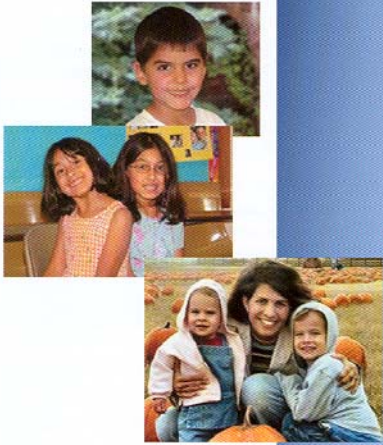


# *Keeping Kids Safe*

A parent-led child safety program

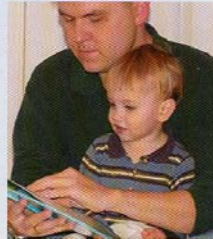


*Dear Parents,*

*The Diocese of Knoxville is committed to providing a safe environment for all who worship, work, or participate in education and formation opportunities at our parishes and schools. The problem of child sexual abuse is a serious one; a child suffers sexual abuse somewhere in our country every 13 seconds.*

*Statistics show that the vast majority of children who are abused (93%) know and trust their abusers and the vast majority of abusers (95-97%) are male. Sadly, one in four girls and one in six boys will suffer some form of sexual abuse before age 18. While child abduction by strangers attracts dramatic media attention, the majority of abusers are family members and trusted friends. The stereotype of the pervert in the raincoat is inaccurate; sexual predators work hard to be seen as model citizens.*

*Because only 29% of parents discuss this issue with their children, providing resources to parents is the first step to protecting our kids. Empowered parents can develop and maintain an environment of trust in the home that allows children to discuss any topic, any fear, and any experience they are having. Potential abusers will avoid children who have such an open and honest relationship with their parents because abusers depend upon secrecy to avoid suspicion.*



*On the other hand, perpetrators target children who are most vulnerable to their methods, such as those looking for affection or attention. As one convicted sex offender chillingly told an audience of parents, "If you won't give your kids any attention, I will." Parents, be especially alert to any older child or adult who takes a particular interest in your children, tries to spend time with them in isolation, and seems to lack healthy relationships with his or her peers.*

*The Diocese of Knoxville is committed to reporting to law enforcement every known or suspected instance of child abuse. When we respond through proper intervention, we provide hope for children to lead healthy and happy lives.*

*What to Say to Children  
(through grade 5)*

- If we ever get separated at the mall or other public place, go to a clerk and say that you lost your parents.
- Don't ever get into a car with someone unless we have said it's okay.
- Grownups should always ask other grownups for help. If an adult asks you for help, walk away without answering.
- Don't answer the door if we're not at home.
- If a car pulls up near you, walk away quickly in the *opposite* direction that the car is traveling.
- Never believe anyone who tells you that we're in trouble and he is going to take you to us.
- Yell, scream, and kick if someone tries to take you somewhere. Shout, "This is not my daddy/mommy!"
- Never go places alone; always go with a friend.
- Never leave the yard or play area without telling us.
- Your body is special and private. No one should ever touch you on the parts of your body that your underwear covers. If anyone ever does this, tell us right away.
- Let us know if someone tells you a secret and doesn't want you to tell us.
- Tell us immediately if someone gives you a gift, especially if it's supposed to be a secret.
- Just because someone calls you by name doesn't mean that he knows you.
- Never give personal information over the Internet. Never agree to meet someone you have met on the Internet.

*What to Say to Youth  
(through high school)*

- Contracts signed by minors are not legally binding without parental consent.
- You must get our permission before you accept a job from anyone.
- Walk with confidence and purpose in public. Be alert and aware of your surroundings and who is in the vicinity.
- Dating should be a fun experience and you should never allow yourself to be coerced into doing anything that you know is wrong.
- It is okay to be rude to someone who is trying to get you to do something that is wrong.
- "Date rape" accounts for the vast majority of teenage rapes. Just because you are on a date does not mean that you cannot say, "No." When you say, "No," that response should be respected.
- Never leave an opened can of soda some place where you can't see it. Get your own drink so you know exactly what is in it. If you start to feel sick or dizzy, tell a friend to call us immediately and we will come and get you, no questions asked.
- Perpetrators rely on our tendency to avoid making scenes in public; it is okay to make a scene to stop someone from taking advantage of you.
- If you are ever in an uncomfortable situation and need a ride home, call us and we will pick you up - and you will not get in trouble.
- Never do anything with your peers that you would not do if we were present, or if you were alone. "Group think" is usually not wiser than an individual's independent thinking.
- Never give personal information over the Internet. Never agree to meet anyone you have met through the Internet.

## Best Practices for Parents

*Make time to communicate with your children—and don't forget that the most important part of communication is listening.*

*Be familiar with your children's friends and activities. Know where your children are—and whom they're with.*

*Acquaint yourselves with the family composition of the homes where your children spend time. Is there adult supervision? Are there older brothers and/or male teenagers around? Does the single mom have a boyfriend present?*

*Screen babysitters carefully; check references before entrusting your children to anyone.*

*Never force children to touch, hug, or kiss someone whom they don't want to. Forcing them to do this teaches them that it is okay for adults to impose themselves on children.*

*Perpetrators start young; be aware of any children who violate the boundaries of other children. Older siblings perpetrating on younger siblings is a very common form of child abuse.*

*Teach your children to trust their instincts and give them permission to say "No" to what they think is wrong.*

*Teach your children that a good secret is one that will eventually be told, like a surprise party. Bad secrets are often used to cover up wrongdoing.*

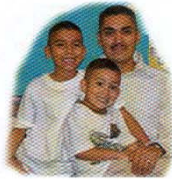
*Understand that abusers often build trust with parents for the sole purpose of gaining access to their children.*

*Teach your children to tell you if anyone makes them feel uncomfortable, or touches them inappropriately—and believe them if they do.*

*Be alert to your child's expressing fear or sudden dislike of someone.*

*Monitor your children's Internet use and keep computers in a public area of the house.*

*Be sensitive to changes in your children's behavior; talk to them about the changes when you notice them.*



## Statement of Completion of Training

I/We, \_\_\_\_\_

the parents or legal guardians of

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
attest that we have reviewed the material in this brochure with our child/children and are assured that they know and understand it.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Parents/Guardians: Please complete and return to your Parish's Religious Education Program Director or Catholic School Principal.

The media have affected many of our children's attitudes about sexuality. Our desire is to uphold the teaching of Christ regarding the dignity of the human person and the gift of human sexuality. Awareness of healthy boundaries allows our children the freedom to grow and develop healthy relationships and to recognize situations that might be harmful.

The teaching of the Catholic Church on chastity is an excellent foundation upon which to build as we teach our children, and the good news is that studies show that teenagers *want* their parents to talk to them about sex. As one boy said, "Maybe it doesn't look like we listen to them, but we do - and talking to us shows they care about what we do."

Every child should be treasured. It is this love that children experience when their parents or other caregivers empower them in this important area of safety.

*Do It Today!*



The Diocese of Knoxville

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