

## What To Do If You Suspect Abuse

If you have reason to believe that a child is being abused or neglected, and that the abuse is by a parent or caretaker, please contact the Department of Children & Family Services at 1-855-4LA-Kids (1-855-452-5437). If you believe the abuse is by someone other than the parent or other caretaker, call your local police or sheriff (911).

### Internet Safety Tips

- ☺ The computer should be in an open area, not in a child's room.
- ☺ Assure your children that you know you can count on them to use the Internet responsibly.
- ☺ Use filtering software designed to help parents limit the websites children can access.
- ☺ Instruct your child to never give out personal information online, including her full name, gender, age, school, address, or teams.

### Victim Assistance Coordinator Diocese of Lafayette

Bishop J. Douglas Deshotel has appointed Mr. Joseph Pisano, Jr. as the Victim Assistance Coordinator for the Diocese of Lafayette. Mr. Pisano's number is (337) 298-2987.

## Additional Resources

### Local Resources:

Children's Advocacy Center (Hearts of Hope)  
P. O. Box 53967  
Lafayette, Louisiana 70505  
337-269-1557  
[www.theheartsofhope.org](http://www.theheartsofhope.org)

Diocese of Lafayette  
Office of Safe Environment  
1408 Carmel Drive  
Lafayette, Louisiana 70501  
337-735-9439  
[www.diolaf.org](http://www.diolaf.org)

For more information about child abuse, visit these websites or visit your local library:

Prevent Child Abuse Louisiana  
[www.pcal.org](http://www.pcal.org)

Child Abuse Prevention Association  
[www.childabuseprevention.org](http://www.childabuseprevention.org)

### Other Prevention Information:

Child Welfare Information Gateway  
1250 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Eighth Floor  
Washington, DC 20024  
800-394-3366  
[www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov)

Prevent Child Abuse America  
228 South Wabash Avenue, 10th Floor  
Chicago, IL 60604  
312-663-3520  
[www.preventchildabuse.org](http://www.preventchildabuse.org)

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children  
2101 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 550  
Arlington, VA 22201  
800-843-5678  
[www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com)

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*Safe Environment for the  
Protection of Children  
and Young People*

## Child Abuse And Neglect Prevention Tips For Parents



Diocese of Lafayette  
Office of Safe Environment  
1408 Carmel Drive  
Lafayette, Louisiana 70501  
(337) 735-9439  
[www.diolaf.org](http://www.diolaf.org)

## What Is Child Abuse?

**Child Abuse** is defined as an injury inflicted on a child by an adult or older child that might not be intentional, but is not accidental. It is usually classified as physical abuse, emotional abuse or sexual abuse.

**Child Neglect** is harm caused by withholding life's necessities - food, clothing, shelter, medical care and education.



## What To Do If A Child Has Been Abused

Believe the child - children rarely lie about abuse

Comfort the child. Tell the child the abuse was not his or her fault

Commend the child for telling you about the experience

Assure the child that you will protect him or her

Stay calm and objective in handling your own anger and confusion

Show the child that he or she is loved, accepted, and an important part of the family

Report the abuse to the police, the local child protective services agency, or a child hotline - the first priority after abuse has been disclosed

Take the child to a physician or hospital for an examination

Seek counseling for the child and for all members of the family

## Recognizing Signs of Child Abuse

Below are some indicators of child abuse which can help you recognize an existing or potential problem of abuse:

Change in behavior habits or school work

Sudden, dramatic changes in personality or activities

Depression, sadness or suicide attempts

Inability to stay awake or to concentrate for extended periods

Detailed and age-inappropriate understanding of sexual behavior

Acting out sexually

Nervousness around adults

Not wanting to be around or alone with certain people

Fear of being touched

Fear or avoidance of bathrooms

Overly submissive behavior

Sleep problems, such as insomnia, frequent nightmares, or bedwetting

Torn skin in and around the vagina or anus

Unexplained bruises, bites, burns, lacerations, abrasions or swelling caused by other than accidental means

Has fading bruises or other marks

Aggression toward adults or other children

Low self-esteem

Poor hygiene



## Child Abuse Prevention Tips

Build open and trusting relationships with your children.

Encourage your children to come to you with their problems.

Talk to your children about abuse in an age-appropriate manner.

Teach children about their private areas on their bodies (the part covered by a swimsuit) that no one may touch.

Discuss safety rules with your children. Use role-play and stories and problem solving to convey message.

Explain to children that some adults may try to hurt them or make them do things they do not feel comfortable doing. They have a right not to do everything an adult tells them to do, especially if something make them uncomfortable. Teach them to say no and get away from dangerous situations and to tell you about anyone who makes them uncomfortable.

Never force them to kiss or hug anyone they do not want to.

Teach your children their full name, address and phone number. Teach them how to make a collect call or dial "O" or 911 from a pay phone.

Choose babysitters carefully, check out references.

Teach children not to accept gifts from acquaintances or strangers and to tell a trusted adult if someone has offered them a gift.

Set rules for using the Internet. Teach children not to give out personal information.

As members of the body of Christ, we are all called on to protect the dignity of all human life. We can all do our part to ensure our children are in safe environments at home, at school, at church.

Recent statistics tell us that one out of every four girls and one out of every six boys is assaulted before they turn 18. If those statistics are correct, on every Sunday in our congregations are people who have been abused and are feeling the pain of that abuse. Reaching out to all victims of abuse is critical in bringing hope and the love of Christ to them.