



Honor Thy Children

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

What is Safe Environment **COMPLIANCE?**

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**...



- Attendance at an Archdiocese of Louisville in-person Safe Environment Training
- A satisfactory Archdiocese of Louisville issued background check (not older than five years)
- (If applicable) A five year Safe Environment refresher training. This can be satisfied by attending any scheduled in-person training or on line. See your school/parish safe environment coordinator for access to the online refresher.

Each parish and/or school are required to have a Safe Environment Coordinator. If you're unsure of your status, check in with them today to ensure your compliance.

**Archdiocese of
Louisville**

**May
2025**

**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!

Honor Thy Children

UNDERSTANDING DYNAMICS

Child sexual abuse is the misuse of power through sexual means. Child sexual abuse generally involves a trusted adult (neighbors, parents, step-parents, aunts, uncles, teachers, priests, deacons, and coaches) who is in a relationship of power to the child and uses that position to manipulate children in order to satisfy the adult's own sexual needs. These trusted adults manipulate situations in order to create an atmosphere where sexualized contact can occur, such as opportunities to be alone with the child. They then work to gradually reduce the child's inhibitions to sexualized touch, while simultaneously working to strengthen the child's trust. As the sexualized

interaction between the adult and child becomes increasingly normalized, the abuser pushes for more and more sexually gratifying interaction. The child is confused

in positions of care. The evolving sexually abusive relationship is maintained due to the power that the adult has in the relationship with the child. That power is



about the sexual violations because the adult abuser is someone that is in a position of trust, and others tend to hold him or her in high regard. Furthermore, children are often told not to disobey or disrespect adults, especially those who are

utilized in making threats that ensure the child's secrecy. Secrecy, then, is the key to keeping sexual abuse private. The child is afraid to talk about what is going on to others, in part for fear that the threats will be carried out.

Children are individuals, and each is affected differently by abuse. A number of people could have the trauma of sexual abuse occur in their lives, but each individual will respond and react in varying ways according to his or her personality, family of origin, support systems, gender, age at the time of the abuse, and many other variables too numerous to list. Other factors that impact the magnitude of the damage include duration of abuse, level of intrusiveness/violation of the abuse, type and severity of threats used to maintain secrecy, relationship to the abuser, the number of perpetrators, and age at the time of disclosure as well as reactions to disclosure. It is never appropriate to try to predict how a child may be affected by sexual abuse. What someone may deem "mild" sexual abuse may traumatize a child the rest of his or her life. Another child that suffered from what others may describe as "severe" abuse, may, with proper care, heal and live a healthy and productive life. The effects of abuse are unpredictable, and all individuals need support and compassion as they find their unique paths to healing.

- The younger the age of the child at the onset and the longer the duration of the sexual abuse, the more severe are the effects of sexual abuse
- The closer the relationship of the child to the abuser, the larger the impact on the child.
- Negative and non-supportive reactions from persons to whom children disclose (disbelief, denial, making excuses) cause negative effects on how the children respond as well as on their healing process.

UPCOMING SAFE ENVIRONMENT TRAININGS

Spring trainings are underway! These important training sessions are designed to promote a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for all—this training, along with an Archdiocese of Louisville-issued background check, is mandatory for anyone working with children. Even if you think you will be working with children in the future, but are unsure, you're strongly encouraged to take advantage of these upcoming sessions.

All trainings begin promptly at 630p (unless otherwise noted) and **children under 16 will not be admitted given the content discussion.**

6.10.25
Catholic Enrichment
Center **(11:00 am)**

6.10.25
Sacred Heart
Ursuline Arts Center

6.16.25
Flaget Center

6.24.25
St. Margaret Mary

6.30.25
St. James (E-Town)

Trainings are subject to postponement due to weather, etc. It's best not to wait if you think you will be serving in your parish or school.

Complete updates can always be found at www.archlou.org/safe

Understanding Grooming

Adults who sexually abuse children seek out vulnerable children – children that are easier to manipulate relative to other children. This means targeting children with whom they have ready access, as well as those who are left alone by adult caregivers and/or possess low self-esteem.

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 the adult abuser, 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.

Family members and caregivers of children also must be groomed as the child is being targeted. When the adult abuser resides outside the family, trust must be earned from the child's guardians in order to gain private access to the child.

A child's shame and embarrassment at having "allowed" the abuse reinforces the secrecy. Soon after the onset of the abuse, children begin to feel complicit in their own abuse. They accept responsibility for causing it and feel as though they deserved it or that they should have stopped it.

These are just a few of the grooming behaviors addressed during the in-person trainings. If a child came to you and might be a victim of grooming, would you recognize the signs? Would you know how to respond?

If you haven't already, we encourage you to attend an upcoming in-person Safe Environment training. Even if you're not currently serving in a required role, the training provides valuable tools to help prevent child sexual abuse.



"Tell-Able"

Become a "Tell-Able" Adult

Create an environment of responsiveness and comfort so that children feel free to disclose. Create an environment that makes it clearly known that children will be listened to and believed. As youth workers (counselors, teachers, principals, catechists, priests, youth ministers, coaches), communicate the idea that children will be heard. Display posters, books, and pamphlets that indicate a level of sensitivity to child abuse. Intentionally raise the issues of "uncomfortable and confusing touches" with children. Invite them to tell you anything that may be bothering or troubling them.

Most of all, be in tune with children that are in your care.



**Archdiocese of Louisville
Office of Safe Environment**

Martine Bacci Siegel, MSN, RN, CNS
Maloney Center
1200 South Shelby Street
Louisville, KY 40220

Phone: 502.636.1044
Fax: 502.634.3381
E-mail: msiegel@archlou.org

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

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.

See something Say something

When children are experiencing stressors such as divorce or death of a loved one, expect a change in their behavior. Children exhibit similar behavioral changes when they are being sexually abused. No one behavioral change by itself indicates a child is being sexually abused, however, a combination of these symptoms should alert adults to the possibility of sexual abuse:



Nightmares, trouble sleeping, fear of the dark, or other sleeping problems.

Extreme fear of "monsters." Spacing out" at odd times.

Fear of certain people or places say babysitter or a friend

These are just a few of the many signs that may indicate child sexual abuse. For a more comprehensive and detailed discussion, we encourage you to attend one of the in-person Safe Environment trainings offered by the Archdiocese of Louisville.