

**Safeguard the Children Committee Meeting
Minutes – April 20, 2026**

Present: Fr. Ricky; Fr. Mario Celestine, OP; Patricia Plescia; Stephanie Lutero; Ericka Giordano; Ray Hernandez; Dawn Ponnet; Lydia Banales

Absent: Toni Smith

Opening Prayer: Led by Fr. Mario Celestine, OP

Announcements

- All children in the School, Religious Education (RE), and Confirmation programs have completed their Safeguard the Children (SG) requirements, and these have been posted to the VIRTUS website.
- All formation leadership (teachers, catechists, classroom helpers, etc.) are up to date with SG compliance.

School Update

- There are a few parents who still need to become SG compliant. Stephanie and the school are actively following up with them.
- All but two new families (for the 2026–2027 school year, including TK, Kindergarten, and newly enrolled students) are SG compliant.

Child Abuse Prevention Month (April 2027)

- Patricia will speak with Toni about planning activities for Child Abuse Prevention Month.
- In the past, efforts have included information tables in the gathering area after all Masses, guest speakers, and other activities to raise awareness and demonstrate the parish's commitment to protecting children, teens, and vulnerable adults.

Facilities & Supervision Concerns

- **Restroom Access:**
Delivery personnel are not permitted to use restrooms within the Education Facility. It was suggested that, if necessary, they be directed to the Pastoral Center.
- **After-School Supervision:**
Concerns were raised about children playing without adequate supervision while parents are engaged in conversation during pick-up and afterward.

Discussion Topics

- **Use of Parish Property:**
 - Discussion took place regarding whether individuals may use parish playgrounds (on either side of the street).
 - No final decision was made. Considerations included:
 - Whether staff should make statements clarifying that church property is private
 - Whether additional signage is needed
- **General Supervision Issues:**

- Children are frequently unsupervised after Mass, after school, and during parish activities.
- Concerns include unsafe behaviors such as climbing trees, roughhousing on equipment, and running in basement hallways.
- **Parent/Volunteer Guidance:**
 - Some parents assigned to supervise may feel uncertain about how to correct children.
 - It was suggested that a checklist or set of clear guidelines be developed to assist them.
- **Behavior Contract:**
 - Fr. Ricky and Stephanie are developing a behavior contract.
 - It was recommended that this contract be applicable to all parish ministries, not just the school.
 - Stephanie will share a draft with the committee.
- **Ministry Compliance:**
 - Liturgical ministries need to be fully SG compliant.
 - Patricia will work with ministry leaders to review and ensure compliance.
- **Policies & Procedures Review:**
 - Lydia recommended a review of existing policies and procedures. Noting that prior updates occurred approximately ten years apart, the committee suggested beginning a new review in 2027 with the goal of publishing updated policies in 2028.
 - Current documents include:
 - Policies dated September 2008 (signed by Msgr. Connolly)
 - Updated policies dated September 2018 (signed by Cambria Smith Tortortilli)

Next Steps:

- Patricia to connect with Toni regarding April 2027 planning
- Stephanie to share draft behavior contract
- Patricia to follow up with ministry leaders on compliance
- Committee to review policies and procedures
- <http://holyfamily.org/wp-content/uploads/Final-Policies-and-Procedures-Sept.-2018.pdf>