



# Honor Thy Children

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

## RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURE

It is highly unlikely for children to make false allegations of sexual abuse. Therefore, when a child reports incidences of abuse or other suspicious behavior, we should presume the child is telling the truth. Children are more likely to report abuse when they know their telling will lead to protection.

In some cases, the abuse cannot be substantiated. An unsubstantiated disclosure does not mean that the child is being untruthful. Rather, it means that there is not enough collaborating evidence to support the child's story.

Recanting is also predictable when a child discloses. Some children recant their disclosures when parents get upset, police are called, crisis escalates, or loss occurs. It is eerie for a child when the things occur that the abuser foretold, which can prompt the child to recant. When dealing with a child who has purposefully disclosed, respond by being honest and direct. Acknowledge the child's courage in disclosing and ask what it is he or she hopes will happen. Provide the child with as much information as possible and allow the child some age appropriate choices about the process. Choices might include allowing the child to be present when the report to authorities is

made or in the case of an older child, allowing the child to make the report. These choices empower the child and allow for some control of the situation. Assure the child that he or she is not to blame, and that the abuse and its consequences are the fault of the abuser, not the child.

When children accidentally disclose, know that they will be much more fearful than children who purposefully disclose. Children who accidentally disclose are highly reluctant for the information to be passed on any further. Be empathic about their reluctance, while letting them know that you must follow the law. Assure the child that you will do everything possible to keep him or her safe.

Inform children of the law, of your legal obligations, and of the reporting process. In some instances, explaining that you have a legal obligation to report the information relieves the child that he or she is not responsible for breaking the silence. Children who disclose often begin by testing you. They share parts of their story without giving all the details. It is not your job to investigate or

substantiate what happened. Rather your response- ability is to make a report to those who are trained to decide whether or not to investigate. Details of the abuse are not necessary in making a report. Praise the child's courage for telling you and explain that you will do your best to protect him or her. Do not, however, make promises that you cannot keep.



Be open and invite the child's disclosure through active listening. This is made difficult by the atrocity of what the child is claiming. Know that children who have been sexually abused often assume that they will be blamed for the abuse. Children who have been abused are skilled at watching others in assessing danger. This ability to "read" others protects them amidst the dynamics of abuse. These

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Archdiocese of  
Louisville

OCTOBER  
2023

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

Are You  
Safe Environment  
Compliant?

Are you working regularly with children?

If so you must have attended an Archdiocese of Louisville Safe Environment Training.

Has it been 5 years since your initial in person training? You must complete your 5 year refresher training

You must also have a satisfactory background check not older than 5 years.

See your Safe Environment Coordinator today to verify your compliance!

# RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURE (Cont...)

skills are readily employed in threatening situations where the child may be vulnerable. Consequently, a child who has been abused may be hesitant to tell you what has occurred. If you respond with horror or anger to what is being said, you are unwittingly causing the child to feel ashamed and fearful. Children respond to this type of reaction by self-censoring. Therefore, do all that you can to maintain your poise as the child tells you what happened. Ask open-ended questions, which allows the child to tell you what he or she needs to say without you leading. For your purposes, whatever the child shares is enough for the time being. Try to refrain from asking clarifying questions that probe and interrogate. And never ask leading questions such as, "How did you try to stop your abuser from touching you?"

Children who are being violated may not view it as "abuse." What they do know is that what they are experiencing does not feel right, or is confusing, or "icky." They may hesitate at labeling it as abuse, particularly if the abuser is a parent, other family member, or a close family friend who is well respected and trusted. Therefore, use language that describes what they experience in their terms such as "yucky touches," or "something that made you feel weird." Answer the child's questions to the best of your ability and be honest in your responses. If you do not know something, say so. Make sure you communicate that you believe the child. You may experience doubt but know that if a child is disclosing sexual abuse, something must be wrong and/or troubling.

Actively support the child and praise his or her strength and courage in disclosing. Emphasize that the child did nothing to deserve what occurred and that telling you was the right thing to do. You may be asked a question such as, "what did I do to deserve this?" Whenever you hear this concern, tell the child that he or she did nothing to deserve being abused, and that it is hard to understand why people do these things to children. When making the report to Child Protective Services, have the child present if possible. This offers the child a sense of control and apprises him or her of the steps that are being taken. If the child is a pre-teen or teen, he or she may opt to make the report personally, which provides a sense of control over what is happening—a necessary part of the healing process.

## WHY SAFE ENVIRONMENT?

In Dallas, 2002, at their Annual Meeting, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops drafted a landmark document in response to the crisis of sexual abuse of children in the Church. This document, setting forth their agreed upon responsibilities in combating the problem, is entitled the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.

The Charter is a comprehensive set of procedures originally to address allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy. The Charter mandates the creation of a permanent USCCB Committee on the Protection of Children and Young People, the National Review Board, and the Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection. The Charter also includes guidelines for reconciliation, healing, accountability, and prevention of future acts of abuse. It was revised in 2005, 2011, and 2018.

In compliance with the charter, the Archdiocese of Louisville is committed to ensuring that children and youth who worship, study, or participate in church-sponsored activities can do so in the safest and most secure setting possible. In an effort to fulfill this commitment, all employees or volunteers who have contact with children or youth (18 and under) for ANY length of time are required to participate in one of the 2-hour Safe Environment Training Workshops.

### UPCOMING TRAININGS

Safe Environment Trainings are back this fall and into the winter

**11.14.23**

St. Joseph (Bardstown)

**11.20.23**

St. Albert

**11.27.23**

St. Margaret Mary

**12.11.23**

St. Bernard (Louisville)

It is strongly advised that you not wait to attend a scheduled in person training if required to do so as trainings are subject to cancellation or postponement due to incimate weather.

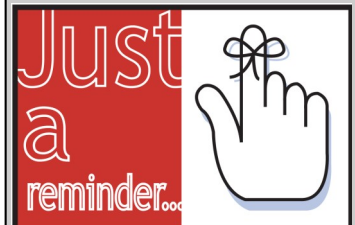
Be sure to bookmark [www.archlou.org/safe](http://www.archlou.org/safe) for the latest status or changes in any training

Should any training be postponed or cancelled at the last minute, notice will be sent to the parish/school Safe Environment Coordinator and posted on the website

### IMPORTANT

Due to the nature of material presented

**NO child under the age of 16 will be admitted to any training**



## Safe Caregivers & Safe Situations

Most victims of sexual abuse were abused by someone they knew or in a place they were familiar with. You can take steps to surround children with safe caregivers in safe environments.

- Abusers often become friendly with potential victims and their families, earning trust and gaining time alone with children. Observe your child with others, and listen to your gut. If you feel uncomfortable with the way an adult is interacting with your child, step in.
- Ask your babysitter for background checks, including criminal and child abuse/neglect checks.
- Check that all of your child's programs require background checks, personal interviews, and professional recommendations for all adults—including volunteers—who work with children.
- Monitor children's Internet and smartphone use. Offenders have been known to use the Internet to lure children into physical contact.

## Educate & Empower Your Child

Talking to your child about their bodies, body safety, and personal boundaries is key in keeping them safe. Child safety is an adult responsibility.

- Use the correct names for body parts, including their genitals, as they are learning to identify them (starting as early as possible).
- Make sure your child knows the difference between "okay" and "not okay" touches. No one should ask to see or touch the private parts of their body, except a medical provider or a caregiver who is helping them clean or use the restroom. No one should show them pictures of private parts. Teach them if those things occur, tell a trusted adult. Teach children that once they can bathe and use the restroom on their own, they should not accept such help from adults and older children.
- Teach children that it's okay for them to say "no" if they don't want to hug or kiss someone, including family, and always respect their decision.
- Educate children about the difference between good secrets and bad secrets. A surprise party is a good secret because it isn't kept for long. A secret that they are told to keep forever is not okay.

## Possible Warning Signs

While not always present, warning signs may include:



Strong efforts to avoid, or to be with, a specific person without an obvious reason



Displaying knowledge or interest in sexual acts that are inappropriate to his or her age



Pain when toileting, trouble walking or sitting, or pain, itching, bleeding, or bruises in or around the genitals



Sudden changes in behavior, such as becoming more withdrawn, or being more aggressive toward family friends, pets, or toys



Unexplained episodes of anger, rage, or moodiness



Sleep disturbances, such as nightmares or bedwetting



Difficulty concentrating or staying on task, irritability, lacking motivation, and showing little or no emotion

90%

of children who are victims of sexual abuse know their abuser. Only 10% are abused by strangers.<sup>1</sup>

1 in 10

children will be sexually abused before their 18th birthday.<sup>2</sup>



The last four warning signs can be signs of stress which may or may not be related to sexual abuse. If your child has any physical symptoms such as pain, itching, bleeding or bruising, seek medical care right away. Remember, children may not react as adults might expect. Often there are no warning signs.



faceitmovement.org



kacac.org



pcaky.org



kosair.org

Call Kentucky's Child Protection Hotline (toll free) at

**1-877-KYSAFE1(597-2331)**

or use the online reporting system at [www.reportitky.org](http://www.reportitky.org).

Always call 911 if a child is in imminent danger and needs immediate protection.

Go to [faceitabuse.org](http://faceitabuse.org) to learn more about the Face It® movement and how you can be the face that ends child abuse and neglect.

[faceitmovement.org](http://faceitmovement.org)

/faceitabuse

@faceitabuse

@faceitmovement

Taken from a pamphlet given out at each Safe Environment Training courtesy of our generous partners at the Face It Movement and Kosair For Kids.

Kosair For Kids continues to fund our "Speak Up/Be Safe" curriculum taught in our Catholic Elementary Schools.



**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](mailto:victimassistance@archlou.org)

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.

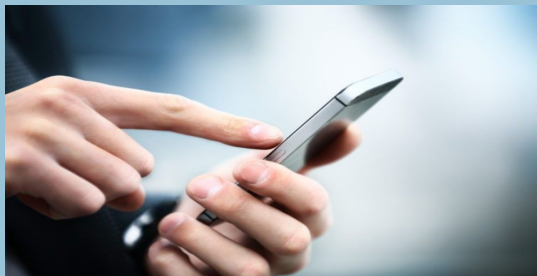
# OBLIGATION TO REPORT

All adults who have any reason to suspect child abuse are legally required to contact Child Protective Services (CPS) and make a report. This is a mandatory reporting law that obligates all adults to make a report within 24 hours of learning about possible abuse. In reporting abuse of children and adults, keep in mind the following:

- ◆ It is better to err on the side of over-reporting than under-reporting.
- ◆ The Protection Acts provide that privileged relationships are not grounds for excluding evidence except in two situations. Neither psychiatrist-patient privilege nor the husband-wife privilege shall be grounds for excluding evidence regarding abuse, neglect, or exploitation. Only lawyer-client privilege and clergy-penitent privilege are excluded [KRS 209.060, KRS 620.050(2)].
- ◆ Persons acting upon reasonable cause in the reporting of known or suspected adult/child abuse, neglect, or exploitation are immune from civil and criminal liability. This immunity exists with respect to the reporting, the investigation, and any judicial proceedings resulting from the report [KRS 209.050, KRS 620.050 (1)].
- ◆ The source of a report of abuse, neglect or exploitation is kept confidential unless it is ordered released by a court order [KRS 209.140].

**The report to CPS should include the following information, if known:**

- ◆ Name and address of the child, or of any person responsible for the child's care.
- ◆ Nature and extent of the suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation, including any evidence of previous abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
- ◆ Identity of the perpetrator.
- ◆ Name and address of the reporter (optional).
- ◆ Where the child can be found and any information you have about the location of the suspected abuser.



**TO REPORT ABUSE IN KENTUCKY CALL**

**1.877.KYSAFE1**