



# Honor Thy Children

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

## WHY SAFE ENVIRONMENT COMPLIANCE?

On June 14, 2002, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops approved the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. The *Charter* addresses the Church's commitment to deal pastorally and effectively with cases of

objects of sexual abuse and exploitation. The Apostolic See issued the *recognitio* for the original *Charter* on December 8, 2002, and the *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual*

policies of the Archdiocese of Louisville. Both the *Essential Norms* and *Charter* have been revised since, and resulted in the revision of the *Archdiocese of Louisville Sexual Abuse Policies* including revised content from the *Essential Norms* and *Charter*.

These policies are complementary to the universal law of the Church, which considers sexual abuse and exploitation a grave sin. Our booklet, *Restoring Trust: The Sexual Abuse Policies of the Archdiocese of Louisville*, given at each mandatory in-person training summarizes procedures related to the sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults by Church personnel and adult sexual misconduct involving Church personnel. This publication introduces the initiatives that the Archdiocese of Louisville is putting in place to

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"Why Compliance")*



sexual abuse of minors by priests, deacons, and Church personnel (i.e., employees and volunteers). In addition, the *Charter* calls for the creation of safe environment programs that will help to create communities where children and adults will be protected from being the

*Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons* were promulgated by the Episcopal Conference on December 12, 2002. These *Essential Norms* constitute particular law for all the dioceses/eparchies of the United States of America and are the basis for our revised

Archdiocese of  
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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](http://www.pcaky.org) [www.pcaain.org](http://www.pcaain.org)
- ☺ Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline 800.4.A.CHILD 800.422.4453 [www.childhelp.org](http://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!

# WHY COMPLIANCE (cont...)

ensure compliance with these policies and the basic elements of a safe environment program. It also provides victims with information about how to contact the Archdiocese about sexual abuse. 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 its dealings. 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. 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. The Safe Environment Program will cover the following topics, identifying signs of child sexual abuse, understanding the dynamics of child sexual abuse, including how children are groomed and how they may attempt to reveal their experience. Participants will also learn how to act in response to child sexual abuse, including the obligation to report and care for the abused child while also becoming familiar with new archdiocesan policies and

the Code of Conduct regarding work with children. We hope that this information is helpful to all in our communities who are working to prevent and respond to childhood sexual abuse. A complete list of scheduled trainings can be found at [www.archlou.org/safe](http://www.archlou.org/safe). Should you have any questions about your compliance, please contact your parish/school safe environment coordinator. If you don't know who that is, contact Scott Fitzgerald, Archdiocese of Louisville Coordinator of Safe Environment Services via email ([sfitzgerald@archlou.org](mailto:sfitzgerald@archlou.org)) or 502.471.2132.

# GAINING COOPERATION

Abusers gain a child's cooperation through manipulation, threats, and bribery. The initial stages of abuse involve subtle, seemingly innocent actions that prey upon a child's lack of knowledge and maturity to violate normal boundaries. This process of manipulating children to become increasingly comfortable with the violations of their boundaries is termed "grooming." Grooming begins with indirect violations that are difficult to identify as preludes to sexual abuse. Such things as tickling a child, hugging a child, or patting the child's backside may not be abusive but could serve as the beginning of the grooming process. For

adult abusers, these interactions are sexually charged. Children, having no experience with the notion of "sexually charged" experiences, are unable to put words to what is happening. They only know that something is a "little weird." This awkward experience is called an "uh-oh" feeling and is often described in safe-touch programs for children. The "uh-oh" feeling is confusing, because of the trust that the child feels for the adult. Children also tend to discount their own "uh-oh" feelings because the abuser uses minimization to justify his or her violations. As the grooming process evolves, sexually violating behaviors become

seemingly normal so that each progressive, intrusive step is experienced as only a slight violation of the previously established boundary. Observe when others interact with a child. Keep your guard up for anything you don't feel is right. Always trust your gut and always report anything you suspect isn't right to (1.877.KYSAFE1). If you have questions, please feel free to reach out Martine Siegel, Archdiocese Victim Assistance Coordinator at [msiegel@archlou.org](mailto:msiegel@archlou.org) or 502.636.1044.

## UPCOMING TRAININGS

**6.10.24**

St. Francis Xavier-Mt. Washington

**6.11.24**

Sacred Heart Schools (Ursuline Arts Center)

**6.17.24**

St. James (E-Town)

**6.26.24**

Flaget Center

**7.29.24**

Saffin Center (Holy Family)

**8.6.24**

St. Gabriel

**8.12.24**

Flaget

**8.13.24**

St. Joseph (Bardstown)

Additionally trainings are being finalized for July, August and September. They will be published at [www.archlou.org/safe](http://www.archlou.org/safe) once confirmed

**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 inclement 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

# RESPONDING 101

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

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

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 responsibility is to make a report to those who are trained to decide whether 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 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



cannot be substantiated. An unsubstantiated disclosure does not mean that the child is being untruthful. Rather, it means that there is not enough corroborating 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, the 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

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 the reporting process. In some instances, explaining that you have a legal obligation to report the information relieves

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## HELP IS AVAILABLE

If someone discloses abuse to you have a legal obligation to report it by calling

1.877.KYSAFE.1

There is also local help available to help you process a situation you maybe were not prepared to deal with.

You can always call the Archdiocese of Louisville Victim Assistance Coordinator

**Martine Siegel**  
502.636.1044  
or email  
msiegel@archlou.org

### Other resources include

Family & Children's Place  
502.893.3900

Seven Counties Services  
800.221.0446

NAMI  
National Alliance on  
Mental Illness  
502.588.2008



**Never be afraid  
to ask for help!**



**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.

## RESPONDING 101 (cont...)

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 to be 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.

**Each parish/school has a Safe Environment Coordinator that can answer your compliance questions and verify your compliance.**

**If you don't know who that is, reach out to...**

**Scott Fitzgerald  
Coordinator of  
Safe Environment  
Services**

[sffitzgerald@archlou.org](mailto:sffitzgerald@archlou.org)

**He can get you in contact with them.**



## DON'T FIND YOURSELF IN A PANIC

Don't miss an opportunity serve your parish or school because you put off attending a Safe Environment Training. Trainings are held all throughout the year.

Make plans now to attend and upcoming training near you!

View a list of trainings at [www.archlou.org/safe](http://www.archlou.org/safe)

