

DRAFT 1-21-14

Dear Holy Family School Parents and Volunteers:

We are writing to clarify the Safeguard the Children requirements and to place these Archdiocesan requirements into context. We also want to inform you that we are rolling out a comprehensive program at the school to ensure we are in full compliance with these requirements so that we can best protect your children. This program is consistent with such long-established programs you may already be familiar with in other Ministries at the Parish such as Sunday Preschool and Toddler Co-op.

BACKGROUND

The Holy Family Safeguard the Children Committee is part of a nationwide program designed to promote a safe environment for children, youth and vulnerable adults and prevent child sexual abuse. The program was initiated in all dioceses in the United States at the direction of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in 2002. There is a Safeguard the Children (STC) Committee in each parish which helps to implement the objectives of the USCCB "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People." We are coming up on the fourteenth Anniversary of that Charter. You can read more about our mission at <http://www.holyfamily.org/2012/01/safeguard-the-children/>.

We realize that there are varying degrees of awareness of our committee in the school community, but most of you have been electronically fingerprinted as part of the Parish's Safeguard child protection program. Most of you have now attended the **VIRTUS®** "Protecting God's Children" program which trains parishioners to spot the sometimes subtle signs of abuse and report suspected abuse so that you can be the eyes and ears for our children. You have allowed your children to attend the "**Teaching Touching Safety®**" program so that students are better able to recognize abuse and protect themselves. You have signed forms each year acknowledging the "Guidelines for Adults Interacting with Minors at Parish or Parish School Activities or Events." Thank you for all that you have done and continue to do to protect our children.

SAFEGUARD REQUIREMENTS

Holy Family and the Archdiocese of Los Angeles require individuals volunteering with or around children to attend **VIRTUS®** classes **every four years**. Thus, every person who volunteers at the school must attend **VIRTUS®** classes. There is no fee. The information provided is enlightening and compelling and educates and empowers us as a community to protect our children.

Further, all persons who could be alone with a child – that is all priests, parish life directors, parish employees and school employees and volunteers who work in a supervisory capacity around children – must be fingerprinted (Live Scanned) through the Archdiocese. **For example, any volunteer who drives children to a field trip, attends overnight trips such as CIMI, coaches a child or runs an extracurricular program must have submitted fingerprints to the parish/school.** Fingerprinting with the parish/school is only required once. Unfortunately, fingerprinting through another organization does not meet this requirement. We realize that teachers, law enforcement and many others submit fingerprints to their employers, but this does not fulfill the Archdiocesan requirement because this information is confidential and cannot be shared between organizations. We need 100 percent compliance with this requirement to ensure that no persons with child-endangering convictions can ever be in a position to be alone with our children. No institution or organization can ever guarantee that no harm will ever come to a child, but background checks in churches, schools and other organizations are a common sense, preventative step.

We understand that as busy parents it can be challenging to find the time to get fingerprints taken and attend the VIRTUS® classes (3 hours for initial certification, and 90 minutes for re-certification every 4 years). We are also making a stronger effort to communicate these requirements. For example, the Parent Commitment and Student Handbook are being updated to reflect these requirements.

COMPREHENSIVE COMPLIANCE SYSTEM

STARTS ON APRIL 1, 2014

Although the parish and school administration has made every effort to remind school volunteers of upcoming VIRTUS® training sessions, recertification classes and fingerprinting these past eleven years, it has become clear that a comprehensive system of enforcement must be instituted at the school to ensure compliance. Therefore, in response to the Committee's request, Dr. Montejano has asked Mrs. Nancy Weyermuller to keep records and send out reminders to volunteers. This is a big job and we want to thank her for taking this on. Once in place, it will be easy for teachers, room parents and the leaders of extracurricular activities to check compliance prior to allowing a volunteer to participate. Therefore, starting on **APRIL 1, 2014:**

- **Fingerprinting: Any volunteer who drives children to a field trip, attends overnight trips such as CIMI, coaches a child or runs an extracurricular program or volunteers in any supervisory capacity around children must have submitted fingerprints to the Holy Family parish.** When you are fingerprinted for the Archdiocese, you will receive a copy of the "Request for Live Scan Service" Applicant Submission form

which you give to the school office. The monthly Los Angeles Archdiocese's fingerprinting schedule can be found at <http://www.laarchdiocese.org/org/hr/Fingerprinting%20Schedule/JANUARY%202014%20FINGERPRINT%20SCHEDULE.pdf>. Fingerprinting is free through the Archdiocese. But if none of those times are convenient you can also choose to pay to be fingerprinted at any Live Scan facility - just take the Applicant Submission form showing the appropriate ORI and OCA numbers and return your copy to the school office. You can pick up this form from the parish or school.

- **VIRTUS®: Every volunteer at the school in any capacity must have a current VIRTUS® Certificate of Training Attendance on file with the Parish.** You can submit a copy of your Certificate of Training Attendance which you receive at the end of the class to the school office.
 - If you have never attended any VIRTUS® classes, the three hour "Protecting Gods Children" sessions will be offered at Holy Family on:
 - **Sunday, January 26, 2-5 p.m. and**
 - **Sunday, March 9, 2-5 p.m.**
 - If you need to be recertified because your 4-year certification has expired, then the hour and a half class will be offered on:
 - **Saturday, January 25, 2:00-3:30 p.m.**
 - **Sunday, February 9, at 2:00-3:30 p.m.**
 - If these times and dates are not convenient, you can find additional classes at other nearby parishes by going to the VIRTUS® website (www.virtus.org) and clicking on Registration.
 - Please pre-register through the VIRTUS® website for all classes even if they are at Holy Family by visiting the VIRTUS® website and clicking on "Registration." If you need assistance with the registration process, please call Lydia Banales (626 799-6508).
 - Also, although we strongly encourage both parents to attend the VIRTUS® classes, we recognize that in some families only one parent volunteers at the school. In those instances, the non-volunteer parent can sign and submit a form stating that he or she is exempt because he or she is not volunteering at the school (please see the attached). If this is signed, we will communicate that this person is not allowed to volunteer at the school at any time. Of course, non-volunteer parents can change their status at any time by taking the class. If a parent has neither the VIRTUS® certificate nor the exemption form on file, we will keep contacting that parent to seek compliance. One point to consider before

submitting the non-volunteer form: from our experience, often one parent may be the volunteer in the early years, but over the course of nine years an opportunity to coach or attend an important field trip might arise that the other parent wants to participate in; then that person must scramble at the last minute to get fingerprinted and take VIRTUS®. To avoid that, and because the more educated our community is the better protected our children are, we strongly recommend every parent take VIRTUS® from the beginning of their child's time here. Regardless, at a minimum, at least one parent per family must take VIRTUS® since every family is required to complete 40 volunteer hours.

- **Guidelines:** All Holy Family volunteers and parents must submit signed forms to the School office each school year acknowledging that they have read and agree to follow the "Guidelines for Adults Interacting with Minors at Parish or Parish School Activities or Events." If you are a volunteer and have not signed and submitted the form to the school yet this school year, please download it, read it, sign it, and send it into the school office: [http://www.la-archdiocese.org/org/protecting/safeguard/Documents/2-0%20Adults%20Interacting%20with%20Minors%20%202-2010%20\[EN\].pdf](http://www.la-archdiocese.org/org/protecting/safeguard/Documents/2-0%20Adults%20Interacting%20with%20Minors%20%202-2010%20[EN].pdf)

Finally, starting with next year's incoming Kindergarten class, every parent in a new family will be required to attend VIRTUS®, be fingerprinted and sign the Guidelines as part of the enrollment packet.

We hope that each of us can take a moment to prayerfully reflect on the need for these steps, participate fully and have patience with us as we roll out the implementation.

Please feel free to contact any of us if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you very much for your support!

Yours,

Dr. Frank Montejano, Principal

Elizabeth Fagan, Safeguard the Children Committee Chair

Safeguard the Children Committee Members:

Lydia Banales, Past Chair and Virtus® Facilitator

Kelly Watson, Vice-Chair

Ann Garland, Virtus® Facilitator

Michelle Gardner, Member

Donella Sotelo, Sunday Preschool Representative

Kelly Studer, MFT, Member

Patricia Plescia, Operations Director

Dawn Ponnet, Director of Faith Formation

Evan Wyatt, Member