



ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI
2026-2027
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION REGISTRATION
 1501 West Boughton Road, Bolingbrook, IL 60490
 Phone: 630-759-7588 Fax: 630-759-5257

March 2026

Greetings St. Francis of Assisi families,

Here is the registration for 2026-27 Religious Formation classes. **Please register your children for the school grade they will attend in the fall and let me know what their sacramental needs are.** Sacramental preparation is required (by the Diocese of Joliet) to be a two-year program. *We offer Kindergarten classes (combined with Grade 1) but Kindergarten does not count as a year of formation for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Communion.* If your child is over the age of seven and has not been baptized, our O.C.I.C. (Order of Christian Initiation for Children) is available.

Preparation for the Sacraments of 1st Reconciliation and 1st Communion (six lessons each) is done at home with parents while children attend their weekly grade-level classes on campus.

Please register your children as soon as you can so that plans can be shifted, if necessary, based on enrollment and catechist availability. For Kindergarten through 6th grade families who enjoyed the flexibility of home-based learning, it will remain an option with weekly teaching instructions being sent to parents and returned assessments being used to track lesson completion.

Classes will begin the week of September 21st. Session days/times are listed here.

Monday 4:30-5:45pm	Grade K/1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Confirmation Year 1 (Grade 7+)	Confirmation Year 2 (after completing Conf Yr 1)
Monday 6:15-7:30pm	Grade K/1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Confirmation Year 1 (Grade 7+)	Confirmation Year 2 (after completing Conf Yr 1)
Tuesday 4:30-5:45pm	Grade K/1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Confirmation Year 1 (Grade 7+)	Confirmation Year 2 (after completing Conf Yr 1)
Tuesday 6:15-7:30pm		Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Confirmation Year 1 (Grade 7+)	Confirmation Year 2 (after completing Conf Yr 1)
Wednesday 4:30-5:45pm	Grade K/1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Confirmation Year 1 (Grade 7+)	Confirmation Year 2 (after completing Conf Yr 1)

Please note: There will be a limit of 16 students per class. If a session does not receive enough registrations, it may be canceled.

Please indicate your preference(s) for your child(ren) on the registration form. Assignments will be made on a first-come, first-served basis upon receipt of registration forms and payment. Sessions without catechists by September 1st will be canceled. Combining grades (based on the curriculum) is an option as well.

This program depends on volunteers who are willing to share their faith with the children.

We are going to try to offer all the grades at each session, but we need nearly 40 catechists to fully populate the program. Parents, please consider being a catechist, co-catechist or substitute. You don't have to know everything in order to teach. Our curriculum provides rich teaching resources that catechists have been very satisfied with, and many say that they've learned something themselves by teaching. There is a \$100 tuition discount for catechists. If you can help, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can get you ready.

The Religious Education office has been directed to require payment of tuition and fees at the time of registration.

I am looking forward to accompanying your family on your journey of faith. Please watch for my emails as I try to keep you all in the loop. The best way to reach me is via email: lwaqner@stfrancisbb.org.

May God Bless your families,

Liz Jesse Wagner
 Director of Religious Formation

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI
2026-2027
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION REGISTRATION
1501 West Boughton Road, Bolingbrook, IL 60490
Phone: 630-759-7588 Fax: 630-759-5257

Are you a registered member of the parish? Yes ___ No ___ (Required - please stop at the parish office or register online)

Family Last Name: _____

Address: _____ City _____ Zip _____

Father's Name: _____ Religion _____

Mother's Name: _____ Religion _____

Mother's Maiden Name: _____

Child(ren) live(s) with: Father: ___ Mother: ___ Stepfather: ___ Stepmother: ___ Guardian ___

email address(es): _____ (please print clearly)

Phone numbers: Home: _____

Mother's Cell: _____

Mother's Work: _____

Father's Cell: _____

Father's Work: _____

Emergency Contact: In the event we are unable to reach a parent during a session:

Name: _____ Relationship to child: _____ Phone: _____

We require a copy of your child's baptismal record to be on file.
If your child has not been baptized, contact Liz Wagner at (630) 759-7588 x109 or lwagner@stfrancisbb.org.
___ We have participated in Religious Formation previously and have supplied the parish with a copy of each child's baptismal record.
New families/children:
___ I am including copies of my children's baptismal records -or- ___ My children were baptized at St. Francis of Assisi

Tuition: \$260 for one child; \$335 for two children; \$400 for three or more children:
Sacramental Fees: Reconciliation/Eucharist \$50; Confirmation \$80
Full payment of all fees is required at the time of registration.
Make checks payable to: St. Francis of Assisi
Please use the Credit Card Charge Form on page 4 (or call Jo Ann at ext.108) if you would like to pay by credit card.

Registration is not complete until all pages are filled out completely and signed, submitted to the Parish Office, and full payment is made.
Completed forms in .PDF format can be attached to an email and sent to lwagner@stfrancisbb.org.
Do not send photos of the forms.

For Office Use Only:

Date _____
Family ID# _____
Baptismal Certificate: _____
Volunteer Form: _____

Tuition Due: _____
Sacrament Fee: _____
Catechist Credit: _____
Total Due: _____

Payment: _____
Date: _____
Method: _____

Family Last Name: _____

Child's First Name <i>(Enter each child below)</i>	M/F	Date of Birth	Last RE Grade Completed	School Grade 2026-27	School	Sacraments <i>(Check if Received)</i>	1st Choice Day/Time	2nd Choice Day/Time
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1.						<input type="checkbox"/> Baptism <input type="checkbox"/> Reconciliation <input type="checkbox"/> Eucharist		
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Special Considerations (Allergies, Medical Conditions, Educational Needs, or other concerns **INCLUDING SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION NEEDED**):

2.						<input type="checkbox"/> Baptism <input type="checkbox"/> Reconciliation <input type="checkbox"/> Eucharist		
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Special Considerations (Allergies, Medical Conditions, Educational Needs, or other concerns **INCLUDING SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION NEEDED**):

3.						<input type="checkbox"/> Baptism <input type="checkbox"/> Reconciliation <input type="checkbox"/> Eucharist		
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Special Considerations (Allergies, Medical Conditions, Educational Needs, or other concerns **INCLUDING SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION NEEDED**):

4.						<input type="checkbox"/> Baptism <input type="checkbox"/> Reconciliation <input type="checkbox"/> Eucharist		
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Special Considerations (Allergies, Medical Conditions, Educational Needs, or other concerns **INCLUDING SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION NEEDED**):

MEDICAL RELEASE

In the event that the undersigned, or my (our) authorized emergency contact, cannot be reached and in the judgment of the Director of Religious Education or other person responsible for the program or other appropriate staff member, there is a necessity for immediate examination and/or treatment of my (our) child, I (we) hereby request and authorize any of the aforesaid personnel to obtain for my (our) child such medical services as deemed necessary. I agree to assume the financial responsibility for any diagnosis/treatment for medication deemed necessary.

Date or dates for which release is intended: **July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027**

The Diocese requires that the following acknowledgments to be on file for each family:
 These forms are available online at the [Religious Education](#) page of our website.

PARENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FOR 2026/2027

I acknowledge that I have received and read the:

- **Parent Guide: Understanding & Preventing Child Sexual Abuse**
- **Parent Guide: Internet Safety for Children & Teens**
- **Diocesan Pastoral Policy Regarding Sexual Abuse of Minors**
- **Standards of Behavior for Those Working with Minors** (Only for families **NEW** to the Religious Formation Program in 2026/2027)

VIDEOS, PHOTOS and VIRTUAL PLATFORMS

Video and/or photos may be taken during this year's program. This authorization form constitutes permission for my child's participation in video and/or photos, which may be used for future promotional efforts, including the Parish and/or Diocese of Joliet website. Additionally, this form constitutes permission to participate in virtual platforms such as Zoom, Google, Seesaw etc. for the purpose of programmatic content.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date: _____

The parties agree that this document may be electronically signed and that the electronic signatures appearing on this document are the same as handwritten signatures for the purposes of validity, enforceability and admissibility.

Transmission via email is not encrypted, so if you are concerned about the security of your sensitive information, please print and fax this form, surface mail it or hand deliver it.

**ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI
RELIGIOUS FORMATION PROGRAM
2026-27 "SHARING OF GIFTS" FORM**

God has blessed our parish with people who are generous in donating their gifts of time and talent. All families participating in the Religious Formation programs of our parish are needed and expected to share their gifts with the program in some way; large or small.

We need YOU! In addition to praying, our family will commit to:

Parent Name: _____

Do you have a www.VIRTUS.org account?: _____

E-mail: _____ Phone: _____

Circle children's grade levels: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9+

Circle preferred time to serve: afternoons evenings

CATECHIST (teaches the faith)

- 1. Catechist (Grade _____)
- 2. Co-Catechist
- 3. Catechist aide
- 4. Substitute catechist (on call)

RELIGIOUS FORMATION COMMISSION

- 5. Commission member

SPECIAL EVENTS --

- 6. Be an Event planner
 (help plan and implement events)
- 7. Be an Event helper
 (help facilitate family activity stations, set up,
 cleanup, etc.)
- 8. Plan and organize food
- 9. Plan and organize service project
- 10. Help with "odd jobs"

SUPPORT TASKS

- 11. Office Volunteer
- 12. Phone Calling
- 13. E-mail coordinator
- 14. Coordinate volunteers
- 15. Support tasks that can be done at church
- 16. Support tasks that can be done at home

OTHER TALENTS

- 20. IT & Computer Support
- 21. Website design
- 22. Photographer / Videographer
- 23. Art Work – by hand
- 24. Art Work/design – by computer
- 25. Sewing
- 26. Music
- 27. Drama

HOSPITALITY

- 28. Provide treats as needed
- 29. Provide beverages as needed
- 30. Set-up and clean-up for events

OTHER

- 31. Other ways we would like to help:

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2026-2027
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION REGISTRATION
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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TUITION PAYMENT – CREDIT CARD CHARGE FORM

Tuition: \$260 for one child; \$335 for two children; \$400 for three or more children:

Sacramental Fees: Reconciliation/Eucharist \$50; Confirmation \$80

Family Name: _____ Student Name(s): _____

Please charge my Visa, MasterCard, Discover, Amex (circle one)

Name on Card: _____ Amount Paid: _____
(Please print clearly)

Card #: _____ Exp. Date: _____ CVV: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____



DIOCESE OF JOLIET

STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOR FOR THOSE WORKING WITH MINORS AND VULNERABLE ADULTS (REVISED DECEMBER 20, 2023)

In accordance with the *USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People (Article 6)* and *Diocese of Joliet's Policy Regarding the Sexual Abuse of Minors and Vulnerable Adults by Church Personnel* (revised December 20, 2023), these *Standards of Behavior* have been developed to foster and maintain an atmosphere of trust and safety for minors and vulnerable adults participating in various programs within the diocese. All Church personnel, be they clergy, seminarians, diaconal candidates, religious, employees or volunteers who staff these programs, are expected to maintain high standards of professional, ministerial, and moral behavior, and are expected to comply with these Standards.

A. Definitions

- Child sexual abuse is any sexual activity with a child. Sexual activity can be touching or non-touching actions and may include fondling, rape, incest, sexual talk, voyeurism (watching), exhibitionism (showing), pornography or internet crimes. This document's definition of child sexual abuse pertains to a victim who is a minor or vulnerable adult and an adult perpetrator.
- Church personnel includes clergy, seminarians, diaconal candidates, religious, employees and volunteers.
- A cleric (or clergy) is a male person who is an ordained deacon, priest, or bishop.
- A diaconal candidate is a male student who is studying to be a permanent deacon.
- An employee is a person who is compensated for services to a diocesan agency, parish, or school (includes Catholic non-diocesan operated schools and/or those operated by a religious community).
- A minor is a person under the age of 18.
- Physical abuse is a non-accidental injury that is intentionally inflicted upon a minor or vulnerable adult.
- A religious is a person who is a member of an institute of consecrated life or a society of apostolic life. A "Religious" is distinguished from a "Diocesan priest," who is incardinated into a diocese.
- A seminarian is a male student who is studying at a seminary in order to become a priest.
- A volunteer is a person who functions without compensation in any role within a diocesan agency, parish, or school (includes Catholic non-diocesan operated schools and/or those operated by a religious community).
- A vulnerable adult is 18 years of age or older who habitually lacks the use of reason (Canon 99) or who, because of mental or physical disability is incapable of protecting himself/herself from sexual abuse.



B. Standards

The following Standards are intended to assist Church personnel in making decisions about interactions with minors and vulnerable adults in Church sponsored and affiliated programs. They do not supersede state law or Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) requirements, nor are these guidelines intended to be all inclusive.

Responsible Professional Conduct

1. Ministry to minors and vulnerable adults respects the rights of parents/legal guardians to educate and form their children. Therefore, activities with minors and vulnerable adults are to be conducted with the explicit knowledge and consent of parents or legal guardians.
2. Church personnel are never to leave minors or vulnerable adults unattended during a class, session, event, etc.
3. Church personnel are responsible for releasing minors and vulnerable adults in their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians at the close of services or activities. In the event that Church personnel are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a minor or vulnerable adult, they are to contact the parent or legal guardian of the minor or vulnerable adult.
4. Church personnel are prohibited from the use, possession or being under the influence of alcohol, non-medicinal cannabis, or any illegal substance while working with minors and vulnerable adults. They are also prohibited from furnishing alcohol, non-medicinal cannabis, or illegal substances to minors or vulnerable adults or permitting minors or vulnerable adults to use such in their presence.
5. Church personnel may provide transportation in accordance with the Diocese of Joliet Transportation Policy (for reference, please see attached).
6. Church personnel are prohibited from using physical discipline for the behavior management of minors or vulnerable adults. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behavior by minors or vulnerable adults.
7. Church personnel are prohibited from acquiring, possessing, or distributing child pornography.

Physical Proximity and Modesty

1. Church personnel are never to be nude in the presence of minors or vulnerable adults.
2. Minors and vulnerable adults are never to be nude in the presence of Church personnel. The appropriate supervision of locker-rooms may be the exception.
3. Changing and showering facilities for adults are to be separate from those for minors and vulnerable adults, if and when possible.



4. When officially approved overnight stays are necessary, an adult should never share a bed, sleeping bag or cot with a minor or vulnerable adult. An adult is not to spend the night in the presence of a lone minor or vulnerable adult, unless it is the adult's own child.
5. Houses used as residences for priests and religious are exclusively for their use. Minors and vulnerable adults should not be allowed in the private quarters of those residences. With the exception of occasional visits from family members, minors and vulnerable adults are not permitted to be overnight guests in the residences of priests or religious.
6. Counseling areas should have transparent windows or open doors. Care should be made to have another adult in the general vicinity during counseling sessions.
7. Adults should never meet with minors or vulnerable adults on a one-to-one basis in secluded areas or closed rooms.
8. Adults should never be in a vehicle on a one-to-one basis with a minor or vulnerable adult unless it is the adult's own child(ren).

Physical Contact

Appropriate affection between Church personnel and minors and/or vulnerable adults is important for a child's and a vulnerable adult's development. It is a positive part of Church life and ministry and should be given in public but not in isolated or secluded areas.

1. The following forms of affection, whether initiated by a minor, vulnerable adult, or adult, are regarded as examples of appropriate contact:

- Side hugs
- Shoulder to shoulder hugs
- Pats on the upper back
- Handshakes
- "High-fives" and hand slapping
- Arms around shoulders
- Holding hands while walking with small children
- Sitting beside small children
- Kneeling or bending to receive hugs from small children
- Holding hands during prayer
- Pats on the head when culturally appropriate
- Reciprocation of appropriate gestures initiated by a minor or vulnerable adult

2. The following forms of affection, whether initiated by a minor, vulnerable adult, or an adult, are regarded as examples of inappropriate contact:

- Lengthy embraces
- Full frontal hugs



- Kisses
- Holding minors of school age on the lap
- Touching buttocks, chest, or genital area
- Touching the knees or legs of minors or vulnerable adults
- Tickling
- Wrestling and/or roughhousing
- Piggyback rides
- Any type of massage
- Any form of unwanted attention

Communication

1. Verbal communication with minors and vulnerable adults is to be appropriate.
2. Church personnel are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations or the telling of jokes with sexual content. However, it is permissible in an educational setting to discuss issues of human sexuality. These classes will convey the Church's views on the topics. If minors or vulnerable adults have other questions not answered or addressed by individual teachers, they should be referred to their parents or legal guardians. Church personnel are not permitted to discuss their own sexual activities with minors or vulnerable adults.
3. Church personnel are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented or morally inappropriate materials (i.e., magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.) or accessing similar materials through electronic or other technological means in the presence of minors or vulnerable adults.
4. Church personnel are prohibited from using technology to interact with minors or vulnerable adults on issues related to sexuality, including but not limited to sexually related conversations, and viewing and/or distributing sexually motivated materials, and inappropriate expressions of affection.
5. Church personnel should remind minors and vulnerable adults that all communication sent digitally (i.e., texting, email, social network sites, posts, notes, etc.) is not confidential and may be reposted to others.
6. Church personnel's electronic interactions are reserved for professional and/or ministry related purposes. Church personnel will obtain written permission from parents/guardians before any electronic communication (i.e., text messages, emails, social media, etc.) with a minor/vulnerable adult and copies of those communications should be retained. Church personnel will not collect e-mail addresses and/or cellular phone numbers of minors/vulnerable adults; this information must be provided in writing by the parent or guardian. Any contact with minors/vulnerable adults by church personnel must be copied to the parents/guardians as well.
7. Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected abuse/neglect/exploitation of minors or vulnerable adults equally apply to the virtual world as they do to the physical world.



Undue Attention

Certain conduct has been used by adults to develop inappropriate relationships with minors and vulnerable adults. Activities include singling out minors or vulnerable adults or showing them unusual attention.

Examples of this behavior prohibited for Church personnel are:

1. Presenting gifts to a minor or a vulnerable adult that would not ordinarily be given to an entire group of children, excluding awards, etc.
2. Allowing a minor or vulnerable adult to drive automobiles of Church personnel even though another adult may be present.
3. Singling out a particular child or vulnerable adult for special dinners, events, trips, or outings.

The *Standards of Behavior for Those Working with Minors or Vulnerable Adults* is to be given to all church personnel. The document is posted on the diocesan website under the Office of Child and Youth Protection: www.diojoliet.org

Church personnel will be required to comply with diocesan education requirements that addresses their role in protecting minors and vulnerable adults.

Minors or vulnerable adults who serve as employees or volunteers will be informed that they have a right to a safe working environment and a right to disclose behavior not in accord with these standards.

PLEASE NOTE: Per DCFS, if you suspect that a child has been harmed or is at risk of being harmed by abuse or neglect, report it online at <https://childabuse.illinois.gov>. In an emergency, call the 24-hour DCFS hotline (or Child Abuse Hotline) at 1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873). **If you believe a child is in immediate danger of harm, call 911 first.**



DIOCESE OF JOLIET

POLICY REGARDING SEXUAL ABUSE OF MINORS AND VULNERABLE ADULTS BY CHURCH PERSONNEL (REVISED DECEMBER 20, 2023)

I. INTRODUCTION

On June 14, 2002, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) approved the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* (the “Charter”). On December 8, 2002, the *Essential Norms for Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors* (Norms) were approved by Pope John Paul II. The Charter and Norms were revised in June of 2005, 2011 and again in 2018 to re-affirm the deep commitment of the Church to create a safe environment for children and youth.

The Diocese of Joliet (the “Diocese”) first promulgated a policy regarding sexual abuse of minors on June 14, 1990. Revisions were made in September 1993, in June 1997, in June 2003, July 2008, February 2013, and July 2021. As with the previous edition, this policy is intended to be in conformity with provisions from the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* and from the *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons (Revised June 2018)*.

This policy is designed to ensure appropriate responses to allegations of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults by church personnel. It addresses preventing sexual abuse through education and screening, reporting abuse, providing pastoral assistance to persons affected by abuse and the processing of allegations.

A copy of this policy is to be given to all clergy, seminarians, diaconal candidates, religious, as well as to all employees and volunteers ministering with minors and vulnerable adults, all of whom will sign an acknowledgement of its receipt. The policy is also to be published on the diocesan website.

II. DEFINITIONS

A. Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is any sexual activity with a child. Sexual activity can be touching or non-touching actions and may include fondling, rape, incest, sexual talk, voyeurism (watching), exhibitionism (showing), pornography or internet crimes. This policy’s definition of child sexual abuse pertains to a victim who is a minor or vulnerable adult and an adult perpetrator.

B. Church Personnel

Church personnel includes clergy, seminarians, diaconal candidates, religious, employees and volunteers.



C. Cleric

A cleric (or clergy) is a male person who is an ordained deacon, priest, or bishop.

D. Diaconal Candidate

A diaconal candidate is a male student who is studying to be a permanent deacon.

E. Director of Child and Youth Protection

The Director of Child and Youth Protection (the “Director”) is appointed by the Bishop to oversee the workings of the Office of Child and Youth Protection. The duties of the Director include, but are not limited to the following:

- Inform the Bishop of allegations including any anonymous allegations or allegations that do not contain sufficient information.
- Oversee the implementation of this policy on a regular basis.
- Report regularly to the Bishop and the Review Board about the implementation of this policy and the progress of individual cases of abuse.
- Supervise the work of the Victim Assistance Coordinator.
- Serve as the central information point for child abuse issues among pertinent members of the Diocesan Tribunal and diocesan general counsel.
- Maintain all records pertaining to child protection and child abuse.
- Provide staff assistance to the Review Board.
- Prepare for the annual USCCB audit and CARA survey.
- Communicate to the public (i.e., within the Church community and beyond) the efforts of the Diocese to prevent the abuse of minors and vulnerable adults and to heal past abuse.

F. Employee

An employee is a person who is compensated for services to a diocesan agency, parish, or school (includes Catholic non-diocesan operated schools and/or those operated by a religious community).

G. Laity

Members of the Catholic Church who are neither clergy nor recipients of Holy Orders or vowed to life in a religious order or congregation (i.e., lay employees, lay volunteers, brothers and sisters).

H. Ministerial Relationship

A ministerial relationship is established between persons when care or services are given. Persons in a ministerial relationship with others include clergy, seminarians, diaconal candidates and religious, as well as employees and volunteers.



I. Minor

A minor is a person under the age of 18.

J. Religious

A religious is a person who is a member of an institute of consecrated life or a society of apostolic life. A “Religious” is distinguished from a “Diocesan priest,” who is incardinated into a diocese.

K. Seminarian

A seminarian is a male student who is studying at a seminary in order to become a priest.

L. Substantiated allegation

A substantiated allegation is one that is found to be more likely true than not true and is not to be interpreted as a legal judgement.

M. Victim Assistance Coordinator

The Victim Assistance Coordinator (the “VAC”), appointed by the Bishop, is to coordinate assistance for the immediate pastoral care of persons who report to have been sexually abused as minors or vulnerable adults. The duties of VAC include, but are not limited to the following:

- Receive allegations of the sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults.
- Listen with compassion to the experiences and concerns of victims/survivors.
- Advise victims/survivors of their right to report to civil authorities and inform them they will be supported in the exercise of that right (*USCCB Norms 11, footnote 8*).

N. Volunteer

A volunteer is a person who functions without compensation in any role within a diocesan agency, parish, or school (includes Catholic non-diocesan operated schools and/or those operated by a religious community).

O. Vulnerable Adult

A vulnerable adult is 18 years of age or older who habitually lacks the use of reason (Canon 99) or who, because of mental or physical disability is incapable of protecting himself/herself from sexual abuse.



III. POLICIES

A. Healing and Reconciliation

1. Ministry to Victims/Survivors

The Victim Assistance Coordinator (the “VAC”), appointed by the Bishop, is to coordinate assistance for the immediate pastoral care of persons who report to have been sexually abused as minors or vulnerable adults. The VAC is available to victims/survivors and their families to aid in the healing process and provide appropriate pastoral care. Assistance offered may include counseling, spiritual direction, support groups or other social services. The Diocese seeks to treat all allegations of sexual abuse with a prompt, direct, thorough, and confidential pastoral response.

Pastoral outreach to victims/survivors and their families includes the bishop or his representative offering to meet with them, listening with patience and compassion to their experiences and concerns, and sharing the “profound sense of solidarity and concern” expressed by St. John Paul II, in his Address to the Cardinals of the United States and Conference Officers (Cf. *USCCB Charter, Article 1*).

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST CLERGY

2. Ministry to the Accused

Appropriate steps are to be taken to protect the reputation of the accused during an investigation of sexual abuse. The accused will be encouraged to retain the assistance of civil and/or canonical counsel. When the preliminary investigation of a complaint so indicates, a priest/deacon may be referred for appropriate medical and psychological evaluation, as long as this does not interfere with the investigation by civil authorities.

When an accusation has been deemed unsubstantiated, the Diocese provides pastoral assistance, including psychological counseling to a person who was falsely accused. All efforts are made to restore the good name of the person falsely accused (*USCCB Norms 13*).

3. Ministry to Communities

In faith communities in which the sexual abuse occurred or where a priest/deacon has been removed, a meeting is held between a representative of the Pastoral Response Team and representatives of the affected community. If requested, the Pastoral Response Team offers pastoral assistance (spiritual and psychological) to the affected faith community.

Pastoral Response Team membership includes the Bishop or his representative and may include the following individuals or their delegates: the Director, Vicar for Clergy, Superintendent of Catholic Schools, Director of Catechesis and Evangelization, pastor/head of institution, religious superior, VAC, as well as experts in trauma response/intervention services.



ALLEGATIONS AGAINST LAITY

Appropriate steps are to be taken to protect the reputation of the accused during an investigation of sexual abuse. In addition, the Diocese will do all that is possible to protect the confidentiality of the accused and the alleged victim.

The accused employee or volunteer will be notified of the allegation. If an employee, the accused will immediately be placed on administrative leave during the investigation, ordinarily without the loss of compensation. If a volunteer, the accused will be relieved of his/her volunteer duties during the investigation.

The Diocese will conduct an investigation of the allegation against a lay employee or volunteer. If the matter is being investigated by the civil authorities the Diocese will not interfere with the investigation.

Upon conclusion of an investigation by the civil authorities, the Diocese will take the outcome of the civil authority investigation into consideration when conducting its own investigation. If the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) conducts an investigation and it results in an “indicated” case of child abuse or neglect, or there is a criminal conviction, or the accused acknowledges the reported abuse, the lay employee or volunteer shall be dismissed and not allowed further employment by the Diocese or allowed to volunteer at a diocesan entity.

If the Diocese’s investigation determines that the allegation is unsubstantiated, the accused shall be reinstated in his or her work or volunteering.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT COMPLIANCE

B. Prevention

1. Education

To foster a safe environment for children and vulnerable adults, the Diocese requires that church personnel comply with the safe environment compliance requirements of the Diocese. These requirements include educational programs identified by the Diocese which contain information about sexual abuse, its identifying signs, controlling access to children and vulnerable adults, appropriate boundaries in relationships, reporting incidents of abuse and the effects of abuse on victims/survivors.

Prior to beginning service, all church personnel are required to complete a *VIRTUS Protecting God’s Children for Adults* training. In addition to clergy, seminarians, diaconal candidates, religious, and employees, this requirement applies to all volunteers who minister with minors and/or vulnerable adults on a regular, recurring basis and those who may have an opportunity to be alone with children and/or vulnerable adults during parish, school or religious education sponsored events. The program is also available to parents and guardians.

All persons who continue involvement with minors and/or vulnerable adults are also required to participate in continuing education training identified by the Diocese.



Children and youth are to receive instruction appropriate to their age level (*USCCB Charter 12*).

Prior to beginning service, all church personnel should receive a copy of the *Standards of Behavior for Those Working with Minors and Vulnerable Adults* and are to sign an acknowledgement of its receipt. The *Standards of Behavior* includes information about appropriate boundaries for those who have regular contact with minors and vulnerable adults (*USCCB Charter, Article 6*). In addition to clergy, seminarians, diaconal candidates, religious, and employees, this requirement applies to all volunteers who minister with minors and/or vulnerable adults on a regular, recurring basis and those who may have an opportunity to be alone with children and/or vulnerable adults during parish, school or religious education sponsored events.

All clergy, school employees and other employees who work with minors, and all volunteers who minister with minors in a repetitive role (includes coaches, religious education or youth ministry, certain scouting roles, etc.) must complete Mandated Reporter Training per Illinois law and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).

Procedures for reporting abuse are to be readily available in printed form and are to be the subject of periodic public announcements (*USCCB Charter, Article 2*).

The Director of the Ongoing Formation of Priests and the Vocations Office are responsible for providing programs of human formation for chastity and celibacy for priests and seminarians respectively, and the Office of the Diaconate will provide similar appropriate programs for deacon candidates and deacons, to assist clergy and seminarians in living their vocation in faithful and integral ways (*USCCB Charter, Article 17*).

2. Screening

Prior to beginning service, all church personnel are required to submit to a criminal background check. In addition to clergy, seminarians, diaconal candidates, religious, and employees, this requirement applies to all volunteers who minister with minors and/or vulnerable adults on a regular, recurring basis and those who may have an opportunity to be alone with children and/or vulnerable adults during parish, school or religious education sponsored events. Backgrounds are evaluated using the resources of law enforcement or other agencies (*USCCB Charter, Article 13*). Background checks are to be performed every five years.

a. Employees

Any prospective diocesan, parish or school employee must complete an application that includes:

1. Employment history, indicating positions held, dates of employment, name(s) of the immediate supervisor, phone number(s), and reason(s) for cessation of employment.
2. Any allegations of physical or sexual abuse made against him/her, which may/may not have involved civil or criminal complaints.
3. A signed authorization to release the applicant's employment history to the prospective employer, as well as at least two references who are not relatives.



Hiring agents must review the employment history and the references provided. All documents must be retained in the employees' file during the time of employment.

b. Volunteers

A respective location (i.e., parish, school, or diocesan office) should have their volunteers complete an application provided by the location for which they are intending to volunteer. The location is to keep a copy of completed applications onsite.

c. Members of Religious Orders

When any religious is presented for assignment or residence in an institution or parish, the appropriate religious superior is to provide the Bishop with a written statement about the person's suitability for ministry including information regarding allegations of sexual abuse.

Members of religious orders, as well as clergy who have been incardinated in a different diocese ("extern clergy"), have been and continue to be assigned to minister within the Diocese. While such clergy remain at all times subject to the authority and supervision of the religious order or the originating diocese where they were incardinated, the Diocese handles allegations against religious order and extern clergy as follows:

1. If the Diocese receives an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult against a religious order or extern cleric who is ministering or has ministered within the Diocese, the allegation is promptly forwarded to that cleric's religious order or originating diocese and is reported to the appropriate civil authorities.
2. If, at the time an allegation of abuse is received, the accused religious order or extern cleric is assigned within the Diocese, the Bishop will immediately withdraw the cleric from public ministry and remove his faculties. If the accused religious order or extern cleric is ministering within the Diocese but not pursuant to a diocesan assignment, the Bishop will immediately remove his faculties for ministry in this diocese.
3. The Diocese will follow up periodically with the religious order or originating diocese to be informed of the outcome of its investigation, namely, whether or not the allegation has been substantiated, as well as the status of the cleric at the conclusion of the inquiry. If the Diocese is informed that the accused cleric has been determined by the religious order or originating diocese that the allegation of sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult is substantiated, and the reported abuse took place in association with the accused's ministry in the Diocese, the religious order or extern cleric's name will be placed on the diocesan website.

d. Priests/Deacons

When a priest/deacon seeks an assignment in the Diocese, his diocesan bishop or religious superior is to provide the Bishop with a written statement of suitability for ministry including information regarding allegations of sexual abuse.



No diocesan priest or deacon against whom an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult has been substantiated may be transferred for ministerial assignment to another ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Before a diocesan priest or deacon may be transferred for residence to another diocese/eparchy or religious province, the Bishop or his delegate shall forward, in a confidential manner, to the local bishop/eparch and religious ordinary (if applicable) of the proposed place of residence any and all information concerning any substantiated allegation of an act of sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult and any other information indicating that he has been or may be a danger to children or young people or vulnerable adults. This shall apply even if the priest or deacon shall reside in the local community of an institute of consecrated life or society of apostolic life. In proposing a priest or deacon for residence outside the Diocese, the Bishop or his delegate shall provide the receiving bishop/eparch or religious ordinary with the necessary information regarding any past act of sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult by the priest or deacon in question (*USCCB Charter, Article 14, Norms 12*).

e. Candidates for Priesthood and the Diaconate

The Diocese of Joliet uses adequate screening and evaluations in determining the fitness of candidates for admission to the seminary or to the diaconate. Additional evaluations are conducted during the years of formation. A comprehensive psychological profile of each seminarian/diaconal candidate must be obtained before anyone is admitted to the priesthood or diaconate.

C. Response to Allegations

1. Reporting

All persons, whether parishioners or church personnel, who have reasonable cause to suspect an incident of sexual abuse by any church personnel, have a serious moral obligation to report the incident or allegation to civil officials (*USCCB Charter, Article 4*).

Under Illinois law, certain personnel (including school personnel [administrators, certified and non-certified school employees, school board members], child care and recreational program personnel, and clergy) are considered mandated reporters and must report to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) any situation in which they have reasonable cause to suspect the abuse (physical or sexual) or neglect of a minor. Reporting abuse of a vulnerable adult is made to the appropriate state agency. Failure to report may result in disciplinary actions. If the accused is a diocesan employee, volunteer, or cleric, church personnel must also inform the Office of Child and Youth Protection.

Non-mandated reporters may call the DCFS hotline if they have reasonable cause to believe that a child known to them in their professional or official capacity may have been abused or neglected. Non-mandated reporters are required to notify their immediate supervisor or higher-level authority in the Diocese if they know or have reason to believe a child may have been abused or neglected and/or if they call the DCFS hotline. If the allegation or suspicion of abuse is against an employee, volunteer or cleric, living or deceased, the diocesan Office of Child and Youth Protection must be contacted.



Per DCFS, if you suspect that a child has been harmed or is at risk of being harmed by abuse or neglect, report it online at <https://childabuse.illinois.gov>. In an emergency, call the 24-hour DCFS hotline (or Child Abuse Hotline) at 1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873). If you believe a child is in immediate danger of harm, call 911 first.

Reports of sexual abuse should also be made to the VAC, who in turn will inform the Director. Complaints against members of religious orders are to be reported to the VAC as well as to the respective superior. Reports of sexual misconduct involving bishops of the United States and reports of their intentional interference in a sexual abuse investigation should be made to the Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service (CBAR).

Procedures for making a complaint are available on the diocesan website, at parishes or diocesan offices, and are the subject of periodic public announcements.

When a person reports an allegation of sexual abuse, the person will be received with the utmost respect and pastoral sensitivity. Victims/survivors are advised of and supported in their right to report abuse to civil authorities (*USCCB Charter, Article 4*).

Allegations that a cleric of the Diocese sexually abused a minor or vulnerable adult may be received from any number of sources (i.e., a meeting in person with the VAC, a telephone call, written communication, email, a personal appointment, the media, public authorities, etc). The Diocese will investigate allegations of the sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult raised by anyone, regardless of circumstances, to the extent possible in each particular case.

The Diocese investigates allegations of the sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult against a cleric whose name is already on the list of clergy with substantiated allegations no differently than if the accused cleric had no previous accusation. The same intake procedures are followed, all allegations are reported to the appropriate civil authorities, the same investigative steps will be taken, and the same pastoral care will be offered to the victim/survivor. The allegation will not go before the Review Board, however, since the cleric has already been removed from ministry.

The Diocese investigates allegations of the sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult against a deceased cleric no differently than if the accused cleric was still alive. The same intake procedures are followed, appropriate civil authorities are notified, the same internal investigative steps will be taken, and the same pastoral care will be offered to the victim/survivor.

All allegations against clerics are submitted to the Review Board except where the accused already appears on the Diocese's public list of clergy with substantiated allegations. If, after appropriate investigation, an allegation of abuse against a cleric is substantiated, the Diocese will add the cleric's name to the public list of clerics with substantiated allegations of the sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult.



2. Assessment and Determination

a. All allegations are immediately forwarded to the Director. The Director informs the Bishop and others he designates of any allegation, including the Review Board. The Director will also notify the VAC if they are not yet aware of the allegation. The Bishop appoints the Director to oversee an investigation. This investigation will be conducted by professional investigators and may include other competent professionals.

However, in no way will the process conflict with an investigation being pursued on a state or federal level. When the Diocese learns that a diocesan cleric is the subject of a criminal investigation for sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult, the Diocese will defer its own investigation of the abuse allegations until notified by the civil authorities that the criminal investigation has concluded. This ensures that the Diocese does not inadvertently interfere with an ongoing criminal investigation or generate needless confusion about who is investigating and why. The Diocese will cooperate fully with the criminal investigation.

b. The Review Board advises the Bishop in his assessment of allegations of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults and in his determination of a cleric's suitability for ministry (*USCCB Charter, Article 2*). In certain cases, the Review Board may consider it important to speak directly with the person making the allegation, the accused person, or other persons for the sole purpose of gathering additional information. The Board will also offer to the Bishop other advice it considers pertinent to the case.

c. The Director shall promptly notify the Bishop of the Review Board's recommendations and advice regarding a matter. Upon receipt of the Bishop's acceptance or rejection of the Review Board's recommendations, the Director or whomever the Bishop delegates shall as soon as possible notify the accuser and the accused of the Review Board's recommendation(s) and the Bishop's acceptance thereof.

d. The Bishop has sole responsibility for deciding if it is more likely true than not true (i.e., substantiated), that sexual abuse has occurred and for determining any action with regard to the accused. In the case of clerics of the Diocese, the Bishop or his delegate sends the case to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, all in accord with Canon Law.

e. After reviewing the case, the Dicastery will advise the Bishop as to which canonical processes are to be followed.

3. Canonical Penalties

When even a single act of sexual abuse by a priest or deacon is admitted or is established after an appropriate process in accord with canon law, the offending priest or deacon will be removed permanently from ecclesiastical ministry, not excluding dismissal from the clerical state if the case so warrants (*USCCB Norms 8*). Removal from ministry is required whether or not the cleric is diagnosed by qualified experts as a pedophile or as suffering from a sexual disorder that requires professional treatment (*USCCB Norms 8, footnote 5*).



a. After even a single act of sexual abuse by a cleric is admitted or is established by a process completed in accord with canon law, every effort shall be made to encourage him to request, if warranted, a dismissal from the clerical state. Should he not do so, the diocese shall pursue his involuntary dismissal from the clerical state unless for reasons of advanced age or infirmity, he shall lead a life of prayer and penance.

In every case involving canonical penalties, the processes provided for in canon law must be observed, and the various provisions of canon law must be considered (cf. Canonical Delicts Involving Sexual Misconduct and Dismissal from the Clerical State, 1995; Letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, May 18, 2001). Unless the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, having been notified, calls the case to itself because of special circumstances, it will direct the diocesan bishop/eparch to proceed (Article 13, “Procedural Norms” for *Motu proprio Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela*, AAS, 93, 2001, p. 787). If the case would otherwise be barred by prescription, because sexual abuse of a minor is a grave offense, the bishop/eparch may apply to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith for a derogation from the prescription, while indicating relevant grave reasons. For the sake of canonical due process, the accused is to be encouraged to retain the assistance of civil and canonical counsel. When necessary, the diocese/eparchy will supply canonical counsel to a priest. The provisions of CIC, canon 1722, or CCEO, canon 1473, shall be implemented during the pendency of the penal process (*USCCB Norms 8 a*).

If the penalty of dismissal from the clerical state has not been applied (i.e., for reasons of advanced age or infirmity), the offender ought to lead a life of prayer and penance. He will not be permitted to celebrate Mass publicly or to administer the sacraments. He is to be instructed not to wear clerical garb, or to present himself publicly as a priest (*USCCB Norms 8 b*).

At all times, the diocesan bishop/eparch has the executive power of governance, within the parameters of the universal law of the Church, through an administrative act, to remove an offending cleric from office, to remove or restrict his faculties, and to limit his exercise of priestly ministry (*USCCB Norms 9, footnote 6*). Because sexual abuse of a minor by a cleric is a crime in the universal law of the Church (CIC, c. 1395 §2; CCEO, c. 1453 §1) and is a crime in all civil jurisdictions in the United States, for the sake of the common good and observing the provisions of canon law, the 25 diocesan bishop/eparch shall exercise this power of governance to ensure that any priest or deacon who has committed even one act of sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult as described above shall not continue in active ministry (*USCCB Norms 9, footnote 7*).

APPENDIX

REVIEW BOARD

The Review Board is a consultative body that advises the Bishop regarding allegations concerning the sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults by clergy and related issues (*USCCB Charter, Article 2, Norms 5*).



A. Membership

The Review Board, whose members are appointed by the Bishop, is composed of not less than seven or more than eleven members of outstanding integrity and good judgment. The majority of members are laypersons, none of whom are diocesan employees.

Members should have expertise in one of the following areas: social work, civil law, education, treatment of sexual abuse of minors, or clinical treatment of sexual disorders. One member should be the parent of a minor or vulnerable adult and one member should be a pastor. When possible, one member is a victim/survivor of child sexual abuse or a parent of the same.

The Bishop shall designate one Review Board member as chairperson for a fixed term, not to extend beyond the term as a member of the Review Board.

Consultants to the Board may include a representative of the Bishop, a canon lawyer, the Promoter of Justice, the Chancellor, the diocesan attorney, and the VAC.

B. Nominating Committee

The Bishop may appoint a Nominating Committee to propose the names of candidates for the Review Board. The Nominating Committee shall consist of the chairperson of the Review Board, the Director, and other members of the Board. For the nomination of the clerical members of the Review Board, the Nominating Committee should consult with the Vicar for Priests or the Director of the Office of the Diaconate, and the Presbyteral Council. For the nomination of the Review Board member who is a victim/survivor or a parent of a victim/survivor of child sexual abuse, the Nominating Committee will consult with the VAC. For the other Review Board positions, the Nominating Committee may at its discretion consult with appropriate professional societies, advocacy groups, and other consultative bodies, such as the Diocesan Pastoral Council. The Director will assist the Bishop's Canonical Consultant to the Review Board to convene the Nominating Committee.

C. Terms

Members are appointed for a term of five years (*USCCB Norms 5*). The Bishop has the right to terminate the appointment of a member at any time.

D. Meetings

The Review Board convenes whenever there is business to conduct or assembles at least twice annually. It will ordinarily meet in person but may meet by video conference. Members may also participate by conference call.



E. Duties

Members of the Review Board are to:

- Advise the bishop in his assessment of allegations of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults and in his determination of a cleric's suitability for ministry.
- Review diocesan policies and procedures for dealing with sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults on a regular basis.
- Advise the Bishop, as requested, on all aspects of cases, whether retrospectively or prospectively.
- Provide new members with an orientation to the Board and present them with a copy of the *Pastoral Policy Regarding Sexual Abuse of Minors and Vulnerable Adults by Church Personnel*, a copy of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* as well as other appropriate materials.
- Attend all meetings, especially those involving particular cases.

F. Criteria for Making Recommendations

- A simple majority of the members of the Review Board appointed to serve at that time shall constitute a quorum of the Review Board. A quorum is needed to make a recommendation to the Bishop.
- Members may be present in person or electronically.
- When considering an allegation of sexual abuse, each member considers all the evidence presented and determines whether the allegation is more likely true than not true.
- If it is determined that the allegation is not more likely true than not true, but the cleric's conduct is otherwise inappropriate, the Review Board may advise the Bishop whether further action appears warranted and suggestions to possible action.

G. Communication

The Bishop or his designate will ensure that the alleged victim and the accused are provided with appropriate and timely information about the progress of the case.

H. Confidentiality

Deliberations and recommendations of the Review Board are to be held in strictest confidence. The Bishop, or his authorized representative, are the only persons who communicate with the alleged victim and the accused, the media, or any other persons.

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

The Diocese does not enter into settlements which bind the parties to confidentiality settlements unless the victim/survivor requests confidentiality and this request is noted in the text of the agreement (*USCCB Charter, Article 3*).



RECORDS AND REPORTS

The Director maintains written and electronic documentation regarding all information acquired by the Review Board and its recommendations to the Bishop.

All of the above records are confidential. However, law enforcement officials receive whatever information is necessary for them to carry out their duties.

Information and records generated by mental health practitioners, including those of alcohol and substance abuse treatment providers, are retained or released in accordance with the provisions of Illinois and federal laws.

The Diocese communicates transparently and openly about issues of sexual abuse within the parameters of legally mandated confidentiality and privacy especially to the faith communities directly affected (*USCCB Charter, Article 7*).

The Diocese publishes an annual public report on the progress made in implementing this policy and cooperates with audits conducted by the National Review Board.

POLICY SUBMISSION

A copy of this policy as well as any revisions to the policy is filed with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops within three months of its effective date (*USCCB Norms 2*).

Parent Guide



Understanding & Preventing Child Sexual Abuse



Diocese of Joliet

425 Summit Street, Joliet, IL 60435
www.dioceseofjoliet.org

Types of Touches

Teach your children the names of their private body parts. Help them understand that they are the *boss* of their own body. Explain that there are three kinds of touches:

- **Safe touches.** These are touches that keep children safe and are good for their bodies. Safe touches include hugging, holding hands, pats on the back, and an arm around the shoulder. Safe touches can also include touches that might hurt, such as removing a splinter.
- **Unsafe touches.** These are touches that hurt children's bodies, feelings, or spirits, for example, hitting, pushing, pinching, and kicking. This also includes the sexual touches described in the previous section. Teach children that these kinds of touches are not okay.
- **Unwanted touches.** These are touches that might be safe but a child doesn't want. These include the sexual touches discussed earlier. It is okay for a child to say *no* to an unwanted touch, even if it is from a familiar person.

For Young Children

Young children remember better how to protect themselves from sexual abuse when they learn and practice a few simple steps so they don't have to wonder what to do, or have to stop and think. Children can be taught to follow these three steps when someone breaks the touching rules.

- Say *no* or words that mean *no*.
- Get away.
- Tell a grown-up.

Expand your child's understanding of the third step by teaching the following:

- Never keep secrets about touching.
- Always tell about a touching problem even if it has gone on for a long time.
- Keep telling until someone believes you.

Teach Assertiveness Skills

Children who are assertive are better able to use the safety steps effectively and resist unsafe situations. Assertive behavior includes standing up straight, looking directly at the person and using a strong, clear voice.

Safety on the Internet

It is important for parents to educate children about Internet risks and monitor use of the Internet. Some rules:

- Never give out personal information or use a credit card online without your parent's permission.
- Never share passwords with anyone.
- Never arrange to meet someone in person you have met online unless parents go along with you.
- Never reply to uncomfortable messages. Always tell parents about them.



For Teens or Pre-Teens

Honest, open discussions about sexual values/limits, healthy relationships, and personal safety can make a difference. Teens should:

- Recall that human sexuality is a graced gift from God. Intimate touching and sexual intercourse are morally appropriate only within marriage.
- Know their own wishes, limits and values, and clearly communicate them to their dates. They should listen to their date's limits and respect them.
- Notice if their date is not respecting their limits and wishes or if their date's behavior doesn't seem right.
- Trust their feelings and intuition. If they are feeling pressured into sex, they have the right to say *no*.

- Be assertive and act immediately if their limits are reached, even if it means making a scene.
- Understand that it is never too late to say *no* and never too late to hear *no*.

More Safety Tips for Teens

- Avoid drugs or alcohol, which reduce one's ability to think clearly and manage one's behavior.
- Always pour your own beverages at a party and keep them in sight. Date-rape drugs can be put in drinks and are often undetectable.
- Go to parties with a buddy and look after each other. Always have a safe way home.
- Meet a date in a public place or stay around others.
- Tell someone about the date, where it will take place, and what time it will end.
- Take a cell phone along if possible.

The Bottom Line

- *No* means *no* whenever a person feels pressured about anything and it should be respected!
- If a person says *no* and the other person continues to touch or to force touch it is abusive behavior.
- If a person forces another person to have sexual intercourse, it is rape, a criminal offense.

Safe Families

Being a parent is one of life's greatest challenges. However, if you have a strong relationship built on a foundation of trust, and your children have skills in self-management, relationship-building, and problem-solving, they are more likely to make safe choices and set personal safety boundaries.

For more tips for parents, please visit
<http://www.cfchildren.org/parents/parenttips/>

**If someone has been abused,
contact the Illinois Department of Children and
Family Services at
1-800-25ABUSE (1-800-252-2873)**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The Diocese of Joliet is committed to promoting an environment that will help ensure the safety of children and young people. If you have participated in a *Protecting God's Children* session, you have already received much information.

This brochure is the next step in our efforts to help keep children safe. You are the primary educators of your children, so it is important that you talk with them personally about their safety. The material in this brochure is designed to give you background information about sexual abuse, to inform you about other ways to keep your children safe, and to provide you with tips for talking to your children.

Staff members at the Religious Education Office (815-727-6411) and at the Catholic Schools Office (815-838-2181) are available to help you. Please call them if you have any questions about the material contained in this brochure or if you need more information.

Sincerely,



Sister Judith A. Davies, OSF
Chancellor

SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION

What Is Child Sexual Abuse?

Child sexual abuse is the use of a child for sexual purposes by an adult or an older, more powerful person, including an older child. *It is a crime in all 50 states.* Sexual abuse is called incest when it happens between family members.

Who Are the Offenders?

- Most sexual abuse is committed by a person the child knows and trusts.
- Offenders come from all walks of life and from all social and ethnic groups.
- Offenders actively work to develop trusting relationships with children.

Who Is At Risk?

- Sexual abuse happens to boys and girls from all social and ethnic groups from infancy to 18 years.
- Young children are especially at risk.

Why Don't Children Tell?

Some reasons children do not tell are:

- They have been taught to obey adults.
- They promised or have been bribed to keep the abuse secret.
- They have been threatened by the offender and are afraid to tell.
- They feel guilty because they believe that the abuse is their fault and are ashamed to tell.
- They are confused because the offender is someone whom they know and trust.
- They have been convinced that the abuse is normal or okay.
- They are too young to know the touching is not appropriate, especially if someone they know and trust does it.
- They don't know the words to tell about the abuse.



Do Children Lie About Abuse?

Children rarely lie about sexual abuse. More often, they are afraid to tell.

PROTECTING YOUR CHILDREN

Here are some things you can do:

- Educate yourself about sexual abuse.
- Learn and practice specific guidelines for protecting children from sexual abuse.
- Talk to your children about touching safety. (See *Teaching Personal Safety Skills*.)
- Teach your children personal safety rules before they reach school age.
- Allow your children to participate in personal safety instruction.

Safety with Babysitters

- Ask babysitters for references and check them.
- Interview babysitters in person. Ask how they discipline children. Ask *what if* questions to find out how they would cope with tricky situations.
- Inform them about your family safety rules, including touching safety rules.
- Set other rules for the sitter. (TV, phone use, and friends)
- Make surprise visits to check on them.
- Ask your children what happens when a babysitter is there and whether they like him or her. If they don't like the babysitter, ask for reasons.

Follow these guidelines even if the babysitter is a family member.

Guidelines for Single Parents

If you are a single parent and are dating, this brings unfamiliar adults into your home.

- Let your new friend know your family's safety rules, especially about touching.
- Tell him or her that your children have been taught to tell if any of these rules are broken.
- Don't leave your children alone with a new friend until you know him or her well.
- Ask your children if they like the new person and why or why not.
- Watch your children's reactions for clues to how they feel.

TEACHING PERSONAL SAFETY SKILLS

Talking openly and honestly sets a tone that helps children feel safe and allows them to talk to you about anything. *Talk with them about touching and private body parts.* Here are some tips:

- Make touching safety a part of your family's safety rules.
- Take advantage of everyday teachable moments: bath time, physical play situations, when a child expresses curiosity about his body or sexuality, and before a child goes out without you.
- Read a book or view a video on touching safety together with your child.
- Revisit the conversation. Don't just talk about this important matter once!

Teach Your Children These Rules

- It is not okay for someone to touch your private body parts.
- It is not okay for someone to touch his or her own private body parts in front of you or to ask you to touch them.
- It is not okay for someone to ask you to take your clothes off or to take photos or videos of you with your clothes off.
- It is not okay for someone to show you photos or videos of people without their clothes on.

Content of this brochure is adapted from
**"Keeping Children Safe from Abuse: Tips for
Parents and Caregivers"**

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www.cfchildren.org

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from the Diocese of Springfield, IL



Tips on Cell Phone Use

1. Take precautions with your child's cell phone.
2. Be specific about cell phone use and set up specific rules about how and when the phone will be used. Set a limit on how much time children can use each month and how many text messages they can send and receive.
3. Emphasize and enforce the rule that teens must follow all laws when driving and using a cell phone.
4. Review school policies and agreements regarding cell phone usage on school grounds during the school day and after school.
5. Explain potential legal consequences of sexting.
6. Make the child aware texting reveals your phone number to whomever you send a message.
7. Children should:
 - know** that predators can also send messages and call to arrange meetings.
 - know** that if they receive a bullying or threatening text message, they should report it immediately to a parent or trusted adult
 - not answer a call from a number that they are not familiar with or not expecting.
8. Review your service plan to learn which features can be blocked to protect children.

Resources for Parents

General Internet Safety Guides

www.onguardonline.org
www.NetSafeKids.org
www.pollyklaas.org
www.willcountysao.com
www.cyberangels.org

Internet Filtering Software

<http://kids.getnetwise.org>

Internet and Cell Phone Safety

www.NetSmartz.org
www.microsoft.com/protect
www.safeteens.com
www.safekids.com
www.netparents.org



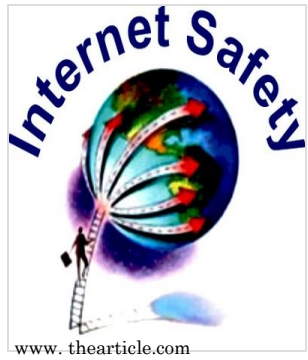
PARENT GUIDE



Internet Safety for Children & Teens



Diocese of Joliet
16555 Weber Road Crest Hill, IL 60403
www.dioceseofjoliet.org



The amount of information available on the Internet continues to grow at an astounding rate. Opportunities abound for social networking, building online profiles, sending video and photos, sharing ideas and thoughts through blogs, tweets.

These ways of socializing and communicating can be fulfilling and worthwhile, yet they do come with certain risks of inappropriate content, contact and conduct. This brief guide attempts to provide general information and where to go for additional information.

General Parent Guidelines

1. **Talk to Your Children**—children of all ages (including toddlers) see parents using multiple electronic devices. Children as young as 2 are now using computers for learning. As soon as your child is using an electronic device, it is time to talk to them about online behavior, safety, and security.

How to begin

- Start Early
- Create an Honest and Open Environment
- Initiate conversations
- Communicate your values
- Be Patient

2. **Learn How to Monitor What Your Children Do Online**

There are many good sites that help parents learn how monitor, control, and block electronic use such as getnetwise.com. The site has many video tutorials, extensive tools that parents can use and a wealth of information.

For Parents of Children (Aged 5-12)



1. Keep the computer in a public place with the screen facing outward.
2. Establish family rules and guidelines to include:
 - a. setting limits on how much time they spend online
 - b. no personal information given
 - c. no school information disclosed
 - d. review of pictures posted.
3. Reinforce the dangers of and penalties for sharing personal or school information. Many schools have policies against students posting information about the school, including the school name, teacher names, etc. Carefully review your school's policies and agreements with your child.
4. Prohibit any meeting in person with someone he/she knows only online, unless you are present.
5. Inform your children that you will monitor Internet use, messaging, and social networking in order to keep them safe.

For Parents of Teenagers (Aged 13-17)

1. Teens have more Internet access through cell phones, mobile devices, or friend's computers, as well as more time to themselves. Consequently, it is not realistic to always be in the same room as your teens when they are online. Reinforce the concept that you and other family members can walk in at anytime, and ask them what they are doing online.

2. Emphasize the concept of credibility and not everything the see on the Internet is true.
3. Let them know that everything on the Internet is public and that it is close to impossible to "take something back once it is posted"
4. Share stories using real examples of teens who have been harmed or hurt because of unsafe online practices .
5. Remind your teen that behind screen names, avatars, profiles are real people with values and feelings. They need to be mindful of what they say and exercise good judgment..
6. Inform your teen that many institutions and companies routinely comb social networking sites to determine if potential job applicants fit their expectations.
7. Remind students that photos can be as damaging to one's reputation as words. Review pictures that are posted.
8. Meeting someone contacted online carries considerable risk and is not advised. If a meeting is arranged adhere to the following:
 - a. do not meet alone.
 - b. go with a trusted adult..
 - c. meet in a public place.
 - d. if not what you expected, walk away and tell a parent or trusted adult.
9. Do not overreact if and when you find out that your teen has done something online of which you do not approve.
10. Reinforce the expectation that parents monitor Internet use and that safety rules must be followed.
11. If teens confide in you about something scary or inappropriate that they encountered online, your first response should not be to take away Internet privileges. Try to be supportive and work with them to help prevent this from happening in the future.

A Resource Provided to You Through the Protecting God's Children[®] Program



EDITOR'S NOTE: Parenting is the most influential responsibility an adult undertakes in life. It is also the one job for which adults receive the least amount of training. Society expects parents to know what to do, to always take appropriate actions, and to behave daily in a manner that provides a wonderful role model for their children. However, society does not provide parents the tools and skills they need to live up to these expectations. The National Catholic Risk Retention Group, Inc., provides parents with this free handbook to help them focus on practical steps designed to help protect children from sexual abuse. This handbook was produced for our Protecting God's Children program as a part of our VIRTUS[®] programs.

The first step to protecting children from sexual abuse is educating parents about the nature of the problem. Awareness about child sexual abuse—what it is and who commits it—opens the door to some simple steps parents can take to protect children. No one has more at stake or a more vested interest in protecting children than the people who gave them life. Awareness, education, and responsible parenting give a child the best tools for her or his defense—and the child may be more likely to tell an adult if something happens.

The Protecting God's Children program is designed for adults in our faith community—to raise their awareness about the nature of child sexual abuse, to educate them on how to recognize the warning signs, and to train them about what to do when they suspect a child is being victimized. The program includes awareness sessions, videos, web-based training modules, online training bulletins, and other programs specifically designed to assist parents and other adults.

The first of two centerpiece videos, *A Time to Protect God's Children*, presents an accurate, clear, and effective introduction to the subject of child sexual abuse. Awareness usually gives rise to the question: "What can I do?" The second video, *A Plan to Protect God's Children*, trains adults to recognize some of the primary symptoms of child sexual abuse and what to do if a child reports abuse.

We recognize that parents need practical advice. Parents bear the primary responsibility for the safety and well-being of their children. Here are some practical actions that parents can take to help protect their children from sexual abuse:

1. By virtue of their physical size, adults have power over children—and that increases a child's vulnerability. For example, parents and other authority figures teach children to "obey adults." When children hear this message, they may interpret it to mean that *all* adults have the authority to tell *all* children what to do, *all* the time. If this is a child's interpretation, then the message has created additional vulnerability for the child. Yet, some simple, common sense steps can help minimize a child's vulnerability. For example:



- Do NOT insist that children hug or kiss relatives or friends. Let children express affection on their own terms.

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- Let children know that their feelings are important to you. Intervene if you notice that your child is uncomfortable doing something that another adult asks him or her to do. Let the child know that you will protect him or her from this discomfort. That doesn't necessarily mean that you should let children off the hook when it comes to doing their chores or cleaning up a mess they've made.
2. Learn to recognize and take advantage of teachable moments with children. Be willing to openly discuss sensitive issues. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends the following age-appropriate conversations with children:
- From ages 18 months to 3 years—begin teaching children the proper names for all body parts.
 - Ages 3 to 5 years—teach children about private body parts and how to say “no” to anyone who touches them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable. Give them direct answers to questions about sex.
 - Ages 5 to 8 years—talk about good touches and bad touches, and safety away from home.
 - Ages 8 to 12 years—focus on personal safety issues.
 - Ages 13 to 18 years—discuss issues such as rape, date rape, HIV, other sexually transmitted diseases, and unintended pregnancy. There are also professionals in the community who can provide assistance with forming age-appropriate responses to children's questions and concerns. Remember, regardless of the child's age: **Take advantage of teachable moments.**
3. Games are a great way to reinforce the lessons you teach your children about safety issues. For example, children are always asking parents, “What if?” Using this same game, parents can raise their own concerns and encourage their children to *think* and *make decisions* relying on the lessons they have learned.
4. Teach children to say, “Stop it,” to instructions that might encourage them to do things that they *really* do not want to do. Reinforce the rule that children should say, “Stop it,” to requests or demands that make them uncomfortable, even if they *think* they should obey. A discussion of these rules can teach a child that there are some times when it is okay to say, “Stop it,” and other times when it is okay to go along with the instructions. Everything hinges on context. Parents must teach their children how to discern between an *appropriate* request and an *inappropriate* request.
- For example, it is appropriate to follow the instruction to “Be nice,” as long as the instruction is within an appropriate context, such as, “Be nice and don't throw things at the other children.” But, tell children it's okay to disobey this request if, for example, someone says, “Be nice and take off your clothes.”
5. Know where children spend their time. Get to know the adults who show up at the various locations in the community where children gather and where they play together. Be wary of any adult who seems more interested in creating a relationship with a child than with other adults. Pay attention when an adult seems to single out a particular child for a relationship or for special attention. Warning signs include treats, gifts, vacations, or other special favors offered only to one specific child.
6. Make unannounced visits to the child's nursery, babysitter, daycare center, or school. When choosing a nursery, daycare center, or school, make sure that there are no areas where children play or work that are “off limits” to parents. Taking these actions raises awareness among caregivers, and reinforces the responsibility they have for the safety of the children in their charge.



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7. Find out if the child's school or church religious education programs include a sex abuse prevention curriculum. If not, volunteer to be on a committee to establish such a program. Work with teachers to review available programs and make recommendations to school administrators. Talk with other parents about supporting the addition of child sexual abuse prevention material to existing child safety programs.



Do NOT allow a child to go alone on “vacation” with *any* adult other than the child's parent.

Do NOT allow a child to spend the night alone with *any* adult other than the child's parent or another **safe** adult.ⁱ

Except in the case of a serious emergency, Do NOT allow a child to travel alone—even for a very short distance—with *any* adult other than the child's parent or another **safe** adult. You should also prohibit children from accepting expensive gifts from an adult, particularly if one child is singled out for special attention.

Parents can make an important difference. However, without a supporting organization to help bring together a community's resources, experts, and commitment, parents are limited in their ability to impact community-wide child abuse prevention. That's where we can help.

The Church can join with parents to build a society where children are no longer at risk of being sexually abused, where those who have been victimized can find the resources and courage to heal, and where all people live together in loving, supportive relationships.

Resources:

Child Sexual Abuse: What It Is and How to Prevent It, American Academy of Pediatrics, 1999.

Adams, C., and Fay, J., *No More Secrets: Protecting Your Child From Sexual Abuse*, Impact Publishers, Ninth Printing, 1991.

Practical Advice for Parents on Preventing Child Sexual Abuse

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ⁱ “Safe adult” is a special designation used in the VIRTUS *Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Program for Parents and Guardians* to describe adults who have demonstrated that they behave in a safe manner when interacting with children.