

Reporting Abuse

To report that a child is being harmed or at risk of being harmed contact your county **Department of Family and Children Services or Sheriff's Department.**

To report an allegation about someone in Church ministry within the Diocese of Savannah follow these three steps:

1. **Notify the appropriate supervisor.**
2. **Call the appropriate civil authorities.**
3. **Call our diocesan Victim's Assistance Hotline 888-357-5330.**



Other Resources

www.usccb.org/ocyp
Office of Child & Youth Protection
Conference of Catholic bishops

www.safeyouth.org
National Youth Violence Prevention
Resource Center

Childhelp@USA National Child Abuse
Hotline 800-422-4453
TDD: 800-2-A-CHILD

www.VIRTUS.org

Catholic Diocese of Savannah Safe Environment Program

Promoting a Safe Environment for Children



601 E. Liberty St.
Savannah, GA 31401
912-201-4100
FAX 912-201-4101
www.diosav.org

The CHARTER for the PROTECTION of CHILDREN and YOUNG PEOPLE

The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People is a landmark document drafted and passed unanimously by the bishops of the United States at their June meeting in Dallas in 2002.

The document is a response to the sexual abuse crisis in the church and is their "Promise to Protect, Pledge to Heal."

There are four focus areas:



- To promote healing and reconciliation with victim survivors of sexual abuse.
- To guarantee an effective response to allegations of sexual abuse of minors.
- To ensure the accountability of our procedures.
- To protect the faithful in the future.

In order to protect the faithful in the future, Article 12 of the Charter states:

"Dioceses/eparchies will establish 'Safe Environment' programs.

They will cooperate with parents, civil authorities, educators, and community organizations to provide education and training for children, youth, parents, ministers, educators, and others about ways to make and maintain a safe environment for children.



Dioceses/eparchies will make clear to clergy and all members of the community the standards of conduct for clergy and other persons in positions of trust with regard to sexual abuse."

This guideline, which mandates that all dioceses create a safe environment for children and young people who pray, study and worship in our schools and churches, is the basis for our diocesan safe environment programs.



OUR COMMITMENT TO A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

The Diocese of Savannah is committed to providing safe environments and fostering continuous improvement in every organization that sponsors activities and/or provides services to children and youth.

Through a series of workshops, educational materials, classroom instruction and background checks, the Diocese is:

- ⇒ Increasing awareness of potentially harmful situations through the VIRTUS training workshops.
- ⇒ Empowering adults and children to act before abuse occurs through the *Child Lures Prevention* for Catholic School and Religious Education students and in Youth Ministry with an Inter-generational Program for families.
- ⇒ Evaluating background checks for relevance to the employee's or volunteer's position.
- ⇒ Implementing a Pastoral Code of Conduct which outlines acceptable and unacceptable behaviors for all clergy, employees and volunteers.
- ⇒ Providing continuing education through the VIRTUS Web site (www.VIRTUS.org).



Your Role in Creating Safe Environments

As an adult you play a vital role in creating safe environments for children. To ensure the safety of everyone, especially those at-risk:

- GET** involved in activities with your child.
- TEACH** your child the correct names for their private body parts.
- KNOW** where your child is and who is with him/her.
- ENSURE** activities are monitored by more than one adult.
- ALLOW** a child to be picked up only by an authorized person.
- PREVENT** abduction by creating a secret password with your child.
- NEVER** leave a child in a building, on a field trip or in a public bathroom alone.
- MEET** with a child only in areas visible to others.
- ALWAYS** monitor access to a child's activities.
- BE ALERT** to strangers hanging around.
- MAKE** sure enough adults are involved in the programs in which your child participates.
- TEACH** your child what to do if someone makes them uncomfortable.

EDUCATED VIGILANCE — BE ALERT — BE AWARE

Indicators of Abuse

Knowledge and vigilance are crucial to creating safe environments. Be attentive to any radical changes in behavior in a child which might indicate abuse of some kind. Some of the indicators are:

- Exhibits a sudden change in their behavior.
- Becomes moody or aggressive.
- Loses interest in school or their grades drop.
- Stops taking care of their personal hygiene.

One or more signs of abuse may mean that the child is experiencing some kind of problem. A trusted adult should talk with the child about her/his feelings and concerns. Now is the time to start talking to your children. You want them to know they can share anything with you and you will still love them.



Predatory Behaviors



Be aware of warning signs and inappropriate behaviors on the part of adults, who:

- Prefer to be alone with children.
- Discourage other adults from participating or monitoring activities.
- Give expensive gifts.
- Use bad language or tell dirty jokes.
- Think the rules don't apply to them.
- Engage in excessive or inappropriate touching, like wrestling/tickling.
- Show pornography to children.
- Allow children to do what parents don't allow them to do.



Basic Safety Rules for Children

Check First: Children should always check first with the adult in charge before going anywhere or making any changes in plans.

Go With Friends: Children are safer when they are not alone.

It's My Body: This message empowers children to set personal limits. They learn that no one has the right to touch the parts of their

body that are covered by a bathing suit, except parents when they are helping them bathe, or a doctor or nurse when they are sick. They have the right to resist inappropriate touching.

Tell a Trusted Adult: Children should be encouraged to ask a trusted adult for help anytime they feel threatened.