June 4, 2020

Dear Pastors/Administrators, Site Coordinators and DRE/CREs:

As most of you have been made aware in prior emails, the Office of Safe Environment is preparing for its annual mandated audit.  As required by the USCCB, every third year is an onsite audit in the dioceses.   This is the AOH's scheduled year for an onsite audit.  The process for the audit is to collect all the Safe Environment data as we do each year.  All of the data collected is sent to and reviewed by the auditors rather than just the bottom line numbers.

In addition, the auditors will meet with most department heads of the Archdiocese, and will visit with 2 - 3 parishes and 1 - 2 schools.  During these interviews, questions pertaining to Safe Environment Policies and Procedures are asked, as well as reviewing all the documentation to back up the data which was collected and submitted.  Once those parishes and schools are identified, I will contact the Pastors and Principals and we will work together to prepare for the audit interview.

Some of these interviews with the auditors may need to be completed remotely as it is still too early to predict how the COVID-19 pandemic will be during the summer and fall.  For the safety of all involved, the auditors will let us know as we near the audit dates.

To ensure that the materials attached and the directions given are received at all parishes and schools, it has been sent separately to all Pastors/Administrators; Site Coordinators; and DREs.  Parish and Diocesan Schools will receive notice under separate cover.  The data for the schools should not be included in the Parish Data Summary.

The audit is comprised of collecting the following information from the Parishes and Catholic schools:

        1. Annual announcement of procedures for making a complaint (Article 2) 2. Annual notice to the Archbishop of Hartford from Pastors/Administrators of their knowledge regarding safe environment compliance (Compliance Letter). (Article 10)
        3. Verification that "Safe Environment" programs are being conducted. (Article 12) 4. Verification of Background checks for all personnel of the Archdiocese of Hartford (Article 13)

This audit period under review is from July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020.    All data from each church within a parish should be combined, and only one Audit Data Summary Form should be submitted for the Parish.  The audit is a "snapshot" of this particular audit period.  The training and background checks do not necessarily have to have been performed during this time period, but rather the personnel and the children must be in compliance during this time period. Example: if a religious formation instructor was background checked in 2015 and attended a Virtus training in 2013, and was in ministry during this   2019 - 2020 audit period, they are considered compliant and their data would be added to this year's count.  If they only had a background check, but never attended training, then only apply their data to the questions pertaining to background checks, but not toward the data number for training.

On May 7, 2020 a "Compliance Letter" was sent to every parish.  It was requested that the name of the parish and town be posted on the letter, signed by the pastor/administrator, and returned to the Office of Safe Environment by May 21, 2020.  Unfortunately some parishes have not completed this as yet.  PLEASE complete and send this today!

On May 19, 2020 the parish and the school Safe Environment Compliance Training Report was sent to all parishes and schools.  It was requested that this report be updated, and all personnel on the report who have been in ministry longer than a year, and are still not in compliance, be notified that they may no longer be in ministry until such time as they complete their training and/or a new or updated background check.  It was requested the updated reports be returned to the Office of Safe Environment as soon as possible.  This report is designed to be a tool to help you complete the Audit Data Summary form (Attached to this email).  If you have not updated this report and returned to our office as yet, PLEASE do so immediately.

Attached you will find the following documents and the directions for completing:

1. How to Report an Incident of Sexual Abuse to the Archdiocese of Hartford (English and Spanish versions)

\*       As per the guidelines sent out by Archbishop Blair regarding the re-opening of Churches, it was recommended that bulletins not be used or distributed at this time.  I am aware that many of you are posting your bulletins on-line or have simply discontinued the bulletins all together.
         o      Therefore, I kindly request that if you are using bulletins, this notice should be placed, in its entirety, within the bulletin, and a copy of that bulletin should be sent to the Office of Safe Environment.

\*       If you are only posting information on your websites, please post this notice in a prominent location of your website, and keep it posted until at least after the audit.  Please advise our office that it is posted there, and we will print it ourselves.

\*       In addition, please print this on lavender paper and post it in a highly visible location in your churches and buildings.  It has been my experience during past on-site audits, the auditors have stopped at random churches and went into the buildings to look for these notices.

        2. Parish Audit Data Summary Form

Numbers need to be calculated and posted on this form.  Please refer to your Parish's most recent Safe Environment Compliance Training report.  Please read the entire Audit Data Summary Form before completing.  The form must be completed in its entirety.  Do not alter this form in any way. Do not leave blank spaces; if necessary respond with "0".

I know many of your religious education classes were cut short this year due to the pandemic.  Please read the questions regarding the training of the children carefully, and answer accordingly.

In addition, I would like to take this opportunity to remind all Priests, Deacons, DREs, Principals, and Virtus Facilitators that as part of your continuing education, you are responsible for registering on the Virtus website, completing the monthly bulletins, and recertifying.  (There are 3 recertification modules that should be completed).

All DOCUMENTATION MUST BE RETURNED TO THE OFFICE OF SAFE ENVIRONMENT ON OR BEFORE JULY 1, 2020

Again, I thank you all for your cooperation.  Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.  I am monitoring my voicemail and have complete access to my emails.

Sincerely,
Kathleen D. Nowosadko
Director of Safe Environment
Victim Assistance Coordinator