

OFFICE OF SAFE ENVIRONMENT



DIOCESE of LAFAYETTE

Mission Statement

The Office of Safe Environment oversees the implementation of the diocesan program, “A Safe Environment for the Protection of Children and Young People.” The

Office provides education resources for children, clergy, religious, and laity (employees and volunteers) in the prevention of and recognition of child abuse. This Office is also responsible for processing criminal history checks on all clergy, religious, and laity who have contact with minors.

What To Do...

[Office of Safe Environment](https://diolaf.org/safe-environment) - <https://diolaf.org/safe-environment>

What should I do if I suspect my child has been abused? Call the police or social services department in your community. Reassure your child that he/she did nothing wrong and that he/she did the right thing by telling you. You may want to find a child counselor experienced in child abuse matters. Call the victim assistance person in your diocese.

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

I get the ‘creeps’ from one of the volunteers at Church. He always has his hands on kids in one way or another. What should I do? Listen to your ‘gut.’ Offenders give warning signs that knowledgeable adults can use; your ‘gut’ often picks them up. You are not accusing someone of abuse; you are communicating your concern about inappropriate behavior. Let the diocesan/eparchial victim assistance or safe environment coordinator know of your concerns. Let the supervisor of the program know of them as well. Keep reporting your concerns until someone hears you. Your courage to report those types of incidents may be very helpful. Reporting can let the person know their behavior is unacceptable, and it lets them know they are being watched. If it is poor judgment, this gives the person the opportunity to change the behavior.

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

My children are too young to hear this. Aren't you destroying the 'innocent period' of their development? Teaching children about boundaries and safe touches is not sex education. There are many safety issues we teach children: bike safety, water safety, fire prevention, driver's training, etc. Personal safety programs should have age appropriate lessons that give children the skills they need to protect themselves without frightening them. Keeping children unaware of the dangers around them does not keep them safe. Predators count on children not knowing what to do.

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

These videos will be watched in class with your children.

You are welcome to view them at home as well.

Grades K-5: [Empowering God's Children Grades K-5](#)

<https://www.sasr.org/apps/video/watch.jsp?v=213743>

Grades 6-8: [Empowering God's Children Grades 6-8](#)

<https://www.sasr.org/apps/video/watch.jsp?v=213746>

[Internet Safety Tips for Teens](#)

<https://youtu.be/Cnc4LaevRBw>

12 Simple Lessons for Internet Safety

Please go over these with your children if they use online devices.

- Always use an Internet “screen name”. Never reveal your real name, where you go to school, what your phone number is, or where you live.
- Always tell a parent or guardian if you receive ANY email, instant message, or chat that you find scary, upsetting or that makes you uncomfortable in any way.
- Never respond to a threatening email or message. Instead, save that message to a special folder on your desktop so that an adult can take the appropriate action.
- Never trade or post personal photographs in the mail or over the Internet. If you do post a personal picture on your personal blog or myspace account, make sure that the picture does not reveal any information in the background that might give an online predator a clue as to where you live or what school you go to.
- Never agree to meet anyone in real life that you have met in a chat room or online.
- Never tell anyone your password or login information.
- Never accept any invitation to go in a private chat room.
- Don't believe everything someone says online. People lie.
- Never accept an “Instant Message” from a stranger or chat with a stranger online.
- Never tell anyone how old you are.
- If you make a new “friend” online, tell a parent or guardian, and introduce this new friend to your parent or guardian online.
- Always get permission from a parent or guardian before using the computer.

* Source: PC Tattletale @ <https://www.pctattletale.com/family.php>

