



Honor Thy Children

Archdiocese of Louisville continuing education for the awareness and prevention of child abuse

WHY SUMMER IS THE PERFECT TIME TO TALK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE

Prevention starts with understanding

Across Kentucky, school will be letting out for the summer soon, and many parents are taking advantage of this time to talk to their kids about what they want to do over their break. While scheduling fun is an important part of any summer plan, parents should consider another important aspect of their conversation with their kids: talking about sexual abuse.

Many parents are uncomfortable with the idea of talking to their children about sex in any form. Yet failing to talk to your kids about appropriate and inappropriate touch can actually make them more vulnerable to sexual predators. Talking about these issues can actually make your kids feel more comfortable coming to you if they do have a problem. Summer is the perfect time

to start this conversation, as it is a time when children tend to have more freedom, and are around other adults in different situations than they otherwise would be during the school year. For younger kids, it is also a good way to introduce a simple rule: anything covered by a bathing suit is considered a private part. Below are some other tips to help guide your conversation:

SUMMERTIME TIPS FOR TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE

- Give examples of appropriate and inappropriate touch. For example, changing a baby's diaper or a doctor giving a checkup would be considered an appropriate touch, while someone touching their private part against their will would be an inappropriate touch.
- Give them a strategy of what to do if anything makes them uncomfortable, such as telling a parent or other trusted adult.
- Emphasize that there are no secrets from parents or the trusted adult. Secrets are often used by predators to manipulate kids. Let your child know that if someone wants them to keep a secret from a parent or trusted adult, that they should not keep that secret.
- Validate their feelings. Make sure that your children know that they can trust their instincts, and that you will respect how they are feeling.
- Make sure that your kids know that it's OK to say "no" to touches that are unwelcome (other than touches that are necessary for health or safety reasons), and that you will support them in their decision. For example, if Great Aunt Sally wants a kiss or a hug, don't force your child if he or she is unwilling to give a kiss or a hug. Empower your child to say no, and support them in that choice. (You'll find more examples on page 3)

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**If you need support or
someone to talk to:**

- © Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky or Indiana:
800.CHILDREN/
800.422.4453
www.pcaky.org
www.pcaain.org
- © Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline
800.4.A.CHILD
800.422.4453
www.childhelp.org

Signs of Possible Sexual Abuse

- Unexplained pain, itching, redness or bleeding in the genital area
- Increased nightmares or bedwetting
- Withdrawn behavior
- Angry outbursts/mood swings
- Loss of appetite or difficulty swallowing
- Sudden/unexplained avoidance of certain people or places
- Sexual knowledge, language or behavior that is unusual for the child's age.

WARNING SIGNS

Every 8 minutes, government authorities respond to another report of child sexual abuse. Child sexual abuse can include sexual contact with a child, but it may also include other actions, like exposing oneself, sharing obscene images, or taking inappropriate photos or videos of a child. These crimes can have a serious impact of the life and development of a child, and can continue to impact the survivor later in life. Learning the warning signs of child sexual abuse is often the first step to protecting a child that is in danger. If you can spot sex-

ual abuse, you can stop it. It's not always easy to spot sexual abuse because perpetrators often take steps to hide their actions. Some signs are easier to spot than others. For instance, some warning signs might be noticed by a caretaker or parent, and are often red flags that the child needs medical attention. Listen to your instincts. If you notice something that isn't right or someone is making you uncomfortable—even if you can't put your finger on why—it's important to talk to the child.

WARNING SIGNS OF ABUSE

PHYSICAL

- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- Signs of trauma to the genital area, such as unexplained bleeding, bruising, or blood on the sheets
- Behavioral signs:
 - Sexual behavior that is inappropriate for the child's age
 - Bedwetting or soiling the bed, if the child has already outgrown these behaviors
 - Not wanting to be left alone with certain people or being afraid to be away from primary caregivers, especially if this is a new behavior
 - Tries to avoid removing clothing to change or bathe

EMOTIONAL

- Excessive talk about or knowledge of sexual topics
- Resuming behaviors that they had grown out of, such as thumbsucking
- Nightmares or fear of being alone at night
- Excessive worry or fearfulness are outside of the child's family.

It's not always easy to identify child sexual abuse—and it can be even more challenging to step in if you suspect something isn't right. If a child tells you that someone makes them uncomfortable, even if they can't tell you anything specific, listen. Talk to someone who can help you figure out if this is something that must be reported, such as a staff member from your local sexual assault service pro-

vider. In the meantime, if you are the parent or have influence over the child's schedule, avoid putting the child in a potentially unsafe situation.

**ARCHDIOCESE OF LOUISVILLE
VICTIM ASSISTANCE
COORDINATOR**

Martine Siegel (502.636.1044)

UPCOMING TRAININGS

A current list of trainings is always available at www.archlou.org/safe
All trainings are at 6:30p unless otherwise indicated.

5.31.18

St. Helen (Glasgow)

6:00 pm (CENTRAL TIME)

6.11.18

St. Gabriel

8.6.18

St. Gabriel

8.8.18

Holy Trinity

5:00 pm

8.14.18

St. Gregory (Cox's Creek)

8.23.18

St. James (Elizabethtown)

More trainings are in the process of being scheduled in June and July and will be posted as soon as confirmed.

Keep checking www.archlou.org/safe for updates as trainings cancelled due to inclement weather will be posted here



TEN TALKING POINTS FOR YOUR CHILD

1. Talk about body parts early.

Name body parts and talk about them very early. Use proper names for body parts, or at least teach your child what the actual words are for their body parts. Feeling comfortable using these words and knowing what they mean can help a child talk clearly if something inappropriate has happened.

2. Teach them that some body parts are private.

Tell your child that their private parts are called private because they are not for everyone to see. Explain that mommy and daddy can see them naked, but people outside of the home should only see them with their clothes on. Explain how their doctor can see them without their clothes because mommy and daddy are there with them and the doctor is checking their body.

3. Teach your child body boundaries.

Tell your child matter-of-factly that no one should touch their private parts and that no one should ask them to touch somebody else's private parts. Parents will often forget the second part of this sentence. Sexual abuse often begins with the perpetrator asking the child to touch them or someone else.

4. Tell your child that body secrets are not okay.

Most perpetrators will tell the child to keep the abuse a secret. This can be done in a friendly way, such as, "I love playing with you, but if you tell anyone else what we played they won't let me come over again." Or it can be a threat: "This is our secret. If you tell anyone I will tell them it was your idea and you will get in big trouble!" Tell your kids that no matter what anyone tells them, body secrets are not okay and they should always tell

you if someone tries to make them keep a body secret.

5. Tell your child that no one should take pictures of their private parts.

This one is often missed by parents. There is a world out there of pedophiles who love to take and trade pictures of naked children online. This is an epidemic and it puts your child at risk. Tell your kids that no one should ever take pictures of their private parts.

6. Teach your child how to get out of scary or uncomfortable situations.

Some children are uncomfortable with telling people "no"—especially older peers or adults. Tell them that it's okay to tell an adult they have to leave, if something that feels wrong is happening, and help give them words to get out of uncomfortable situations. Tell your child that if someone wants to see or touch private parts they can tell them that they need to leave to go potty.

7. Have a code word your children can use when they feel unsafe or want to be picked up.

As children get a little bit older, you can give them a code word that they can use when they are feeling unsafe. This can be used at home, when there are guests in the house or when they are on a play date or a sleepover.

8. Tell your children they will never be in trouble if they tell you a body secret.

Children often tell me that they didn't say anything because they thought they would get in trouble, too. This fear is often used by the perpetrator. Tell your child that no matter what happens, when they tell you anything about body safety or body secrets they will NEVER get in trouble.

9. Tell your child that a body touch

MONTHLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT TIP

Do you know who your parish/school Safe Environment Representative is?

Will you be working regularly with children this year?
(i.e. coach or youth group)

Are you Safe Environment compliant? Don't get caught in the fall rush, check with your rep today

Should you have any questions or need assistance with Safe Environment please contact

Scott Fitzgerald
Coordinator of Safe Environment Services

fitzgerald@archlou.org
or 502.471.2132

might tickle or feel good.

Many parents and books talk about "good touch and bad touch," but this can be confusing because often these touches do not hurt or feel bad. Some prefer the term "secret touch," as it is a more accurate depiction of what might happen.

10. Tell your child that these rules apply even with people they know and even with another child.

This is an important point to discuss with your child. When you ask a young child what a "bad guy" looks like they will most likely describe a cartoonish villain. You can say something like, "Mommy and daddy might touch your private parts when we are cleaning you or if you need cream — but no one else should touch you there. Not friends, not aunts or uncles, not teachers or coaches. Even if you like them or think they are in charge, they should still not touch your private parts."

**Archdiocese of Louisville
Office of Safe Environment**

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No child or adult should ever experience abuse by anyone, especially a church minister. We all have the right to be treated with dignity and to expect our church to reflect the goodness of God in all of its dealings.

We hope that this information is helpful to all in our communities who are working to prevent and respond to childhood sexual abuse. Please let us know if you need further assistance or information by calling or emailing our victim assistance coordinator, Ms. Martine Siegel, at 502/636-1044; victimassistance@archlou.org or the Chancery at 502/585-3291.

We must heed God's call to care for the most vulnerable among us and to continue our efforts toward wholeness and health in dealing with sexual abuse.

SUMMER CAMP QUESTIONS

This summer many kids will be heading off to summer camp for some fun and sun away from home. That said, it is important for parents to know that the camp has policies and procedures in place to minimize the risk of sexual abuse. Parents should ask the following questions:

- Are criminal background checks (including the sex offender registry) performed on all personnel?
- How many references does the camp require, and how does the camp check them?
- What training do staff members receive about child sexual abuse?
- How are campers made aware of what to do if they feel unsafe?



- Under what circumstances are staff members allowed to be alone with a camper? (The answer needs to be: NONE!)

- How does the camp monitor behavior of older campers with their younger peers?
- Are at least **two adult counselors**

assigned to sleep in each cabin?
- Who is responsible for enforcing camp rules and regulations?
Approximately 10 million children will pack up their clothes, bedding and favorite pillows and head off to summer camp this year. Most will return home with wonderful memories of new friends and fun filled days. Asking questions like these will go a long way in ensuring those are just that, wonderful.