



# The Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program

Frequently  
Asked  
Questions

# FAQ



## **The Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program** *Frequently Asked Questions*

### **1. What is the Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program?**

- The Knights of Columbus has no higher priority than the safety and well-being of the young people served through its programs and activities.
- The Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program is designed to protect young people served through Knights of Columbus programs and activities, including the Columbian Squires Program, from all forms of abuse.
- Councils participating in official Supreme Council programs and activities are required to comply with all policies and procedures of the Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program.
- Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program requirements are in addition to all of the safe environment/youth protection requirements established by local dioceses and parishes.

### **2. Why does the Knights of Columbus maintain a safe environment program?**

- As the world's largest Catholic fraternal service organization, the Knights of Columbus has a responsibility to maintain its own safe environment program across all of the dioceses in which it is active around the world. This means that the Knights of Columbus has a duty to ensure compliance with its own safe environment program policies and procedures, including training and background check requirements.
- The Knights of Columbus maintains the highest standards for the protection of young people across all of its programs and activities within all dioceses in which the Knights of Columbus is active.
- The program helps assure families, dioceses and communities that the Knights of Columbus has done everything within its power to safeguard the young people served through its programs and activities.
- The program helps protect the good name and reputation of the Knights of Columbus.

### **3. Who administers the Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program? Who may I call with questions and concerns about the Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program?**

- The Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program is administered by the Fraternal Services Department of the Knights of Columbus in partnership with Praesidium, an international leader in youth protection.

- ❑ All inquiries regarding the program should be directed to the Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program Line at **203-800-4940** or [youthleader@kofc.org](mailto:youthleader@kofc.org)

#### **4. What are the essential components of the Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program?**

- ❑ The Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program consists of three key components.
  - The first component is Praesidium’s Armatum© child abuse awareness and prevention training.
    - ❑ This training includes three required training modules for members serving in youth leader and officer roles: “Meet Sam,” which addresses the issue of sexual abuse awareness; “Duty to Report,” which presents legal reporting obligations; and “Know Your Policies,” which covers the Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program policies and procedures.
    - ❑ These training modules cover best practices for child abuse prevention and detection.
  - The second component is a thorough youth leader screening process, which includes mandatory background checks.
    - ❑ The following youth leader positions require a background check: state Squires chairman, state youth director, youth director, Columbian Squires chairman, Squires chief counselor and Squires committee counselor.
  - The third component is a robust reporting requirement.
    - ❑ All members of the Knights of Columbus have an obligation to report any and all issues relating to youth protection and safe environments to local law enforcement if they have a reasonable basis to believe that there may be abuse taking place.
    - ❑ All members serving in Board-designated youth leader or officer roles (state deputies, grand knights, faithful navigators, state Squires chairmen, state youth directors, youth directors, Columbian Squires chairmen, Squires chief counselors and Squires committee counselors) are mandatory reporters under the policies and procedures of the Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program.
    - ❑ Mandatory reporters are obligated under the policies and procedures of the Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program to report suspected abuse to law enforcement if they have a reasonable basis to believe that abuse is taking place.
    - ❑ The policies and procedures of the Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program advise that, depending on particular facts and circumstances of a given case, members in designated youth leadership positions notify local pastors and diocesan safe environment directors of potential or actual misconduct.

**5. How can someone report a violation of the policies and procedures of the Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program, or suspected abuse, to the Knights of Columbus?**

- Policy and procedure violations and suspected abuse should be reported to the Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Hotline at 1-844-563-2723.

**6. In what languages is the Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program available?**

- The Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program is currently available in English, French and Spanish.

**7. Who is Praesidium?**

- Praesidium is an international leader in abuse risk management based in Arlington, Texas, which has helped thousands of organizations protect those in their care from abuse.
- Praesidium was started more than three decades ago in response to requests from youth-serving organizations.
- Praesidium has more than 30 years of research and experience in working with more than 4,000 youth- and vulnerable adult-serving organizations. Praesidium knows who is at risk, which types of programs and activities have higher risks, and where and under what circumstances incidents and false allegations are most likely to occur.
- Praesidium researched and developed the “Protecting God’s Children” video used widely throughout the dioceses of the United States.
- To find out more information, you may visit Praesidium’s website:  
<http://website.praesidiuminc.com/>

**8. Why has the Knights of Columbus decided to partner with Praesidium?**

- After more than a year of careful study, review and analysis, as well as a competitive bid process, the Board of Directors of the Knights of Columbus elected to partner with Praesidium to provide guidance on how to enhance the Order’s existing safe environment program.
- Praesidium enjoys an outstanding international reputation for its expertise in assisting large youth-serving organizations to maintain the highest standards for the protection of young people and for the comprehensive scope of its products and services.

**9. Who must comply with the policies and procedures of the Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program?**

- Every person serving in a Knights of Columbus sponsored youth program or activity is required to comply with the program.
- Councils participating in official Supreme Council programs and activities are required to comply with all policies and procedures of the Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program.

**10. What about officers and fraternal leaders who directly or indirectly serve young people through Knights of Columbus programs and activities? Do they require special training and background checks?**

- Yes. Members holding certain Board-designated leadership positions (state deputies, grand knights, faithful navigators, state Squires chairmen, state youth directors, youth directors, Columbian Squires chairmen, Squires chief counselors and Squires committee counselors) are required to complete Praesidium's Armatus© youth protection training.
- In addition, members in designated youth leadership positions (state Squires chairmen, state youth directors, youth directors, Columbian Squires chairmen, Squires chief counselors and Squires committee counselors) are required to undergo a background check.

**11. Which youth leaders are required to complete Praesidium's Armatus© youth protection training and undergo a background check?**

- Members duly appointed by their grand knight or state deputy to the following Board-designated youth leadership positions are required to complete Praesidium's Armatus© youth protection training and undergo a background check:
  - State Squires chairmen
  - State youth directors
  - Council youth directors
  - Columbian Squires chairmen
  - Squires chief counselors
  - Squire committee counselors

**12. Which officers must complete Praesidium's Armatus© youth protection training?**

- Members holding the following Board-designated officer positions are required to complete Praesidium's Armatus© youth protection training:
  - State deputies
  - Grand knights
  - Faithful navigators (if their assemblies sponsor a Columbian Squires Circle)

**13. Must state deputies, grand knights and faithful navigators undergo a background check?**

- No, unless he also holds a Board designated Youth Leader position.

**14. How do I access the online training?**

- Members in designated leadership positions requiring Praesidium's Armatus© online youth protection training will receive a username and password via email or regular mail.
- Training may also be accessed at <http://www.kofc.org/safe> (click "Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program") or <http://website.praesidiuminc.com/LoginNow>.

- 15. What should you do if you believe that you are required to complete Praesidium's Armatus© youth protection training but have not received a username and password?**
- Please submit your request for a username and password to the Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program Line at 203-800-4940 or youthleader@kofc.org.
- 16. What if you are not required to complete Praesidium's Armatus© youth protection training but are interested in doing so?**
- Please express your interest in taking Praesidium's Armatus© youth protection training by using the Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program Line at 203-800-4940 or by writing to youthleader@kofc.org.
- 17. Is it okay to provide others with your username and password?**
- No. Sharing your username and password with others may prevent you from receiving credit for having completed the required training.
- 18. Why are members in designated youth leadership positions required to complete Praesidium's Armatus© youth protection training and a background check?**
- Members serving in designated youth leadership positions are required to complete Praesidium's Armatus© youth protection training and a background check because of their direct responsibility to protect the young people entrusted to their care by parents, the Knights of Columbus and the local community.
  - The Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program helps assure families, dioceses and communities that the Knights of Columbus has done everything within its power to safeguard the young people served through its programs and activities.
  - The Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program also helps protect members serving in designated youth leader positions against false allegations of misconduct.
- 19. Why are state deputies, grand knights and faithful navigators required to complete Praesidium's Armatus© youth protection training?**
- State Deputies, grand knights, and faithful navigators (if their assemblies sponsor a Columbian Squires Circle) are required to complete Praesidium's Armatus© youth protection training to help ensure that they understand the policies and procedures that members of the Knights of Columbus are expected to follow regarding the safety and well-being of young people served through the Order's programs and activities.
  - Even if there are no council/assembly sponsored youth programs, as the top officers of their respective subordinate units, state deputies, grand knights and faithful navigators serve as the chief compliance officers for their jurisdictions, councils and assemblies in matters relating to the Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program.

**20. Will diocesan training or training completed through an employer or any other organization be accepted as a substitute for Praesidium's Armatus© safe environment and youth protection training?**

- No. Members serving in designated leadership roles must complete Praesidium's Armatus© youth protection training covering policies and procedures particular to the Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program.
- Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program requirements are in addition to all safe environment and youth protection requirements established by local dioceses and parishes.
- As the world's largest Catholic fraternal service organization, the Knights of Columbus is responsible for maintaining its own Safe Environment Program across all of the dioceses in which it serves. This includes ensuring compliance with its own safe environment training and background checks.
- The Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program training modules contain certain policies and procedures specific to the Knights of Columbus that cannot be found in any other youth protection training program.
- These policies and procedures set forth uniform youth protection standards for members of the Knights of Columbus throughout the world.
- The policies and procedures of the Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program allow the Order to maintain direct responsibility for the compliance of Board-designated youth leaders and officers with required training and background checks to ensure the safest possible environment for the young people participating in the programs and activities of the Knights of Columbus.

**21. Will prior background checks run by the diocese, a school system or any other organization be accepted as a substitute for a Knights of Columbus background check conducted by Praesidium?**

- No. Only a Knights of Columbus background check administered by Praesidium will be accepted. Due to privacy laws, the Knights of Columbus may not obtain, review or otherwise rely on background checks conducted on members by another employer or organization.
- Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program requirements are in addition to all of the safe environment and youth protection requirements established by local dioceses and parishes.
- As the world's largest Catholic fraternal service organization, the Knights of Columbus is responsible for maintaining its own Safe Environment Program across all of the dioceses in which it serves. This includes ensuring compliance with its own safe environment training and its own background checks.
- Just as other youth-serving organizations require their own background checks before individual persons are allowed to lead and/or otherwise participate in such organizations' programs and activities, it is the policy of the Knights of Columbus to

maintain its own original background check on file for all members who serve in designated youth leadership positions relating to the Order's programs and activities.

- The policies and procedures of the Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program allow the Order to maintain direct responsibility for the compliance of Board-designated youth leaders and officers with required training and background checks to ensure the safest possible environment for the young people participating in the programs and activities of the Knights of Columbus.

**22. Must Board-designated youth leaders also comply with diocesan safe environment program requirements, including the need to complete diocesan youth protection training and diocesan background checks?**

- Yes. Diocesan safe environment and youth protection requirements typically apply to any member of the Knights of Columbus who volunteers with young people in any diocesan parish or school.
- Board-designated youth leaders, as well as any other members of the Knights of Columbus who volunteer in any diocesan school or parish program or activity, must comply with any and all safe environment and youth protection training and background check requirements for the diocese and parish in which they volunteer.
- Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program requirements are in addition to all safe environment and youth protection requirements established by local dioceses and parishes.

**23. What will be done with my background check information, and what happens if there is adverse information?**

- In the event that background information requires additional review, the Order's Safe Environment Background Records Review Committee will review the information.
- Members of the Safe Environment Background Records Review Committee are bound by strict confidentiality.

**24. What assurances can the Knights of Columbus give me that my personal information is safe and secure with the Knights of Columbus and Praesidium? What has the Knights of Columbus done to protect members' personal information?**

- Members' personal information is maintained confidentially and securely by Praesidium and the Knights of Columbus according to criteria set forth in each organization's strict data privacy policies. Knights of Columbus Information Technology Security personnel thoroughly reviewed the data security controls relating to the Praesidium application and have confirmed that those controls provide for the safety of member information.



- ❑ All communications between the Knights of Columbus and Praesidium occur over encrypted channels.
- ❑ All data maintained by the Knights of Columbus are secure and confidential, shared only with those who have a specified need to know (for example, the members of the Safe Environment Background Records Review Committee, who are bound by strict confidentiality).

**25. Where can I find Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program policies and procedures?**

- ❑ Most policies and procedures of the Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program are readily available for review in three publications: *Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program Grand Knight and Faithful Navigator Handbook* (#5095), *Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program Youth Leader Handbook* (#5096) and *Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program Squire and Parent Handbook* (#5094).
- ❑ These three Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program handbooks have been provided to state deputies, grand knights and faithful navigators (whose assemblies sponsor Columbian Squires Circles).
- ❑ These three Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program handbooks can also be found online at <http://www.kofc.org/safe>. Click “Support Materials.”
- ❑ The policies and procedures contained within these Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program handbooks are also covered in Praesidium’s Armatus© youth protection training.

**26. Why are there three different handbooks relating to The Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program?**

- ❑ The three Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program handbooks address three distinct audiences within the Knights of Columbus: officers, youth leaders, and Columbian Squires and their parents.
- ❑ *The Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program Youth Leader Handbook* (#5096) addresses issues that youth leaders face relating to the maintenance of a safe environment for young people served through Knights of Columbus programs and activities.
- ❑ *The Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program Grand Knight and Faithful Navigator Handbook* (#5095) addresses the role grand knights and faithful navigators serve in selecting youth leaders and ensuring compliance with the policies and procedures of the Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program.
- ❑ *The Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program Squire and Parent Handbook* (#5094) informs Squires and their parents of key points of the Knights of Columbus

Safe Environment Program and how parents may teach their children about personal safety and risks of abuse.

**27. Which is the correct youth leader application form to use? Is the *Youth Leader Application* (#4348) still good?**

- No. The *Youth Leader Application* (#4348) is no longer accepted. Please discontinue the use of the *Youth Leader Application* (#4348).
- Instead, councils and circles should submit an updated *Service Program Personnel Report* (#365) or *Columbian Squires Officers and Chairmen* form (#468) that includes members who serve in designated youth leadership positions.
- The most convenient way to update your council's *Service Program Personnel Report* (#365) is by going online to the secure Officers Online section of the Knights of Columbus website at [www.kofc.org](http://www.kofc.org) and selecting the Member Management application.
- Once the updated *Service Program Personnel Report* (#365) or *Columbian Squires Officers and Chairmen* form (#468) are received, appointed members will receive electronic notification to take Praesidium's Armatus© youth protection training and to provide consent to a background check conducted by the Knights of Columbus and Praesidium.
- When submitting the updated *Service Program Personnel Report* (#365) or *Columbian Squires Officers and Chairmen* form (#468), please provide as much information on the appointed member as possible, including email address, if available.

**28. Do I ever need to renew my training and background check?**

- Yes, every two years. All members serving in designated leadership positions requiring Praesidium's Armatus© youth protection training and a background check are required to renew both their training and background check every two years for as long as the member continues to occupy the designated leadership position.

**29. What happens if a member in a designated youth leadership position fails to comply with the policies and procedures set forth in the Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program, including the requirement to successfully complete the youth protection training and background check?**

- Members listed in Board-designated leadership positions (state deputies, grand knights, faithful navigators, state Squires chairmen, state youth directors, youth directors, Columbian Squires chairmen, Squires chief counselors and Squires committee counselors) on the *Service Program Personnel Report* (#365) are required to complete Praesidium's Armatus© child abuse awareness and prevention training.
- The member serving in the designated youth leadership position will be removed from the position. As soon as possible, the grand knight or faithful navigator must then appoint a new member who is willing to satisfy the Knights of Columbus Safe

Environment Program policies and procedures needed to fill the youth leadership position.

**30. What happens if a member in a designated officer position (grand knight, faithful navigator, etc.) fails to comply with the policies and procedures set forth in the Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program, including the successful completion of the training requirements?**

- The member serving in the designated officer position will receive an official letter from the Supreme Office notifying the member that both he and his council are not in compliance with the Knights of Columbus Safe Environment Program and will strongly advise him to complete the training requirement as soon as possible.



1 COLUMBUS PLAZA • NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT 06510-3326  
TEL. 203-752-4000 • WWW.KOFC.ORG