

Diocese of Rochester Department of Evangelization and Catechesis

Creating a Safe Environment: Sexual Abuse Awareness

Educational Resource Material For Parish Catechetical Programs

Introduction

The mandate of the Bishops of the United States calling for the education and training of children in sexual abuse awareness presents opportunities and challenges parish catechetical programs in the Diocese of Rochester. As a diocese, we are committed to maintaining full compliance with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. A comprehensive plan to train all volunteers who work with children, youth and vulnerable adults has been in place since autumn of 2003. These materials provide a framework and plan for integrating the goals of *Creating a Safe Environment* into the faith formation experiences of children and youth.

In New York State, public school districts are mandated to provide sexual abuse awareness training to students. Every district implements this mandate differently. The education that parishes offer on sexual abuse awareness will complement the training provided by the school districts and situates this education within context of our Roman Catholic faith, values, and Tradition. Parish Catechetical Leaders and Youth Ministers should contact the public school districts where their children and youth parishioners are in attendance and learn how the state mandate for sexual abuse awareness is implemented in that district.

Parents have the most serious duty and the primary right to do all in their power to see to the physical, social, cultural, moral and religious upbringing of their children. (Canon 1136) It is important to respect the rights of parents/guardians in the education of their children in sexual abuse awareness. **Before any parish program is offered, parents/guardians must be notified in writing and informed of the time, place, and content of the program.** All children are expected to participate, with parents having the right to opt out of such awareness education by indicating so in writing; opt-out letters must be kept on file to give an accurate count during USCCB audits.

The Diocese of Rochester partners with parents/guardians in the education of children in sexual abuse awareness. An important part of this partnership is to provide for the education of parents/guardians to help them talk to their children about human sexuality and sexual abuse awareness. For this reason, materials for the education of parents/guardians are included in this resource. ****ALSO NOTE THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER AND RESOURCES PROVIDED BY OUR DIOCESE**

Education for sexual abuse awareness is an ongoing priority. Curriculum planning must include a process for providing sexual abuse awareness updates to children and their parents/guardians as needed or as directed by the Diocese of Rochester.

The Department of Evangelization and Catechesis of the Diocese of Rochester thanks the Department of Evangelization and Catechesis of the Diocese of Albany for providing the original educational materials from which this resource is based.

Frequently asked questions about Parish Faith Formation and Sexual Abuse Awareness Education

Are parishes required to offer Sexual Abuse Awareness education sessions?

Yes. To ensure diocesan compliance with *Article 9* and *Article 12* of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, the Diocese of Rochester requires all Parish Catechetical Programs will offer a minimum of 3 hours of Sexual Abuse Awareness education on an annual basis at each age/grade level.

With all the demands of a typical catechetical or youth ministry curriculum, how can this education for sexual abuse awareness be included?

Parish catechetical programs are required to offer 30 contact hours of catechesis per year. Adding these educational modules will help Parish Catechetical Programs to fulfill this requirement. In order to meet the expectations of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* regarding the education of children in this subject, parishes will decide how best to implement the educational materials within their programming.

How should parishes integrate this education for Sexual Abuse Awareness for Children and Youth into their program calendar?

1. Choose one regular faith formation session when all groups will cover this material.
2. Add a special session to your calendar.
3. Plan a Saturday or Sunday retreat module for all children/youth or for designated groups.
4. Plan a special family education session that is part of your faith formation calendar.

What are some models for education in Sexual Abuse Awareness for Children and Youth?

1. Single sessions for each age group offered as part of regular faith formation classes.
2. Workshop/retreat module when all children are divided into age groups and all modules are offered.
3. Workshop module or retreat module for designated age groups.
4. Designate one or more expert catechists as trained to present these sessions to age groups.
5. Intergenerational module on Sexual Abuse Awareness.

What times of year are appropriate for Sexual Abuse Awareness education programs?

These education modules can be offered at any time of year. For some sessions, appropriate times would be in October during *Respect Life* month, during the liturgical year when Jesus' stories of healing and compassion are proclaimed, and whenever the Gospel features stories about Jesus and children.

Implementing Education in Sexual Abuse Awareness for Children and Youth

- A. Education for children and youth in sexual abuse awareness must be offered on an annual basis within each of four age ranges: ages 5-7, ages 8-10, ages 11-13 and ages 14-17.
 - Parishes may choose to offer sessions for each specific age level.
 - Parishes may wish to offer a parish-wide intergenerational session annually.
 - Parish youth ages 13-17 who volunteer in parish programs must also complete *Creating a Safe Environment for Teens* (both online and in-person sessions).
- B. Notify parents before this training is offered. A sample parent letter is included in the appendix.
 - Parents have the right to know when the training will be offered.
 - Parents may review the materials at any time.
 - Parents have the right by written consent to opt out of such education sessions. **Parishes are required to maintain a file of written consent to opt out and indicate this on the individual learner's permanent catechetical record.**
- C. Parishes must provide for the formation of catechists for their leadership and witness they provide to children and youth. All catechists, in addition to full compliance with *Creating a Safe Environment*, are to be well prepared to assist in the curriculum planning, implementation, delivery, and follow up of Sexual Abuse Awareness educational sessions.
- D. **Keep records of when each training is offered, what grade levels participated, how many children and youth participated and who supervised the educational sessions.**
- E. Statistics regarding implementation of education for sexual abuse awareness for children and youth are collected as part of the annual parish *Creating a Safe Environment* compliance report.

Lesson Plans for Age Groups

Included in this resource manual are sample lesson plans created by the Department of Evangelization and Catechesis for usage in Parish Catechetical Programs. There are three lessons for each age group for primary grades Pre K-5 and one lesson plan for age group in Young Adolescent and Adolescent Catechetical Programs in addition to the materials covered by the *Called to Protect for Youth* program and the *Creating a Safe Environment for Teens* training program.

In addition, there is also a sample lesson plan for an intergenerational session and a sample lesson plan for a parent educational session.

Each lesson plan:

- Can be adapted/alterd using relevant resources that best meet the needs of each parish's individual programs;
- Can be integrated into an existing catechetical/youth ministry curriculum;
- Is designed for one hour, but can be adapted for a shorter or longer time period;
- Provides an age- appropriate objective around sexual abuse awareness. These lesson plans are not designed to provide all education about these topics or answer all questions. These lessons will complement what children and youth learn in New York State public schools about the topics of preventing child / teen abuse and child / teen abduction.

Lesson Plan- God's Love and Human Dignity: Pre K-Grade 1 (Ages 5-7)

Objectives:

- The student will be able to communicate that God created them as his own, and that each person is unique and special.
- The student will understand that everyone is created in God's image and is loved.

Opening Prayer:

**Let us pray.
Father of all people,
we thank you for the gift of life.
Help us to see the beauty in each person.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Sing: "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands"

Presentation and Process: *God Made You and God Loves You*

- Begin by saying "Did you know God created you? God made you! In the Bible, we know that God created Adam and Eve and that we are all created in God's image. That means we are made to act and love like God. We don't know what God looks like, but we know how God treats others and that is what we are made to do too. Humans are God's special people and God loves all of us very much. Who are some people/things that you love? (Mom, Dad, Puppy, Kitty, Brother, Grandma, Grandpa, Aunt Peach, etc.)
- Because God created human people, it means that our bodies are very special and unique. Each one of us has a body, and that's the only body like that! It's the only one there is! Look at your hands, those are the only ones that look like that, and they're yours! Look at your fingerprints, those are the only ones just like that, and God made them! We're all different, but because we're human, we're all children of God.
- We believe that every human being is good in his or her own way because every person was created by God. Therefore, even people who may seem different, must be treated with kindness and respect. This is called dignity (help the learners repeat the word after you).

Possible activity:

Make art butterflies by painting each child's hands and 'stamping' them on a piece of art paper. Draw in the body and antennae. Then discuss how each butterfly is different from the others because each child's hands are different.

Presentation: *All People Are a Part of God's World*

- Remember, your bodies belong to you. And other people's bodies are private and belong to them. Put us all together, and we are the body of Christ. Think about all the people in our town as one of Jesus' legs! Think about the people in another country as another of Jesus'

legs! Do you see how all of us, all of us with special unique bodies can work together to “make Jesus walk?”

- Play a game of Ball Bounce using a sheet or parachute and a ball to demonstrate working together. By all players gently tugging up and down, they cause the ball to bounce, but that wouldn't happen if some of the participants didn't raise and lower the sheet!
- What was hard/easy about this game? Was it harder when one person wasn't “getting it”? Imagine having to do it alone!
- Talk about how, like in the game, if one part of the body is hurting, we all can suffer. Being human and being made by God means that we have to take care of not only ourselves, but other people as well. This is called dignity (help the learners repeat the word after you).
- Make different emotion faces and have children guess what you might be feeling. Help them to understand it is important to recognize one another's feelings. You might also read them a story and ask them to tell what the characters are feeling at different times! How can we make sad people feel better, because they, like us, are made in God's image?
- Share different images of children all around the world and celebrate the beauty of God's creation. We are all part of the great, BIG body of Christ!

Alternative activity:
Have the students play another game that requires them to work as a group, and not individuals. You could have them put a puzzle together or complete an obstacle course that each person does a part.

Closing: End with a prayer about God's love for us and for all his people; make the sign of the cross in blessing on each child's forehead, “May God bless you and always keep you safe, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Lesson Plan- Appropriate Boundaries: Pre K-Grade 1 (Ages 5-7) (Gathered, Family or At-Home Session)

Objectives:

- The students will be able to distinguish between good and bad (appropriate or inappropriate) touch.
- The students will understand their right to say “no” to an adult who makes them feel uncomfortable.

Opening Prayer: Use a short prayer or song with gestures that speaks of God’s love for all God’s creation, especially children. For example Psalm 104:24: “O Lord, how wonderful are all your works. In Your wisdom, you have made them all, the Earth is full of Your creatures.”

Sing: “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands”

Presentation and Process: *Kinds of Touch and a Child’s Right to Privacy*

- Begin by saying “God loves us so much. God created us to be happy. He gave us our bodies. What are some happy things we do with our bodies?” (Run, jump, sing, laugh, smell flowers, pet puppies, hug our parents, play, see new faces...)
- Touching is something we do with our hands. We give and receive touches. What are some good kinds of touches? Good touches make us happy and comfortable.
- What about bad kinds of touches that make us feel sad, confused or uncomfortable? Can you name some of those? (When someone forces you to kiss or touch them, when someone tickles you too much even when you have said “stop,” when a friend hits you for playing with one of their toys, when someone touches you in the private areas of your body.)
- The Church teaches us that our bodies are “temples of the Holy Spirit.” That means our bodies are God’s home – just like the church building. We should always treat God’s home with respect and care! We don’t break things in the church, and we shouldn’t hurt other people.
- In the Church, there are areas that are kept private, or shrouded. The tabernacle, for example, sometimes has a curtain hanging inside (or sometimes outside even). In some churches, if the chalice is on the altar at the start of Mass it has a cloth covering it. Our bodies are the same way. In church we call it reverence. With our bodies, when we cover ourselves, we call it modesty. When something is covered, it is a sign that it is not for everyone.
- Review the private areas of our bodies – those covered by a bathing suit. (It is always advisable to use proper names for body parts – like penis, vagina, buttocks, and breasts.) Point out that no one should touch those private parts of our bodies. There are exceptions, like when the doctor has to examine us when there is something wrong, or when we need to ask our parents to help us with something. We should try to take care of our own bodies as best we can by ourselves.

Alternative activity:
Have the students draw their favorite physical activity or sport rather than just saying it.
Notice how many activities involve physical contact.

Presentation: *Learning the Skills to Avoid Bad Touching*

- Your bodies belong to YOU. Whenever a person bothers you with a bad, “not OK” touch, you can say “NO.” Even if it is an adult or someone who is bigger than you, or someone you even love and know well. Let’s hear you all say “NO” in a big loud voice. (Have learners all say “NO” together.)
- When we say “NO” to something that makes us uncomfortable, we are making sure *our* Temple of the Holy Spirit is respected. It is never wrong to make sure someone is treated with respect – even ourselves!
- Now ask the learners to stand up and this time, say “NO” with their voices and their bodies. Show them how to move back and hold up their hand in a stop motion. (Now have all learners say “NO” with a hand up and move back.)
- “After we say “NO” in a big, loud voice and hand motion, what do you think you should do then?” Answer: Go tell an adult you trust.
- Who are some people you can trust? Name them (parents, catechist, teacher, principal, pastor, nurse, police officer, doctor, etc.).
- Sometimes a bad touch is scary and you might feel scared to tell someone, but it is important to do that. Remember you can’t get into trouble when you tell someone the truth about a bad touch. When someone touches you that way, it is NEVER your fault. Adults are supposed to keep you safe and need to know when someone made you feel unsafe.

As an alternative you might want learners to practice saying “NO” in the following scenarios (if this is during a family session, you may want to give families space to have quiet chats with their children:

- *Your older brother tickles you so hard, he makes you cry. He thinks it is fun, but you don’t.*
- *Your grandpa holds you on his lap and squeezes you so tight that you feel uncomfortable, and doesn’t let you down when you try to get down.*
- *Your mom’s friend helped you get a wet bathing suit off, and stopped to feel your buttocks and penis. It made you feel scared and uncomfortable.*

Closing: End with a prayer about God’s love and protection of us, and make the sign of the cross in blessing on each child’s forehead, “May God bless you and always keep you safe, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Lesson Plan- Speak Up: Pre K-Grade 2 (Ages 5-7)

Objectives:

- **The students will understand that it is appropriate and correct to tell an adult whenever someone hurts them.**
- **The students will be able to articulate what adults in their lives they can tell.**
- **The students will understand that the adults at Church are there to help!**

Opening Prayer: **Let us pray.
Spirit of God,
we thank you for making a home in our hearts.
Help us to recognize your presence in us.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Sing: “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands”

Presentation and Process: *God Helps Us Find Our Way*

- Using a compass, show the learners how the needle of the compass always points in one direction. Tell the learners that when we lose our sense of direction, the compass always points north, and we can use it to help find our way.
- Explain to the learners that God is like a compass for us. When we feel lost or confused, we can always remember that God is on our side and will help us find our right direction. If we are ever hurt, sad or confused, we can rely on God in knowing that when we tell, we’re making the right choice. We should never be afraid, sad, or shameful if we need to talk to someone about our feelings.
- Ask the learners if they have ever found something that wasn’t theirs or if they saw someone get hurt. How did that make you feel? Did you know in your heart and want to do the right thing? God helps us to make those choices. Like the compass, God helps us find the right direction in our own lives.
- Using set locations on a local map (like a nearby school and the Church), help the learners using the compass (align the map and compass) to find the directions to the Church from the school. Then, using a “map” (pre-written statements: “Older child pushed me; I feel sad; I am mad; Tell Mom and Dad; Tell Fr. ____) have the learners find the direction to show how to make the right decision.

Alternative activity:

Create a large boardgame board or use the board from Candy Land or other children’s board game. Have the students create a game piece that can move along the path of the board game always forward.

Our path always leads to God, and even when we need help along the path (shortcuts or bonus squares), as long as we are heading towards God, we are doing it right!

Presentation: *Don't Hold It In*

- Using a lunch bag or a plastic grocery bag and stones/rocks (appropriate size for children) show the learners how if there are things that hurt us or bother us, they're like rocks that we hold inside of us. We can hold a few, many even. Have the learners continue to fill the bag and show them how it becomes heavy by holding the burdens of the hurt or sadness. It may even tear and all the hurts come pouring out at once! Ask them to imagine how it must feel if all the hurts or fears we have all came pouring out at once. Give the learners their own rock or stone and tell them to keep it as a symbol of something that might have hurt them or something they might fear. Have them throw it in the yard, lake, or stream as a symbol of God helping them let it go, after they have told their parents or another adult what it was.
- Remind the learners that no matter how scared they might be or how hurt they may feel, God wants to help you find the right direction and know that you can get help for those fears or hurts by telling God, by telling our parents, and the adults who serve us at Church.

Alternative activity:

Create a balance scale (or use one you have) where you can put objects on either side to balance it out. Show how we can add weights of all sorts to the scale and tip it so that it becomes harder and harder to ignore. Eventually the one side tips to the bottom.

Explain that the weights are when we try to take everything on ourselves. But if we share the weight with God, our parents, and other trusted adults (move weights from heavy side to the other), it balances out and we don't tip.

Closing: End with a prayer about God's love for us and for all his people, and make the sign of the cross in blessing on each child's forehead, "May God bless you and always keep you safe, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Lesson Plan- What Does it Mean to Be a Person? Grades 3-5 (Ages 8-10)

Objectives:

- **Students will recognize the human dignity in all people.**
- **Students will understand dignity as the need to treat others with respect, courtesy and Christian charity.**
- **Students will understand that all people have boundaries, and we should always act in ways that keep those boundaries safe.**

Opening Prayer: **Let us pray.**
 Father and Creator of all people, we thank you for the beautiful human family you have made.
 Loving Spirit, help us to be good neighbors.
 We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Presentation and Process: *Identifying God's People*

- Begin by asking the learners to describe the meaning of the word: solid. It may be described as "the same all the way through," or "whole, strong, one." Show examples of things that are solid. Bring to class a rock, a piece of wood, and other solid items. This is how God intended our human family to be: Solid.
- Do you think our human family is solid? Why or why not? We have a word for one solid human family: "Solidarity." Ask the learners to repeat the word with you.
- Solidarity is when we care for one another as one, solid family. We need to care for one another as one, solid human family, just as God always cares for us.
- Tell the learners that part of being a solid family means we should always feel safe in our family.
- Ask the learners, "Do you feel safe with your family?" Continue by asking, "What do families do to make family members feel safe?"
- Ask the learners "Do you feel safe at Church? What are some things at Church that make you feel safe, like you're part of a family?"
- The people we encounter at Church and in our own families are all part of the people of God. They are all part of the human family we keep in solidarity.

Alternative activity:

Start by sharing St. Paul's description of the Church as the Body of Christ. That we are all a part of the body, even if we are many parts.

Using Legos or other building blocks, create a structure (box, house, etc.) that is strong and doesn't break. You can make this into a game by setting the structures up on a table across the room and tossing beanbags or other balls like a carnival game to break it apart.

What are things you need to do or remember to make it strong? (i.e. not too tall, interlocking blocks, secure them together, etc.)

The Lego structure is like the Church and like our families. The different blocks support one another and together make it stronger. Continue with the "Ask the learner" questions to the left.

Process: *Drawing One Human Family*

- Have the learners draw a house (triangle on top of a square/rectangle). Have them decorate the house with windows and a door. Have them think about the people who might live in that house.
- Have the learners draw a cross at the top of the triangle. It's now a church. Have them think about the people who go to that church.
- Have the learners draw a circle around the church. This is like the world. There are homes and churches all over the world filled with people.
- Have the learners draw a heart around the whole image so that everything fits inside it. This is like God's love for all people, all families, all homes, all churches and the world. Just like God loves us, God loves all the world. We are called to love and respect all people in the world.
- Because we are in solidarity with all the people of the world, we need to treat all people with dignity and respect. This means treating them kindly, helping others and never making fun of or bullying someone because they might be different than you.

Alternative activity:

Use the same Legos or building blocks to have each learner build a house/church. Then bring them together to see how there are many churches in the world but all together.

Explain that God shows his love to the entire world, and we should do the same. We are all God's children and so everyone needs our love and respect.

Closing: Ask the learners to either draw a picture of someone they respect or someone who makes them feel safe on their House/Church/World/Heart picture. Have them take that picture home and tell them to pray for that person.

End with a blessing for God's protection – "May God's love surround you and protect you from harm at home, at school and at play. May the Lord bless you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Lesson Plan- Who Is a Safe Person? Grades 3-5 (Ages 8-10) (Gathered, Family or At-Home Session)

Objectives:

- Students will recognize the lures used by those who sexually victimize children.
- Students will be able to demonstrate strategies for keeping from being tricked into uncomfortable and dangerous situations.

Opening Prayer: Use an appropriate scripture reading, psalm or prayer that speaks of God's care for us, or God's protection of us, for example: Psalm 23 or an adaptation of "The Lord is My Shepherd."

Presentation and Process: *Identifying Safe People in Our Lives*

- Begin by asking the learners, "Who are the adults that make you feel safe?" (Try not to get generic categories, like "teachers," "parents," etc. Instead encourage them to name individuals – Mom, Mrs. Brown, etc.) Continue by asking, "What do they do to make you feel safe"?
- After they process the first two questions, tell learners that most adults want us to be safe and try to protect us, but sometimes there are people that do not make us feel safe and protected, and make us feel uncomfortable. "What are some things people say or do to make us uncomfortable?"
- You may get a variety of responses, but zero in on or prompt responses around unwelcome affection (over-tickling, forced kissing, uncomfortable touches, verbal control, being alone with someone, being tricked into doing something you don't want to do.)

Alternative activity:

Print out 5-6 adult characters from movies the children are familiar with. They could be Disney heroes or villains or other movie characters. Be sure to print "good" and "bad" examples.

Around the picture, have the children write why they would feel safe or unsafe around them.

Explain that in the real world there are adults who make us feel safe or not. Who makes you feel safe? (like the original activity, be specific.)

Notice any answers on the print outs that have a physical component. That is our focus going forward.

Presentation and Process: *Identifying Lures*

- Today we are going to learn to recognize people who cannot be trusted to keep you safe or try to trick you into situations that make you uncomfortable. Ask, "Are these persons always strangers?" Affirm that often these "tricky" people are known to you and try to get you to like or trust them first. The ways they do this are called "lures." Do you know what some lures are? (see Appendix)
- At this point you might show the video, "Tricky People" (This video is older but has a great storyline for kids and can be found at dailymotion.com) or present common lures used by sexual predators (see Appendix).

Alternative activity:

Use "Tricky People Class" from One Family Pediatrics on youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FR7DF4CbgEc>

Presentation and Process: *Responding to Lures*

- A. What do you think you would do if someone used one of those lures on you to try to get you into an uncomfortable situation? It is important to follow a few special safety rules for avoiding tricky people with lures (even if they are known to you).
- B. Know that you always have the right to say “NO” to anyone who makes you feel uncomfortable, even if it is an adult and you were taught to do what adults tell you. You have the right to be respected and tell someone that is what you need. For example, “Uncle Tom, I feel uncomfortable when you keep tickling me. I need you to stop when I say it is enough!” or “I’m sorry I can’t help you find your lost dog, but my parents do not allow me to go off alone with someone. Maybe you should find an adult to help you.”
1. Tell a trusted person (remember you named some of them in the beginning) when someone makes you feel uncomfortable or when someone tells you to keep a secret about an uncomfortable situation. Even if someone threatens you if you tell, it is important to still tell.
 2. Always let a trusted adult know where you are at all times and whom you will be with. Never be in a situation where you are alone with a person who makes you feel uncomfortable.
 3. Always stay alert! Sometimes we might know what a lure is, but get involved in the situation and get tricked without realizing it.

Alternative activity:
Use “Protect Yourself Rules – A Friendly Stranger” from Fight Child Abuse on youtube:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SY7RhBszp0k>

Closing: Ask the learners to either name or draw a picture of something new they learned today that would help them stay safe.

End with a blessing for God’s protection – “May God’s love surround you and protect you from harm at home, at school and at play. May the Lord bless you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Lesson Plan- Helping Others Feel Safe Grades 3-5 (Ages 8-10)

Objectives:

- Students will understand that they can be helpers to younger children's safety.
- Students will learn how to safely be helpers to older people's safety.
- Students will understand their role in creating make safe environments for all of God's people.

Opening Prayer:

Let us pray.

Good and caring Father, you give us all that we have.

Spirit of Compassion, help us to share what we have with others.

Help us to work for those in need in our community, our nation, and our world.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Presentation and Process: *What can you do?*

- Begin by asking the learners to think about people who might look up to them or see them as an example of God's love for all people.
- Have the learners' brainstorm ways that they might make other people feel good or ways they help other people (helping younger kids read, helping elderly people.) Have them work in teams/pairs to do this.
- Have the teams share their findings out loud with the whole group/class. Ask them to think about this question: "Do you think helping others makes them feel safe?"
- Ask the learners to think about this question: "What about when you see someone hurting? What can you do for them? How can you help another child of God?"
- Have the learners brainstorm ways in which they can help someone who is hurting or help someone who has been hurt and is trying to heal. (Tell an adult, listen to them as a friend, spend time with them, bring them to Mass, etc.)
- Wrap up this process by having the learners look at their lists of ways people might think they're helpful and ways they can help people and have them point out the similarities/differences.

Alternative activity (first 3-bullets):

Provide each student with a list of the corporal works of mercy (or post them in a prominent place where everyone can see). Pose this question: How can you do these at your age? What can you do to <work of mercy> with those younger than you? What can you do to <work of mercy> with those older than you?

As you brainstorm, ask them about how helping others makes them feel and how being helped makes them feel. Talk about how helping others can make them want to help others too! Through discovery, help them see that by helping others they are creating a safer world because people will be watching out for one another.

Corporal Works of Mercy:

Feed the Hungry

Visit the Sick

Give drink to the Thirsty

Visit the Imprisoned

Clothe the Naked

Bury the Dead

Shelter the Homeless

Process/Activity: *What Can I Do Calendar*

- Have the learners draw a weekly calendar (in any format they like: grid, boxes, list, etc.)
- Challenge the learners to list one way that they can make their homes/school/church a safer place and one way they can help other people (younger or older).
- “Safe” things might be: making sure your kitchen has a fire extinguisher, talking with mom and dad about a family emergency plan, making sure everyone has a seatbelt.
- “Helping” things might be: visiting the elderly at a local home, holding the door for others, helping a new person at school, helping with a younger sibling’s chores.
- Ask the learners to keep track of their progress (perhaps give them stickers to help them chart). Ask them to bring their calendars back at a later date and have them share their stories about how they helped other people and made others feel safe.
- Wrap up by reminding them that just how like they helped others, people are there to help them too if they ever feel hurt or afraid or unsafe. They can always talk to their parents, teachers, and adults who help them at Church.

Alternative activity:

Read the story of the Judgment of the Nations (Matthew 25:32-46).

Explain that when we help others and make them safe by completing the Acts of Mercy, we are doing the work that Jesus asks of us.

Print out a set of sheep that the students can write on. On as many sheep as they want, have the students write a practical way in which they can help others and keep them safe.

If you have a picture of Jesus (especially as the Good Shepherd) hang it up and put these pictures around him. Each time someone does one of these, have them put a star on the sheep.

Closing: End with a blessing for God’s protection – “May God’s love surround you and protect you from harm at home, at school and at play. May the Lord bless you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Middle School Lesson Plan: Ages 11-13

Objective: To help youth recognize lures used by those who sexually victimize others via the anonymity of the Internet. To give young teens skills to avoid being victimized by Internet sexual predators.

Opening Prayer: "I have formed you and I know you," says the Lord. (Psalm 136)
Reflect on God who knows us better than anyone and calls us by name. No one is anonymous to God.

Presentation and Process: *Watching Out while Having Fun*

- Ask young people what are some things they like to do for fun?
- When we decide to do something for fun, we tend to just do it and only think about the fun it will be. Rarely, if ever, do we think about the dangers that something fun might hold. For example, we think that sledding is fun, and it is! But it's more fun when we are aware of and prepare for the dangers inherent in sledding. We need to know how to stop, what protective gear to wear, etc. If so, it can be great fun.
- What are some of the dangers to be aware of in the things you mentioned above? How many of you think surfing the net and meeting people online is fun?

Internet Safety Scenarios

Divide the group into three and give each group one of the following scenarios to talk about. Call the group back together after about 5 minutes to report on what they said.

- A. *You create a screen name by using your first name, last initial and birth date to make it easy for you to remember. It is easy to remember, but is this screen name a good idea? Why or Why not?*
- B. *You are in a chat room and someone starts to talk to you. She says she is your age and lives in a nearby town. At the end of a long conversation, she says she wants to meet with you. You really want to make some new friends and are interested in meeting her. What do you do?*
- C. *You are creating your own blog or vlog. You want to make it in your personal style. What information should you put on it and what should you avoid putting on it?*

If the young people come up with ideas for Internet safety, affirm them, then mention the others they did not come up with. Review some of the dangers and lures that predators use via the anonymity of the Internet (see Appendix).

Using the Internet Safely

Ask young people to come up with some "Ten Commandments" for online safety. Then fill in what they missed. Talk about the importance of parents in helping them to avoid the dangers of the Internet and to keep their online use safe and fun!

Close your session in prayer. Invite young people to share their intentions.

Middle School Lesson Ages 11-13

Creating A CASE for Safe Environments

Objectives:

- The youth will appreciate the Church teaching on human dignity and recognize their own dignity
- The youth will understand recognize physical, emotional and behavioral boundaries in their lives and those of others
- The youth will understand the plight of sexual abuse and practical methods of protection
- The youth will understand the vast majority of adults care about them and want what is best for them.

Opening Prayer:

A Reading from the First Letter of St. John

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light in in him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.

The Word of the Lord.

Lord Jesus, help us learn today that we are made to walk in the light with you. Help us discover the beauty of being made in your image and how to respect the wonderful gift of one another you have given us. We ask this, as we ask all our prayers, through Christ our Lord, AMEN.

Presentation and Process: Made in the Image and Likeness of God

Invite everyone to choose a partner and ask them to stand back-to- back. Play a game of Telephone Drawing by giving one partner a simple drawing and the other partner a paper and pencil. The partner with the drawing will have 5 minutes to describe the drawing to their partner without saying explicitly what should be drawn. Can the drawer re-create the drawing exactly? After the game, pose this question: How is “likeness” different than a mirror image? The likeness of something resembles and entity without having to be an exact copy. A caricature is a likeness of someone. A photograph is an image. What does being made in the image and likeness of God mean for you and I?

- We show God to others, much like the drawing you created shows a likeness of the original to the viewer.
- We are not God, but we resemble elements of God, just like no copy is exactly the original.

- We recognize that everyone we meet is also made in the image and likeness of God.

When we recognize others to be made in the image and likeness of God, we are compelled to treat one another with respect and love. God loves each of us. He created us with love and for love. We all have great dignity and value. God values us despite our own sinfulness and calls us to value others in the same way. This is called respect. Respect is a virtue that leads us to doing right and avoiding doing what is wrong.

Lead a discussion using the following questions either in whole group or small group setting:

1. How do you show respect for yourself? How do you show respect toward others?
2. When have you strived to treat another as a child of God?
3. When have you been treated as “made in God’s image?”
4. What might look different in the world if more people treated others with respect?
5. How can you tell someone is being disrespectful?

We have Boundaries

Invite everyone to stand up with their partner once again to play the following game:

MIRROR PUSH

Each person faces their partner and holds their hands up to the other palm to palm BUT without touching. The goal is to “push” the other person without touching him or her and without being touched. You must mirror their actions and they must mirror yours.

As Christians we are called to imitate Christ. We try to be the mirror that show Christ and Christian love to the world. Trying to push someone over in the game reminds us that as humans, we sometimes try to exert control over another. We are not God; those actions force others to feel disrespected. When we act, feel, or believe that we have control over another, we cross important boundaries.

We show respect for ourselves and others by recognizing boundaries. Some boundaries are put in place by us, personally and some are enacted by authority figures like parents, teachers, or lawmakers.

Boundaries are physical, emotional, and behavioral limits. Because we are imperfect human beings, we require boundaries in our relationships. Boundaries provide us with the promise of being in a relationship where both people are committed to preserving the respect and dignity of the other.

Let’s play this game about boundaries:

RAISE A RED FLAG:

Hand out a red paper flag to everyone in the group (a piece of red construction paper works!) Pose the following questions and ask them to raise a red flag if they believe the situation crosses or is ABOUT to cross a boundary:

Physical Boundaries:

1. Your best friend gives you a fist bump
2. Your mom gives you a kiss on the cheek
3. Your band teacher rubs your back
4. Your youth minister gives you a hug
5. The elderly woman in the pew behind you shakes your hand during the Sign of Peace
6. A friend puts his or her arm around you at a football game without asking
7. A coach pats you on the bottom when you come off the field
8. A participant at youth group sits “overlapping” you on the couch
9. Your sibling punches you in the arm on the school bus
10. A person comes up behind you in the hall and places their hands over your eyes without saying a word

Emotional Boundaries

1. Your boyfriend/girlfriend gets jealous if you talk to someone else
2. Your boyfriend/girlfriend tells you that he or she loves you
3. Your mom says, “I am not mad, I am just disappointed.”
4. A priest scolds you in the confessional
5. A family member threatens you when you don’t do what he or she says
6. Your dad is proud when you succeed
7. Your math teacher laughs when you make a mistake
8. A person in your class sends you an inappropriate text
9. Your friends cheer you on at your game or recital
10. Your friend blames you for things that go wrong in his or her life

Behavioral Boundaries

1. Your friend starts changing his or her clothes in front of you
2. Someone offers you weed
3. Your best friend’s parent offers to get you into an R rated movie
4. Your neighbor sees you walking and pulls over to see if you need a ride home
5. Your friend’s dad leaves a pornographic site up on the family laptop
6. Your youth minister says EVERYONE must play the game
7. Your mom signs you up for a volunteer project
8. Your gym teacher tells you everyone must shower after Phys Ed or will not get a participation grade for the day
9. Your camp counselor wrestles with you
10. Your principal tells you to put your hat in your locker

Review this game by taking some of the questions to the extreme. For example, maybe it is ok for a boyfriend or girlfriend to tell you they love you but NOT on day 2 of a relationship and maybe it’s ok for your mom to kiss your cheek but not in the hallway at school. We set

different boundaries for ourselves and have different levels of comfort. Learning to respect what may be comfortable for you and is not comfortable for others is a key skill in life!

When Crossing Boundaries Crosses the Line

Sometimes an individual tries to manipulate another into believing that he or she should cross his or her own predetermined boundaries. This technique is often used to get people to cross their sexual boundaries. For us to be safe, we must be able to identify warning signs of red flags becoming dangerous situations. These can be especially dangerous if an adult tries to get us to cross our own predetermined boundaries. While most adults care for you and want what is best for you, it important for you to be aware of some warning signs:

A person (especially an adult) is crossing the line when:

- They give you alcohol or drugs
- They try to be alone with you or ask you to keep a secret and threaten you if you reveal it
- They try to win you over with gifts, special praise or consideration
- They use conditions you might want to get you something they want
- They ask you too many personal questions or share too many personal details with you
- They touch you too closely or for too long
- They make a comment about your body or that of someone else that is inappropriate
- They invite you to look at pornography
- They try to isolate you from your support system
- They use persistent or inappropriate means of being in communication with you
- They ask you to text a picture of yourself
- They use their authority to manipulate you

HOW TO RESPOND:

1. Inform someone you know and trust about what is happening to you
2. Keep telling until something happens to change your situation

IF a person comes you with information about abuse:

1. Try to be understanding and listen
2. Encourage that person to tell a trusted adult
3. Don't make promises you can't keep
4. Offer to go and tell someone with that person

Closing Prayer:

Let us pray for one another, that we might know of the support we offer each other as the Body of Christ in the world today. May we always be a source of help and comfort. Amen.

Lesson Plan: Healthy and Holy Relationships (Ages 14-17)

Objectives:

- **The learner will develop skills for recognizing healthy and unhealthy relationships with both adults and peers.**
- **The learner will discover that self-worth is an important part of engaging in healthy relationships**
- **The learner will grow in understanding of what it is to have a Christ-centered relationship.**

Opening Prayer:

Recite: 1 Corinthians 13 (The gift of Love)

Loving God, we ask that the words of scripture might guide us as we gather today in your name, Amen.

Presentation: Knowing How to Distinguish Healthy/Unhealthy Relationships

- Begin by saying:

How do you know when you are in a healthy relationship? (Invite responses, then share..)

A healthy relationship is life-giving. The other person encourages you to grow. It does not demand all your time and attention; you are proud to be with the other person in the circles of your family and sense of belonging and there is a great sense of trust between you.

In a healthy relationship, you can remain faithful to your core values and beliefs and are genuinely happy for the accomplishments of the other.

How do you know when you are in an unhealthy relationship? (Invite responses, then share..)

An unhealthy relationship stifles and can harm you. It is demanding and possessive. You feel isolated from friends and family and embarrassed by the other person's behavior; you feel trapped and lose a sense of yourself. There is a loss of control over your own choices, and it is not respectful of personal boundaries; You feel "disconnected" from yourself and others and may be asked to keep secrets hidden from people outside the relationship. In an unhealthy relationship there may be jealousy, a constant need for reassurance of loyalty, and a sense of blame for mistakes or misfortune of the other.

Possible activity

Put young people in groups of two [Grab your reader's attention with a great quote from the document or use this space to emphasize a key point. To place this text box anywhere on the page, just drag it.]

. Ask them to create a scenario of a pair of "friends," a couple or an adult/teen relationship in one of these two categories (a healthy or unhealthy relationship). Share their scenarios with the large group as time allows

Process: The Importance of Self-love

- Our own "self-love" or self esteem plays a big role in the way we interact in relationships with others. Sometimes, we all forget that we are special.
- Ask the participants: What gets in the way of your self-esteem? Share: For some, it is a negative response they have received from others such as humiliation or rejection, others experience self-doubt, jealousy, or negative body image.
- Pose the question: How can we help ourselves and others be more loving toward ourselves? When we do not have a strong sense of self-esteem, we may be prone to accepting mistreatment by others in our relationships because we do not feel worthy. God tells us we are "fearfully and wonderfully made;" (Psalm

Possible activity

Provide each participant with a blank sheet of paper and something to write with and encourage them to create a "text self-portrait" using words to describe their gifts, talents, and qualities they like about themselves. These words can be formed to create a face drawn out of text instead of traditional lines. The self-portraits are a great reminder of how special you are!

139:14) what we often can't see in ourselves, others see in us every day!

▪ **Whole and Holy Relationships**

As we talked about in the beginning of the session, there are distinct qualities to both good and bad relationships. It is important to have healthy relationships in many different settings:

1. With our family
2. With our friends
3. With our classmates/coworkers
4. In dating

Take some time to reflect on one of these relationships you experience as an important, meaningful relationship to you. Use the handout "Whole and Holy Relationships" for some quiet reflection time and then sharing in the larger group.

- Ask: What qualities of the relationships listed did you find challenging?
- Talk about Pope Francis' remarks on relationships in his encyclical "The Light of Faith" In that document he remarks: "The light of faith is capable of enhancing the richness of human relations, their ability to endure, to be trustworthy, to enrich our life together." Those are definitely the qualities of healthy relationships that God wants for us; relationships that reflect the love that God has for us and all of creation. Then ask: How might your relationships be different if you saw those you cared about through God's eyes? How might all the relationships in the world be different?

Closing: Learning from and Leaning into Our Relationship with Christ

- The Letters of St. Paul, a disciple in the Early Church, are a large portion of the New Testament. Within these letters, St. Paul gave the early Christians an illustration of what it means to engage in meaningful Christ-centered relationships. He instructed disciples to live in peace with one another, embracing an environment of support, kindness and cooperation. His words can serve as an inspiration for the relationships we form and maintain with others. St. Paul urged us to consider the importance of our actions and whether or not they are building up or tearing down the Body of Christ. Seeking Christ-Centered relationships built upon mutual respect is a healthy way to navigate the often- confusing realm of human relationships. Read the scriptures below to learn more about the advice of St. Paul:

Ephesians 4: 1-5, 25-32

Romans 9-12

Philippians 2:3-4

Colossians 3:12-15

- End the session by giving each participant an index card and something to write with. Say: As we conclude our reflection on relationships, I invite you to choose ONE of the words that stood out to you in the letters of St. Paul with relation to the way we should treat one another and write it in LARGE print across your index card.

When I give the signal, please raise your card for the group to see.

We pray, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Holy Trinity, model of relationship, thank you for showing us the very essence of love, goodness, and purity. Guide us as we grow in relationship with you and one another. Help us to be people of (RAISE CARDS NOW and call out your word) as we move forward. Remind us that we have been wonderfully made by you and are worthy of your love as well as the respect and love of others. AMEN.

WHOLE and HOLY RELATIONSHIPS

To be whole and holy, means to be dedicated to God with purity of thought as well as actions. Loving relationships are at the core of our path to holiness.

Here are some tips for maintaining these types of meaningful, Christ-centered relationships with others. Rank them in order of importance, in your opinion: (Use 1-12, with 1 being of the utmost importance)



- ___ Admit when you are wrong and offer forgiveness
- ___ Allow the other freedom and space
- ___ Seek support from the other and accept their help
- ___ Help the other grow closer to God
- ___ Treat the other with respect and accept differences
- ___ Strive to work on yourself and encourage the other to grow
- ___ Make quality time for the other
- ___ Pray for the other
- ___ Communicate well
- ___ Seek to understand not judge
- ___ Promote the health and well-being of the other
- ___ Listen attentively

Now think about a relationship that is important to you.

Which of the qualities listed above are most prevalent in that relationship?

Which qualities do you hope to increase in your relationship?

What stands in the way of increasing those qualities in your relationship?

Lesson Plan: Intergenerational Session

(Designed for learners age 8 and older; approximately 90 minutes)

NOTE: any adult who will be working with a child that is not their own needs to be CASE trained and background checked PRIOR to the session!

Goals of the session:

- To increase community understanding about childhood sexual abuse
- To foster cooperation to create a safe environment for children
- To educate participants about what sexual abuse is and to alert them to suspicious behaviors

Planning the session

- Invite parish members to participate: children and parents/guardians, ministerial staff, parish leadership, interested adults.
 - Communicate the goals of the session as part of the invitation.
- Gather all materials necessary for the session.
- Establish the role of the leader/facilitator.
- Copy all necessary materials.
- Prepare a prayer environment.

Session outline

- 1. Welcome** the participants
- 2. Prayer** (see appendix)
- 3. Introduction** (the diocesan commitment to Creating a Safe Environment)
- 4. Opening activity**
 - Ask each person to form a group of three other people of different ages and together to develop a list of ways to help create a safe environment to protect children from sexual abuse.
 - Join two groups together to share their lists
 - From the lists, choose the top four ideas. Post on newsprint.
 - Ask one person to serve as spokesperson to share ideas in large group.
- 5. Process:**

What did we learn from this activity?

 - Many good ideas
 - It takes everyone to create safe environments
 - Everyone's knowledge and input can help create safer environments
 - We can rely on each other when we don't know all the answers

What do those insights mean for our own community? What role can you play?
How does it make you feel to talk about the problem of sexual abuse? Why do you feel that way?
- 6. Presentation: What makes a safe environment?**
 - What we believe about people created in the image and likeness of God.
 - Define sexual abuse (Activity by an adult or older child for the sexual gratification of the adult or older child)

- What behaviors should make a child or an adult suspicious? (Characteristics of sexual abusers)

7. Discussion (Use groups of 6-8)

- What can a child do to protect himself/herself? Create lists and so all can see the ideas.
- How can parents help protect children?
- How can the rest of the community help protect children?

8. Activity

- As a group, create a poster, an advertising slogan, a bookmark, etc. to help children remember how to stay safe.

9. Closing

- Thank people for coming and ask them to remember to pray for each other and for the whole community.

Creating a Safe Environment: Sexual Abuse Awareness

Parent Education For Parish Catechetical Programs

**God created man in His image:
in the divine image He created them;
male and female God created them. (Gen. 1:27)**

Introduction

The Roman Catholic Church of the United States is committed to helping to create safe environments for children in homes, schools and communities. The education of parents, children and volunteers about childhood sexual abuse raises the consciousness of the whole community about the problem. That consciousness can become part of the solution.

Childhood sexual abuse is a topic that no one wants to talk about. It horrifies and repels us. A code of silence has developed around this topic, and that code has made it more difficult for society to address the issue.

Educating parents about childhood sexual abuse is part of the commitment the Bishops have made to create safe environments for children. Such education is a challenge for any parish. This material provides some models parishes can adopt to plan for the education of parents.

Principles for Educating Parents about Childhood Sexual Abuse In a Catholic Context

Many parents will have participated in the volunteer training for *Creating a Safe Environment*. That experience will have provided them with the best education around the topic of childhood sexual abuse. However, other parents may not have taken that opportunity to learn more about childhood sexual abuse, and so you may find that you need to offer some specific education for them. These principles should inform your plans for education for parents.

- Use prayer as a context for the conversation. Begin with prayer, end with prayer or use prayer in the midst of the presentation.
- Establish an atmosphere of trust and open discussion.
- Emphasize that parents are the primary educators of their children.
- Acknowledge that some parents will be very uncomfortable with the topic of childhood sexual abuse.
- Plan to talk about how our theology informs our approach to the subject of sexuality, sex education and sexual abuse.
- Build on personal experience.
- Be comfortable with the topic and vocabulary.
- Use small group discussion as a tool for education.
- Be prepared for questions.

Key Concepts for Parent Education on Sexual Abuse

- A. Parents are primary educators of their children, and most especially they have a responsibility to form their children in faith. For that reason, the education of children about their sexuality as a gift from God begins at home. Parents can equip children with an understanding that their bodies are a gift from God, a gift that is to be treasured. We believe that humans are made in the image and likeness of God and that serves as a theological foundation for our conversations about human sexuality.
- B. Sexual abuse is a societal problem that we must face. Education about sexual abuse helps us respond to this problem by making us more aware and by giving us tools to equip our children with knowledge and skills that can protect them from perpetrators of sexual crimes.
- C. Sexual abuse content should include:
 - Introduction to theological principles
 - Facts about sexual abuse
 - Recognizing the signs of sexual abuse in children
 - Discussion of characteristics of sexual abusers
 - How to talk to children about sexual abuse
 - How to keep children safe
- D. Other important concepts:
 - Sexual abuse is a violation of the person created in the image and likeness of God.
 - Sexual abuse harms the victim profoundly and always.
 - Consent by a child to sexual activity is legally impossible.
 - Sexual abuse is a sin.
 - Perpetrators of sexual abuse are criminals.
 - Forgiveness is always available to the repentant sinner, but society has the right to prosecute and punish sexual offenders.
 - In the case of sexual abuse by clerics or any church employee, the Catholic Church has pledged investigation and cooperation with authorities.

Models for Parent Education in Parish Catechetical Programs

- A. Choose parent education modules and offer them throughout the year.
 - Use diocesan materials to create parent/guardian education sessions. The volunteer training manual and video can serve as a centerpiece for the training, or you may wish to create your own materials. There is a sample training session on page 16.
 - Develop an intergenerational session to educate parents/guardians and children together. There is a sample session on page 10.
 - Cooperate with nearby parishes, Catholic schools, planning groups or local regions to sponsor parent education opportunities open to parents/guardians.
- B. Invite representatives of *The Center for Missing and Exploited Children* to do a presentation for parents at your parish. Contact the New York State branch at 585-242-0900 or at www.missingkids.com.
- C. Invite experts in the area of childhood sexual abuse to speak.
 - Doctors, police officers or social workers are good resources on the topic of childhood sexual abuse.
 - Your local school district may have resources to help you.
 - Catholic schools are a good resource on the topic of childhood sexual abuse.
- D. Develop a parent/guardian newsletter or use the existing newsletter to update parents/guardians on the subject of sexual abuse.
- E. Offer discussions for parents/guardians between masses on Sunday or during faith formation sessions.

Theological Foundations for Parent Education

God's Gift of Sexuality

God created man in His image
in the divine image He created them;
male and female God created them. (Gen. 1:27)

God looked at everything He had made and He found it very good. (Gen 1:31)

From the beginning of the story of salvation, we learn of God's intention: that the people God created are in God's own image and likeness and that this creation is good. All dimensions of humanity reflect the wonder and splendor of God including our bodies, our minds and our souls. As we grow and mature throughout our lives, we are called to grow and mature in all aspects of our person: body, mind and soul and we know that growth reflects the great love God bears for us, His creation. Human sexuality is a gift from God.

In our Roman Catholic tradition, healthy sexuality is continually affirmed.

We find in the Paschal Mystery the story of our redemption in Christ, further affirmation of our material world and our sexual nature. The incarnation of God's Word, the divine becoming human, adds even greater dignity or divine approbation to our being corporeal, sexual beings.... we who bear the name of Christians are called to experience and express human love as whole person-body, mind and soul.

(USCCB, Human Sexuality, A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning, p.10)

From our Catholic perspective certain principles evolve.

- Each person is created in the image of God.
- Each individual possess dignity as a human person.
- Each of us is called to love and be loved.
- All human life and all dimensions of it are fundamentally good, despite the reality of original sin.
- Each being is a sexual being from conception to death.
- Human sexuality is central to our humanity and is part of our identity.

Sample Parent Session

(Approximately 90 minutes)

Goals of the session

- To educate parents and guardians about childhood sexual abuse
- To provide parents and guardians with tools to help protect their children and teens

Session outline

Welcome

Introduction (diocesan commitment to creating a safe environment and sharing goals of the session) (10 minutes)

Opening Activity

Ask the group:

- How has the world changed since you were a child?
- What influences exist that did not exist to the same extent when you were young? (Internet, computers, cell phones, societal violence, South Park, explicit sexual lyrics and situations in the media, etc.)
- How do these influences make it harder/easier to “parent”?
- What has this all got to do with the sexual abuse of children?
- What do you need to know about childhood sexual abuse?
- Why do you need to talk to your children about childhood sexual abuse?

- Why is it so hard to do?

Presentation

The reality of sexual abuse

- Include definition, myths, characteristic behaviors of a sexual abuser, and signs of sexual abuse in children

Process

- What questions do you have?

Activity

- Distribute the “Practice! Practice! Practice!” scenarios. Have parents work in groups of 2-4 to talk about how they would use these activities with their children.

Process

- Why is it difficult to talk to your children about childhood sexual abuse?
- What techniques will make it easier?
- What do you want to say to your children?
- What commitment can you make about talking to your children about childhood sexual abuse?

Closing Prayer

- Pray the parents' prayer together (Appendix)

Appendix:

Additional Resources

The following resources may be helpful in planning education programs for children and youth on sexual abuse awareness.

Books

Abuse Is Not OK! by Susan Gore Zahra. Liguori Publications, 2003.

This 24-page booklet teaches kids how to recognize different types of abuse, tells what to do if abused, and ways to prevent abuse. (*Please note: the vocabulary in this booklet is more appropriate for older children ages 11-13 although it is advertised for younger children.*)

Boundaries: A Guide for Teens by Val J. Peter & Tom Dowd. Boys Town Press, September 2000.

Illustrates why healthy boundaries are important to developing meaningful relationships. This book's format allows readers to place themselves in a situation and to process what the reader would do if they were in the same situation. (Ages 14-18)

Creating Safe and Sacred Places: Identifying, Preventing, and Healing Sexual Abuse. Gerard J.

McGlone, SJ,

Ph.D. and Mary Schrader with Laurie Delgatto, St. Mary's Press, 2003.

Written especially as a resource for the youth minister, this comprehensive book contains background information about sexual abuse, training, education and listening sessions for ministry leaders, volunteers, parents and guardians and young people and an extensive list of resources.

It's MY Body by Lory Freeman. Parenting Press, 1982

Helps adults and preschool children talk about sexual abuse together in a way which minimizes embarrassment and fear, but emphasizes self-reliance and open communication. Introduces two "touching codes" which children can use to protect themselves when they're uncomfortable.

(Ages 3-8)

Know What? Your Body is Yours! Channing L. Bete Co. Inc., 2001.

Through interactive exercises and reader-friendly text, children learn to identify inappropriate touches and behavior. Readers are encouraged to tell a trusted adult about any experiences that have made them feel unsafe or uncomfortable. Includes a Leaders Guide.

(Ages 6-8)

My Body Belongs to Me. Channing L. Bete Co. Inc., 2000.

In the story, Mother Teddy Bear teaches her children about touching. Young children learn from the story that their bodies are their own, how to protect themselves against an unwelcome touch, and the importance of telling an adult if they've been touched in a way that makes them feel unsafe. IN Spanish and English. (Ages 2-6)

My Body is Private by Linda Walvoord. Girard, Albert Whitman & Company, 1984.

Teaches the reader what private means, and that one's body is private too. Addresses touching that makes one feel good, like a hug, and touching that doesn't feel good. (Ages 5-8)

Preventing Child Sexual Abuse by Kathryn Goering Reid. United Church Press 1994.

This book contains ten sessions that provide sexual abuse prevention material that can be used in a classroom setting or special event. Session topics are: 1) God cares about children 2)

God created Me! 3) Why bad things happen to people 4) God wants me to be safe 5) God's gift of feelings 6) Good touch/bad touch/confusing touch 7) God gives us courage 8) No more secrets 9) Justice and forgiveness: responding to harm 10) Wrapping up with a positive self-image. (Ages 5-8)

Preventing Child Sexual Abuse by Kathryn Goering Reid with Marie Fortune. United Church Press, 2002.

This book contains thirteen sessions that provide sexual abuse prevention material for ages 9-12 (grades 4-6). The material may be used in a classroom setting or special event. Session topics are: 1) Each child is a child of God 2) God's gift of feelings 3) The rights of children 4) God wants you to be safe 5) Good touch/bad touch/confusing touch 6) God cares about us 7) What about the family? 8) Saying "No!" 9) No more secrets 10) Justice and Forgiveness: Responding to harm 11) Peer pressure 12) Advertising/males and females in media 13) Wrapping it up with a positive self-image. (Ages 9-12)

The Right Touch by Sandy Kleven, LCSW. Illumination Arts Publishing Company, Inc., 1997.

An illustrated book to be read by an adult to children that teaches the skills to help prevent child sexual abuse. The story is about a mother who tells her son a story about a child who is lured by a neighbor to see some non-existent kittens as a way of teaching him about sexual abuse. Children will learn that secret or forced touching is wrong and should be reported to a trusted Adult. (Ages 5-8)

Sexual Abuse Prevention: A Course of Study for Teenagers by Rebecca Voelkel-Haugen and Rev. Marie M.

Fortune. United Church Press, 1996.

Revised and updated curriculum for church youth ministry. Six sessions provide information from the facts and myths of sexual assault to medial messages about women, men and relationships.

Telling Isn't Tattling by Kathryn M. Hammersing. Parenting Press, Inc., 1996.

Many children and adults have trouble knowing the difference between telling and tattling. In this book, children learn when to tell an adult they need help and when to deal with problems themselves. Adults learn when to pay attention to kids' requests for help. Thirteen stories portray examples of children telling or tattling. Each story ends with the question, "Is she/he telling or tattling?" The situation role-play in this book will help pull kids into the discussion. (Ages 8-11)

Unmasking Sexual Con Games, 3rd Edition by Kathleen M. McGee and Laura J. Buddenberg. Boys Town Press, 2003.

This teen-relationship curriculum uses real intercepted letters between teens to expose often-used lies and manipulative actions that trick young people into sexual activity. The Leader's Guide can be used to teach adolescents how to recognize nine emotional grooming tactics, identify distorted thinking and language cons, understand the 12 steps of physical closeness, practice good friendship and dating skills, combat sexual harassment and avoid intimidation and dating violence. The curriculum also includes a new revised Teen Guide. (Ages 14-18)

What Every Kid Should Know About Sexual Abuse: A Coloring and Activities Book. Channing L. Bete Co. Inc., 1986.

This coloring book teaches children what sexual abuse is and how to protect themselves from it. (Ages 6-9)

Your Body Belongs To You! A Coloring & Activities Book. Channing L. Bete Co. Inc.

Uses pictures and puzzles to deliver the empowering message to children that their bodies are special. Also advises readers on how to protect themselves from unwelcome contact and to alert an adult if they've been victimized. In Spanish and English. (Ages 6-9)

Videos

YOUTUBE: The Catholic Church is Committed to the Safety of Children

"Keeping Your Child Safe" Oblate Media and Communication, 1980.

Contains three separate 10 minute programs that help parents, teachers and professionals educate young children about physical and sexual abuse. Each episode features animated characters Penelope or Peter Mouse and their family members as they learn how to seek help and find safety in the midst of abusive situations. The segments are titled: *"Safe at Last: Keeping Your Child Safe from Physical Abuse"*, *"Speak up, Say No!: Keeping your Child Safe from Sexual Abuse"* and *"For Pete's Sake Tell!: Keeping Children Safe from Sexual Abuse."* In English and Spanish. (Ages 5-9)

"Safety N.E.T. Kids: No Easy Targets" Safety N.E.T. Kids, 2003

Glenn Olsen, founder of Safety N.E.T. Kids, 5th Degree Black Belt and nationally certified instructor teaches children about the importance of knowing when it's OK to say no, and about unwanted touches and how to react in potentially dangerous situations. (30 minutes; ages 4-11)

"Tricky People" Yello Dyno, Inc., 1998-2001

A modern day parable of abuse and prevention and a dramatic portrayal of the dangerous yet effective schemes of child predators. Includes a Parent Guide to reinforce the 33 lessons and give guidelines for age-appropriate discussion. While excellent for both boys and girls in this age range, it has a special focus for pre-teen girls. Parents are encouraged to preview before showing to children. (40 minutes; ages 9-12)

"Yello Dyno's Can't Fool Me" Yello Dyno Inc., 1998-2001

Yello Dyno sings his heart out with a pack of safety-smart kids. While practicing for the big concert at school, the kids and Yello Dyno share important personal safety knowledge through the songs they have written to teach kids about personal safety while making it FUN! (30 minutes; ages 4-8)

Text and Textbook Series

The following Sexuality Education series/texts contains segments on sexual abuse awareness indicated by parentheses.

Family Life. RCL-Benziger. 2011. (Grades K-8)

God's Own Making. William H. Sadlier, Inc., 2000. (Grades 4 and 7)

Growing In Love. Our Sunday Visitor, 2001. (Grades K, 2, 3, 7 and 8)

Sex and the Teenager: Choices and Decisions by Kieran Sawyer, S.S.N.D.

Ave Maria Press, 1999. (Chapter 2 – *L.I.F.E. Choices: Love, Infatuation, Friendship, Exploitation* and Chapter 9 – *A Criminal Choice: Sexual Abuse*).

Tough Choices: Bringing Moral Issues Home by Sean Lynch and Brian O'Brien. Ave Maria Press, 2003.

(Grades 9-12) Chapter on *Child Abuse and Domestic Violence*.

Websites

www.cfchildren.org – Committee for Children site. Programs and prevention curricula focus on the topics of youth violence, bullying, child abuse, and personal safety.

<http://www.dzl.org/> Darkness to Light site. Provides information to prevent, recognize and react responsibly to reduce child sexual abuse through education and public awareness. Educational booklets, bookrack cards, and posters are available in English and Spanish.

<http://www.dorightbykids.org/> - Authoritative source for answers to questions about preventing and reporting child abuse. Created by Monroe County Department of Human & Health Services. Reviewed and approved by NYS Office of Children and Family Services.

<https://faithandsafety.org> A collaboration of the USCCB and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. Offers news, information, blog posts, links, website and app reviews etc. for families on all aspects of online safety.

www.faithtrustinstitute.org - FaithTrust Institute is a national, multi-faith, multicultural training and education organization with global reach working to end sexual and domestic violence.

<http://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/parents> Federal Bureau of Investigation site. Tips for parents on internet safety.

<http://keepingkidssafe.us/> Provides resources for safe environment training of adults, teens and children, in churches, schools, faith-based communities, and other mission-driven organizations in a straightforward, reasonably priced, easy to implement program.

<http://www.kidpower.org/> Resources on boundaries, cyberbullying, relational bullying, abuse prevention and stranger safety.

www.missingkids.com - The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children site. Click on "Resources" and "For Families" for information on missing children, reporting exploitation, and how to keep children and teens safe. Has information on child/teen sexual exploitation prevention as well as leads on individuals reporting exploitation.

<http://www.netsmartz.org/Parents> - A program of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children that provides age-appropriate resources to help teach children how to be safer on- and offline. The program is designed for children ages 5-17, parents and guardians, educators, and law enforcement.

nfcym.org/more/youth-protection/ - The National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry site. Click on "Youth Protection" for links to child abuse prevention resources.

www.parentsformeganslaw.com - Parents for Megan's Law is a not-for-profit victims' rights organization for the prevention and treatment of childhood sexual abuse.

www.safekids.com - Advice on fun and safe family internet use.

<http://psbskids.org/webonauts> Basics of internet safety for kids

<http://www.nsteens.org> Interactive games and videos on internet safety topics

www.safeteens.com - Advice for teen-online internet safety.

Internet Safety and Children / Teens

Technology has been a wonderful gift to expand the horizons of learning for children, teens and adults. But this same technology can expose children and teens to dangers. Sexual predators will often use the Internet to sexually exploit children and teens. They will often spend a great deal of time gradually seducing minors by establishing trust – they listen to children’s stories, connect with their interests, give advice. Then they may slowly introduce sexual subjects into the conversation or lure the child/teen into a face-to-face meeting.

Since some children and teens are curious about sex and sexually explicit material, going onto the Internet is an easy way for sex offenders to take advantage of the opportunity to exploit them. Predators may gradually desensitize children/teens in order to lift inhibitions around talking about sex.

Here are some simple rules for children and teens about online Internet safety:

1. **Keep your identity private.**

- Never give your name, address, phone number, school name, birthday, photograph or any other personal information to someone online. Predators will do anything to gain access to your information and may use lures to do so. For example, they may say that you need to give them some information in order to gain access to a chat room or a site they are recommending to you! Don’t fall for that! Or, they are astute in getting information from your screen name. Often people use a birth date in their screen name. This is a giveaway that you are a child or teen, which attracts the attention of the predator.
- Realize that people are not always who they say they are. You may think you are speaking to a peer, when in fact, it is a predator in disguise, all the time gaining information from you they will use later. This is particularly true of “teen only” chat rooms – it’s impossible to tell who is a real teen!

2. **Never respond to e-mail messages, social media messages, chat comments or newsgroup messages from anyone you do not know or those that are hostile, inappropriate, or in any way make you feel uncomfortable.**

- The best response is to simply get away from the site and make an adult aware of it. In public chat rooms, there is usually a monitor who will screen the comments, but not so in private chat rooms. Be wary when someone asks you to leave the public chat to join him or her in a private chat room. A private chat room gives predators free rein to say whatever they want to you.
- Never open a spam e-mail message as this may automatically get you into a database for future inappropriate messages. Always know your sender.
- Be wary of those who try to isolate you by turning you against friends and family. This is a common lure to get children/teens to turn their allegiance to the predator.

3. **Never, ever, arrange to meet someone you meet online without parental permission and supervision.**

- Always let a parent know of any invitation to meet someone. If your parent is assured that this might be a peer who wants to make a friend, meet the person in a public place accompanied by your parent. Never meet someone alone!!! If your parents say no, trust them. It's NO!

4. Always talk with your parents to establish rules and expectations for going online.

- For your own safety, parents need to be able to monitor a child/teens' Internet activity. The computer should always be in a public place in the house. Parents may use some sort of chip or filter to deny access to certain types of material. Parents may put limits on the amount of time a child/teen is online, as well as for what reasons a child/teen can be online.

Warning Signs for Parents / Guardians

- Is your child/teen spending large amounts of time online, especially at night?
- Is your child/teen using an online account that belongs to someone else?
- Does your child/teen quickly change the screen or turn the computer off when you come into the room?
- Does your child/teen make phone calls to someone you don't know, receive mail or gifts from someone you don't know?
- Do you find pornography or inappropriate material on the computer?
- Is your child/teen becoming increasingly isolated from the family and being drawn to the computer instead of interacting with friends?

Parents, learn everything you can about the Internet, and teach your children/teens appropriate "netiquette".

For more on Internet safety see:

www.missingkids.com - The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children site. Click on "Parents and Guardians" for information about missing children, reporting exploitation, and how to keep your child/teen safe. This site has information on child/teen sexual exploitation prevention as well as leads on individuals reporting exploitation.

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children has excellent brochures about preventing cyber-based sexual crimes such as: [Child Safety on the Information Highway](#), [Teen Safety on the Information Highway](#) and [NetSmartz: Keeping Kids Safer on the Internet](#).

www.safekids.com - Find advice on fun and safe family Internet use.

www.safeteens.com - Find advice for teen-online Internet safety.

Tricks/Lures used by Sexual Abusers

Bad News Trick

The abuser tells a child that something bad has happened (sickness or the death of a parent, for example) and that the abuser was asked to pick up the child and bring him/her home.

Bribe Trick

The abuser offers something special that the child may want, then asks for sexual favors in return.

Can I Help You Trick

The abuser may give assistance to a child when needed or may offer to help the family of the child by offering rides or by offering to baby-sit. These activities put the abuser in a position of trust in the eyes of the child.

Drug and Alcohol Trick

Drugs or alcohol are given to the child to make it easier for the abuser to take advantage.

Game Trick

Wrestling, tickling, accidental or deliberate contact with genitalia as part of the rule of a game played with a child.

Help Me Trick

The abuser may ask for help from a child: directions, help looking for a pet, help carrying heavy packages to the car, etc.

Internet Trick

Abusers will try to get personal information from a child. Often they will pretend to be the same age as the child to establish friendship. Sometimes they will send the child sexual material, or they will try to set up a meeting.

Position of Power or Authority Trick

The abuser may be in a position of power or authority (coach, teacher, police officer, and priest) and use their position to insist that children be obedient to their request.

“You are special” Trick

The abuser gives special attention or favor to a child to gain trust for future sexual abuse.

Sample Parent/Guardian Letter

Date

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Our Catholic tradition has always taught that the human body is sacred, and that all people are made in the image and likeness of God. The formation your children receive at our parish reflects these teachings.

Because we know that our work with your children is a sacred trust, we have fully implemented *The Charter and Norms for the Protection of Children and Young People* by conducting background checks on all Church employees and volunteers who work with children, youth or vulnerable adults. Now we are ready to begin a new program that will educate children about sexual abuse. Our program complements the New York State sexual abuse awareness mandate that provides for public schools to educate children about sexual abuse.

Our goal is to help children become more aware of situations, people or circumstances that may threaten their safety while, at the same time, reminding them that they are precious in the eyes of God.

Bishop Matano is fully committed to this education of children. We have been using supplemental education around these topics since 2003. All children and teens in our program will participate in these sessions. If you would like to see an example of the content of the courses, please contact our office.

We look forward to working with you to provide the safest possible environment for our children.

Sincerely,

Pastor

Catechetical Leader/Youth Minister

Sample Opt-Out Letter

Dear Parent/Guardian:

As Catholics, we believe every human person is made in the image and likeness of God, and for this reason we believe in the dignity of every person. Every person's dignity needs to be respected, and when this is not done, we believe the Body of Christ is hurt.

As part of the Diocese of Rochester's ongoing commitment to provide safe environments for children and teens, we are offering a session to all young people in our parish as part of our Safe Environment curriculum. This session will empower and educate your child to be safer in his or her daily life.

Through the lesson your child will:

- Learn about the Church's teaching on human dignity and recognize their own dignity
- Understand boundaries
- Develop a greater respect for others
- Understand how to protect himself or herself from sexual abuse
- Understand that the vast majority of adults care about and want what is best for them.

Our session is not intended to replace your important role as parent. You have the primary responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of your children. This session is designed to assist you in that responsibility by giving children information and skills through a lens of faith that you may not be able to offer them.

If you do not want your child to participate in our session, please fill out the form at the bottom of this letter. Regardless if your child participates or not, please know that the parish and the Diocese of Rochester will continue to strive to provide you with information and materials to help you educate your child in this area of faith development.

I understand that Creating a Safe Environment is being taught to fulfill one portion of the education component of the USCCB's *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*.

I DO NOT give permission for my child to participate in the Creating a Safe Environment lesson. I am opting to ensure his/her formation in this area myself, and I recognize that my child's school, parish and the Diocese of Rochester are available to provide resources to help me.

Name of Student: _____

Name of Parent/Guardian (Printed): _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Prayer for Families

O Lord, bless our family today and every day,
Guide us in our comings and goings.
Help us be examples of your love and will.
Help us forgive those who have hurt us.
Protect our children every day and
Grant us your peace.
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Parents' Prayer

Lord God, Giver of Life and Source of all Hope,
You have entrusted us with the precious gift of life
in our children.

We praise you and we thank you
for the many gifts of love our children offer us each day.

Help us to guide them in Your ways.
Inspire us to teach them well in attitudes of peace, justice and love.

Lead us to grow in patience, openness to the Holy Spirit
and courage to face the challenges of parenthood.

As we send our children into the world each day,
We ask your protection for them.
Watch over them and guide them.
Comfort them and give them courage.

Bless them with good health and strong faith
that they may praise you all the days of their lives.
We ask all these things through Jesus your Son,
our Lord, Amen.

Prayer for Children and Teenagers

Lord God, you have promised me a future full of hope.

You know my innermost thoughts and dreams, my fears
and confusion.

You offer me strength and comfort to face each day as a new creation in you.

Help me live a life of service and love,

Hopeful in difficult times and joyous in good times.

Grant me the wisdom to serve you well and

to celebrate your presence in my life every day.

In the name of your Son, Jesus, Our Lord, Amen.