



## First Semi-Annual Report on Continuous Quality Improvement Initiatives

Submitted by:

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and

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June 1, 2006 to November 30, 2006

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston

The reporting schedule identifies three Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) topics as the subjects of this reporting period. These are:

- 1) Improve communication with and feedback from parish Child Abuse Prevention (CAP) Teams;
- 2) Complete implementation of personal safety curriculum in parish religious education programs; and
- 3) Assess the pilot program results for the safety curriculum for upper grade children in parishes and schools.

The following summary outlines activities and efforts related to each of these topics and lists efforts on the initiatives for the period of June 1 to November 30, 2006.

### **1. CAP Team Communication and Feedback**

The Office of Child Advocacy (OCA) has implemented a number of strategies to improve communication with the parish Child Abuse Prevention (CAP) teams. Most notably, CAP team members now directly receive all the information and communication that is sent to pastors and principals. In the past six months, this communication/information has included:

- Letters from Cardinal O'Malley to pastors, religious educators and principals about safe environment initiatives and training requirements
- Annual updates about the Code of Ministerial Behavior, the Policies and Procedures for the Protection of Children, and the status of abuse prevention education and training programs for children in the parishes and schools
- Compliance questionnaires sent to parishes in support of data collection for the US Conference of Catholic Bishops audit process
- Announcements about the personal safety/abuse prevention program being incorporated into the middle school grades
- Packets of information for parents to be distributed in support of their awareness of child abuse, how to talk with children about abuse, educational resources on abuse prevention, reporting procedures and services to families offered by various community agencies
- Suggested parish bulletin announcements about the services offered by the CAP Teams, who they are, and a note from the CAP Team members to the parish community about child abuse and its prevention

In addition, CAP Teams have received the materials necessary to be used *in instructing others* on the requirements and responsibilities for reporting federal crimes against children to the proper authorities. They have received written presentations that include the information necessary to understand the reporting responsibilities and contact information for providing those reports.

The OCA has also developed a standard form for CAP Teams to use to report the names of those in their parishes who have attended any particular training in *Protecting God's*

*Children.* The standard form facilitates easier reporting of necessary information; names, parish/school identification, phone numbers and function (clergy, employee, volunteer, staff, principal, teacher, etc) in the parish/school. The reporting form was also made available on the OCA website for easy download and use – eliminating the need for more tedious, handwritten reports.

The OCA has also facilitated communication with and *between* CAP Teams about establishing a process by which CAP teams scheduling training in their parishes for clergy, staff and volunteers post a notice of the training session (along with dates, times, and contact information) on the OCA web-page. In this manner, parishes that need to have new personnel trained in child abuse prevention, but whose CAP Team does not have training scheduled, can send their personnel to any other area parish to receive it. This also facilitates an economy of scale in that several parishes can combine the small number of people needing training into a larger group and run a single “cluster” session rather than a number of separate sessions with only a small number of people in attendance. Feedback from CAP Teams on this capability has been quite positive.

The OCA has set aside funds to conduct the first set of regional meetings with CAP Teams throughout the Archdiocese of Boston. These meetings are planned for early 2007. Regional bishops and local pastors will be invited to attend and participate. These meetings will concentrate on three topics: 1) the experiences and support needs of the CAP teams; 2) feedback about their experiences with the VIRTUS training; and 3) updates on our activities, upcoming trainings, and resources available through the OCA.

During this period, the OCA also conducted two training sessions for new CAP Team members in parishes that had lost CAP Team members over the past year due to staff and volunteer turnover.

## **2. Implementation of Personal Safety Curriculum in Religious Education**

Over the course of the past six months, the OCA has continued to work with pastors and religious education leadership throughout the Archdiocese to complete implementation of the modified version of the Talking About Touching (TAT) personal safety and abuse prevention curriculum in all religious education programs.

In July 2006, in support of this goal, the Office of Child Advocacy contracted with the MA Children’s Trust Fund for a full time Public Health Specialist who is also an expert in TAT to coordinate with and provide technical assistance (TA) to any parish encountering barriers to implementation, and conduct ongoing training sessions for religious educators. This TA includes in-person visits and site support to parishes, as well as providing phone support and any necessary training and/or curriculum materials.

In addition, the OCA has made numerous efforts to assist parishes in meeting the compliance standards. A modified version of the TAT program has been distributed to assist in aligning the curriculum with the Religious Education Curriculum Guidelines of

the Archdiocese. There are also multiple options for how parishes can integrate the curriculum into their religious education program. The OCA had previously hosted in 2005 a series of five, regional “Best Practices” sessions for all religious education leaders in the archdiocese.

Over the next six to twelve months, the OCA will assess the results of the 2006 audit of parish compliance with implementing the TAT curriculum. The OCA will expeditiously work with all parishes that have not yet implemented this program to achieve the goal of 100% implementation.

Also in this reporting period, the Archdiocese has achieved a measure of success with an initiative to make implementation of child personal safety/abuse prevention education in religious education programs even easier. In late 2005, the OCA and the Office of Religious Education jointly sponsored a “summit” meeting with the presidents of the five primary US publishers of religious education texts (Benziger, Sadlier, Harcourt, Silver-Burdett and RCL) in order to discuss in more depth the past, present, and future of child safety programs within religious education across the United States, and to hear their thoughts on how this could impact their religion texts. The meeting was designed to talk about what the Archdiocese of Boston has learned about the principles of safety and abuse prevention education and what makes for successful integration and learning of these skills. Also discussed was the creation of a set of guiding principles “contextualizing” personal safety and abuse prevention information in the religious education classroom, and the level of interest of the publishers in either integrating the material as part of their texts or presenting it in supplements. Critical to the discussion was to gauge whether or not the publishers 1) could agree to common criteria, content and approaches to integration; 2) would be willing to work with us for ongoing consultation and technical support; 3) could assess whether the national market had potential enough to warrant the necessary R&D investment; and 4) would work with representation from other dioceses and USCCB toward accomplishment.

In late summer 2006, after a long period of consultation and collaboration between the publishers, the Offices of Child Advocacy and Religious Education, the Catholic Schools, and abuse prevention experts, the Archdiocese received what we believe is the first correlation or "bridging" document in the United States between a national religious education curriculum and an evidence-based child personal safety/abuse prevention program - in this case Harcourt Religion Publishers "Call to Faith" and TAT. Harcourt has produced both a comprehensive school and a parish-based program. The documents are being distributed free of charge by Harcourt to its Boston customer base in the Archdiocesan parishes and schools. RCL is not far behind and Sadlier Press, is hosting sessions in the Archdiocese for religious educators and teachers who use their product. It is our hope that this effort will make it even easier for our religious educators to teach these critical concepts to our children, and will serve as a model for the rest of the country as to how best to fulfill the requirements of the Bishop's Charter to provide safety training to children in religious education by placing it within the catechetical framework.

### **3. Assess Pilot Program of Keeping Children Safe**

The pilot of the “Keeping Children Safe” (KCS) personal safety/abuse prevention program for middle school children was conducted in the spring of 2006. The curriculum, which was derived from two well-known and evidence-based programs (Kids and Company<sup>TM</sup> authored by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and the Michigan Model for Comprehensive School Health Education<sup>®</sup>), and was reviewed by regional experts, includes the following:

- A review of the safety rules (age appropriate) that were discussed in TAT
- Increased emphasis on ability to judge risks
- A discussion of power and when it is appropriate for others to have power over them
- Discussion of peer pressure and behavior in groups
- Discussion of babysitting and appropriate touch (as this age group might be beginning this task)
- Discussion of internet/on-line safety (as this age group would have more unrestricted use of Internet).

The program was piloted successfully in more than a dozen schools and parish religious education programs from April – May 2006. Evaluation data was collected post-training for those teachers involved in the pilot training sessions, and post-implementation at the end of the pilot period. The results of those surveys are reported here.

Catholic schoolteachers and religious educators who participated in the pilot were trained in the curriculum in February 2006. Their evaluation of the training and the material indicates the following:

- The teachers and religious educators were satisfied with the breadth of the training and the materials they received.
- Following the training the participants felt confident in their ability to implement the curriculum.
- Participants found the lessons and accompanying material to be age-appropriate.

The teachers and religious educators were surveyed again following the full implementation of the pilot program to elicit feedback on the implementation and the responses of students to the program. The feedback from the pilot participants was considered prior to finalizing the curriculum and preparing for the full rollout of KCS in Fall 2006. All participants in the pilot program were asked to comment on their experiences teaching the lessons as well as the response of the children to each of the lessons. The findings indicated that:

- The teachers and religious educators found the lessons to be valuable and the goals for each lesson to be realistic.
- The children participated actively and enthusiastically in most lessons.
- The material was age-appropriate.

- It was difficult for a minority of teachers and students to discuss material about unsafe touching. Nevertheless teachers found the lessons to be valuable.

Following the pilot implementation of “Keeping Children Safe” a series of twenty-two (22) two-day training sessions for teachers and religious educators representing all schools and parishes (almost 900 individuals) was conducted from August – September 2006. Implementation of the program in these grades is underway, and the RCAB is aiming to have the program fully implemented by December, 2006. Four makeup sessions for religious educators and school teachers unable to make the August/September sessions were held on October 21, 26, 27, and 30.

Participants in these trainings were also asked to evaluate the instruction they received in preparation for full implementation of the program. Evaluation results indicated the following:

- 95% of the participants found the training to be adequate to excellent, with the highest ratings going to:
  - o Discussion of the problem of child abuse.
  - o Discussion of the concepts and objectives of the curriculum for grades 4-8.
  - o Training on mandated state and federal reporting.
  - o Presentation and discussion of the selected media.
- 97% of the participants found the hands-on part of the training to be adequate to excellent (except in the area of internet safety where 83% found the training adequate to excellent). Participants were nearly unanimous in their positive ratings of the way the trainers modeled a lesson.

The OCA will circulate and collect surveys to obtain feedback on the actual implementation process once it is complete. These will be used to make adjustments in the program and in future trainings as needed.

**Next CQI report due May 31, 2007**