



Illuminations

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Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta • OCYP Newsletter

NEW CONTACT INFO

Address

2401 Lake Park Dr. SE
Smyrna, GA 30080

Main Phone Number

404-920-7550

FAX

404-920-7551

Jennifer Broel

404-920-7553

Director

Safe Environment Program

jbroel@archatl.com

Sue Stubbs MS, NCC

404-920-7554

Director

Victim Assistance Program

sstubbs@archatl.com

WEBPAGE

www.archatl.com/offices/ocyp/



24 Hour Reporting Hotline

888-437-0764

If reporting during regular business hours, call us directly first. If you cannot reach us in person, call the hotline.



OCYP National Office

Have you ever wondered or been asked what the Magisterial teachings are on the subject of sexual abuse? Wouldn't it be great if there were a summary of this very topic that would be easy to refer to and reference? Well you are in luck! The OCYP National Office has posted on their web page just such a summary: *Magisterial Teachings on the Protection of God's Children*. This document answers such questions as "Where can I find the Magisterial Teachings on Child Sexual Abuse and what do they say?" and "What are some ways Catholics could live out the teachings in relating to survivors of sexual abuse?" and many more. The link for this document can be found at www.usccb.org/ocyp/resources.shtml. Consider making parents, catechists and parishioners aware of this document through your parish bulletin, website, or another form of media you utilize to communicate with them.



Safe Environment Program

As you wrap up the school year, remember to complete the Children/Youth tracking form and submit it to the Office of Safe Environment via fax 404-920-7551, e-mail at jbroel@archatl.com, or US mail (the new address is noted at the top of the left margin) by the end of the school year. All forms **MUST** be signed by your Pastor or Principal. For all of you that have already submitted the form, THANK YOU!!!

Also, keep in mind that you can order "You Matter" materials by completing our online form at <http://www.archatl.com/offices/ocyp/order/index.php>.



Victim Assistance Program



The Way: A Healing Retreat for Male Survivors of Abuse is a 3-day retreat being offered by the Archdiocese of Atlanta's Victim Assistance Program the weekend of July 8-10, 2011 at Carmel Retreat Center in Hoschton, GA. Please review the brochure on-line for details of this retreat and pass the information on to anyone you may know who could benefit from this experience (<http://www.archatl.com/offices/ocyp/vassistance/services.html>).

Hard copies of the brochure are available upon request by contacting Sue Stubbs at 404-920-7550 or sstubbs@archatl.com.

Feature Article

Messages Children Hear in the Safe Environment Programs

Mary Jane Doerr ♦ Associate Director, USCCB Secretariat for Child & Youth Protection ♦ Washington, D.C.

When schools launch a new academic year, millions of children also are set to learn the ABC's of child protection. In Catholic schools and parishes nationwide, safe environment training gives children the skills necessary to protect themselves from would-be-offenders. Mary Jane Doerr, associate director of the Secretariat for Child and Youth Protection of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), has listed here some of the messages children hear in safe environment programs.

1. **Abuse is never a child's fault**, a point that children need to hear over and over again. Offenders try hard to make children feel complicit in the abuse or to blame them for the abuse. Children learn that that is never true! The blame **always** belongs to the adult who is taking advantage of a child's trust and vulnerabilities.
2. **God loves children forever and wants them to live holy and happy lives.** If a child has been abused, that child learns they are still innocent and loved by God and their families. The shame of child sexual abuse needs to be put where it belongs: on the abuser.
3. **Abuse that has happened should be reported.** Children learn to tell a parent or another trusted adult if someone is hurting them and to keep telling until they are believed. One study shows that children tell of their abuse an average of nine times before someone believes them. Parents can help children learn whom they can trust by pointing out the adults who can be trusted. Parents can also teach children the correct names of private body parts. This simple step gives children the vocabulary to tell others what happened to them.
4. **You can recognize abuse when it happens.** Children learn to trust that feeling that says something isn't right and to tell a parent or other trusted adult when something happens that makes them feel uneasy. Children learn to question if someone is telling them to do what the child doesn't like but says it is because he loves the child. Children learn to tell parents or trusted adult if another person makes them sad or confused or tries to get them to break rules. This can stop the process of grooming by which an abuser lures a child toward danger. A child who questions another's inappropriate behavior can send a message to the offender that this child is not an easy target, but one that will tell what is being done to him/her.
5. **There are ways to spot a grooming process.** Offenders are willing to spend a great deal of time grooming the family, the child and even the community so they may be seen as a trusted family friend. Children learn that anyone who lets children break rules, gives them alcohol or shows them pornography needs to be reported to parents and other trusted adults. Children learn not to keep secrets from parents. They learn that they should tell parents when someone gives them special gifts or is always touching them or tickling them and says not to tell.
6. **Parents or other trusted adults will talk about this subject.** Children often try to protect their parents from bad news, so they need to learn they can tell their parents anything. This lesson is conveyed when parents stay involved in their children's activities and talk with them about what is happening in their lives. This is how children learn what can be shared with parents. The more effective safe environment programs include parents in the learning process. This gives the child a clear signal that this subject is not off limits but instead is something to be talked about with family members.
7. **Boundaries exist.** Learning about personal boundaries can protect children and their knowing boundaries reinforces the teaching to listen to one's instincts. Children who listen to the voice that says, "This doesn't feel right," can protect themselves.
8. **Children can stand up for themselves.** Children need to be respectful and obey, yet at the same time need to know there are times when it is okay to say no to an adult. Children learn when it is appropriate for them to say, "No, stop doing that." For example, they hear they can say no to someone who makes them uncomfortable, shows them pornography, or offers them alcohol.
9. **There are ways to explain inappropriate behavior.** Children learn how to describe what's happening when someone is doing something that just seems a "little weird" even though it may not seem wrong. The ability to articulate what has happened to a child enables a child to more easily confide in a parent or other trusted adult. This can alert the adult to a potentially dangerous situation so it can be avoided. This is ultimately the goal of safe environment education.