

## **Vacation Bible School Religious Education Guidelines for a Safe Environment**

- Vacation Bible School is appropriate for children Pre-K 3 and up who are potty-trained. We recommend including on the registration form “Children must be potty-trained to participate in the VBS program at our parish.”
- For recommendations as to ratios please consult the Safe Environment 2016 Handbook.
- When offering snacks or lunches, ensure that staff have reviewed any written notification from a parent/caregiver as to an allergy in order to act accordingly. The Office for Safe Environment and Child and Family Resources has an example **Food Allergy Action Plan**, and a Sample Letter to Parents and Families.
- Be familiar with and share with volunteers and staff where emergency exits are, fire extinguishers, defibrillators, first aid kits, land line telephones, etc.
- Ensure that your staff are provided with instruction as to how to report incidents or illnesses to their direct supervisor, D.R.E., Pastor, etc.
- Establish a clear procedure for parents to follow in the drop off and pick up of their children. For Example: “Children Pre-K to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade are dropped off and picked up at their classroom by a parent/guardian.”
- Ensure that any volunteer or paid staff has submitted to Diocesan requirements of attending Safe Environment Training and completing an application for review of any criminal history. As to the planning phase, it is recommended at least one month prior to the start of your VBS that a volunteer and paid staff list is created to ensure that Safe Environment requirements are met. It takes 3-4 weeks to complete the requirements. Please take this into consideration when recruiting volunteers for VBS.
- Youth volunteers are a big percentage of the volunteer base with VBS, and should adhere to the recommendations and provisions as taken from Safe Environment Handbook.
- Volunteers under the age of 18 cannot be left alone to supervise children.
- Parent Guardian Consent Forms denoting at least two parent/guardian contacts should be retained.
- Discipline guidelines and behavioral expectations should be provided to students and families prior to the start of classes to support any class or student changes if warranted. Examples are provided within the revised Safe Environment Handbook 2016.
- If medical information such as diagnosis or special needs accommodation is provided to staff, seek to clarify and define these needs prior to the start of VBS.
- Any medication requirement should be provided before child is brought onto campus or by parent themselves. It is not recommended to have child self-administer or possess medications while in Vacation Bible School.

- In the event that a lock down type response is necessary:
  - Preliminarily know if your classrooms lock from within. In the event of an emergency, have staff lock classroom from within and turn off lights. Have staff move children away from entry.
  - Instruct Catechists to have cell phones available to them in class in a fashion not causing a disruption.

The offices of Religious Education and Child and Family Resources are available to support you and your staff as you plan and hold your Vacation Bible School.

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