##### (NAME OF PARISH)

##### FAITH FORMATION

##### HANDBOOK

##### (YEAR)

##### A FAMILY JOURNEY IN FAITH

*This handbook sample is for reference purposes only. Parish-specific content and the order in which items appear are left to the discretion of the pastor or his delegate.*

INTRODUCTORY LETTERS

The introductory letters in a handbook set the tone for the parish’s catechetical ministry as a whole and for each particular year. Include letters of welcome from both the pastor and catechetical leader that:

* Express the goals of the parish’s RE program
* Express appreciation for the people involved
* Set themes for the year (optional)
* Highlight special events
* Emphasize the importance of the parish’s RE program in the broader context of parish life, including the spectrum of faith formation programs (family, child, youth, young-adult ministries, adult faith formation, etc.)

MISSION STATEMENT

Because the RE program has an important role to play in the mission of the parish, the parish mission statement should be included in the RE handbook.

RE PERSONNEL

Identify for parishioners those who are charged with the ministry of catechesis for the parish each year. If possible, include pictures of key individuals. Indicate how each person listed can be contacted (usually through the parish office or e-mail; take care not to post personal contact information unless given permission by that person to do so.)

RE CALENDAR

A complete and accurate calendar enables our families to make RE a priority by providing complete and accurate dates and times for the year’s catechetical activities. Coordinate the calendar with the parish school and public school calendar to accommodate holidays, vacations, etc.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

##### Describe ways in which parents may be actively involved in the parish stewardship, especially through the RE program.

FAITH FORMATION PROGRAMS

Provide a brief description of the faith formation programs offered by your parish. Copies of RE texts/resources should be made available for parent/student review.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

Provide a brief description of the safe environment programs offered by your parish. Copies of safe environment resources should be made available for parent/student review. It would be suitable for the safe environment parent release form to be included as an addendum to this handbook (release form provided on page 5.)

POLICIES

REGISTRATION

State registration policy, including sacrament preparation. Registration requirements may include:

* Age
* Required forms and certificates (birth/Baptism/Eucharist certificates)
* Other forms (such as child custody, if needed)
* Emergency information for each child
* Emergency contact
* Name of person, other than parent, to whom child may be released
* Doctor’s name and phone number
* Emergency release form for emergency medical treatment
* Health concerns and medication (Parish personnel and volunteers may not dispense or administer medication to students. Parents are to speak confidentially to the religious education director about their child’s health concerns.)
* Parent should submit a new form (or update current form) and sign/date each year
* Fees (specify your parish fees)
* Explain how fees will be applied (for supplies, books, etc.). Include a statement that no one will be denied RE for financial reasons and to speak with the catechetical director for special considerations.
* Statement on accommodations for children with special needs.
* Statement for parents who choose to home-school their child.
* Statement for children who attend Catholic schools.

ATTENDANCE

State your attendance policy. Include instructions on how parents are to report an absence, how the parish will report to parents if a student is not in class, how parents may assist their child with missed work due to absence.

State your policy for sacrament preparation attendance.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

State the specific arrival and dismissal times and procedures for children attending your RE program offerings. State procedure followed when parent is late in picking up a child. Supervision of children must be provided from the time they arrive for your program until the time that they are delivered safely to their parent’s care.

Be aware of your possible child custody issues and know who is authorized to accompany each child to and from your RE program.

* Pre-school and Kindergarten
* Provide a map of traffic flow, parking, crosswalks, classroom entrance, etc.
* A parent, not a minor under the age of 18, should accompany the child to the classroom.
* Sign in/sign out procedure. This will ensure safety and provide a clear attendance record.
* Elementary
* Provide a map of traffic flow, parking, crosswalks, classroom entrance, etc.
* A parent, not a minor under the age of 18, should accompany the child to the classroom.
* Sign in/sign out procedure may still apply up to grade 2 (or higher if deemed necessary).

Indicate the procedure needed for an early pick-up. For example, if a child needs to leave early, the parent must give a signed not (stating the reason, time, date, who will pick up the child, and catechist’s name and room number) to the RE office. Include a notice that a child will be released only to those persons whose names are listed on the emergency information form and that photo ID may be required.

COMMUNICATION

Explain how you intend to keep parents informed about activities of your program (e.g. newsletters, phone calls, emails, etc.)

DISCIPLINE PROCEDURE

Describe expectations for student behavior in a Christian environment. Explain your procedure should a child require disciplinary action. Keep the tone positive, with consequences that provide “teachable moments” and exhibit a spirit of God’s mercy, compassion, and love for the child.

OFF-SITE ACTIVITIES

Specify the policy for off-site activities (if applicable).

EMERGENCY CLASS CANCELLATION

Specify the policy regarding the cancellation of programs. Information about cancellation can be made available through a phone or text message, the parish web site, on the parish’s answering machine, etc.

FIRE SAFETY AND LOCKDOWN PROCEDURE

* Fire drills will be conducted once a year. All students, staff, and catechists will depart the facility.
* In case of a real fire, children will be taken to (state location).
* A map indicating preferred exit routes and gathering place outside the building is posted in each building.
* In case of lockdown, children will be sheltered in the nearest safe location until the all-clear is given by a law enforcement agent.

***The following form should be placed at the end of the Parish’s Parent/Family Handbook:***

**Parent Acknowledgment Form**

This is to acknowledge that I/we have received the ***<insert name of parish>*** Faith Formation Handbook for Religious Education. We understand and agree to cooperate with the parish policies set forth in the handbook.

Signed (Parent/Guardian) Date

*optional*

Signed (Student) Grade

Signed (Student) Grade

**Safe Environment Program**

Consistent with diocesan policy, ***<insert name of parish>*** will conduct Safe Environment training as part of the religious education curriculum. A meeting will be held before the class is conducted to provide parents an opportunity to review the safe environment materials.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Yes, I give my consent for my child(ren) to participate in the Safe Environment training program.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ No, I do not give my consent for my child(ren) to participate in the Safe Environment training program.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_I will attend the parent class and make my decision at that time.

Signed (Parent/Guardian) Date