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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP
DIOCESE OF KNOXVILLE

February 14, 2011

Dear Pastors and Parish Safe Environment Coordinators:

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to each of you for your leadership and commitment in serving your fellow parishioners. I also would like to thank you for your continued dedication in complying with the Diocese of Knoxville's Safe Environment Program.

As a result of our most recent Safe Environment audit, we have created a committee of dedicated religious educators to create and implement a diocesan program for age-appropriate safe environment training for children in our parish/diocesan schools and our religious education programs. This committee has gathered information from numerous dioceses throughout the country and has worked to create a new, comprehensive Safe Environment Program for our kids.

This program is to be used in all of our parish/diocesan schools and parish religious education programs for grades kindergarten through high school. This new program will take the place of the current tri-fold training program. With that said, it is necessary that each child in our parish/diocesan schools and parish based religious education classes be exposed to a quality program which discusses such ideas as "good touches and bad touches", "safe adults", "safe secrets", and to discuss scenarios they might encounter so to equip them with the tools necessary to recognize and report potential abuse. As we all know, online safety and bullying have been a constant discussion in the classrooms and in the news. This new, comprehensive program has been created in such a way that our children will be equipped to handle these situations as well.

I ask that each parish/diocesan school and parish based religious education department teach the new program in their classrooms to each of their students before the end of the 2010-2011 school year, thus ensuring compliance for the upcoming 2010/2011 audit. Furthermore, I would ask that you begin presenting the curriculum in the fall of each school year beginning fall of 2011.

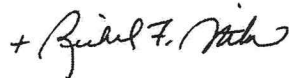
Along with the new training curriculum the final information packet will have the required reporting procedures and guidelines for record keeping. The records for all Keeping Kids Safe programs for the 2010/2011 audit year should be submitted to the diocesan office of Religious Education by no later than June 1, 2011.

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Before this new curriculum will be taught to our children, parents will be given a Keeping Kids Safe training acknowledgement form to complete and return. A parent will either acknowledge s/he is aware the training will be offered or will decline to have his or her child(ren) participate. If s/he declines, he or she must complete the Keeping Kids Safe decline form, which will be available in the Keeping Kids Safe classroom materials. DREs and school principals will be required to complete attendance/training completion forms for all students enrolled in the program and will submit those to the diocesan office of Religious Education by February 1st of each school year (beginning with the 2011/2012 school year). All students enrolled in kindergarten-12th grade are required to participate or have a written parental decline form on file.

The Keeping Kids Safe program will become available to all parishes and schools on March 1, 2011. You will receive notifications via e-mail and will be able to access information on the diocesan website. Be assured of my prayers for you and your families.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard F. Stika".

Most Reverend Richard F. Stika
Bishop of Knoxville