



*Since 2002, the Catholic Church in the U.S.A. has followed a set of rules initiated by the bishops of the country and approved by the Vatican for dealing with sexual abuse of minors by priests or deacons: The Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons.*

## Every U.S. diocese/eparchy is required...

- To have a **written policy** for dealing with sexual abuse of minors by priests, deacons and other Church personnel
- To appoint a **victim assistance coordinator**, who is available for the immediate pastoral care of persons who report having been sexually abused as a minor by a priest or deacon
- To **report** allegations concerning child sexual abuse to **civil authorities** and to cooperate with the civil investigations
- To establish a **review board** of at least five persons, mostly members of the **laity**, who counsel the bishop on allegations and review local policies dealing with sexual abuse of minors
- To investigate **promptly** and **objectively** any allegation of sexual abuse of minors by a priest or deacon
- To **remove** offending priests or deacons **permanently** from Church ministry
- To **prohibit the transfer** of offending priests or deacons for ministerial assignment in another diocese or eparchy
- To receive necessary **background information** before permitting a priest or deacon to exercise ministry in a diocese or eparchy
- To **protect** the rights of accusers and of the accused

*For more information and to read the full text of the norms, visit:*

<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/charter.cfm>



# 5 FIVE WAYS

to protect your children from sexual abuse

*Parents play the primary role in educating their children about sexual abuse. Here are 5 tips for teaching safety to the little ones God has entrusted to you.*

1

**Keep it practical.** Teach your children the differences between safe touches and unsafe touches.

2

**Tell your children that saying “no” is okay.** Empower your children to say “no” if anyone makes them feel uncomfortable or touches them inappropriately.

3

**Give your children a way to alert you.** Tell your children they can use an excuse or share a special “code-word” with you to alert you about an unsafe person or situation.

4

**Tell your children to report an unsafe touch.** Let your children know they should tell you if they feel uncomfortable or unsafe around any adult or peer. You can also identify other adults they can tell about unsafe touches.

5

**Tell your children you trust them.** If your child makes a report to you, believe him or her. Tell them it is not their fault and that you love them. Immediately bring the allegation to the attention of public authorities.



Promise to Protect

Pledge to Heal

# Ten Tips for Protecting Children and Offering Outreach to Victims/Survivors

**1 Sexual abuse is about the victim.**  
Many people are affected by abuse but the individual most impacted is the victim who has suffered a violation of trust that can affect his or her entire life.

**2 The residual effects of having been abused can last a lifetime.**  
The sense of violation goes deep into a person's psyche and feelings of anger, shame, hurt and betrayal can build long after the abuse has taken place. Those who have been abused can heal, but it often takes time, therapy, and the support of loved ones.

**3 No one has the right to have access to children.**  
No one, no matter who they are, has an automatic right to be around children or young people who are in the care of the Church without proper screening and without following the rules.

**4 Common sense is not all that common.**  
Dioceses, schools, parishes, and especially families, must educate themselves and others on how to protect children.

**5 Child sexual abuse can be prevented.**  
It is critical to build safety barriers around children and young people to keep them from harm—such as protective guardians, codes of conduct, background evaluations, policies and procedures, and safety training programs.

**6 Feeling heard leads toward healing.**  
Relief from hurt and anger often comes when one feels heard, when one's pain

and concerns are taken seriously, and a victim/survivor's suffering, pain, and anger are acknowledged.

**7 You cannot always predict who will be an abuser.**

Experience shows that most abuse is committed by someone who has gained the trust of a victim/survivor and his/her family.

**8 There are behavioral warning signs of child abusers.**

Some abusers isolate a potential victim by giving him or her undue attention or lavish gifts, others allow young people to participate in activities which their parents or guardians would not approve, such as watching pornography, drinking alcohol, using drugs, and excessive touching, such as wrestling and tickling.

**9 People can be taught to identify grooming behavior.**

Grooming behaviors are the actions which abusers take to project the image that they are kind, generous, caring people, while their intent is to lure a minor into an inappropriate relationship. Offenders can be patient and may groom their victim, his or her family, or community for years.

**10 Background checks are important.**

Background checks in churches, schools and other organizations keep predators away from children both because they scare off some predators and because they uncover past actions which should ban an adult from working or volunteering with children.



# Watch for These Warning Signs of Abuse in Minors

No longer wants to see a **particular person** they had been close to

Declining **academic** performance

Tries to hide use of **technology**

No longer interested in **activities** they used to enjoy

Changes in **personality**

Demonstrates **aggressive behavior** or constantly angry

Tries to get minors **alone**



Commits physical and emotional **boundary violations**

**Withdraws** from family or friends

Keeps **secrets** with minors

Gives lavish **gifts** to minors

Allows or encourages minors to **break laws** or rules

Is overly interested in **spending time** with minors

Has **inappropriate** or suggestive conversations with minors

Does not believe the **rules** apply to them (or, does not follow rules or protocols)

Takes **photos** without approval, or asks minors to send them photos

## ... and These Warning Signs of Perpetrators



# The Child Sex Abuse Crisis: Q&A for Parents

*Every April Catholic parishes and schools across the U.S. participate in National Child Abuse Prevention Month. While dioceses work year-round to prevent abuse, during the month of April a special emphasis is placed on the importance of learning how to protect the vulnerable from this evil.*

*Below is a list of questions and answers for parents prepared by the Secretariat for Child and Youth Protection at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Every child deserves a safe environment, and these questions and answers will help parents ensure that a safe environment for children is a reality.*

## **What should I do if I suspect my child has been abused?**

Call the police or social services department in your community. Reassure your child that he/she did nothing wrong and that he/she did the right thing by telling you. You may want to find a child counselor experienced in child abuse matters. Call the victim assistance person in your diocese.

## **My child came home and told me about being shown pornography. What should I do?**

Call the police. There is no good reason for an adult to share pornography with children. Assure your child that they are not in trouble, that they did the right thing by telling you. If necessary, help them process the experience by talking about your feelings toward pornography and why it is wrong. If the child was shown pornography at school, let school officials know about it as well. Call the victim assistance person in your diocese.

## **I get the 'creeps' from one of the volunteers at Church. He always has his hands on kids in one way or another. What should I do?**

Listen to your 'gut.' Offenders give warning signs that knowledgeable adults can use; your 'gut' often

picks them up. You are not accusing someone of abuse you are communicating your concern about inappropriate behavior. Let the diocesan/eparchial victim assistance or safe environment coordinator know of your concerns. Let the supervisor of the



program know of them as well. Keep reporting your concerns until someone hears you. Your courage to report those types of incidents may be very helpful. Reporting can let the person know their behavior is unacceptable, and it lets them know they are being watched. If it is poor judgment, this gives the person the opportunity to change the behavior.



# The Child Sex Abuse Crisis: Q&A for Parents

## **Why do I have to be trained? I did not do anything wrong, this is a clergy problem.**

Child sexual abuse is a widespread societal problem, not a Catholic clergy problem. The more people who are trained to recognize the warning signs of an offender, the safer our children are. In the aftermath of the clergy scandal, the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* requires the Church to train both adults and children to prevent child sexual abuse. This is not because the Church thinks all adults are the problem. It is because the solution to preventing child sexual abuse depends on caring adults knowing what to do.

## **My children are too young to hear this. Aren't you destroying the 'innocent period' of their development?**

Teaching children about boundaries and safe touches is not sex education. There are many safety issues we teach children: bike safety, water

safety, fire prevention, driver's training, etc. Personal safety programs should have age appropriate lessons that give children the skills they need to protect themselves without frightening them. Keeping children unaware of the dangers around them does not keep them safe. Predators count on children not knowing what to do.

## **I believe morality should be taught in the home, not in school. Does my child have to attend these training classes?**

You are right, morality is best taught in the home, but this is personal safety training, not morality class and not sex education. Catholic moral theology compels us to keep children safe. Parents are the primary educators of their children, and those who do not want their children to participate in the school/religious education portion of the training may opt out. They should still receive the parent portion of the training for assistance in how to teach their children to be safe.