



Parish Bulletin Resource



These bulletin blurbs were provided by the USCCB Secretariat for Child & Youth Protection for use in your parish bulletin under this headline:

Promise to Protect. Pledge to Heal. *Safety & Healing for all God's Children*

Suggested uses: There is no particular order, use any of them as needed or one every week, *especially during April which is Child Abuse Prevention Month.*

Five Steps to Safer Environments

The Archdiocese of Atlanta mandates that all people who work with children and youth in our parishes and schools must undergo child abuse prevention training through the YOU MATTER program. The training details the warning signs of an inappropriate relationship with a child. Other steps to preventing child abuse are:

1. Control access to children by carefully selecting the adults who work with children and youth.
2. Monitor all programs for the safety of children and youth.
3. Be aware of and sensitive to what is going on in the lives of children.
4. Communicate concerns to the appropriate person in authority.

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Test Your Knowledge of Abuse Prevention: True or False?

It is common for both child and adult victims of sexual assault to wait some time before telling someone about the abuse. True. It is common for victims of sexual assault to wait some time before telling someone. When the person was assaulted as a child, he or she may wait years or decades. The reasons for this are numerous: victims may want to deny the fact that someone they trusted could do this to them; they may want to just put it behind them; they may believe the myth that they caused the assault by their behavior; or they may fear how other people will react to the truth.

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Learn to “Stop” Inappropriate Activity Before It Happens

Child safety tip: Teach your child to respect the word “stop!” Teach your preschooler that “stop” means “stop,” and that your child has the right to stop people from touching his or her body. Obviously, exceptions will have to be made for doctors and parents, but even parents must listen when a child doesn't want to be tickled or

hugged anymore. Reinforcing this excellent lesson gives your child the power to recognize—and to stop—“bad touching” by others if it should happen.

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Source: “Know the Rules . . . After-School Safety Tips for Children Who Are Home Alone,” www.kidsafe.com.

Know Your Kids’ School

Parents and guardians have the primary responsibility for protecting their children from all potential harm. When choosing a nursery, daycare center, or school, parents should inspect the building and grounds to make sure there are no areas where children play or work that are “off limits” to parents. Such facilities should have a policy that welcomes parents to visit the center or school without prior appointment.

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Source: Philip J. Lazarus, “Characteristics of Safe and Responsive Schools,” VIRTUS, January 14, 2002.

We need to know...

Estimates are that approximately 60% of abusers are men, 15 to 20% are women, and 20 to 40% are men and women acting together. So while men are indeed the majority of sexual abusers, it is dangerous to underestimate the risk that female sexual abusers also pose to children. Among educators, 57.2% of abusers are male, and 42.4% of abusers are female.

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Source: Charol Shakeshaft, Hofstra University, from speech given at the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

An Appropriate Way to Report Inappropriate Behavior

How should you communicate your concerns to someone who may be behaving inappropriately with children? The “I” message is a simple way to reframe what you want to say so that the listener hears you speak of your feelings and concerns rather than hearing a complaint against him- or herself. The “I” message, simply diagrammed, says, “I feel [feeling] when [situation] because [reason].” For example, you can say, “I feel anxious when you drive a child home alone after religious education classes, because that could put you or the child in a potentially risky situation.” It is a much more constructive approach than saying, “You shouldn’t be driving children home alone because it is against the rules and puts them in danger.”

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Source: Paul J. Ashton, “CAREfronting vs. Confronting Those Who Behave Inappropriately”

Educational Materials on the Danger of Abuse

The overwhelming majority of our clergy and lay leaders are hardworking individuals who are dedicated to serving the People of God in our parishes and schools. All of us together are responsible for making sure that all of our ministries are as safe as possible for our children and young people. That means each of us has a responsibility to educate ourselves about the real danger of sexual abuse.

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Audit Results

Did you know that an independent audit released in 2010 found the Archdiocese of Atlanta to be in full compliance with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*? As a matter of fact, the results of these audits across the nation have been compiled and they show that since 2002 the Catholic Church in the U.S. has trained over 5 million children and 2 million adults in how to recognize, respond and prevent child abuse AND background screened almost 2 million adults (employees, volunteers & clergy). That is truly amazing and we all deserve a pat on the back for making it happen. Thanks for your cooperation and for caring deeply about keeping our kids safe!

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Source: "2007 Report on the Implementation of the Charter for the Protection of Children & Young People: Findings and Recommendations" (March 2008), www.usccb.org/ocyp/annual_report2007.shtml

Get Involved in Parish Safety Programs

Parents and guardians play a key role in the success of parish programs for young people. Parents and guardians who are involved in parish programs and events will be in the best position to protect their own children as well as all the children in the parish community. Involvement and communication are important factors in helping to ensure safe environments for all of our children. Contact the parish office for more information on how you can become actively involved in the safe environment training programs in our parish.

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Listen to Your Children

This summer, when your children are out of school and on different schedules, meeting new people and going to new places, make sure that you talk to them often about their experiences and the people they've met. Listen carefully to your children. If possible, observe and get to know the other children and adults who are part of your children's summertime fun. Above all, communicate your safety concerns to your children. Make sure they know that they can come to you with any concerns they may have about the people they interact with. And

if you hear of or observe behaviors that may be inappropriate, make sure to communicate your feelings to people who are in a position to intervene. Communication is the key to creating and maintaining a safe environment all year round.

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Source: www.kidsafe.com

Summertime, Safe Time

All teachers, staff, and volunteers in the Archdiocese of Atlanta who work with children must undergo fingerprinting and criminal background checks. Archdiocesan guidelines and abuse prevention training programs currently in use emphasize the importance of parents' knowing who has access to their children at school and other Church-sponsored activities. Summertime is here, and parents should remain vigilant regarding who is granted access to their children. Make sure camp counselors have undergone criminal background checks. And make sure you know the camp's daily routine. In particular, make sure that no camp activity results in a child being left alone with one adult. All activities should be supervised by more than one adult, and the camp should be open to unannounced drop-in visits from parents.

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Source: Sharon Womack Doty, "Summer Safety—Monitor All Programs!"

Preventing Child Abuse Is Everyone's Responsibility

It is every adult's moral responsibility to protect possible victims by reporting the suspected abuse or neglect to the responsible authorities. Sexual abuse of minors is a pervasive societal problem, and only concerted and sustained efforts by all adults in every segment of society can help to protect children and youth. To find out who to call to report abuse in your county, visit *How to Report* and *DFCS Contacts* on the Office of Child & Youth Protection webpage at www.archatl.com/offices/cyp/ or call the numbers below.

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Ensuring Your Child's School Is Safe

Every employee and any volunteer who works with children in the Archdiocese of Atlanta's parishes and schools must have a background check before he or she is permitted to work in any school or parish related job or activity that involves contact with children. But what about the children who attend non-Catholic private or public schools? Talk with school administrators and find out what steps they take to protect children from harm. Suggest that they review other abuse prevention programs to ensure that their policies and practices are up to date. And demand that all employees and volunteers who work in the school be properly screened, including background checks, before they are allowed to work with your children.

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Internet Filter Software Is No Substitute for Parental Monitoring

There is a lot of material on the Internet that is inappropriate for children. Parents can use filtering software to protect children from that material, but filters do not guarantee that children will not be exposed; a filter will never be a substitute for parents' presence. Monitor your child's online behavior. Keep your family computer in a highly visible, common area, like the family room or the kitchen. Ask your children to show you what sites they go to, and be open and willing to discuss the inappropriate material they might come across.

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Source: www.netsmartz.org

Keeping Your Child's Personal Information Personal

If your children give out personal information over the Internet, not only is it easy to track, it's tough to completely remove. Emphasize to them how important it is that they keep personal information private. Make sure that they have a strong (ideally, alphanumeric) username and password that don't reveal anything personal. Encourage them not to give out their e-mail address, if they have one. If your children tell you that they have given out personal information online, contact your Internet service provider or the site where the information is posted to see what you can do to have it removed. For more information, visit www.netsmartz.org.

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Be Vigilant

It is vitally important that we are constantly vigilant—that we always observe the behaviors of those who interact with children. And we must always communicate our concerns to the appropriate parties. Sometimes this means communicating our safety concerns to our children. And sometimes this means communicating our concerns about seemingly inappropriate behavior to those who are in a position to intervene. Parents must also listen carefully to their children and observe both their children's activities and the behavior of older children and adults who interact with them. When children exhibit dramatic behavioral changes, adults must find out what caused the changes. Being aware of what's happening with our children means talking to, listening to, and observing them—at every opportunity.

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Reporting Suspected Abuse Takes Courage

When any adult in the faith community has reason to suspect that a child is being or has been abused, he or she has a moral (and often a legal) responsibility to report those suspicions to civil authorities. Reporting suspected abuse takes courage. However, adults who take a stand for children and make the call are often responsible for saving a child from terrible torment. To find out who to call to report abuse in your county, visit *How to Report* on the Office of Child & Youth Protection webpage at www.archatl.com/offices/cyp/ or call the numbers below.

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Safety Rules Bear Repeating

Research reminds us that teaching children how to resist the overtures of a potential molester requires repetition and reinforcement. Children and young people need to know the rules, and they need to hear them over and over and over again so that the rules become part of a thought process. This is done in the same way we teach the rules about looking both ways before crossing the street and the danger of getting too close to an open flame. Empowering children to speak up and resist the overtures of potential molesters can stop a child molester in his or her tracks. Molesters who fear being caught—and being labeled a molester—may decide it is not worth the risk and back off.

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Children Do Not Lie About Abuse

Most children are not lying when they say that they were abused. Less than 5% of all allegations are intentionally false. It is more likely that children will refuse to tell about abuse than to lie about abuse. Several studies estimate that only about 6% of all children report sexual abuse by an adult to someone who can do something about it. The other 94% do not tell anyone or talk only to a friend (and they swear their friend to secrecy). To find out more about how to create an environment where children are confident in disclosing information that may indicate that they were abused, watch the YOU MATTER Safe Environment videos available on-line at www.archatl.com/offices/cyp/ under *Safe Environment Materials*.

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Assistance Ministry Helps Abuse Victims

Did you know that outreach to victims of sexual abuse is one of the ministries in the Archdiocese of Atlanta? The Office of Child and Youth Protection provides assistance towards healing by means of therapy, spiritual direction, and mutual support groups. The director of the office, Sue Stubbs, is a Nationally Certified Masters level counselor with over 9 years helping victims of abuse. **If now, or at any time in the past, a priest, deacon, or other person representing the Church has sexually abused you, you are urged to contact Sue at 404-920-7550 or the 24 Hour Reporting Line at 888-437-0764.**

Can You Pass the “Blog Beware” Quiz?

Internet blogs and other social networking sites have recently exploded in popularity and in the news. The number of *MySpace.com* users is estimated at more than 67 million. The majority of activity on these and other youth-oriented Web sites is positive. However, we’ve all read stories of how those who would harm children use these sites to lure children and teens into inappropriate discussions. To combat this danger, www.netismartz.org offers a wide range of Internet safety resources for parents and children. Start by taking the “Blog Beware” quiz. For kids, there’s a related site: www.netismartzkids.org.

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Source: www.netismartzkids.org

Do Those Missing Children Postcards Really Work?

Absolutely! One in six of the missing kids featured on these cards are recovered as a direct result of the photograph. The cards with the photographs of missing children reach up to 79 million homes weekly. So the next time you reach into your mailbox and find one of these cards, take a good look at the child’s picture. You never know when you might be the one who makes the difference in helping to find a missing child.

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Source: “The Importance of Photos,” www.missingkids.com.

@TEOTD Are Your Kids AATK?

Do you understand the sentence above? Chances are your kids do. The Internet is a great resource for information and fun; but like nearly everything else these days, cyberspace brings with it its own set of challenges for parents. Parents should monitor their children’s Internet use and become familiar with the multitude of abbreviations, acronyms, and other shorthand that their children may be receiving via Internet chat rooms, instant messaging systems, and text message devices. For a searchable database of this Internet lingo, please visit www.lingo2word.com/index.php.

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Screening and Training of Personnel Who Work with Children

Did you know that all Catholic school personnel in the Archdiocese of Atlanta are screened for their ability to work safely with children, are provided information and training to help them recognize and deal with issues of child sexual abuse, and are offered guidance and instruction on appropriate professional conduct with students? Likewise, all seminarians and candidates for the diaconate go through extensive evaluation and psychological assessment before entering formation. After ordination, priests and deacons receive ongoing training on

maintaining the integrity of the ministerial relationship. Thanks for your dedication and hard work in keeping our kids safe!

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Healing Those Harmed by Clergy Sexual Abuse

The Archdiocese of Atlanta has committed significant resources to help those who were sexually abused by Church personnel to recover from their horrible experiences. We hope our efforts will help, but we realize that only the grace of God can provide the complete healing the victims need. In the midst of this sorrowful story, lessons have been learned and taken deeply to heart. Ineffective policies of the past have been rejected. Understandings that did not measure up to human realities have changed. New insights and policies can now offer protection to all people.

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The Dangers of Webcams

A webcam is a video camera that is connected to a user's computer and is most often positioned on top of the user's computer monitor. When activated in conjunction with an online service, the webcam will permit the user to transmit video images of himself or herself to others in real time. Webcams can be a source of convenience and amusement for viewing friends from other schools or relatives who live out of state. Unfortunately, due to its use by child molesters who search the Internet for unsuspecting children, the webcam is the single most dangerous peripheral device that can be attached to a child's or young person's computer. Prior to connecting a webcam or a microphone to a computer, specific rules should be established to help protect the safety of everyone involved.

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Source: Robert Hugh Farley, "Webcams and Other Real-Time Online Dangers"

Rejoice in Hope

Scripture tells us to "rejoice in hope" (Rom 12:12), and it is through this powerful invitation that many come to wholeness and healing. St. Augustine said: "We are an Easter people, and Alleluia is our song." And St. Thomas Aquinas said: "We should be an Alleluia from head to toe." They remind us about the importance of our call to be men and women of celebration about our life as fully redeemed, fully loved, and fully alive human beings. These reminders call all victims and survivors of sexual abuse to rejoice in the great hope that they will again, one day, be fully a thriver in the community—someone whose gifts are acknowledged, whose abuse is believed, and whose life is valued by others. **For more information on preventing sexual abuse and on the outreach programs available to help victims to heal, please contact: Sue Stubbs or Jennifer Broel 404-920-7550.**

Source: Paul J. Ashton, "Hope for Healing, Surviving, and Thriving"

Compliments Can Support Abuse Prevention Efforts

You can help create a safer environment for children by identifying the strengths in those around you and providing each of your employees, co-workers, and peers with genuine compliments regarding their respective contribution to your community's abuse prevention efforts. Everyone appreciates a pat on the back every now and then. Notice those who genuinely inspire you, and give them a genuine and well-deserved pat on the back. For more information about your parish's programs to educate and train adults in child abuse prevention, please call the parish office.

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Learning Something New About an Abuse-Related Issue

You can help create a safer environment for children by learning something new each week about an abuse-related issue. It doesn't have to be something major or time-consuming to be a benefit. It could be as simple as keeping your eye open for news items or statistics that broaden your understanding about different types of abuse, characteristics of abusers, warning signs that a child is a victim, and other such information. The sources are all around you . . . TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, the Internet, co-workers, peer groups . . . it's up to you to create a specific action plan that defines how much effort you'll invest each week and how much you intend to learn, and then to identify specific sources for information.

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Dangers of Cell Phone Cameras

Cell phones with photographic capability are a mixed blessing. Forget your camera? Whip out the cell phone, and your toddler's first step, friend's goofy mishap, or a fender-bender is captured for posterity. But cell phones are also being used in a sinister way—to silently take pictures of unsuspecting children, adolescents, and adults without their consent. Plus, unlike conventional photographs, digital photos can be placed on the Internet very quickly—within minutes of taking the photo—and distributed around the world. In fact, some Web sites have been created for the sole purpose of posting photos taken surreptitiously with camera phones. Have a healthy suspicion of anyone using a cell phone in an awkward way, such as not holding it up to his or her ear or facing his or her mouth in a walkie-talkie style. If you see someone using a cell phone in a way that appears suspicious, don't be afraid to ask what he or she is doing or to alert someone in a position of authority about your concerns.

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Source: Donna Albertone, "Taking a Closer Look at Cell Phone Video Voyeurism"

Is Child Sexual Abuse Still a Crisis Today?

Is child sexual abuse still a crisis today? Regardless of the answer, we are faced with both good and bad news. Instead of scandalous headlines and emotionally charged confrontations, child sexual abuse has become a very sad reality in our daily lives. Child sexual abuse has been, is, and will continue to be a societal evil that must be battled each and every day for as long as there are children to protect. But if we are willing to face this daily challenge, to tackle this unfortunate and tragic problem, to treat child safety and security as a ministry, then it truly can be said that we are a part of the solution.

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