

Protecting Our Children & Youth



What is in Place in Our Diocese to Protect Children?

- An Advisory Board for the Protection of Children and Young People.
- Safe environment training for adults, youth, and children.
- An Accountability and duty to report
 - Mandated reporting requirements.
- The Office of Compliance
 - Conducts an immediate preliminary investigation of the facts and circumstances of a complaint.
- The Office of Outreach and Prevention
 - Offers a Pastoral Response to victims of abuse.

To participate in programs with children and youth, you are required to fulfill the screening procedures for diocesan personnel and volunteers

- Criminal background checks - conducted once every three years (Office of Compliance)
- Safe environment training – conducted once every three years (Office of Outreach and Prevention)
- Be willing to provide access to references

Refer to the Diocesan Child Protection and Outreach Policy at:

www.dioceseofprovidence.org

Important Do's and Don'ts in Protecting our Children

Catholic parishes, schools, and agencies will maintain an environment that is free from all forms of intimidation and harassment: physical, verbal, written, psychological, social, and electronic.

Catholic parishes, schools, and agencies will employ disciplinary practices that respect the dignity of each child. It is not acceptable to strike, shake or slap a child.

Adults will not provide a gift to an individual young person without prior approval from the administrator of the program or parent/guardian.

Adults will meet with an individual young person in an open and public area.

CODE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT

Adults will not be alone with a young person in a residence, sleeping facility, locker room, rest room, dressing facility or other closed room or isolated area.

Adults will not provide alcohol, controlled substances or pornographic materials to young people at any time.

Adults will not use or be under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances while participating in a youth activity. Adults or minors who are under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances are not permitted to participate in youth events.

No alcoholic beverages will be accessible or served during events which are designed specifically for children and/or youth.

CODE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT

... and remember these as well

Adults will not drive alone with a young person without explicit parental or guardian consent.

Adults will report abuse or inappropriate activities involving a minor to appropriate personnel immediately.

Adults will cooperate fully with Diocesan and/or law enforcement personnel in any investigation of abuse of children and/or youth.

CODE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT

If you are a Priest, Deacon, or someone else who is credentialed to serve as a pastoral counselor and/or spiritual director with children and youth, these are important standards of conduct:

Refer to section in the Diocese of Providence ***Child Protection Policy***.

- **2.2.1** “will not be involved beyond their competence in counseling situations and will refer clients to other professionals when appropriate.”
- **2.2.2** “will avoid situations that might present a conflict of interest and carefully consider the possible consequences prior to entering into a counseling arrangement with someone with whom they have a pre-existing relationship (i.e. employee, professional colleague, friend, or other pre-existing relationship).”

PASTORAL STANDARDS and CODE OF CONDUCT

2.2.3 “will not audiotape or videotape sessions for training purposes without the explicit informed consent of the individual client or their guardian.”

2.2.4 “will never engage in sexual intimacies with the individuals they counsel. This includes consensual and nonconsensual contact, forced physical contact, and inappropriate sexual comments.”

2.2.5 “will not engage in sexual intimacies with those who are close to the client (i.e. relatives or friends of the client) when there is a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the client. The pastoral minister needs to be fully aware of the potential for exploitation or harm that exists in such intimate relationships.”

2.2.6 “will assume the full burden of responsibility for establishing and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all counseling and counseling-related activities.”

PASTORAL STANDARDS and CODE OF CONDUCT

Review:

As a Diocesan employee or volunteer you need to have a:

1. A current Background Criminal Investigation Check and renewal once every **three** years.
2. Safe Environment Training and participate in a renewal once every **three** years.
3. Sexual Misconduct Extract Acknowledgement Form submitted to the program coordinator at time of hire or volunteering.

Protecting Our Children & Youth

Recognizing the Signs



What are some of the Signs and Symptoms of Abuse that I ought to watch for if I suspect a child or youth has been or is being abused?

- **The first step in helping abused or neglected children:**
 - Learn to recognize the **signs of child abuse and neglect.**
- **The second step:**
 - Learn to recognize the **signs and traits of a possible abuser.**

The presence of a single sign does not prove child abuse is occurring nor that someone is an abuser. A closer look at the situation is warranted when these signs appear repeatedly or in combination.

Definition

Child/youth: An individual who has not attained the age of eighteen (18). For the purposes of reporting as outlined in this training a minor shall also include an individual over the age of 18 who habitually lacks the use of reason.

Types of abuse:

- **Physical abuse:** includes any types of physical assaults (such as striking, kicking, biting, throwing, burning, or poisoning) that caused, or could have caused, serious physical injury to the child.
- **Sexual abuse:** includes any act of vaginal, anal, or oral intercourse; vaginal or anal penetrations; and other forms of inappropriate touching, exhibitionism for sexual gratification, or acts of sexual exploitation performed by an adult with a child

Types of abuse con't:

- **Emotional abuse:** involves any physical or emotional assaults (such as torture or close confinement) that caused or could have caused serious psychological injury to the child.
- **Neglect:** involves a failure to provide the basic necessities (such as food, clothing, hygiene, and shelter) for a child, and/or a lack of appropriate care for a child including grossly inadequate parental supervision or ethical guidance, or grossly inadequate attention to the child's physical, medical, psychological, emotional, or educational needs.

Types of abuse con't:

- **Pornography:** involves the acquisition, possession and distribution of pornographic images of children.

Signs often associated with particular types of child abuse and neglect.

- It is important to note, however, that these types of abuse are more typically found in combination than alone.
- A physically abused child, for example, is often emotionally abused as well, and a sexually abused child also may be neglected.

The Child:

- Shows sudden changes in behavior or school performance
- Has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to the parents' attention
- Has learning problems (or difficulty concentrating) that cannot be attributed to specific physical or psychological causes
- Is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen
- Lacks adult supervision
- Is overly compliant, passive, or withdrawn
- Comes to school or other activities early, stays late, and does not want to go home

Consider the possibility of **physical abuse** when the **child**:

- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, cuts, broken bones, or black eyes
- Has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school
- Seems frightened of the parents or another adult caregiver and protests or cries when it is time to go home
- Shrinks at the approach of adults
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver

Consider the possibility of **neglect** when the **child**:

- Is frequently absent from school
- Beggars or steals food or money
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses
- Is consistently dirty and has noticeable body odor
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs
- States that there is no one at home to provide care

Consider the possibility of **sexual abuse** when the **child:**

- Has difficulty walking or sitting
- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities
- Reports nightmares or bedwetting
- Experiences a sudden change in appetite
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Runs away
- Is abandoned (forgetful or consistent tardiness with transportation) by parent or adult caregiver.

Consider the possibility of **emotional maltreatment** when the **child**:

- Shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity, or aggression
- Is either inappropriately adult (parenting other children, for example) or inappropriately infantile (frequently rocking or head-banging, for example)
- Is delayed in physical or emotional development
- Has attempted suicide
- Reports a lack of attachment to the parent

Talking about it

Responsible adults should ask open ended questions when making an inquiry.

- **Ask:** How did you get that bruise?
- **Instead of:** Did you fall down?

When a child makes a disclosure be careful of your reaction – shock, disgust could possibly cause the young person to minimize or stop the disclosure.

Mandated Reporting Law

Rhode Island state law imposes an affirmative duty on all persons **who have reasonable cause to know or suspect that abuse or neglect** of a child has occurred to make a report of this, **within 24 hours**, to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (R.I.G.L. 40-11-3).

Those who suspect abuse or neglect are obligated to make verbal report to the agency:

1-800-RI-Child

Failure to report known or suspected child abuse or neglect **is a violation of the law** (R.I.G.L. 40-11-6-1).

DUTY TO REPORT

It is diocesan policy that sexual misconduct or the failure to report an observation or complaint of sexual misconduct is a violation of an **employee's** obligations of employment and one's commitment to Christian service.

In the case of **volunteers**, such behavior is considered to be a violation of one's responsibility to those whom they serve.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

A **report** of the observation or complaint **shall be made immediately** to:

- The immediate supervisor of the employee or volunteer.
- Supervisory personnel shall immediately inform the Diocesan Vicar General or the Director of the Office of Compliance.
- When an uncertainty exists whether a situation or conduct is in violation contact the Director of the Office of Compliance.
- Do not hesitate to contact local law enforcement immediately if the safety of an individual or child is at risk.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

***How do I
Recognize
Predatory
Adults?***



Indicators of Possible Predatory Behavior in Adults

- Persistent inappropriate displays of affection
- Inappropriate interest in the sexuality of a child
- Insistence on obtaining time alone with child

Indicators con't.

- Providing children with gifts and money for no apparent reason
- Violations of privacy
 - Violation examples: Contact for no apparent reason using texting, Facebook, My space and other social networking, etc.
- Consistent preference for spending free time with children vs. adults

Circle of Grace

Safe Environment Training

for our Youth.

Circle of Grace is the love and goodness of God that surrounds us and all others.

It is the recognition that God is with us always and is there to help us in difficult situations. Through the Circle of Grace Program, adults assist children and youth to recognize God's love by understanding that each of us lives and moves within a Circle of Grace. Your Circle of Grace holds your very essence in body, mind, heart, soul, and sexuality. This is taught in a visual and real way.

Circle of Grace Prayer

One can **demonstrate this prayer** and ponder its profound simplicity.

Imagine:

- Raising your hands above your head and then bringing your arms slowly down keeping them outstretched.
- Extending your arms in front of you and then behind you embracing all of the space around you knowing that **God** is in this space with you.
- Then slowly reach down to your feet.
- This is your **Circle of Grace**. **You are in it.**

Circle of Grace

Because this holistic concept includes all senses it allows children and young people to **identify uncomfortable situations long before inappropriate touch may occur.**

The Circle of Grace program teaches children and young people to seek help from a trusted adult, reinforcing God's presence in their real life struggles.

Investigations / Pastoral Outreach

Important Numbers to Know:

Office of Compliance

call **401-941-0760**

Office of Outreach and Prevention,

call **401-946-0728**

80 Saint Mary's Drive

Cranston, RI 02920

Resource Information and Websites

- Diocese of Providence:
www.dioceseofprovidence.org
- United States Catholic Conference of Bishops:
www.usccb.org/ocyp
- Rhode Island Department of Children Youth and Families
www.dcyf.ri.gov
- United States Department of Health & Human Services Child Welfare
www.childwelfare.gov