in a **sealable** plastic bag.
- Remove gloves following the proper procedures.
- Wash hand thoroughly with anti-bacterial soap, using proper hand washing procedures.

As soon as possible, notify the Director/Coordinator who will call a custodial person for immediate clean up. If no one comes to clean up, the 10% bleach solution in the Catechist Kit can be used temporarily as a disinfectant.

Contents of Catechist Kit:

- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| 1. Disposable latex gloves. | 5. Band-aids. |
| 2. Paper towels. | 6. Alcohol towelettes. |
| 3. Plastic bags with ties or Zip-lock bags. | 7. 10% bleach solution. |
| 4. Gauze pads. | 8. These instructions. |

5. Medication

No medication of any kind (including both prescription and over-the-counter) should be administered to, or taken by, the student during the Parish Catechetical Program. If an exception has to be made, the parent must provide **written** request and directives to the Director/Coordinator.

6. Emergency Procedures

It is the responsibility of the Director/Coordinator to make certain that all Catechists know exactly what to do in an emergency.

*[There should be a brief, clear statement of emergency procedures, including fire, weather and bomb threats. There should also be clear statements concerning use of such materials as candles or other potentially dangerous materials in the classroom. Fire and Police telephone numbers **should be posted** in various conspicuous places on the premises. In **each** area where catechetical sessions are held, a diagram of emergency exit routes is on display.]*

A record of each evacuation of the premises, including fire drills, is kept on file -- including date, time and duration of fire drill.

In the event of an emergency (*e.g.* student accident, Catechist illness, *etc.*):

- Ask a hall monitor or other responsible adult to watch the class if the Catechist must leave the room.
- Send one or two students to the Religious Education office with a request for assistance.
- If no alternate supervisor is available, take the entire class to the Office or to another Catechist's classroom, depending on the urgency of the need.

Early in the school year explain to students what they should do in case of an emergency, such as:

- Stay calm and in their seats.
- Read quietly from their books.
- Designate a specific student (the one nearest the door) to go to the Religious Education Office for help.
- Give specific instructions as to what to do if a fire alarm goes off during an emergency and the Catechist is not in the room - *i.e.*, they must leave the room in a quiet, orderly way and leave the building according to fire drill rules.

Bomb Threat:

If a bomb threat is received by telephone or in writing, the following procedure is recommended:

- Inform the Police Department immediately and accept the advice of the Police with respect to the action to be taken.

Fire Drills:

At least once a semester a fire drill is held, making use, insofar as possible, of the procedures known to the children from their regular school drills. The escape route to be used in evacuating the children is posted in the classroom by the door. Fire Department personnel should assist the Director/Coordinator in determining the safest evacuation routes. Each Catechist should be aware of a secondary evacuation route, should it be necessary.

Instructions given to Catechists include:

- Lead students out of the room to the assigned place of safety. Insure that all students are out of the room.
- Have the last person out of the room, closer the door.
- Bring the attendance register and use it to verify that all those in your charge are accounted for and safely out of the building.

A staff member is appointed whose responsibility is to check the bathrooms and to evacuate any students in those rooms. Provisions must be made for the safety of disabled student. For each disabled student, a staff member (an adult), other than the Catechist, should be assigned to assist that student.

Anti-Sexual Harassment

Introduction

Sexual harassment in the workplace is unacceptable behavior on the part of any employee of the Archdiocese of New York. It is a behavior that is disrespectful to another person. In addition, it is a violation of Federal, State, and City law.

When it exists, it is a problem that affects everyone, at all levels and in all types of work. It contributes to a hostile, non-productive work environment and affects work productivity and performance. It is unacceptable behavior by supervisors and managers, as well as by staff members.

Each one of us is responsible for compliance against sexual harassment. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring a work environment that is free of all forms and types of discrimination, harassment, and sexual harassment.

Policy

The Archdiocese of New York is committed to providing a work environment reflecting the highest standards of respect for the personal dignity of every employee. The Archdiocese neither condones nor permits sexual harassment and undertakes to address, prevent and correct any sexually harassing behavior in the work environment. Staff members are prohibited from initiating or engaging in sexually harassing conduct or behavior.

Definition

Sexual harassment is defined as any **unwelcomed** or **unwanted** conduct of a sexual nature, whether verbal, non-verbal or physical, when:

- Submission, acquiescence or rejection of such conduct is explicitly or implicitly made a condition of employment.
- Submission, acquiescence or rejection of such conduct is used as a factor in employment decisions, including but not limited to evaluation, training, promotion, compensation, duties, transfers, privileges and other terms or conditions of employment.
- Such conduct substantially interferes with employment by creating a hostile, intimidating or offensive work environment.

Grievance Procedure

Staff members who personally experience sexual harassment, or witness it, are required to report such incidents to the Director of Human Resources or to their supervisor⁹ who will inform the Director of Human Resources. Immediate reporting ensures prompt response and resolution of objectional conduct.

⁹ *In the parish religious education setting, the "supervisors" or "Directors" are the Director/Coordinator of Religious Education, the Pastor, the Regional Catechetical Director or the Director of the Archdiocesan Catechetical Office*

The Director of Human Resources, in coordination with the Department Director will promptly conduct and document an investigation of each grievance reported. The Director of Human Resources will submit a recommendation to the Department Director.

Such recommendation may include, but is not limited to:

- Formal warning.
- Suspension with pay.
- Termination of employment.

Sexual Harassment Complaint Procedure

If you think you are being sexually harassed in your workplace, the following procedure should be followed:

- When appropriate, make your displeasure known to the person harassing you. See if the behavior stops.
- If the inappropriate behavior continues, either:
 - 1) inform your supervisor who will contact the Office of Human Resource or
 - 2) inform the Archdiocesan Office of Human Resources directly.
- Interviews will be conducted in a timely fashion.
- Confidentiality will be maintained. Only those directly named by the complainant will be interviewed.
- If harassment is determined to be present, appropriate action will follow.
- The situation will be monitored to insure there is no further harassment.

H. Copyrighted Materials

The Catechist Handbook makes clear that any printed materials that are copyrighted may not be duplicated without permission from the holder of the copyright. The following exceptions may be made:

- A Catechist may duplicate a single copy to use in preparing or in teaching their class.
- A Catechist may duplicate a short printed item for each of the students in the class, but the distribution must be limited to that particular class and time period, and the copies **must** include the notice of copyright.

Music for use in class or program liturgies may **not** be reproduced without securing the permission of the holder of the copyright. The Regional Catechetical Office has available the copyright policies for the major publishers of liturgical music. Audio-visual materials, such as videotapes, are also protected by copyright laws and may not be copied for classroom use.

APPENDIX

Forms: These pages are found in (red) *Handbook for Parish Directors and Coordinators*:

P45 - 49	Application for Volunteer Catechetical Personnel, including Confidential Information Sheet.
CF-9	Catechist Formation Program - Application for Level I Certification.
CF-10	Level I - Record of Attendance.
CF-11	Catechist Formation Program - Application for Level II Certification.
CF-12	Level II - Record of Attendance.
CF-13	Catechist Formation - Level II Renewal.
CF-14	Level II Renewal - Record of Attendance.
CF-15 - 18	Observation / Evaluation of Parish Catechist.
CF-19	Lesson Plan for Catechetical Session.
H-35	Student Accident Report
H-39	Field Trip Permission
	* Discipline Report Form
	* Progress Report
	* AV Requisition Form
	* Guest Speaker Request Form

* These forms can be found in this document, following the Appendix page.

AUDIO-VISUAL REQUISITION FORM

I wish to reserve the following videotape/audio-cassette or filmstrip:

to be used on: (Day) _____ (Date) _____

In case other catechists are also using the same equipment during class time, it would be convenient for me to show this audio-visual during the:

Beginning _____ Middle _____ End _____ of class time.

(Catechist) _____

DISCIPLINARY REPORT SHEET

Date _____

Catechist _____ Grade _____ Room _____

Student's Name _____

(Catechist) Briefly explain inappropriate behavior _____

Number of verbal warnings given before action taken _____

What specific disciplinary action have you taken with this student?

What was student's response? _____

Catechist, please be sure to see the Director/Coordinator before leaving today, so that a follow-up can be obtained regarding this student and the incident reported.

ADDITIONAL ACTION TAKEN BY DIRECTOR/COORDINATOR

Will meet with the catechist and student(s) involved. Depending on the outcome of this meeting, any subsequent meetings with parents will be discussed.

Director/Coordinator's disciplinary action toward student: _____

Summary of Director/Coordinator's conversation with parents: _____

Additional notes: _____

GUEST SPEAKER
PRIEST / DEACON / RELIGIOUS BROTHER / SISTER

CLASSROOM VISIT REQUEST

Upon completion of the upper portion of this form, please submit to Director/Coordinator.

Date submitted: _____

I would like a Priest / Deacon / Sister / Brother to visit my class on:

Date _____ (or) Date _____ (or) Date _____

The topic I would like our guest to speak about is: _____

I would like our guest to speak for approximately: _____ 15 minutes; _____ 25 minutes.

Grade _____ Catechist _____ # Students _____ Room # _____

To: Priest / Deacon / Sister / Brother:

Please return this portion of the form to Director/Coordinator.

I shall visit the class on:

Date: _____ Time: _____ For about _____ minutes.

Grade: _____ Catechist: _____

STUDENT PROGRESS REPORT

This is the Archdiocesan Form. Some Directors/Coordinators create their own form for their parish program. Include whichever form that you use.

(Attach your own copy, here.)

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CCC = Catechism of the Catholic Church

GDC = General Directory for Catechesis