



THE ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE OF CHALAN KANO

**Policy and Procedures Relative
to the Prevention of Abuse of Children
and for Responding to Allegations by Clergy, Religious,
and Church Representatives**

(Updated to align with the USCCB Charter; supersedes 2014 policy)
Promulgated by Decree of the Bishop of Chalan Kanoa

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THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF CHALAN KANOA

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Decree Updating the Policy for the Child Abuse and Protection Policy of the Diocese of Chalan Kanoa

The Diocese of Chalan Kanoa has long recognized its sacred responsibility to safeguard the dignity of every child and to establish clear policies and procedures for the prevention of abuse and the protection of minors. The first diocesan policy was promulgated in 1997 and later updated in 2014 to reflect developing awareness, pastoral responsibility, and canonical requirements.

Since that time, the Church has continued to deepen its understanding of both the harm caused by abuse and the pastoral and juridical responses necessary for the protection of children and young people. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, through the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* (2011 revision), the *Essential Norms* (2006), and the universal penal norms promulgated by the Church's Canon Law, has provided clear standards which must be observed in all dioceses.

In light of these developments, the Diocese of Chalan Kanoa now issues this comprehensive update of the *Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Children and Young People*. This policy integrates the requirements of the Charter and Essential Norms, incorporates best practices as reflected in other diocesan policies, and aligns with the civil law obligations of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Therefore, by this decree, I hereby promulgate the updated *Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Children and Young People* as particular law within the Diocese of Chalan Kanoa. These policies and procedures have the force of law for this Diocese. All contrary statutes, policies, and customs are hereby abrogated.

This decree is to be published on the official diocesan website and through official parish announcements, and is to be communicated to all diocesan offices, schools, and parishes as the means of promulgation. The policy takes effect on the Sunday of its publication on the diocesan website.

Given at Chalan Kanoa, Saipan, this 7th day of October, in the Year of Our Lord 2025.


Most Rev. Romeo D. Convocar, D.D.
Bishop of Chalan Kanoa


Rev. Fr. James S. Balajadia
Chancellor

Article I. Introduction

Section 1. Purpose

This policy provides a structure, division of responsibilities, and detailed procedures for the Diocese of Chalan Kanoa to prevent the occurrence of physical and sexual abuse of children, to respond promptly and transparently to reports of abuse, and to address necessary restrictions on accused persons consistent with canon and civil law. In accordance with the USCCB Charter, the Diocese commits to healing, reconciliation, accountability, and prevention.⁹

Section 2. Scope

This policy applies to allegations in which (1) a child is victimized by a representative of the Diocese; (2) a child is victimized on diocesan property or at a diocesan event; (3) a representative of the Diocese is required to function as a mandated reporter regarding a third party; or (4) child sexual abuse material (child pornography) is used, acquired, possessed, or distributed by a diocesan representative.¹⁰

Section 3. Terms and Definitions

Assessment Team / Independent Review Board (IRB): A standing team, renamed the Independent Review Board (IRB), of at least five members—majority lay, not in the employ of the Church—with expertise in psychology, social work, canon law (or a person truly knowledgeable of it), and civil law; includes at least one diocesan priest. Members are known for integrity, professional skill, and good judgment; appointed by the Bishop for five-year terms. The Promoter of Justice may serve as a non-voting, ex officio member.

Child abuse (canonical delict): Sexual abuse of a minor as in *Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela* art. 6: (a) delict against the Sixth Commandment committed by a cleric with a minor under 18 (a person who habitually lacks reason is equivalent to a minor); (b) acquisition, possession, or distribution by a cleric of pornographic images of minors for sexual gratification by any means or technology. Penalties include dismissal or deposition according to gravity.

Child abuse (civil law): For purposes of civil reporting, child abuse is defined by the Commonwealth Code, including physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse or attempted sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, and emotional abuse of a person under 18. See civil definitions and mandated-reporting duties in the Commonwealth Code.¹

¹ Commonwealth Code – Child abuse definitions include physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse (or attempted), sexual exploitation, and emotional abuse of a person under 18. Physical abuse: willful and

Credible/Non-credible allegation report: A report is reviewed by the Bishop or Delegate and/or the Promoter of Justice. If there is reasonable suspicion that allegations are credible, the report advances for investigation; if not, it is retained in a restricted file and steps are taken to restore the good name of the accused.

Mandated reporter: Those persons designated by the Commonwealth Code who must report suspected child abuse to police. Failure to report may result in criminal charges. Under Commonwealth law, a parent/guardian or any person who has custody or control of the child is required to report suspected abuse.

Minor/Child: Any person under the age of 18. For canonical processes, a person who habitually lacks the use of reason is treated as a minor.

Psychological Evaluation: An examination undertaken by a licensed specialist in the behavioral and psychological sciences, usually a psychologist or a psychiatrist, which attempts to determine the presence or absence of a particular psychic defect in the person. The evaluation is undertaken using professionally recognized procedures. Using these procedures the expert identifies psychic defects a recognized in the DSM-IV (and updates).

Representative of the Diocese/Church: Those authorized to function in official ministry under Church authority—cleric, religious, or lay; paid or volunteer.

Victim Assistance Coordinator (VAC): A social service professional recognized by the Diocese to assist the victim/survivor and family in obtaining resources and assistance as a result of victimization; may be assisted by trained volunteers under supervision.

Article II. Abuse as a Sanctionable Offense

1. It is established under the particular law of the Diocese of Chalan Kanoa that child abuse as defined above is a sanctionable offense when committed by a representative of the Catholic Church. The offending party is punished by just penalties.
2. Prescription: The period of prescription follows canonical norms and the statute of limitations under civil law in this jurisdiction; however, all allegations are considered

intentional striking/beating resulting in harm. Neglect: willful/negligent failure to provide adequate supervision, medical care, food, clothing, or shelter resulting in harm. Sexual abuse: engaging in or attempting sexual molestation with a child under 18. Sexual exploitation: permitting a child to engage in actual or simulated sexual conduct knowing it will be used in a performance or media that visually/aurally depicts the conduct. Emotional abuse: mental distress/injury impacting psychological capacity as evidenced by observation and substantial impairment of functioning.

and, if founded, forwarded to the Dicastery For The Doctrine Of The Faith for determination regarding prescription or dispensation allowing a trial.

3. Zero tolerance (Charter alignment). If even a single act of sexual abuse of a minor is admitted or established after appropriate process, a cleric is permanently removed from ministry; dismissal from the clerical state is pursued if warranted. If dismissal is not applied due to advanced age or infirmity, he must live a life of prayer and penance with prohibitions on public ministry, attire, and presentation as a cleric.¹¹

Article III. Prevention

1. Education of Personnel
 - a. Annual notice: all representatives are informed yearly of these policies and sign acknowledgments; for clerics, this constitutes a canonical warning. (c.1374.1)
 - b. Annual supervisor formation covering abuse dynamics, prevention, reporting, resources, and legal sanctions for abuse or failure to report.
2. Safe-Environment Education for Children and Youth
 - a. Catholic schools and parish programs provide age-appropriate instruction each year on protecting oneself from sexual abuse, recognizing grooming and unsafe situations, digital safety, and how to report abuse.
3. Background Screening (Employees/Teachers)
 - a. Police clearances for any place lived for one year or more within the past ten years.
 - b. Sex-offender registry checks (including federal checks where available).
 - c. No ministry/teaching until required clearances are obtained.
4. Background Screening (Volunteers with access to minors)
 - a. Police clearances for any place lived for one year or more within the past ten years.
 - b. Sex-offender registry checks (including federal checks where available).
5. Seminarians and Diaconate Aspirants
 - a. Psychological evaluation to assess suitability; police and FBI clearances; testimonials and references as requested.
6. Extern Priests and Incardination
 - a. Psychological evaluation required for incardination; not required solely for temporary ministry, but a letter of suitability from the Ordinary is required attesting to moral character and absence of credible allegations.
7. Code of Conduct
 - a. All personnel with regular contact with minors read and sign the Code of Conduct prior to service; expectations include fidelity to Church teaching, ethical standards, professional conduct, accountability, dignity of each

person, confidentiality, and prohibitions on physical, sexual, or emotional abuse and neglect.

8. Catholic Schools and Recognized Catholic Agencies
 - a. All recognized Catholic schools and organizations within the Diocese must maintain internal guidelines to provide for safety of children and youth (e.g., two-adult rule; no one-on-one transport; line-of-sight visibility). Such guidelines protect youth from abuse and adults from false accusations. A copy shall be filed with the Chancellor within six months of promulgation and upon updates.²

Article IV. Reporting

1. Mandated reporters shall fulfill their obligations under civil law, except where the sacramental seal of confession protects confidentiality in the context of Reconciliation.
2. Representatives who are not mandated by law but have reason to believe abuse has occurred are required by this policy to report to civil authorities and to the Diocese, apart from information received in sacramental confession.^{3,4}
3. Internal recipients: the Bishop or Vicar General/Delegate are the appropriate officials to receive allegations of physical or sexual abuse committed by a representative of the Church. Reports made to pastors, principals, or the VAC must be forwarded immediately to the Bishop/Delegate.
4. Victim Assistance Coordinator (VAC)
 - a. Upon a credible allegation (semblance of truth), provide contact information and resources to the victim/survivor and, if applicable, parents/guardians.
 - b. Coordinate counseling and medical services for the victim; offer short-term counseling for immediate family; facilitate pastoral/spiritual care and specialized catechetical resources.
 - c. Provide regular, appropriate updates to the victim/survivor on case status and precautionary measures, respecting privacy and process.

² Internal guidelines typically include the two-adult rule; prohibitions on transporting individual youth other than one's own children; line-of-sight supervision; visible offices/classrooms—protecting youth from abuse and adults from false accusations.

³ Mandated Reporter under Commonwealth Code (e.g., 6 CMC § 5312). While the seal of confession is absolute, information obtained outside confession may be subject to reporting requirements.

⁴ Civil authority for reporting suspected child abuse: Department of Public Safety

5. Promoter of Justice: appointed/confirmed by the Bishop to conduct the preliminary canonical investigation (cc. 1717–1719) to determine credibility and reporting triggers; convenes the IRB within 48 hours when feasible.
6. IRB review: evaluates information and advises the Bishop whether allegations have sufficient merit; identifies additional information needed and assists the Promoter of Justice in obtaining it.
7. Bishop’s initial determination: after hearing IRB and Promoter reports and allowing the accused an opportunity to hear the allegations and offer an initial response, the Bishop determines whether the case advances. If so, the Promoter submits a petition and the Bishop notifies the Dicastery for The Doctrine of The Faith per Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela/Essential Norms.
8. Civil notifications: if civil laws may have been violated, the Delegate ensures reporting to the Department of Public Safety or other competent authority (if not already reported).
9. Sede vacante: during a vacancy in the episcopal see, the Apostolic Administrator receives allegations and acts per this policy.⁵

Article V. Case Management and Canonical Process

1. Precautionary measures (c. 1722): pending outcome of canonical/civil processes, the Bishop may impose restrictions for the common good, including removal from ministry, limits on residence, prohibitions on contact with minors, and limitations on public appearances.
2. Employment/volunteers: lay employees may be placed on administrative leave; volunteers are removed from service pending outcome per personnel policy.
3. Religious: accused religious are removed from diocesan ministry; the major superior is notified.
4. Dicastery for the Doctrine of The Faith communications: upon acceptance of petition of accusation, the Bishop informs the Apostolic Delegate for CEPAC and submits documentation to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of The Faith, which determines forum and provides for trial. The Promoter of Justice continues investigation and supports Dicastery for the Doctrine of The Faith requests.

Article VI. Return to Ministry and Sanctions

1. No cleric who has been removed from ministry due to a finding of abuse may be transferred to another diocese/eparchy for ministry.

⁵ Sede vacante: the Apostolic Administrator receives allegations and acts per this policy.

2. A representative acquitted in canonical and (if applicable) civil fora, or whose charges are determined unfounded, may be returned to ministry/service at the Bishop's discretion, with steps to restore reputation.
3. Where guilt is established in canonical or civil fora, the individual is deemed incapable of ministry/service in the Diocese. Incardinated clerics may receive sustenance (sustenatio); faculties are removed; no public ministry, attire, or presentation as a cleric.
4. Sustenatio refers to basic living expenses (room/board, clothing, health care).⁶
5. Remuneratio refers to payment for services rendered and presumes a ministerial assignment; unavailable where public ministry is prohibited.⁷
6. Dismissal from the clerical state may not be imposed in certain cases (e.g., advanced age or infirmity); in such cases a life of prayer and penance applies with the prohibitions stated above.⁸

Article VII. Ministerial Standards, Boundaries, and Digital Conduct

To prevent abuse and grooming, the Diocese adopts the following standards (incorporated into the Code of Conduct and handbooks):

1. Two-adult and line-of-sight supervision; avoid one-on-one closed-door settings with minors.
2. Digital communications with minors occur only on approved platforms with parental access and archiving; no disappearing messages or personal accounts.
3. Physical contact must be respectful, age-appropriate, and non-sexual; no lap-sitting, massages, or tickling.
4. No provision or use of alcohol, cannabis, or illegal substances in the presence of minors; no ministry while impaired.
5. Photography/video only with parental consent; never in private spaces; no posting to personal social media.
6. Transportation: avoid one-on-one; written parental consent; vetted, insured drivers; documented itineraries.
7. Overnights: separate adult/minor sleeping areas; supervision ratios; curfews; documented room checks; incident response plan.

⁶ Sustenatio: basic living expenses (room/board, clothing, basic health care) provided to clergy in accord with law and diocesan norms.

⁷ Remuneratio: payment for services rendered within a ministerial assignment; not applicable where public ministry is prohibited.

⁸ Dismissal from the clerical state may not be imposed in limited cases (charity due to advanced age or infirmity); prohibitions and a life of prayer and penance apply.

Article VIII. Safe-Environment and Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Adults Office (SEPMVAO), Training, and Audits

The Safe-Environment and Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Adults Office (SEPMVAO) is established as the diocesan office responsible for implementing and monitoring all safe-environment initiatives, including training, background screening, and compliance audits.

The Director of the SEPMVAO is appointed by the Bishop and remains in office at the discretion of the Bishop. The Director reports directly to the Bishop (or his Delegate) and exercises delegated authority in carrying out these policies and programs on behalf of the Diocese.

The SEPMVAO is responsible for:

1. Designing and delivering adult and youth training programs in abuse prevention, recognition, and reporting;
2. Tracking and managing background checks, screening results, and renewals for clergy, religious, employees, and volunteers;
3. Maintaining records of training, compliance, and case documentation;
4. Conducting regular compliance reviews of parishes, schools, and diocesan programs;
5. Proposing revisions or supplementary measures in light of newly enacted Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands legislation, or other developments in safeguarding practice, subject to the Bishop's approval;
6. Issuing public summaries of compliance and corrective actions annually to promote accountability and transparency.

Article IX. Screening and Suitability

1. Criminal background and sex-offender checks prior to service and at least every three years thereafter (or sooner as law/policy require).
2. Psychological evaluations for seminarians/diaconate candidates; letters of suitability for all visiting/assisting clergy; no assignment without verified clearances.
3. Adverse results are adjudicated by a panel (Delegate, HR, legal) to determine suitability and risk mitigation; placements may be denied, limited, or conditioned.

Article X. Transparency, Records, and Publication

1. Communicate openly with affected communities consistent with privacy and reputational rights; employ survivor-centered language.

2. No confidentiality clauses in settlements unless specifically requested by the survivor; any request is documented.
3. The Chancellor maintains secure archives of IRB minutes, case files, screening, and training records with access limited by law and legitimate need-to-know.
4. Publish the policy on the diocesan website; distribute to all parishes/schools; publish annual safeguarding summaries.

Appendices

Appendix A – Code of Conduct (for Ministry with Minors)

All clergy, religious, employees, and volunteers with contact with minors must sign and follow this Code:

1. Pastoral Integrity: Represent the Church faithfully; avoid scandal and harm.
2. Boundaries: Adhere to two-adult and visibility standards; avoid private one-on-one interactions.
3. Digital: Use only approved platforms; include parents/guardians when appropriate; archive communications.
4. Physical Contact: Non-initiatory, brief, non-sexual; avoid behaviors that could be misinterpreted.
5. Gifts/Favors: Avoid favoritism or secrecy; obtain supervisor approval for any gifts of more than nominal value.
6. Substances: No alcohol, cannabis, or illegal substances with minors; never minister while impaired.
7. Pornography: Never possess, display, access, or distribute; report inadvertent exposures immediately to the Delegate.
8. Transportation/Overnights: Follow diocesan protocols, consents, ratios, separate sleeping arrangements.
9. Reporting & Cooperation: Report suspected abuse to civil authorities and to the Diocese; cooperate fully with investigations.
10. Training & Screening: Complete and maintain current all required training and clearances.
11. Consequences: Violations may result in removal from ministry/employment and legal action.

Appendix B – Allegation Intake and Case Documentation Templates

B1. Allegation Intake Form – Required Fields:

- i. Reporter name/contact; relationship to victim/survivor; date/time of report.
- ii. Victim/survivor name, age; parent/guardian contact information.
- iii. Accused name/role; parish/school/agency; supervisor; contact info.
- iv. Location(s) and date(s) of alleged conduct; description; known witnesses/evidence.
- v. Immediate safety issues; actions taken; civil report status and report number.
- vi. Signatures; case number; assigned Delegate/VAC; IRB scheduling.

B2. Incident Log & Evidence Tracker – Required Entries:

- i. Chronology of actions; interviews; evidence received; storage location; chain-of-custody.
- ii. Referrals; counseling/medical services arranged; communications with civil authorities.
- iii. IRB advice; Bishop decisions; precautionary measures imposed or lifted; Dicastery for The Doctrine of The Faith correspondence.

Appendix C – Independent Review Board (IRB)

1. Authority & Purpose; Consultative Role; Confidentiality and Oath.
2. Composition; Qualifications; Appointment; Terms; Removal; Vacancies.
3. Meetings: Quarterly plus special; quorum; voting; agenda; minutes (custody: Chancellor).
4. Conflicts of Interest and Recusal; use of external experts when needed.
5. Advisory Functions: credibility assessment; precautionary measures (c. 1722); suitability; safety plans; biennial policy review.
6. Annual aggregated report to the Bishop on safeguarding observations and recommendations.

Appendix D – Safe-Environment Curriculum Topics (Age-Appropriate)

1. Body autonomy, boundaries, consent; trusted adults and help-seeking.
2. Recognizing grooming, bullying, online luring, sextortion risks; bystander strategies.
3. Digital citizenship; privacy; reporting harmful content; church-specific reporting routes.
4. Healthy relationships and respect grounded in Catholic teaching.

Appendix E – Event, Travel, and Lodging Standards

1. Parental consent; medical information; emergency contacts; medication protocols and secure storage.
2. Chaperone ratios (at least 1:8 middle school; 1:10 high school) with two unrelated adults present at all times.
3. Rooming lists; separate adult/minor sleep areas; curfews; head counts; check-in/out procedures; incident response plan.
4. Transportation plans; vetted drivers; seatbelts required; itinerary on file; communication tree during travel.

Appendix F – Communications and Transparency Protocol

1. Designate a spokesperson; prepare holding statements; FAQs; parish/school letters and bulletin inserts.
2. Protect privacy; use survivor-centered language; avoid details that enable identification of minors.

3. Public annual safeguarding summary and, where applicable after due process and legal review, publication procedures for substantiated clerical cases.

Appendix G – Acknowledgment of Receipt and Agreement to Comply

I acknowledge receipt of the Diocese of Chalan Kanoa Policy and Procedures Relative to the Prevention of Abuse of Children and for Responding to Allegations. I agree to comply with its provisions, complete required training and screenings, and adhere to the Code of Conduct.

Signature: _____ Date: _____ Printed Name:
_____ Role: _____

Appendix H – Parent/Guardian Permission and Medical Release Form

The following template is provided by the Diocese of Chalan Kanoa as a standard form for use by parishes, schools, and Catholic organizations. It may be adapted as needed to fit the particular circumstances of an event or activity, provided that all essential elements — parental consent, medical release, transportation approval, and emergency contact information — are retained.

Event Information

Parish/School/Organization: _____

Event Name/Description: _____

Location: _____

Date(s) and Time(s): _____

Supervising Adult(s): _____

Participant Information

Participant's Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Grade: _____

Parent/Guardian Information

Parent/Guardian Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone (Day): _____ (Evening): _____

Emergency Contact (if different): _____

Emergency Phone: _____

Medical Information

Allergies (food/medication/other): _____

Medications (list with dosage/times): _____

Other Special Needs/Instructions: _____

Permissions

I, the undersigned parent/guardian of the above-named participant, do hereby give permission for my child to attend and participate in the event described above.

I authorize adult supervisors to obtain emergency medical treatment for my child in the event of accident or illness. I understand that every reasonable effort will be made to contact me prior to such action.

I acknowledge that the Diocese of Chalan Kanoa and its representatives will take all reasonable precautions for the safety and well-being of participants, in accordance with diocesan policy.

Transportation Consent: Yes No

I give permission for my child to be transported to/from the event by diocesan/parish-approved adults.

Photo/Video Release (optional): Yes No

I consent to photographs or video recordings of my child being used for parish/diocesan communications (bulletins, website, social media).

Signatures

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

For Parish/School Use Only

Supervisor receiving form: _____

Date received: _____

Appendix I – Parish/School Leadership Acknowledgment Form

The following template is provided by the Diocese of Chalan Kanoa for use by pastors, principals, ministry leaders, and directors of Catholic organizations. It serves as a formal acknowledgment of receipt of the diocesan Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Children and Young People and affirms the leader's responsibility to implement the policy within his or her area of authority.

This form is to be completed by pastors, principals, ministry leaders, or directors of Catholic agencies to acknowledge receipt of the diocesan Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Children and Young People, and to affirm commitment to its implementation within their parish, school, or organization.

I hereby acknowledge that I have received and reviewed the Diocese of Chalan Kanoa Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Children and Young People. I affirm my responsibility to ensure compliance with this policy in all ministries, programs, and activities under my supervision, including the training of personnel, the use of background checks, the implementation of the Code of Conduct, and adherence to diocesan reporting procedures.

Parish/School/Organization: _____

Printed Name of Leader: _____

Title/Role: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Footnotes & Legal References

1. Commonwealth Code – Child abuse definitions include physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse (or attempted), sexual exploitation, and emotional abuse of a person under 18. Physical abuse: willful and intentional striking/beating resulting in harm. Neglect: willful/negligent failure to provide adequate supervision, medical care, food, clothing, or shelter resulting in harm. Sexual abuse: engaging in or attempting sexual molestation with a child under 18. Sexual exploitation: permitting a child to engage in actual or simulated sexual conduct knowing it will be used in a performance or media that visually/aurally depicts the conduct. Emotional abuse: mental distress/injury impacting psychological capacity as evidenced by observation and substantial impairment of functioning.
2. Internal guidelines typically include the two-adult rule; prohibitions on transporting individual youth other than one’s own children; line-of-sight supervision; visible offices/classrooms—protecting youth from abuse and adults from false accusations.
3. Mandated Reporter under Commonwealth Code (e.g., 6 CMC § 5312). While the seal of confession is absolute, information obtained outside confession may be subject to reporting requirements.
4. Civil authority for reporting suspected child abuse: Department of Public Safety (verify annually in training materials for current contacts).
5. Sede vacante: the Apostolic Administrator receives allegations and acts per this policy.
6. Sustentatio: basic living expenses (room/board, clothing, basic health care) provided to clergy in accord with law and diocesan norms.
7. Remuneratio: payment for services rendered within a ministerial assignment; not applicable where public ministry is prohibited.
8. Dismissal from the clerical state may not be imposed in limited cases (charity due to advanced age or infirmity); prohibitions and a life of prayer and penance apply.
9. USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People (2011 revision), Articles 1–2 (To Promote Healing and Reconciliation; To Guarantee an Effective Response).
10. Ibid., Article 4 (To Create a Safe Environment for Children and Young People) and related Essential Norms.
11. Ibid., Articles 5 and 9 (To Cooperate with Civil Authorities; To Discipline Offenders); see Essential Norms 6–9 (precautionary measures under c. 1722; removal from ministry).
12. Ibid., Articles 12–13 (To Protect the Faithful in the Future; To Provide for Accountability and Annual Audits).



THE ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE OF CHALAN KANOA

Independent Review Board (IRB) Policy

(Adapted to diocesan safeguarding policy)
Promulgated by Decree of the Bishop of Chalan Kanoa

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Article I – Authority and Purpose

1. The Independent Review Board (IRB) of the Diocese of Chalan Kanoa is established in accordance with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People (USCCB, 2011 revision) and the diocesan Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Children and Young People.
2. The IRB is a confidential, consultative body to the Bishop. It assists the Bishop in assessing allegations involving minors and vulnerable adults, in advising on precautionary measures, and in reviewing and recommending safeguarding policies for canonical, civil, and diocesan compliance.
3. The IRB has no independent decision-making authority; it advises the Bishop, who retains exclusive canonical authority. The Vicar General may serve as the Bishop's Delegate for implementation. The Chancellor attests decrees and maintains custody of IRB records.

Article II – Definitions

Minor/Child: Any person under 18 years of age. A person who habitually lacks the use of reason is considered equivalent to a minor for canonical purposes.

Vulnerable Adult: An adult whose capacity to consent or protect themselves is impaired due to physical, mental, emotional, or situational factors, or due to a power imbalance with the minister.

Representative of the Diocese: Any person acting in ministry or service under diocesan authority, whether clergy, religious, employee, or volunteer.

Precautionary Measures: Temporary restrictions for the common good (e.g., removal from ministry, limitations on residence, prohibitions on contact with minors), consistent with canon 1722.

Promoter of Justice: A cleric or qualified person appointed by the Bishop who presents and sustains the case in canonical processes.

Director, Safe-Environment and Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Adults Office (SEPMVAO): Appointed by the Bishop, remains in office at the Bishop's discretion, and may recommend policy updates for the Bishop's consideration in light of new CNMI law or safeguarding practice.

Article III – Composition

1. The IRB shall consist of at least five (5) members, the majority of whom shall be lay persons not employed by the Diocese.
2. Members are selected based on integrity, professional competence, and good judgment, and collectively provide expertise in psychology/psychiatry, social

- work or victim advocacy, canon law, civil law, and parish pastoral leadership (at least one pastor).
3. Members are appointed by the Bishop for five-year terms, renewable at the Bishop's discretion. The Bishop designates a Chairperson and, if useful, a Vice-Chairperson.
 4. The Promoter of Justice and the Director of SEPMVAO may attend as non-voting, ex officio participants. The Bishop may invite other experts on an ad hoc basis without voting rights.
 5. All members shall sign an Oath of Confidentiality and an annual Conflict of Interest Disclosure.

Article IV – Appointment, Orientation, and Training

1. Upon appointment, members receive an orientation covering diocesan policy, the Charter and Essential Norms, CNMI reporting requirements, canonical process (cc. 1717–1722), and trauma-informed practice.
2. Members should complete annual continuing education in safeguarding (e.g., updates in law, best practices, digital risks). The SEPMVAO coordinates these trainings.
3. Each member must acknowledge the Code of Conduct for IRB members and agree to the confidentiality and records provisions herein.

Article V – Meetings and Procedures

1. The IRB meets at least quarterly and additionally as needed. The Chairperson, Bishop, or Vicar General/Delegate may convene special meetings for urgent matters.
2. A quorum is a simple majority of appointed voting members. Participation may occur in person or by secure teleconference.
3. With the Bishop's approval, the IRB may create subcommittees (e.g., policy review, training, case management procedures) to prepare recommendations for the full board.
4. Meetings begin with prayer and proceed according to an agenda circulated in advance by the Chairperson in coordination with the Delegate and SEPMVAO.
5. The Chancellor or a delegated notary prepares confidential minutes, which are reviewed and approved by the IRB and secured in diocesan archives.

Article VI – Case Intake and Review Workflow

1. Intake: The Bishop’s Delegate (often the Vicar General) receives reports, ensures civil reporting as required by CNMI law, and assigns a case number. The Victim Assistance Coordinator promptly offers pastoral care and resources.
2. Preliminary Canonical Investigation: The Promoter of Justice conducts or coordinates the investigation pursuant to cc. 1717–1719 and provides a synopsis and documentation for IRB review.
3. IRB Review and Advice: The IRB evaluates whether the information presents a semblance of truth (credibility) and advises the Bishop regarding precautionary measures under canon 1722 and any immediate pastoral communications.
4. Bishop’s Determination: The Bishop considers IRB advice and the Promoter’s report to determine next steps, including notification to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) where required by universal law.
5. Ongoing Monitoring: The IRB may recommend safety plans, clinical evaluations, or risk assessments. The SEPMVAO tracks compliance, and the Delegate reports material changes to the IRB.
6. Closure and Communication: When a case is resolved, the IRB may advise on pastoral communications, restoration of reputation, and lessons learned for continuous improvement.

Article VII – Functions and Duties

1. Advise the Bishop on the credibility of allegations and the prudential application of precautionary measures.
2. Recommend clinical or risk assessments where warranted and assist in interpreting results for suitability decisions.
3. Review diocesan safeguarding policies and procedures at least every two years and recommend revisions to the Bishop.
4. Provide consultation on safe-environment training emphases, screening standards, and audit findings.
5. Contribute to survivor-centered pastoral responses consistent with diocesan policy and best practices.
6. Provide the Bishop with consultative advice on broader safeguarding issues upon request.

Article VIII – Confidentiality and Records

1. IRB deliberations, materials, and communications are confidential. Members shall not disclose case details outside the IRB except as required by law.

2. All members shall sign an Oath of Confidentiality and are bound to preserve good name and reputation of all involved.
3. Confidential minutes and records are kept by the Chancellor or a delegated notary and secured in diocesan archives under restricted access.
4. Non-identifying summaries may be used for diocesan audits and public safeguarding reports as determined by the Bishop.

Article IX – Conflicts of Interest and Recusal

1. Members must disclose any actual or potential conflicts (e.g., personal, professional, financial, or pastoral relationships with parties).
2. Members with conflicts shall recuse themselves from deliberation and voting on the matter. The Chairperson records recusals in the minutes.
3. An annual conflict-of-interest disclosure shall be completed by all members and retained by the Chancellor.

Article X – Voting, Recommendations, and Communications

1. The IRB strives for consensus. When needed, advice to the Bishop may be expressed by majority and minority views.
2. Recommendations are submitted in writing to the Bishop (and his Delegate) by the Chairperson, with a brief rationale and any dissent noted.
3. External communications on cases are made only by the Bishop or his designated spokesperson. IRB members do not speak publicly about cases.

Article XI – Use of Experts

1. The IRB may recommend the engagement of external experts (e.g., forensic psychologists, child protection specialists, canonists) to assist in complex matters.
2. Experts engaged to advise the IRB are bound by confidentiality and shall receive only information necessary for their consultative role.

Article XII – Relationship with Diocesan Offices

1. The IRB collaborates with the SEPMVAO for data on training, screening, and compliance audits relevant to case review and policy evaluation.
2. The IRB collaborates with the Victim Assistance Coordinator to understand survivor needs and pastoral care considerations, without intruding upon privileged communications.
3. The IRB works with the Promoter of Justice on canonical process and the Bishop's Delegate on implementation and communication.

Article XIII – Reporting and Annual Summary

1. At least annually, the IRB Chairperson provides the Bishop an aggregate summary of activities, cases reviewed (non-identifying), policy recommendations, and training completed.
2. The Bishop determines what non-identifying information may be included in diocesan safeguarding summaries published for accountability.

Article XIV – Appointment, Term, and Removal

1. Members are appointed by the Bishop and remain in office at the Bishop’s discretion.
2. The Bishop may remove a member for cause, including breach of confidentiality, persistent non-attendance, or loss of professional standing.
3. Vacancies are filled by the Bishop as promptly as possible to preserve the board’s breadth of expertise.

Article XV – Amendments and Review

1. This IRB Policy may be amended by decree of the Bishop. The IRB may recommend amendments or addendums for the Bishop’s consideration, particularly in light of new CNMI law or developments in safeguarding practice.
2. The IRB shall review this Policy at least every two years and submit recommendations to the Bishop to ensure continuing relevance and effectiveness.

Article XVI – Effective Date

This IRB Policy takes effect upon promulgation by decree of the Bishop of Chalan Kanoa and is attached as a governing appendix to the diocesan Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Children and Young People.

Appendix A – Oath of Confidentiality (IRB Member)

I, _____, having been appointed to the Independent Review Board of the Diocese of Chalan Kanoa, do hereby swear and affirm that I will maintain strict confidentiality with respect to all information received in the performance of my duties. I will safeguard the good name and reputation of all persons involved and will not disclose confidential information except as required by law or competent ecclesiastical authority.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness (Chancellor or Notary): _____ Date: _____

Appendix B – Conflict of Interest and Recusal Disclosure

Name: _____ Date: _____

Please disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest related to matters that may come before the IRB (personal, professional, financial, pastoral):

If a conflict exists, I agree to recuse myself from deliberations and voting on the affected matter(s).

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C – Annual IRB Member Disclosure

- I have completed annual safeguarding training as coordinated by SEPMVAO.
- I have reviewed updates in CNMI law and diocesan safeguarding policy provided this year.
- I have no undisclosed conflicts of interest.
- I reaffirm my Oath of Confidentiality.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix D – Case Review Checklist (For IRB Use)

- Case number, intake date, report source, civil reporting status.
- Summary of allegation(s): dates, locations, roles, witnesses, evidence.

- Victim Assistance Coordinator outreach and services offered.
- Preliminary investigation synopsis (cc. 1717–1719) and Promoter of Justice notes.
- Risk assessment or clinical evaluations (if any).
- Precautionary measures recommended (canon 1722) and rationale.
- Pastoral communications and safety planning recommendations.
- IRB vote/advice summary; any minority views noted.
- Follow-up items and monitoring plan.

Appendix E – Meeting Agenda and Minutes Template

Standard Agenda:

- Opening prayer.
- Roll call, quorum confirmation, approval of previous minutes.
- Review of agenda and declarations of conflicts/recusals.
- Case reviews (closed session).
- Policy review items and training updates.
- Recommendations for the Bishop and follow-ups.
- Scheduling of next meeting and adjournment prayer.

Minutes shall record: date/time, attendees, quorum, conflicts/recusals, agenda items, summary of advice to the Bishop (without identifying details), and action items. Minutes are prepared by the Chancellor or delegated notary and secured in diocesan archives.



THE ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE OF CHALAN KANOA

**Safe Environment and Protection of Minors
and Vulnerable Adults Program
(SEPMVAO Edition)**

Promulgated by Decree of the Bishop of Chalan Kanoa

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1. Introduction & Mission

The Diocese of Chalan Kanoa is committed to promoting the dignity, safety, and well-being of children, youth, and vulnerable adults entrusted to the pastoral care of the Church. This Safe Environment and Protection Program (SEPMVAO) implements the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People (2011 revision) and the Essential Norms (2006).

The Program embodies the Diocese's zero-tolerance commitment to sexual misconduct and its obligation under the Commonwealth Code of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) to report suspected abuse. It integrates spiritual, pastoral, legal, and educational measures to create a culture of accountability and care.

Mission Statement:

To safeguard the innocence and dignity of all children and vulnerable adults by ensuring that every person who ministers in the name of the Church does so in a manner that is safe, transparent, and accountable.

Core Goals:

- Prevent abuse through formation and screening.
- Respond immediately and lawfully to any allegation of abuse.
- Support victims and families with compassion and pastoral care.
- Foster a community of trust through education, training, and audits.

2. Authority, Scope & Applicability

1. **Authority.** This Program is promulgated by decree of the Bishop of Chalan Kanoa and has the force of particular law within the Diocese. It implements the USCCB Charter, the Essential Norms, and relevant canonical and civil provisions of the CNMI (Code Title 6 §§ 5311–5314, § 1311).
2. **Scope.** These norms apply to all clergy, religious, seminarians, employees, and volunteers of the Diocese of Chalan Kanoa and to every ministry, school, program, and organization under its jurisdiction.
3. **Relationship to Other Policies.** This Program is to be read in conjunction with the Policy and Procedures for the Protection of Children and Young People and the Independent Review Board Policy. If a conflict arises, the Bishop determines interpretation and application.
4. **Commitment to Civil Law.** All Church personnel must comply fully with CNMI laws on child abuse and neglect and mandatory reporting. The Diocese cooperates with civil authorities and will not obstruct investigations.

3. Definitions

- **Minor/Child:** Any person under the age of 18. For canonical purposes, a person who habitually lacks the use of reason is considered equivalent to a minor.

- Vulnerable Adult: An adult whose capacity for self-care or protection is impaired by disability, illness, or a power imbalance with the minister.
- Representative of the Diocese: Any person who acts in the name of the Church as clergy, religious, employee, or volunteer, paid or unpaid.
- Abuse: Physical injury, neglect, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or emotional maltreatment as defined in Title 6 CMC § 5311 et seq.
- Sexual Misconduct: Any sexual behavior by a Church representative contrary to the Sixth Commandment and to Church teaching, including the use of child pornography.
- Bishop’s Delegate: A cleric appointed by the Bishop to coordinate responses to allegations and to serve as liaison with civil authorities.
- SEPMVAO Director: The Director of the Safe Environment and Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Adults Office, appointed by the Bishop and serving at his discretion.
- Victim Assistance Coordinator (VAC): A qualified individual designated by the Bishop to offer pastoral support and referrals to victims and families.

4. Governance & Roles

a. Bishop

- Promulgates and enforces this Program.
- Appoints key personnel (Delegate, Chancellor, SEPMVAO Director, VAC).
- Decides suitability for ministry after consultation with the Independent Review Board (IRB).

b. Bishop’s Delegate

- Receives and documents reports of suspected abuse.
- Coordinates civil reporting and initial Church response.
- Ensures pastoral support and communication with families.

c. Chancellor

- Attests official acts and maintains secure archives for safeguarding records.
- Oversees record retention and confidentiality per diocesan policy.

d. Director, Safe Environment and Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Adults Office (SEPMVAO)

- Administers background checks, training programs, and compliance audits.
- Maintains data and certification records for all diocesan entities.
- Recommends policy updates to the Bishop in light of new laws or best practices.

e. Victim Assistance Coordinator (VAC)

- Provides survivor-centered pastoral care and referrals.
- Collaborates with civil authorities and SEPMVAO on case follow-up.

f. Independent Review Board (IRB)

- Advises the Bishop on credibility of allegations and on policy improvements.

- Reviews cases and issues written recommendations.

g. Parish/School Safe Environment Coordinators

- Implement training, screening, and record-keeping locally.
- Report quarterly to SEPMVAO for audit purposes.

h. Appointment of Parish/School Safe Environment Coordinators

- Each Pastor/Parish Administrator shall appoint, in writing, a Safe Environment Coordinator for the parish (and school, if applicable).
- The Coordinator must be fully cleared (screening/background check) and complete diocesan safe-environment coordinator training within 30 days of appointment.
- Term: serves at the discretion of the Pastor/Parish Administrator; vacancies must be filled within 30 days.
- Reporting: reports locally to the Pastor/Parish Administrator and functionally to the SEPMVAO Director.
- Scope: ensures implementation of training, screening, documentation, and quarterly reporting required by this Program.
- Conflict of interest: individuals with supervisory authority over accused persons in an active case may not serve as Coordinator for that case.

5. Mandatory Reporting to Civil Authorities

All clergy, religious, employees, and volunteers are mandated reporters under CNMI law and must immediately report suspected abuse to civil authorities before notifying Church officials.

Civil Agencies for Reports:

Agency	Details
Child Protective Services (CPS) – Department of Community and Cultural Affairs (DCCA)	P.O. Box 10007, Saipan, MP 96950 (670) 233-6026 / 664-6008 Fax (670) 664-6033 cps@dcca.gov.mp
Department of Public Safety (DPS) – 24-hour hotline	(670) 664-9000 / 888-9000
Office of the Attorney General – Criminal Division	(670) 237-7600 attorney.general@doj.gov.mp

Reporting Steps:

1. Ensure the immediate safety of the child or vulnerable adult.
2. Make an oral and/or written report to CPS and/or DPS.
3. Notify the Bishop’s Delegate or SEPMVAO Director after civil reporting is complete.
4. Document date, time, persons contacted, and summary of the report.
5. Cooperate fully with civil investigations and preserve evidence.

Non-Retaliation: No person who reports suspected abuse in good faith shall suffer retaliation or adverse consequences.

Seal of Confession: The sacramental seal is inviolable (1983 CIC can. 983 § 1) and is not subject to civil reporting laws.

6. Incident Response Protocol

Every allegation of abuse or misconduct is treated seriously. The Diocese follows both civil law and canon law in responding to such reports.

A. Immediate Response

- Ensure Safety. Remove the alleged offender from contact with minors pending investigation.
- Medical & Pastoral Care. Offer medical attention and pastoral support through the VAC.
- Notify Civil Authorities. Confirm that a report has been made to CPS/DPS.

B. Internal Notification

- The Bishop's Delegate is the primary diocesan contact for all allegations.
- The SEPMVAO Director maintains a confidential log of all reports.
- The Bishop is informed immediately of any credible allegation.

C. Preliminary Investigation (Canon 1717 ff.)

- The Bishop's Delegate conducts an initial assessment to determine credibility.
- The Promoter of Justice oversees canonical procedures.
- The Bishop may impose precautionary measures (Canon 1722) such as temporary removal from ministry.

D. Cooperation with Civil Authorities

The Diocese cooperates fully with civil investigations and preserves all evidence. Church investigations do not interfere with civil proceedings.

E. Communication

Only the Bishop or his designated spokesperson releases public statements. Privacy of all parties must be respected at every stage.

7. Prevention: Ministerial Standards & Boundaries

A. General Principles

Every representative of the Diocese is expected to uphold the highest moral standards and avoid situations that may lead to abuse, confusion, or scandal.

B. Two-Adult Rule

At least two unrelated adults must be present in any setting involving minors. Private one-on-one meetings are to occur only in visible, open spaces.

C. Appropriate Physical Contact

Examples of Appropriate Contact

- Handshakes, brief hugs, or pats on the shoulder in public settings
- High-fives, fist bumps, or side hugs of short duration
- Holding hands during communal prayer

Inappropriate Contact

- Prolonged embraces, kissing, or tickling
- Sitting on laps or massage of any kind
- Touching in bathing suit areas or sleeping in the same bed

D. Gifts & Favors

Avoid favoritism or gift-giving that could be misinterpreted. Never give secret or expensive gifts to a minor.

E. Pastoral Counseling & Confession

Use offices with windows or visible areas; maintain appointment logs; never meet a minor in private living quarters.

8. Digital Communication & Social Media Guidelines

A. Purpose

Digital communication is an extension of ministry and must respect the same standards of transparency and propriety.

B. Rules for Communication

- **Approved Platforms.** Use diocesan-approved email and messaging systems that can be archived.
- **Group Messaging.** Always include another adult or parent/guardian in messages with minors.
- **Private Messaging.** Prohibited unless unavoidable; copy another adult and save transcripts.
- **Photos & Videos.** Obtain written parental consent; never photograph minors in bathrooms, bedrooms, or changing areas.
- **Social Media Accounts.** Ministry accounts must have at least two adult administrators.

C. Digital Safety Education

Parish and school programs will teach youth how to recognize and report online grooming or exploitation.

9. Screening & Background Checks

A. General Policy

All clergy, employees, and volunteers with access to minors must complete screening and background checks before beginning service.

B. Screening Steps

1. Application. Complete the diocesan volunteer/employee form.
2. Reference Checks. Verify character and prior service.
3. Criminal Background Check. Conducted through diocesan channels.
4. Sex-Offender Registry Search. Required for all roles involving minors.
5. Clearance Documentation. SEPMVAO retains proof of completion.

C. Renewal & Record-Keeping

- Background checks renewed every three years.
- Records maintained securely by SEPMVAO under the Chancellor's oversight.

D. Visiting Clergy & Religious

Must present a Letter of Suitability from their bishop or superior before ministry in the Diocese. No faculties are granted without verification.

10. Training & Education

A. Adult Training

All clergy, religious, employees, and volunteers who work with minors or vulnerable adults must complete diocesan-approved safe-environment training (e.g., Protecting God's Children or equivalent) before ministry begins. Annual refresher sessions are required.

B. Youth Education

Catholic schools and parish programs provide annual age-appropriate instruction on personal safety, boundaries, and how to report abuse. Parents may review the curriculum and request reasonable accommodations or opt-outs.

C. Leadership Development

- Mandatory reporting and documentation
- Recognizing grooming behaviors
- Supervising staff and volunteers
- Responding pastorally to victims

D. Documentation

Completion certificates and attendance rosters are kept on file at each parish or school and submitted to SEPMVAO during annual audits.

11. Ministry with Minors: Programs & Events

A. Registration & Documentation

- Current participant rosters with parent/guardian contact information.
- Signed permission and medical release forms for each participant.
- Attendance logs for every session, event, and trip.

B. Supervision Ratios

Age Group	Recommended Ratio	Minimum Adults Present
Ages 5–8	1:6	2
Ages 9–12	1:8	2
Ages 13–17	1:10	2

At least two adults must always be present, regardless of group size.

C. Chaperone Responsibilities

- Ensure the safety and supervision of all participants.
- Never leave minors unattended.
- Report any incidents immediately to the program leader and SEPMVAO.

D. Overnight and Off-Island Events

- Require written permission from parents/guardians.
- Must be approved in writing by the Pastor and SEPMVAO Director.
- Separate sleeping quarters for males/females.
- Two adult chaperones of the same sex as participants per room or area.

E. High-Risk Activities

For swimming, sports, or travel by boat/plane, additional supervision and signed parental consent are required. Participants must follow CNMI safety regulations and diocesan travel guidelines.

12. Transportation & Travel

A. Driver Qualifications

- Must be 21 years or older with a valid driver's license.
- Must have current vehicle registration and insurance.
- Must be cleared through diocesan screening before transporting minors.

B. Transportation Rules

- Avoid transporting a single minor; if unavoidable, obtain prior written parental consent and notify the supervisor.
- Seat minors in the back seat; driver and minor should never travel alone without consent.
- Maintain head counts before departure and upon arrival.
- Follow all CNMI traffic laws and safety regulations.

C. Overnight & Off-Island Travel

- File itineraries with SEPMVAO and the parish/school office.
- Keep emergency contact and medical information accessible.
- Conduct nightly head counts; maintain curfews.

D. Vehicle Use

- Church-owned vehicles: used only for approved ministry activities.

- Privately owned vehicles: driver assumes responsibility for insurance coverage.

13. Facility Safety & Access

A. Visibility and Access Control

- Meeting rooms must have windows or open doors when in use with minors.
- Hallways, classrooms, and common spaces should remain well-lit.
- Keys are controlled by designated supervisors; lost keys must be reported immediately.

B. Safe Facility Maintenance

- Regular inspections of playgrounds, classrooms, and parish halls.
- Fire exits, alarms, and emergency plans must be clearly marked.
- Restrooms and changing areas monitored discreetly and appropriately.

C. Use by External Groups

Outside groups using diocesan property must agree in writing to comply with the Safe Environment Program and provide proof of insurance and background clearance for their leaders.

D. Restricted Areas

No minors are permitted in sacristies, storage rooms, or offices unless accompanied by authorized adults.

13-A. Identifying and Maintaining Safe Spaces

A. Definition

A safe space is any physical, digital, or relational environment within the Diocese of Chalan Kanoa where children, youth, and vulnerable adults can learn, worship, and participate in activities free from fear, intimidation, harassment, or abuse. Safe spaces promote respect, inclusion, and transparency while maintaining appropriate supervision and boundaries.

B. Characteristics of Safe Physical Spaces

- **Visibility.** Activities take place in areas that are open, well-lit, and observable by others; interior windows and open-door policies are encouraged.
- **Accessibility.** Entry and exit points remain unlocked during programs (except where security requires otherwise). Emergency routes and exits are clearly marked.
- **Predictability.** Schedules, meeting places, and supervision plans are communicated in advance to parents/guardians and participants.
- **Appropriate Environment.** Rooms are clean, free of hazards, and arranged to support group interaction rather than isolation.
- **Accountability.** Attendance logs and visitor sign-in/out sheets are maintained for all diocesan properties hosting minors.

C. Safe Relational Spaces

- Adults model respect and fairness; bullying, shaming, or favoritism are never tolerated.

- Every child or vulnerable adult knows to whom they can speak if they feel unsafe.
- Programs integrate “See Something, Say Something” awareness, teaching participants to report concerning behavior early.
- Parish and school leaders conduct periodic “safety walk-throughs” to listen to youth and assess comfort levels.

D. Safe Digital Spaces

- Ministry websites, social-media pages, and messaging groups are moderated by at least two cleared adults.
- All online meetings or virtual classrooms use password protection, waiting rooms, and identifiable display names.
- Recording or screenshots of minors are allowed only with written parental consent.
- Online conduct follows the same boundaries outlined in Section 8 (Digital Communication & Social Media).

E. Implementation

The SEPMVAO Director assists parishes and schools in identifying, marking, and maintaining designated safe spaces. Checklists for safe-space assessments are included in annual audits. Each parish or school displays a visible Safe Space Poster that lists contact information for the SEPMVAO Office, the Victim Assistance Coordinator, CNMI Child Protective Services, and the Department of Public Safety.

14. Audits, Compliance & Corrective Action

A. Annual Diocesan Audit

The SEPMVAO Director conducts annual audits of all parishes, schools, and ministries to verify:

- Training completion for clergy, staff, and volunteers.
- Current background checks for all personnel.
- Proper documentation of permission slips, rosters, and supervision logs.

B. Parish/School Self-Assessment

Each parish and school completes a quarterly compliance checklist (Appendix J). Results are submitted to SEPMVAO for review and follow-up.

C. Corrective Actions

5. A written corrective plan is issued with a timeline.
6. The Pastor or Principal ensures completion.
7. Persistent non-compliance is reported to the Bishop.

D. Public Accountability

An annual summary of diocesan compliance is published by SEPMVAO to demonstrate transparency and accountability.

15. Records, Privacy & Retention

A. Record Custody

The Chancellor maintains the official archives of the Diocese, including:

- Background check records and training certificates.
- Parish/school audit reports.
- Case files and IRB minutes (in restricted access archives).

B. Confidentiality

All records are confidential and released only to:

- Civil authorities as required by law.
- The Bishop and his designated officials.
- Legal counsel when appropriate.

C. Retention Periods

- Screening and training records: retained for at least seven years.
- Case files: permanent retention in restricted archives.
- Compliance audit records: retained for five years.

D. Data Security

Electronic records are password-protected and stored in secure diocesan systems. Paper files are locked in cabinets accessible only to authorized personnel.

16. Program Review & Continuous Improvement

A. Annual Cycle

The Safe Environment Program follows a July-to-June implementation year. Each cycle includes:

8. July–August: Renew expired background checks; schedule parish/school trainings.
9. September–October: Parish compliance checks and updates to local records.
10. November–December: Mid-year audit sampling; review digital-safety practices.
11. January–March: Renew chaperone and transportation approvals for spring events.
12. April–June: Year-end diocesan audit; publish compliance summary; plan improvements.

B. Policy Review

The SEPMVAO Director, in consultation with the Independent Review Board (IRB), reviews this Program every two years or sooner if CNMI law changes. Recommendations for amendment are submitted to the Bishop for approval.

C. Collaboration & Training

The Diocese collaborates with community partners—such as the CNMI Department of Community and Cultural Affairs, Department of Public Safety, Office of the Attorney General,

and local schools—to share resources, host training, and strengthen island-wide child-protection efforts.

D. Evaluation Measures

- Annual audit findings.
- Feedback from parishes, schools, and parents.
- Case-management reviews by the IRB.
- External consultation with professional safeguarding experts as needed.

17. Enforcement & Sanctions

A. Accountability

Every person who serves the Diocese is expected to uphold these standards. Violations may result in disciplinary action, removal from ministry, or referral to civil authorities.

B. Clergy & Religious

Credible allegations of abuse by clergy or religious are referred to the Bishop, who applies canonical penalties as required by *Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela* and the Essential Norms.

C. Employees & Volunteers

Employees may face suspension or termination for violations. Volunteers may be dismissed from service. All cases involving suspected criminal conduct are reported to CPS and DPS.

D. Public Transparency

Consistent with privacy law, the Diocese may publish statements acknowledging confirmed cases and steps taken to ensure safety. Communications are coordinated by the Bishop’s Delegate in consultation with legal counsel.

E. No Retaliation

No one who, in good faith, reports misconduct or participates in an investigation will suffer retaliation.

Appendix A – Code of Conduct for Ministry with Minors

All clergy, employees, and volunteers serving minors must:

- Uphold Christian values of respect, compassion, and integrity.
- Maintain appropriate physical, verbal, and emotional boundaries.
- Never use language or humor that is profane, sexually suggestive, or demeaning.
- Avoid behavior that could be misconstrued as favoritism or grooming.
- Report any boundary violations or suspected abuse immediately.

Acknowledgment:

Each person engaged in ministry signs this Code of Conduct and renews it every two years.

Appendix B – Interactions & Behaviors Chart

Permitted	Always Ask / Conditional	Prohibited
Handshakes, brief side-hugs, high-fives in public	One-on-one meeting in visible space with parental notice	Prolonged hugs, kissing, massages, tickling
Group texts including parents or another adult	Transporting a single minor with prior consent and notice	Private digital messaging with minors
Photos at events with prior consent	Gift of small token (e.g., birthday card)	Secret or expensive gifts
Holding hands during communal prayer	Emotional discussions with minors in open settings	Sharing explicit materials or stories

Appendix C – Appropriate Physical Contact and Affection Chart

Safe Touch	Caution Zone	Unsafe Touch
Side hugs, brief hand on shoulder, pat on back	Touching hands or knees while comforting	Touching chest, stomach, thighs, or any area covered by swimsuit
Public gestures of encouragement	Extended embraces	Lap-sitting, wrestling, or tickling
Handshakes during greeting or farewell	Playful shoulder contact	Any touch used for control, intimidation, or secrecy

Appendix D – Digital Communication & Social Media Standards

- Use diocesan or parish-approved email, messaging, and social-media accounts only.
- Never send or receive sexually explicit material or memes.
- Never engage in private one-on-one digital conversations with minors.
- Obtain parental permission before sharing photos or videos of minors online.
- Do not “friend” minors on personal social-media accounts.
- Save or archive ministry communications for audit purposes.

Appendix E – Reporting Flowchart (Civil and Diocesan)

- Step 1: Ensure Immediate Safety.
- Step 2: Call CNMI CPS (670) 233-6026 / 664-6008 or DPS 24-Hour (670) 664-9000.
- Step 3: Notify the Bishop’s Delegate or SEPMVAO Director.
- Step 4: Provide written report to CPS within 24 hours if requested.
- Step 5: VAC contacts victim/family for pastoral support.
- Step 6: Delegate notifies the Bishop and records case in confidential log.
- Step 7: IRB reviews and advises on credibility and precautionary measures.

Appendix F – CNMI Agency Directory

Agency	Contact Information	Purpose
Child Protective Services (DCCA)	P.O. Box 10007 Saipan MP 96950 (670) 233-6026 / 664-6008 Fax (670) 664-6033 cps@dcca.gov.mp	Receives and investigates child abuse reports
Department of Public Safety (DPS)	Capitol Hill Saipan MP 96950 24-hr (670) 664-9000 / 888-9000	Law-enforcement response and emergency intervention
Office of the Attorney General – Criminal Division	Caller Box 10007 Saipan MP 96950 (670) 237-7600 attorney.general@doj.gov.mp	Criminal prosecution and legal guidance
SEPMVAO – Diocese of Chalan Kanoa	Cathedral Parish Office Complex, Chalan Kanoa (670) 234-3000	Diocesan reporting and training office

Appendix G – Parent/Guardian Permission & Medical Release Form

Participant Name: _____

Event/Program: _____

Date(s): _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

I give permission for my child to participate in the above activity and authorize the supervising adults to seek emergency medical treatment if necessary.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____

Emergency Contact Name & Phone: _____

Medical Conditions/Allergies: _____

Appendix H – Volunteer / Employee Application & Screening Form

1. Full Name _____

2. Address _____

3. Phone _____ Email _____

4. Position applied for _____

5. Have you ever worked with minors before? Yes No
6. Have you ever been accused or convicted of abuse or a sexual offense? Yes No
7. References (Name / Relationship / Phone): _____
8. I understand that a criminal background check and sex-offender registry search are required.
Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix I – Transportation Policy & Driver Verification Form

Driver Name: _____
 License No.: _____ Exp. Date: _____
 Vehicle Make/Model: _____ Plate No.: _____
 Insurance Company: _____ Policy No.: _____
 Copy of driver’s license attached Copy of insurance card attached

Conditions for Approval:

- Must be 21 or older and screened by SEPMVAO.
- Must obey CNMI traffic laws and safety rules.
- Never transport a single minor without written consent and notice.

Signature of Driver: _____ Date: _____

Appendix J – Parish/School Quarterly Compliance Checklist (Excerpt)

Category	Yes	No	Notes/Actions
All adult personnel current on training certificates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Background checks current for all staff & volunteers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Permission forms on file for off-site activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Two-adult rule observed at all times	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Transportation logs complete and on file	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Digital communications follow approved policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Incident logs maintained and reviewed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Appendix K – Mandated Reporter Quick Reference (CNMI Law Summary)

- Title 6 CMC § 5311–5314 defines child abuse and neglect.
- Title 6 CMC § 1311 requires any person with knowledge of a crime to report it.
- Failure to report may result in criminal penalties.
- Reports should be made to CPS or DPS immediately.
- A written report may be requested by CPS within 24 hours of oral report.

Appendix L – CNMI CPS Referral Template

Date of Report: _____ Time: _____
 Reporter Name: _____ Position: _____
 Child’s Name/Age: _____ Parent/Guardian: _____
 Address/Phone: _____
 Nature of Incident: _____
 Location of Incident: _____
 Immediate Safety Actions Taken: _____
 Person Notified (CPS/DPS): _____ CPS Report Number: _____

Appendix M – Incident Report and Evidence Log

Date of Incident: _____ Location: _____
 Persons Involved: _____
 Description of Incident: _____
 Immediate Action Taken: _____
 Witnesses: _____
 Reported to Civil Authorities? Yes No If Yes, Agency: _____
 Date: _____
 Signature of Reporter: _____ Date: _____

Appendix N – Annual Audit & Compliance Summary Sheet

Entity	Audit Date	Training Completion %	Background Check %	Findings/Corrective Actions
Parish 1				
Parish 2				
School 1				
School 2				
Diocesan Average				