

## Diocese of Wilmington Response to the Wurtele Report

The Diocese of Wilmington has received the assessment of our safe environment program conducted by Dr. Sandra Wurtele. The report contains several recommendations for enhancement of our safe environment program. In the coming months we will integrate the recommendations for the program: For the Sake of God's Children and "Keeping Our Promises" (the curriculum for safe environment education).

"Article 12 of *The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* directs all dioceses to create programs and processes to teach children and youth about sexual abuse and its prevention. The Diocese of Wilmington developed *Keeping Our Promises*, a curriculum for children in grades Pre-K through 12. *Keeping Our Promises* is the umbrella document guiding education on issues of safety and child sexual abuse. Content is supplemented by the established curriculum guides in Religion, Biology, Health, and Family Life. The program was established in this way because of the strong belief that every person in a school, religious education program, or Catholic youth organization shares in the responsibility for educating young people on these topics. *Keeping Our Promises* is built around eleven essential elements of a safe environment, with topics incorporated into existing classroom instruction throughout the year." (Wurtele Report p11)

We note that our children/young people in the Religious Education Programs throughout the Diocese attend public schools in the states of Maryland and Delaware in which health instruction including sex education as well as bullying/harassment are required within the curriculum. Our Religious Education Programs complement these curricular areas as much as possible with age appropriate instruction from the "Keeping Our Promises" curriculum.

### Response to Recommendations

Based on the above statement from Dr. Wurtele's report the following is the Diocesan response to the recommendations, identifying where recommendations are already addressed in the integrated curriculum areas in our schools as noted above. (Religion, Health, Biology and Family Life as well as in *Keeping Our Promises*) We note that it was not the charge of the Assessor to review curricula beyond *Keeping Our Promises* and thus take this opportunity to provide complementary information to complete the expectation of adequate instruction for all involved.

## Recommendations by number

1. Editorial Changes to Introduction and Essential Elements: The list of concepts will be fully stated with rationale and re-ordered as recommended. We will integrate a statement clarifying the conceptual approach in the Introduction to “Keeping Our Promises” describing it as a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary, multi-year curriculum focusing on “respectful relationships”
2. The revision of the Curriculum will include a Parent Involvement Strategy column for activities and discussions for parents.
3. The recommendations for integrating CSA prevention concepts into the other curricular areas beyond “*Keeping Our Promises*” will be shared with the Education Department offices responsible for those curricula areas for review and integration as appropriate.
4. The mapping of the curricula areas will be done with a fully representative group. The relationship to Health, Biology, Family Life and Religion will be apparent in the mapping.
5. In the revision of the curriculum we will expand the annual assessment tool to include an outcomes assessment area for students.
6. The four Body-Safety Rules will be welcome additions to the materials with the curriculum.
7. The issue of authority and obedience with trusted adults will be a deliberate focus addressed as part of the religion curriculum as well as in health education so that a child is confident in saying no to something a trusted adult may ask of that child which would be harmful to the child.
8. We will continue to expand the practice opportunities for children in learning interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and reduce health risks.
9. The curriculum revisions will incorporate giving students opportunities to brainstorm how they would help a friend who discloses abuse, emphasizing if a friend tells them of abuse, they need to tell an adult about the friend’s problem.
10. Within Religious instruction and as we deal with Healing/Forgiveness in the “Keeping Our Promises” curriculum, children will gain a fuller understanding that “it is not their fault “if, for example, they are bullied and “they are not to blame” if they are victimized.
11. In accord with our Health Standard 8 we will continue to work to have students participate in selection, development and implementation of prevention initiatives.
12. The expansion of materials/activities for parents will be covered in recommendation 2 adding a column of parent related activities.
13. We will provide parents with expanded information related to child abuse, reporting, child safety, signs of abuse and talking points with their children.
14. We will add a flow chart to our reporting procedures to provide clear step by step guidance on what action to take if there are concerns, allegations, suspicions, or disclosure of abuse.
15. Consideration will be given to measuring knowledge, attitudes and behaviors expected to change as a function of training of adult/children and periodically summarize the number and type of complaints about misconduct.
16. As recommended the power point presentation slide will delete the use of predator.

17. We will expand the instruction on the description of behavioral warning signs that an adult may be grooming a child or teen. We will continue the use of Stop It Now! and engage the seminarians in role playing related to how to approach the inappropriate behaviors in others.
18. As much as possible we will continue to incorporate role play and videos in our training of seminarians focused on sensitively talking with adults who may be exhibiting questionable behaviors with children, hearing and responding to someone who discloses abuse, reporting the incident in accordance with reporting policy and responding in confession to someone who admits to sexual abuse.
19. We will incorporate clergy-abuse cases in seminarian instruction drawing from the John Jay College reports and other documentaries to facilitate discussion on how priests groomed their victims, their vulnerabilities, stressors they were experiencing and what reduced their inhibitions and facilitated abuse.
20. We will research additional ethical training materials for seminarians and clergy and determine incorporation.
21. We will consider development of an assessment process to use with various groups to determine knowledge of reporting duties and documenting the seminarians' responses to the questions asked at the conclusion of the 2012 Online Training.