

CREATING A NETWORK OF PREVENTION AND PROTECTION

To report suspected abuse of a minor, call the
Pennsylvania Child Abuse Hotline

1-800-932-0313

If you suspect child abuse by clergy,
church officials, church employees or
volunteers, please also contact the

Archdiocese of Philadelphia

Office for Child and Youth Protection

Victim Assistance

1-888-800-8780



**SAFE ENVIRONMENT
PROGRAM**

OFFICE FOR CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION
ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA

ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM



In *The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, the United States Bishops called for the establishment of a Safe Environment Program in every Diocese. My brother Bishops and I reaffirmed our deep commitment to create and maintain a safe environment for young people within the Church.

I am pleased to report that, since 2003, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia has trained more than 60,000 employees and volunteers in child safety and the prevention of sexual abuse. These 60,000 plus adults return to their parishes, classrooms and places of service with sound knowledge to foster a network of protection for our young people.

The Safe Environment Program is comprehensive, not only educating and guiding adults, but also providing young people with an age-appropriate, personal safety curriculum. The Archdiocese provides this education to almost 120,000 young people every year in our schools and parish religious education programs.

The Safe Environment Program also mandates background checks and child abuse clearances for all adults working with children and offers parents the resources to help them guard the safety of their children.

In this brochure, you will find more detailed information about the various programs and services offered through the Safe Environment Program of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. The safety and well-being of our young people is of the highest priority and I assure you of my commitment to sustaining the efforts initiated through the *Bishops' Charter*. May the Lord watch over our young people and guide us all in our efforts to protect and care for them.

Cardinal Justin Rigali

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Justin Card. Rigali". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Archbishop of Philadelphia

EMPLOYEE AND VOLUNTEER BACKGROUND CHECKS

Did you know?

Pennsylvania state law requires that **all school employees** must have current background checks. The Archdiocese of Philadelphia exceeds Pennsylvania law by requiring **all employees and volunteers** who have regular contact with children in any capacity, to have current criminal background checks. For example, the Archdiocese goes above and beyond the requirement of the law by mandating that parish volunteers, CYO coaches, and catechists have background checks.

What does the Archdiocese require?

- All priests and deacons, as well as teachers, parish staff and volunteers who come into regular contact with children must have a child abuse clearance and state police background check on file at the parish or school. Regular contact with children is defined by the Archdiocese as contact which occurs during the course of work or ministry at least one time per week.
- Anyone who lives or has lived outside of the state of Pennsylvania within the past two years must also provide a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) fingerprint check for criminal history clearance.
- Pastors may require background checks for other staff and volunteers who have less than regular contact with children in an effort to exceed guidelines and enhance protection efforts.

All school employees hired after April 1, 2007 must have an FBI Clearance regardless of residency.

As a parent, what should I do?

- Visit the Office for Child and Youth Protection web site **www.archphila.org/protection/index.htm** to learn more about the safe environment policies and procedures of the Archdiocese.
- If someone new is working with your child in an Archdiocesan program or parish activity, do not hesitate to ask your Pastor, Principal or Director of Religious Education if that person has the required background checks on file.

MANDATED SAFE ENVIRONMENT TRAINING

Did you know?

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia mandates that all priests and deacons, as well as parish staff, teachers, employees, and volunteers who work with children must complete Safe Environment Training in addition to having current background checks on file. The training program used by the Archdiocese was developed by a national team of experts with decades of experience in sexual abuse identification and prevention. For more information about the program visit www.virtus.org.

What does the training include?

Safe Environment training sessions occur periodically throughout the year in all areas of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia to accommodate new employees and volunteers and ensure that they complete this critical program.

This 2.5 hour training utilizes group discussion, videos and course materials and includes topics such as:

- The prevalence of child sexual abuse in the United States
- How perpetrators gain access to children
- Examples of inappropriate behavior with children
- Warning signs of abuse
- The experience of child sexual abuse victims
- How adults model appropriate behavior with children
- Characteristics of safe relationships between adults and children

There are now more than 100 facilitators throughout the Archdiocese of Philadelphia who are trained to provide sessions in parishes in order to meet the widespread need for this mandated educational curriculum.

For more information about scheduled sessions, or to become a facilitator, visit the Office for Child and Youth Protection website at www.archphila.org/protection.



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PARENT EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Parents are the first and most influential teachers of children and are responsible for their spiritual, moral, emotional, physical, and intellectual development. This is an awesome and sometimes daunting responsibility. When armed with proper information, parents can best protect their children from predators.

Did you know?

The Office for Child and Youth Protection offers extensive resources for parents on its web site. Find the information at www.archphila.org/protection/Resources/res_main.htm

The Archdiocese also offers two educational programs designed specifically for parents regarding the prevention of child sexual abuse. Two video presentations are available to parishes or groups by request:

What Do I Say Now?

This video is a resource for parents of young children, ages two through seven. It provides safety information that parents need to share with their young children and offers examples of teachable moments.

Called to Protect for Parents and Families

This video is for parents of pre-adolescents, ages eight through thirteen. The video addresses the behavior of child molesters and shows how they violate the physical, emotional, and behavioral boundaries of children. Parents are given real-life examples of the actions of predators and how those actions violate boundaries and place children at risk.

Virtus: An Additional Educational Resource

Virtus is a nationally recognized organization that created the *Protecting God's Children Awareness Program for Adults*, used in this Archdiocese. Virtus also offers a comprehensive program for the protection of children. Information concerning the prevention of child sexual abuse and other child safety issues is available on the Virtus website (www.virtus.org) This webpage offers timely and focused articles on how caring adults can work together to keep children safe.

Parents and guardians can also receive free bi-weekly safety bulletins that cover a variety of topics. To sign up, please send an e-mail to philavac@adphila.org or call the Safe Environment Office at 215-587-2466.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people enrolled in all Archdiocesan high schools, parish and regional elementary schools, schools of special education and parish religious education programs receive safe environment education. Each year, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia offers these lessons to almost 120,000 young people.

The programs taught to children in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia are age-appropriate and ongoing. Parents will always receive advance notice of the presentation and be given the opportunity to remove a child from the lesson. It is the hope, however, that all children throughout the Archdiocese will have the opportunity to be educated on these serious topics.

What kind of safe environment programs will children experience?

Pre-K through 8th Grade

The *Teaching Touching Safety* program focuses on the appropriateness of good boundaries, safe and unsafe touch, and the importance of telling an adult if someone is making the child uncomfortable. All of this material is delivered in an age-appropriate curriculum. This curriculum is utilized in all Archdiocese of Philadelphia parish elementary schools, special education schools and religious education programs. Additional information, including lesson plans, is available at www.catholicschools-phl.org/parents/safeenvironment.htm.

Called to Protect for Youth - 9th Grade

This video offers information about three types of boundaries that child molesters will attempt to violate—physical, emotional, and behavioral. Students learn to define and identify the three types of boundaries, are given examples of how predators try to violate their boundaries, and are reminded that most adults in their lives care about them and want the best for them.

The Gift of Innocence - 10th, 11th and 12th Grade

In 2008, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia launched *The Gift of Innocence* program in each of its 20 high schools. The program, built around a 20-minute video presentation produced by the Archdiocese, looks at the issue of sexual violence in the context of Catholic moral teaching. The Archdiocese forged a partnership with area law enforcement and victim assistance experts to focus the program's message on the following themes:

- (1) sexual violence is a crime;
- (2) sexual violence is never the fault of the victim but always the fault of the offender; and
- (3) the victim's value as a person is never diminished in the eyes of God.

TECHNOLOGY AND INTERNET SAFETY

The use of technology can enhance our efforts to ensure a quality faith based academic education where our children are instilled with Catholic values. Technology also serves to bring the world at large to children in their homes and classrooms.

How does the Archdiocese discuss technology with children, ensuring that they embrace it for the right reasons – and not the wrong ones?

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia utilizes a nationally recognized program, NetSmartz Internet Safety from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, to educate every student enrolled in our schools. Students who participate in Internet safety programs report both increased awareness of Internet dangers and safer online practices.

How can I help ensure Internet safety for my child?

- Research, research, research! Parents who research Internet safety issues and educate themselves ensure a much safer online experience for their child.
- Engage your child in discussions about Internet safety, providing examples of the dangers that exist online. For instance, many teenagers share personal and private information online and readily communicate with people they don't know. These practices can naturally make them more susceptible to predators. Encourage your child to think carefully before posting any information online.
- Be aware that your child can go online without your knowledge from many locations outside of his/her school and your home.
- Establish rules for use of the computer and guidelines for how young people are to respect themselves and others while they are online.
- Encourage your child to talk with you about anything that makes them uncomfortable while they are communicating online.

Technology and the Internet will continue to play an increasing role in all of our lives. Safe and ethical use is the goal for all children. This information is shared to help you guide your child in using the Internet in a positive way that reflects Catholic teachings. For more information and additional Internet safety links, visit www.catholicschools-phil.org/schools/Technology.htm or www.cybertipline.com.

THE VULNERABILITY OF CHILDREN

Did you know?

Statistics show that one in five girls and one in ten boys will be sexually abused in their lifetime. Sexual violence may be in the form of a physical sexual assault, but also includes peeping, exposing a child to pornography, and sexual harassment.

What are the warning signs of abuse?

Children may experience:

- Recurring nightmares
- Insomnia or increased sleeping
- Sudden regressive behavior
- Fear of the dark
- Withdrawal from others
- Aggressive behavior
- Change in performance at school
- Loss of self esteem

Adolescents may experience the above, and show additional signs such as:

- Poor self image
- Deteriorating peer relationships (loss of interest in friends)
- Loss of interest in enjoyable activities

If your child exhibits one or more of these behaviors, it does not necessarily mean he/she has been sexually abused. Parents who wish to discuss concerns, fears and ways to talk to their child are encouraged to call the Archdiocesan Victim Assistance Program at 1-888-800-8780.

How do I keep watch for offenders?

The first line of defense in identifying potential offenders is understanding their common behaviors, such as:

- Looking for ways to spend time alone with children
- Attempting to get a child or adolescent to do things that parents would not approve of (i.e. drinking alcohol, smoking, viewing sexually explicit materials)
- Offering gifts, money or special attention to one child
- Asking a child to keep secrets

HOW TO RESPOND TO YOUR CHILD

If your child has been sexually abused, your response as a parent will impact his or her ability to recover. The most important issue to address is his or her physical and emotional well-being. Medical attention and a report to child protective services are critical to ensure the safety of your child. Call local law enforcement authorities, the statewide abuse hotline (1-800-932-0313), and your child's pediatrician if you have reason to believe your child has been sexually abused. It is also important to seek professional help from counselors who are experts in working with sexually-abused children.

What do I do if my child tells me he/she has been hurt?

- Believe your child.
- Make sure your child knows that you do not blame him or her for anything.
- Remain calm. A child can interpret your anxiety to mean that they should not have told you.
- Let your child talk.
- Listen for as long as it takes – and it may take quite a deal of listening.

What happens if my child tells an employee or volunteer of the Archdiocese that he or she has been harmed? What happens if my child knows of another child who has been abused?

All Archdiocesan employees and volunteers who work with children are mandated reporters of child abuse under the law in Pennsylvania. Your child may tell a teacher, coach, volunteer, catechist, pastor, or principal that they have been harmed or know of another child who has been abused.

In all cases, the law and the policy of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia mandate that the following steps are to be taken immediately:

- The person in charge of the institution or parish must be notified.
- Child Line (the statewide child abuse hotline) must be called at 1-800-932-0313 to make a formal report.
- The Office of Child and Youth Protection in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia must be notified at 1-888-800-8780.
- When allegations are against an employee or volunteer of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, local law enforcement authorities are notified.

The person making the report only has to have a reasonable cause to suspect child abuse. It is not his or her job to investigate the report, only to inform the proper authorities.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia provides comprehensive Safe Environment Training for clergy, employees, and volunteers, as well as parents and children. Expert staff is also available to answer parents' questions about background checks, training opportunities, mandated reporting policy or simply how to discuss the subject with your child. The Safe Environment Program also is pleased to offer speakers for groups. Call 215-587-2466 or visit the Office of Child and Youth Protection web site at www.archphila.org/protection/index.htm

Additional Archdiocesan Resources:

Victim Assistance Program- Victim Assistance Coordinators are able to assist if you suspect your child or another child has been sexually abused. Victim Assistance Coordinators provide support and guidance regarding how to talk to your child and what resources are available for trained therapeutic intervention. Counselors or coordinators will walk you through the steps of making a formal report and complaint. Contact the Victim Assistance Program toll free at 1-888-800-8780 or write to philavac@adphila.org.

SAFE (Sexual Abuse Family Education Program) - The SAFE Program of Catholic Social Services offers therapy or referrals for children and adolescents who have been sexually abused. Contact the SAFE Program at 215-587-3900.

Personal Safety Education- The Office of Catholic Education provides students from Pre-K through 12th grade with safe environment education programs. These lessons are offered to students enrolled in parish and regional elementary schools, parish programs of religious education, schools of special education, and Archdiocesan high schools. For a complete listing of lesson plans, please go to www.catholicschools-phl.org.

Technology Safety- Internet Safety programs are taught in all Archdiocesan schools. Information on these programs can be found on the Office of Catholic Education website at: www.catholicschools-phl.org/schools/Technology.htm.

Another Educational Resource is Virtus, which created the Protecting God's Children Awareness Program for Adults, used in the training of adults in this Archdiocese. Virtus offers a comprehensive program for the protection of children. Information concerning the prevention of child sexual abuse and other child safety issues is available on the Virtus website (www.virtus.org) This webpage offers timely and focused articles on how caring adults can work together to keep children safe.