



2026-2027

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION HANDBOOK

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OFFICE

3S601 Warren Avenue
Warrenville, IL 60555
630-393-2400, ext. 116

Director of Faith Formation

Mrs. Maggie Detwiler
630-393-2400 X122

**To report your child/ren's absence from RE class
Please call or email Maggie Detwiler**

Dear Parents,

We are very happy to welcome you to a new year of Religious Education here at St. Irene!

Our goal is to make disciples so that the children and families in our program are on fire with the faith and their love for God! Our hope is that, as they grow in their knowledge of the faith, they will become witnesses by their lives and be bold proclaimers of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Our catechists and assistants who instruct and hand on the faith are faith-filled Catholics who are eager and excited to share the Good News of the Kingdom of God with your children. They are very passionate about the Catholic faith and proclaim the love of God with great joy and enthusiasm.

The Religious Education program exists to assist you as parents in evangelizing and catechizing your children. Your role in your children's faith formation is vital. As the primary religious educators of your children, it is by your practice of the faith and by your example that your children will see how essential God and the faith are in your daily lives. Your teaching, support, example, attitude, and the values you impart, are fundamental for your children. To keep the faith alive at home, it is important to attend Sunday Mass weekly as a family, pray together daily, participate in the sacraments often, and complete any family activities that are provided.

I ask that you read this Family Handbook very carefully. It contains essential program and policy information. It is important that parents understand the handbook contents and are willing to comply with its directives.

If you have a question regarding anything in this handbook, please contact us. Also, if you would be interested in assisting the program further in a volunteer capacity, please feel free to contact us. We need many volunteers to make this beautiful ministry of handing on the faith to the children run smoothly and effectively.

Please take a look at our website, www.st-irene.org, and look at the Religious Education page to find information about the program. Also, please like the **St. Irene Religious Education** page on **Facebook!**

May the Holy Spirit guide and lead us in a grace-filled year!

In Christ,
Fr. Gregory Rothfuchs

Carrying the message of Christ's love to our children.

PHILOSOPHY

The philosophy of the Religious Education Program of St. Irene Church is based on three key principles:

1. Religious Education is a life-long process of entering into a personal relationship with God and getting to know Him more intimately. We strive to help the children recognize God's unconditional love, compassion, and forgiveness. Religious Education has a threefold mission:
 - a) Through the Word of God, in study and prayer, the children will hear the Good News of Salvation. They will gain a better understanding of Scripture, learn how to apply it in their lives, and be able to proclaim the Good News to others.
 - b) To promote Worship through prayer and an appreciation and growth in the love of the liturgy, the children will realize that worship is central to our lives as Catholics.
 - c) In Service to the church, community, and at home, the children will learn that helping others, especially those who are elderly and poor, are at the heart of living a life in Christ.
2. In providing doctrinal, moral, and liturgical enrichment; as well as formation in the sacramental life and values of the church, we seek to make disciples of Christ, whereby the children will give witness to Christ by leading lives of holiness.

GOALS

The Religious Education Program will strive to:

1. Develop a sense of personal worth as children of God, made in His image and likeness.
2. Develop a sense of community where relationships may be formed and they can genuinely grow in friendship, trust, and prayer.
3. Teach what Jesus taught by remaining faithful to the principle elements of the Christian message for Catechesis and the Church:
 - a. The Mystery of the Holy Trinity
 - b. Creation
 - c. Jesus Christ
 - d. The Holy Spirit
 - e. The Sacraments
 - f. The Life of Grace
 - g. The Moral Life
 - h. Mary and the SaintsAssist students in understanding and remembering:
 - a. the traditional prayers of the Church
 - b. the Beatitudes
 - c. the Ten Commandments
 - d. the Laws of the Church
4. Provide students with experiences of Christian Community:
 - a. to celebrate together the principle events of the liturgical year.
 - b. to promote participation in personal prayers and communal worship.
5. Guide students into commitments of Christian Service:
 - a. in doing service projects.
 - b. to activate Christian concern for issues of life, truth, and justice.

GUIDELINES FOR ST. IRENE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Classes in the St. Irene Religious Education Program will be taught in conformity with the teaching of the Church as presented in the General Catechetical Directory, in Sharing the Light of Faith, The National Catechetical Directory of United States, The Catechism of the Catholic Church and in accordance with the policies and guidelines of Religious Education Programs within the Diocese of Joliet.

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

CHANGE OF INFORMATION

It is the responsibility of the parent to notify the Religious Education Office if you should move or change any of the following information:

- **Phone Numbers: Home Phone, Cell Phone, Work Phone**
- **Address**
- **E-mail Address**
- **Health Status**
- **Marital Status and Custodial Situation**

FLOCKNOTE

News blasts, updates, and flyers will be emailed via Flocknote or hard copies may be sent with the oldest child of the family.

PROGRESS REPORTS

Progress reports will be given to the children in grades 1-8 in January and at the end of the catechetical year. These reports will help parents to keep track of their child's progress within the program and will also contain a record of the child's absences. Content, prayers and beliefs for each grade level are expected to be learned with assistance from our parents.

VOLUNTEERS

All volunteers are a wonderful asset to our program. Please call the Religious Education Office if you are able to give time to help in our program during the year. We count on your presence and your commitment.

All adult volunteers are required to attend a program called Protecting God's Children.

A volunteer background check form will be filled out by each volunteer.

CATECHISTS are the heart and soul of the Religious Education Program. They echo the life and stories about Jesus. Their time spent in preparation and presentation is greatly valued.

SUBSTITUTE CATECHISTS are vital to the program. They are needed to fill in when a catechist cannot come at their scheduled time.

CATECHIST ASSISTANTS, both adult and teen, are the strong right arms to the Catechists. Catechist Assistants are asked to perform many tasks such as attendance, listening to traditional prayers, helping children with class work, accompanying children to the office, making copies, helping with dismissal, etc.

OFFICE ASSISTANTS are willing volunteers who offer their time to help in the Religious Education Office. They assist with tasks such as: taking phone messages, collecting attendance sheets, making copies for catechists, preparing mailings and sacramental booklets, newsletters, etc. Other tasks include monitoring the doors, bathrooms, and hallways for security, greeting the children, and helping with dismissal.

The Parish website, www.st-irene.org, has a wealth of updated information for you. We encourage you to refer to it frequently. Here you may access a link to the Religious Education department.

GENERAL INFORMATION

CLASS SCHEDULE

Tuesdays

5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Grades 1 - 8

CONTINUITY

Parents are reminded that their child should be enrolled in the Religious Education Program the **entire eight years**. Acceptance into the Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Confirmation Programs is based upon regular attendance of the student in the Religious Education Program.

EMERGENCY CONTACT

The St. Irene Religious Education **Flocknote** enables the R.E. Office to notify all households and parents by email of an emergency or unplanned event that causes early dismissal or Religious Education cancellation. It will also allow us to send you announcements or reminders throughout the year.

Our office will also activate the Emergency Closing Center with our information. Parents and Volunteers can receive automatic e-mails on any changes of our schedule. To sign up for this free service, or check status on any closings, please visit the public website at www.emergencyclosings.com. Search under the “Religious” tab.

Automated weather related phone:

847-238-1234

Religious Education Office:

630-393-2400, x122 or 116

Reporting TV Stations:

CBS, NBC, ABC, WGN, FOX

Search for St. Irene Religious Education Program (CCD), Warrenville

ENROLLMENT

Enrollment in Religious Education is open to any child of a family seeking Catholic education and Sacramental Preparation. Registration in the parish is encouraged.

You may know neighbors or friends who for various reasons are not enrolled in a Religious Education Program. We ask you to encourage them to contact the Director at 630-393-2400, X122.

The grade level of a student entering the program will be left to the sole discretion of the Faith Formation Director, in dialogue with the parent(s) or guardian.

EXPECTATIONS

It is expected that each family become actively involved in St. Irene Religious Education Program and Parish, as evidenced by regularly participating in the Mass and financially supporting the parish, to model an active Christian faith and to reinforce the values and attitudes of living that faith. The parent and their child also **agrees** to act in accordance with these values and attitudes.

FIRST AID

State law regulates minor injuries to be treated with water, disinfectants and Band-Aids. We follow

the rules of universal precaution. The Religious Education Office has available to all catechists a supply of: disinfectants, Band-Aids, rubber gloves and Ziploc bags to dispose of any materials used to clean a wound. If there is a serious injury, we will call 911 and notify parents immediately. Our building is equipped with an AED (Automatic External Defibrillators)

HOME STUDY

Special arrangements must be made with the Faith Formation Director. It should be noted that even though a family may home school their children, the child must be in attendance in person in a Parish Religious Education Program for two years prior to the reception of the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Confirmation. For St. Irene Parish, that means the child must be in attendance in our Religious Education Program for Grades 1, 2, 7, and 8. Home Study is not permitted to accommodate schedules or extra-curricular activities.

LOST AND FOUND

If your child loses an article, please check with the Religious Education Office: 630-393-2400, X116.

MEDICATIONS

Except in extraordinary circumstances, which must be approved by the Director of Religious Education, personnel will not maintain, administer or supervise the taking of medication. An exception is made for use of EpiPens, but only with the doctor's authorization. Arrangements must be made each year with the Director.

STUDENT MATERIALS

Children in the program will be given folders in which they can carry their papers, etc. **Please check their folders weekly and remove work.** Students are given **textbooks** and materials that they are expected to bring to every class. Some teachers may choose to have the children leave their textbooks in the classroom. Students who lose their books (materials) may purchase a replacement from the Religious Education Office. Students will be given backpacks to carry their materials.

TUITION

The tuition for 2026-2027:

\$250.00 for one child

\$ 65.00 First Eucharist Program (Grade 2)

\$330.00 for two children

\$ 65.00 Confirmation Program (Grade 8 and High School)

\$400.00 for three or more children

\$50.00 payment is due at time of registration

No child will be denied instruction due to lack of funds. If payment for tuition presents a problem for you, financial arrangements must be made directly with the Director of Religious Education

POLICIES

ABSENCES

A student who misses 3 classes will receive a notification from the Religious Education Office. Make-up work will be assigned for any classes beyond the third absence. Please contact the Director ahead of time if you know your child will be missing more than 4 classes. Students in 1st and 7th grade sacramental preparation years who miss more the 4 classes may be required to attend make-up sessions during the following summer.

In the event of an emergency or illness parents are asked to call 630-393-2400, X122 to inform us of your child/ren's absence.

ABUSED AND NEGLECTED CHILDREN

Religious Education personnel are mandated reporters and are required by law to follow DCFS guidelines in reporting any suspicions of abuse or neglect.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is expected for the **full hour and thirty minutes of class each week**. Every class is important in the student's catechetical formation. The catechist facilitates the formation of community, proclaims the Word, encourages service and leads the students in prayer each week. Each class builds upon the preceding class.

ARRIVAL TIME

Students are expected to arrive no more than ten minutes before class time. If you need to drop your child/ren off early, they will need to wait in the RE Office/main lobby area, until their Catechist arrives.

CELL PHONES

Cell phone use is prohibited when Religious Education classes are in session. That means **any** cell phone: that rings, is used as a phone or a camera, or to text message may be claimed by the catechist or the assistant and sent to the Director's office. The parent will be required to retrieve the cell phone. It will not be returned to the student. Catechists may make the decision to collect all phones for the class period.

CELL PHONE LAW

Public Act 96-0131 went into effect January 1, 2010. **THIS LAW PROHIBITS ANY DRIVER, REGARDLESS OF AGE, FROM USING A CELL PHONE WHILE OPERATING A MOTOR VEHICLE IN A SCHOOL ZONE.** According to the Secretary of State, distracted driving has become a serious problem in both our nation and our state. So please follow the law! There should be no cell phone usage in our parking lot or on Warren Avenue in front of the school building. Keep our children safe!

CUSTODY ISSUES

If parents are divorced or separated, St. Irene Religious Education Program presumes that both parents have access to the children and their records unless one parent provides documentation that he or she has sole custody.

DELAYED PARENTS

If a parent is delayed in picking up their child, for the safety of the child, he/she will wait for pick-up with their catechist or the director in the Religious Education Office.

DISMISSAL

EARLY DISMISSAL:

Requests for early dismissal create a major disturbance to the class. We strongly discourage this – even occasionally. The catechist may not dismiss any student from the classroom.

An office assistant will contact the catechist - when the parent arrives - and request that the student be sent to the office. **Parents are to come into the building to sign the child out and meet their child in the Religious Education Office.**

It is recommended that parents schedule ALL extracurricular activities and appointments at a time that does not present a conflict with your child's Religious Education classes. **We do not consider sports activities a valid reason for early dismissal.**

DRUG/ ALCOHOL ABUSE POLICY

We will tolerate no possession or use of drugs or alcohol on Parish property. Serious consequences (including possible suspension or expulsion) will be taken should there be any infraction of this policy. All Religious Education Staff Members, Catechists, and Volunteers shall immediately notify the office in the event that they observe any person in possession of/or under the influence of drugs/alcohol on school grounds.

FOOD POLICY

The St. Irene school building is a shared space with other programs. As such, the classrooms need to remain allergy free and safe for all. Therefore, food or snacks are not permitted in the classrooms. There may be instances where arrangements can be made for an activity involving food in the Activity Center. **Please let us know if your child has any food allergies.**

Gum chewing is not permitted in the building at any time.

LATE ARRIVALS (TARDINESS)

Late arrivals are discouraged as they are disruptive to the class. Parents are requested to make every effort to have their children arrive on time for class sessions. **All tardy students must enter the building at door #1 facing Warren Ave. and come to the RE office to obtain a tardy slip.**

REGULAR DISMISSAL

Classes will end promptly at 7:00 PM. A student will be released to either parent unless the Religious Education Office has a copy of the court order giving one parent exclusive custody.

SECURITY

When dismissing from the school, we ask that the parents do not enter the building. Please wait outdoors for their child. Dismissal from the school building takes place at Doors #1 and #6 **only**.

To safeguard the well-being of our children during class time, our building doors will be locked at the beginning of class each week. Any person having business in the school building during these hours will be asked to come to the Religious Education Office via Door #1 and sign in. All other doors are always locked.

WEAPONS POLICY

St. Irene Parish takes seriously the safety and wellbeing of students in our care. We will tolerate no possession of any type of weapon (whether real or make-believe) on parish property. Serious consequences (including possible suspension or expulsion) will be taken should there be any infraction of this policy. All Religious Education Staff members, catechists, and volunteers shall immediately notify the office in the event that they observe any person in possession of a firearm or weapon on school grounds.

DROP-OFF & DISMISSAL PROCEDURES FOR 2026-2027

Parents and guardians are urged to use extreme caution when dropping off or picking up their children. Please follow posted entrance and exit signs to the south parking lot. Religious Education Staff, Catechists, and Assistants will help with drop-off and dismissal.

Please follow the directions given below.

Arrival at the School Building:

1. Students in 1st – 3rd grade should be dropped off in the parking lot on the south end of the school building. They should enter through door #6 and proceed to their classroom on the lower level.
2. Students in 4th – 8th grade should be dropped off on northbound Warren Avenue, exit their vehicle on the sidewalk side, and enter through Door #1 facing Warren Avenue.
3. If a student in 4th – 8th grades has (a) younger sibling(s) in 1st – 3rd grades, they should be dropped off in the south parking lot, enter through Door #6, bring their younger sibling(s) to class, and proceed upstairs inside the building.

Dismissal from the School Building:

Please park in the south lot and wait for your child(ren) outside. Children will be dismissed from the same doors from which they entered. Pick up on Warren Avenue if only on the Northbound side. Do not have your child cross the street to come to you.

Dismissal from Church:

On occasion, we will gather in Church at the end of class time. Parents will be alerted to these dates via Flocknote and invited to join us in Church. At the end of class, students will be dismissed to their parents in Church. You must come into Church to pick up your child. They will not be dismissed outside without a parent present.

SACRAMENTS

Sacraments are sacred moments in a person's life as he/she encounters Jesus Christ. Preparation for the Sacraments are joint efforts on the part of the child, the parents, and the catechist. Class time, parent meetings, parent participation, retreats, and celebration experiences are all necessary ingredients for a meaningful initiation into these sacramental experiences.

Sacraments are typically celebrated in:

Grade 2: First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion

Grade 8: Confirmation

First Reconciliation preparation begins in grade one and is further developed in grade two. There will be a group celebration in November for second grade children when the parents, in conjunction with the Pastor and Director, deem the child ready.

First Holy Communion preparation begins in grade one and is further developed in grade two. The celebration of this sacrament usually takes place in second grade when the parents, in conjunction with the Pastor and Director, deem the child ready.

Preparation for the initial reception of sacrament(s) by children in grades three through eight will be arranged, using age-appropriate instructional materials and procedures, with the parents by the Director.

Confirmation preparation begins in grade seven (Year I) and continues through grade eight (Year II). The candidate must have completed two consecutive years of Religious Education before they can be confirmed. If they have not taken Year I they will be required to do so.

There must be a desire and commitment to the requirements of the preparation programs and the Catholic faith on the part of the children and families preparing to receive sacraments.

EUCHARISTIC LITURGY

On the night before He died, Jesus directed us to remember Him by celebrating the Eucharist. It is the most important thing He told us to do. It is a GREAT blessing to be Catholic, that the God of the universe should humble Himself and take on the form of bread and wine, so to be intimately united to us. The Eucharist is the GREATEST gift we will ever receive! What a tremendous grace that we are called to share in this profound mystery of the Eucharistic meal, “the wedding feast of the lamb” (Rev. 19:9).

There is NOTHING more important in our whole life that we will ever do than go to Mass. God is so madly in love with us and longs to be with each one of us. We should have a great desire to attend Mass on Sunday, and as often as we can, to be so closely united to Our Lord. Mass is essential to coming to know God and growing in our relationship with Him. Parents, as the primary educators of their children, show by example their commitment to weekly participation in the Sunday Eucharist. May we help our children grow in love of God and the Eucharist by attending Mass on Sunday as a family.

Each week the children in every grade level, 1-8, are expected to fill out a **Mass Reflection** that they can obtain from their catechist, or use a journal as a class. This is a great way for the children to pay attention and participate in the Sunday Liturgy. It provides a wonderful opportunity to discuss the Mass with your children so they will gain a deeper understanding and appreciation for the liturgy.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

CONDUCT

Students in the Religious Education Classes are reminded that the rooms and desks they use for class are shared with other ministry groups and other children programs within the parish. All are expected to respect the property of the school and other students. Parents are responsible for any damage to or theft of St. Irene property.

Good conduct, cooperation, attention, and courtesy are expected during class time. Any student who continually fails to cooperate with the Catechist and other students within a class shall be spoken to privately. A parent may be called in if necessary.

The Religious Education program defines serious misconduct as, but not limited to, fighting, stealing, cheating, and possession/use of drugs, weapons, and/or alcohol, disrespect to staff, gang involvement, vandalism, aggressive behavior, swearing, vulgarity, and possession of dangerous items.

OTHER EXPECTATIONS

- The children will enter and exit school in an appropriate manner.
- The Catechist must be present in the classroom before the students may enter.
- Students will take assigned places in the classroom and need permission to leave their seats.
- Coats and hats are not to be worn during class. There will be a designated place for coats and hats.
- Modest attire is required. Wearing any of the following: suggestive logo or wording on t-shirt low-rise jeans that expose underwear, and low-cut tops may result in your child being sent home.
- Catechists, assistants, and students should display mutual respect.
- Students will raise their hands and wait for permission before speaking.
- Textbooks and appropriate materials are required for each class.

HOMEWORK AND THE PARENT'S ROLE

It is our hope and expectation that parent's worship with their children at Mass. Parents should be modeling their faith, talking about their faith and values and telling and re-telling stories about Jesus. Parents are asked to review what has been taught in class and help the children with any homework a Catechist may have assigned. Parents are also encouraged to take time to pray with their children and help them learn the traditional prayers. There are scheduled Family Masses that occur during class time in the calendar program year that you are expected to attend with your child/ren.

CURRICULUM

Grades 1 through 6 curriculum used is **Word of Life** published by Augustine Institute/Ignatius Press. Word of Life employs an engaging and relevant kerygmatic catechesis that young learners will enjoy through a blended learning model of textbook and engaging video enhancements. State-of-the-Art digital components that allow young learners and parents to interact with dynamic faith formation materials will be used both in the classroom and at home.

Word of Life uses a teach-the-teacher model that equips teachers to present lessons effectively and themselves to be more deeply formed in the faith as they teach. When teachers and catechists are well-formed and passionate about the content, everyone wins. It is an authentic and comprehensive program for both children and parents, providing complete family faith formation with Word of Life materials and the expansive digital library of Augustine Institute and Ignatius Press.

Confirmation Year I & II (Grades 7 & 8) curriculum used is **Decision Point** published by Dynamic Catholic. Decision Point is a program created to prepare young Catholics for the Sacrament of Confirmation. It has been designed to ignite a conversation about the genius of Catholicism between candidates, parents, sponsors, catechists, peers and priests. A version of the program is available in the form of weekly email. This invites parents and sponsors to have an incredible adult faith formation experience alongside the candidates as they prepare for the Sacrament of Confirmation. The various components of the program are experienced in the traditional format of workbook and seventy-two short films, which lead to great opportunities for class or small group discussions over the two-year formation years. All resources are free online and are also available using an app format. To learn more, visit DynamicCatholic.com/Confirmation.

Addition Confirmation requirements will be discussed in separate communication.

Grades 7 & 8 will also be issued a **Youcat**, a youth catechism that is written in language suitable for young people to understand the faith.

MASTERY OF CATHOLIC PRAYERS AND BELIEFS



<u>GRADE LEVEL</u>	<u>PRAYERS / BELIEFS</u>
1st	Sign of the Cross Angel of God Glory Be Our Father Hail Mary Grace Before Meals
2nd	Review 1st grade prayers Morning Offering Act of Contrition
3rd	Review 1st and 2nd grade prayers Apostles Creed Seven Sacraments
4th	Review 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade prayers and beliefs Ten Commandments Memorare to the Blessed Virgin
5th	Review 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th grade prayers and beliefs Eight Beatitudes Prayers of the Mass Prayer to St. Michael
6th	Review 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5th grades prayers and beliefs Nicene Creed
7th	Review 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6th grades prayers and beliefs 7 Spiritual Works of Mercy 7 Corporal Works of Mercy
8th	Review 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7th grade prayers and beliefs Gifts of the Holy Spirit Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Students grades 1-5 will be periodically pulled from their regular classes to be individually tested on the recitation of the prayers listed with Mrs. Dianne Urso.

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

All religious education and other programs for youth in the Diocese of Joliet shall actively seek to provide a supportive, caring environment in which all persons are safe from all forms of intimidation including bullying, which is unacceptable, unchristian, and strictly prohibited.

For the purpose of this policy, bullying is defined in conformity with Illinois Law as follows:

“Any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

- (1) Placing the child/youth in reasonable fear of harm to the child/youth’s person or property;
- (2) Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the child/youth’s physical or mental health;
- (3) Substantially interfering with one/more child’s or one/more youth’s academic performance; or
- (4) Substantially interfering with one/more child’s or one/more youth’s ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a parish.”

105 ILCS 5/27-23.7 (b)

Bullying Conduct

Bullying conduct covered by this policy is conduct that occurs on parish property or at parish sponsored activities or events; while children/youth are being transported or walking to or from the parish or parish sponsored activities or events; while children/youth are waiting in transportation pick-up/drop-off zones; or cyber bullying as defined hereinafter.

Cyber Bullying

This policy prohibits bullying and intimidation of children/youth through the use of internet and social media sites on any electronic device (private, public, or parish owned), whether on or off the parish campus, or during non-attendance hours.

Any child/youth who engages in bullying will be subject to appropriate discipline, up to and including suspension or expulsion and referral to local law enforcement. Behavioral interventions may be included as a component of the disciplinary actions. This may include but is not limited to mandatory counseling.

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Retaliatory behavior by a child/youth accused of bullying will also incur consequences. False accusations of bullying will result in disciplinary action taken against the accuser. Any reported bullying issue will be promptly brought to the attention of the appropriate party: the Pastor or Director of Religious Education/Parish Catechetical Leader or designee, and there after investigated. Reference: *The Illinois School Code*, 105 ILCS, 5/27-23.7

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 hugging. 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/risks, healthy relationships, and personal safety can make a difference. Teens should:

- Recall that human sexuality is a good gift from God. Inmate touching and sexual intercourse are morally appropriate only within marriage.
- Know their own wishes, limits, and values. 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.children.org/parents/parentsinfo/>

If someone has been abused, contact the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services at 1-800-254-ABUSE (1-800-254-2873)

Parent Guide



Understanding & Preventing Child Sexual Abuse



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

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 proactively 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 (815-221-4147) and at the Catholic Schools Office (815-221-6126) 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
Charterholder

Content of this brochure is adapted from *Keeping Children Safe from Abuse: Tips for Parents and Caregivers*
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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 the area 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 education.

Safety with Babysitters

- Ask babysitters for references and check them.
- Interview babysitters in person. Ask how they discipline children. Ask what if transitions 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 meals!
- 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 caring for teens, 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 safely 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.
- Renew 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.