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Ques. Why Continuing Education ?

Ans. Because it Works!

In 2002 when the Bishops met in Dallas, the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People was developed and new mandatory guidelines were issued for all the U.S. dioceses. Article 12 of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People states:

“Diocese will establish “safe environment” programs. They will cooperate with parents, civil authorities, educators, and community organizations to provide education and training for children, youth, parents, ministers, educators, and others about ways to make and maintain a safe environment for children. Diocese will make clear to clergy and members of the community the standards of conduct for clergy and other persons in positions of trust with regard to sexual abuse.”

In the Diocese of Rockville Centre, more than 100,000 staff and volunteers have attended the Virtus, Protecting God’s Children program since 2002. The program consists of a 3 hr. awareness and prevention training session. This safe environment training is mandatory for all staff and volunteers in the diocese. The decision to have everyone who works and volunteers for the diocese attend a 3 hr Virtus program was not made hastily and certainly demonstrates a deep commitment to making sure that children are safe in our parishes, schools and agencies. In addition to the 3 hr Virtus session, the program consists of on-going continuing on-line education bulletins for all employees and volunteers within the faith community working with children. The continuing education component of the program is designed to provide employees and volunteers who work with children with the latest academic research, practical advice, and fresh ideas for how to effectively prevent abusers (and potential abusers) from having access to minors and, therefore, opportunities to commit abuse.

Education is central to solving the problem of child sexual abuse. It is essential that all of us learn the facts about how and where abuse happens, and how to identify potential abusers. The issue of child sexual abuse is a complex problem. We must reject any attempt to minimize the scope of the problem or play down the effort it will take to eliminate this risk from our community and society.

Ongoing education allows us to regularly examine our own opinions, ideas, and points of view that might blind us to incidents of abuse that could be occurring in our environment right now. Continuing education helps keep us focused and might prevent us from providing abusers with access to children and the opportunity to abuse them. Through ongoing education over a prolonged period of time those who work with children remain focused, involved and informed and children are protected.

Continuing education, such as the monthly Protecting God's Children "on-line training bulletins" provided via Virtus Online is vital to keeping diocesan leaders, employees, and volunteers *constantly* aware of the risks, warning signs, and behavioral responses relevant to preventing future occurrences of child sexual abuse.

To register to attend a *Virtus, Protecting God's Children* session, please go to www.drvc.org , click on the Virtus Training calendar and follow the prompts.