



April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month

National Child Abuse Prevention Month is a time to acknowledge the importance of families and communities working together to prevent child abuse and neglect, and to promote the social and emotional well-being of children and families. During the month of April and throughout the year, communities are encouraged to share child abuse and neglect prevention awareness strategies and activities and promote prevention across the country. – www.childwelfare.gov

A prayer from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:

God of endless love,
Ever caring, ever strong,
Always present, always just;
You gave Your only Son to save us
by the blood of His cross.

Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace
join to Your own suffering
the pain of all who have been hurt
in body, mind, and spirit
by those who betrayed the trust placed in them.

Hear our cries as we agonize
over the harm done to our brothers and sisters.
Breathe wisdom into our prayers,
soothe restless hearts with hope,
steady shaken spirits with faith;
Show us the way to justice and wholeness,
enlightened by truth and enfolded in Your mercy.

Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts,
Heal Your people's wounds
and transform our brokenness.
Grant us courage and wisdom,
humility and grace,
so that we may act with justice
and peace in You.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen



Parent's Prevention Handbook: Practical advice for parents on preventing child sex abuse from our training partners at VIRTUS: <http://virtusonline.org/virtus/ParentHandbook.pdf>

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Why don't some children reveal they are victims of sexual abuse? Often, children don't have the ability or willingness to talk about being victims of abuse. Sometimes they fear the parents' reaction. Sometimes they fear retribution. Remember, much of the time the child and the child's family know the abuser. The child fears the impact that reporting will have on the family and often believes (usually because the abuser has threatened the child) that someone may go to prison. A child might fear the family

will be torn apart, or that the child will be blamed if news of the abuse is made known. The offender may have threatened to harm the child or more often, another family member if the child tells. The child often feels guilty because the offender has convinced the child that it's the child's fault that the abuse occurred.

Do I really have to worry about sex offenders—don't they go to prison when they get caught?

Actually most sex offenders don't go to prison. Many may sit in jail for a short while, awaiting trial, but the majority of convicted offenders receive probation. This may sound shocking, but the sad reality is that it's often difficult to prove that an offense has occurred. Many people assume that a medical examination will prove that a child has been molested. The reality is that many cases of sexual abuse of children do not involve physical evidence sufficient for a conviction. Unless there is a witness, the court is left with the offender's word versus the word of a child, often a very young child. In order to avoid traumatic and lengthy legal processes, plea bargains are often entered and accepted. This theoretically shields the child from further distress and ensures the offender has to register as an offender, has to receive treatment, and is monitored by various authorities.

What is supervision, who supervises a sex offender on probation? Supervision can actually be a series of activities designed to decrease the offender's likelihood of repeating his or her crime. Usually directed by a department of corrections, probation and parole officers work with law enforcement, treatment providers, and community members to maintain the offender. The offender must register his or her address with the local police or sheriff's department and must meet with a probation or parole officer regularly who conducts home visits. Some offenders must wear a GPS, (electronic monitoring) system and most offenders must attend sex offender treatment while under supervision.



Why Is There An Office Of Safe Environment?

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) requires that all Dioceses/Eparchies have in place a Safe Environment Program for the protection of children and young people. The *“Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People”* was adopted by the USCCB in June 2002 as a response to sexual abuse of minors by Catholic priests and deacons, particularly from the time period of 1950 to 2002. The USCCB established an **Office of Child and Youth Protection** to oversee the application of the Charter's principles and to create the means for accountability for ensuring implementation of standards.

Reporting

To report suspected cases of sexual abuse please contact your local law enforcement agency or call the **West Virginia Adult / Child Abuse Hotline: 1.800.352.6513**

To report suspected cases of sexual abuse of children by personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to the Diocese, please contact one of the Bishop's designees at: **304.233.0880 or 1.888.434.6237:**

- Sr. Ellen F. Dunn, O.P., ext. 264
- Mr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263
- Rev. Msgr. Frederick P. Annie, V.G., ext. 267
- Rev. Msgr. Anthony Cincinnati, STD, V.E., ext. 270

You may also fill out and return a confidential **Complaint Form for Allegations of Sexual Abuse of a Minor** by printing one from the Diocese's web site at www.dwc.org, then clicking Diocese > Offices > Office of Safe Environment > Download Files and Forms or by calling 304.230.1504 to request a form via U.S. mail from the Office of Safe Environment.

The Three Components of Compliance

The Safe Environment Program by the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston consists of the following three components:

- ✓ Background Check
- ✓ Policy Relating to Sexual Abuse of Children (Summer 2014)
- ✓ Awareness training for adults (VIRTUS online or live training)

All three components are mandated by the Diocese for persons seeking employment or seeking to volunteer directly or indirectly with children. A person is considered in compliance with the Diocese's Safe Environment Policy upon successful completion of all three components. Every year, the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston - as well as all other dioceses in the United States - is audited by the USCCB for compliance with its "*Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.*"

Touching Safety

A Student Awareness Program has been implemented since the fall of 2005 to give children information (appropriate for their age levels) and skills to help recognize acceptable and unacceptable behaviors and how to effectively deal with those behaviors. This is a VIRTUS program called "**Touching Safety**". The program is taught in Catholic schools and as part of Parish Schools of Religion. This program offers lesson plans for children in grades Kindergarten through 12.

If you are teaching Touching Safety, please recall that two lessons are taught each year. It is mandated that the first lesson be taught in the Fall (by the end of October). **The second lesson should be taught before the end of the school year.** There is flexibility as to when the second lesson is taught, but the first lesson must be taught by the end of October. **Remember that Opt-Out Letters must be sent to parents at least two weeks in advance of teaching a lesson.**

The "Touching Safety" lesson cycle for this year and next is:

School Year **2016-17** - **CYCLE THREE** - Lesson Five (by the end of October) and Lesson Six

School Year **2017-18** - **CYCLE ONE** - Lesson One (by the end of October) and Lesson Two



Five Steps of VIRTUS

Do you remember your VIRTUS awareness training? There are five steps to follow in the Protecting God's Children awareness program.

They are:

Step 1: Know the warning signs

Step 2: Control access

Step 3: Monitor all programs

Step 4: Be aware

Step 5: Communicate your concerns

More resources for raising your awareness may be found here:

<http://www.usccb.org/about/child-and-youth-protection/>

and here: www.virtusonline.org