



## Office of Safe Environment and Catholic Schools

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### Introduction to **Circles of Care**

The **Circles of Care** curriculum was developed and is maintained by the Diocese of Manchester, New Hampshire. The foundation for **Circles of Care** is rooted in our Catholic faith: we are created in God's image and likeness, we share a common dignity as His daughters and sons, God's declaration that all creation is "good," and that, created in God's image and likeness, we are called to relationship, to community, and to care for one another, especially those most in need all grounded in our faith in Jesus Christ.

**Circles of Care** also addresses topics presented in **The Catechism of the Catholic Church**; in particular, Section Three: Life in Christ (pp 421-611) which addresses The Dignity of the Human Person, The Human Community, God's Salvation: Law and Grace, and The Ten Commandments. It also satisfies the Safe Environment training mandate of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*.

The name of the program is rooted in the universal symbol for wholeness, the circle. Throughout the history of humanity, the circle has signified completeness, infinity, and the sphere within which communication and dialogue happen best. The lessons in **Circles of Care** are intended to strengthen and complement the care that is already part of the catechetical ministry in our Catholic schools and parish religious education programs. Throughout the lessons students will be introduced to foundational principles of living our Catholic faith, especially personal safety, making good decisions, developing wholesome relationships, and self-esteem. This is done within the context of the religion curriculum for each grade. Prayer experiences conclude each lesson.

As in all curricula, there will be a need for adjustments based on the students who are in the group, the events happening in our communities and in our world, the comfort level of the instructor, and any other factors influencing the participants. Make these adjustments using your best judgment, while assuring that the appropriate lesson is covered adequately. The goal is to achieve the outcomes that are outlined for each lesson. Consult with other instructors who are teaching in your school or parish program as well as your principal or catechetical leader. Our Office of Safe Environment is always available to assist you. Included in this curriculum is a letter to parents, an opt-out form for parents to sign if they do not want their child/children to participate, class activity sheets and take home pages for pre-k through grade 6.

In preparing this curriculum, the intention and hope has been that all of the materials will assist you in continuing the ministry we share with you, that of caring for and forming in faith the young members of the Church. The Diocese of Rochester thanks the Diocese of Manchester for sharing Circles of Care with us.