

## What Everyone Should Know About Sexual Abuse

- All children are vulnerable to sexual abuse regardless of ethnicity, cultural background or economic background.
- All children have an inherent right to feel loved, valued and protected.
- Often there are no physical signs of sexual abuse.
- Many cases of child sexual abuse go unreported because the child is afraid or ashamed to tell anyone what has happened.
- Offenders often threaten to hurt the victim or the victim's family members.
- Many children believe that are to blame for the abuse.
- A victim is never to blame for the abuse. The victim cannot prevent abuse; only the offender can.
- There is little evidence that children make false allegations of abuse; what is more common is a child's denying that abuse has happened when it did.

## Preventing Sexual Abuse

- Supervise! Know who your child is talking to at all times.
- Parental controls – use them and learn about them.
- Tell your child you will monitor his or her relationships. Be sure to follow up with your promise.
- If you don't know about the Internet and cyber sex, become informed.
- Young people need to know their bodies are sacred. Talk openly about safe versus unsafe touch.
- A good rule of thumb: If someone enjoys being around your child more than you do, there is a problem.
- Nothing is more sacred than communication. Research points to it as being key. Good communication assumes mutual respect regardless of any information a child might share.
- Open discussion about sexual matters, although it may be uncomfortable, needs to be pursued. If not to you, to whom will your child turn?
- Know the adults, peers and the families of peers with whom your child relates. Ask about all that happened with your child when you were not with him or her. Be curious.
- Be there and know where your child is and what he or she is doing. Do not assume to know anything about anyone.
- Show you child that it is okay to say no when someone he or she knows and cares about does something he or she does not like.
- Set and respect family boundaries.
- Speak up when you see "warning-sign" behaviors.
- Teach your child that secrets about touching are not okay.
- List who to call for advice, information or help if you should need it.



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# Archdiocese of Milwaukee *Safeguarding All of God's Family*

## Newsletter

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Dear Friends,

Jesus said, "I will lay down my life for my sheep" (John 10:15).

When Jesus laid down his life to protect his sheep he taught us that the shepherd lays down his life to protect his sheep. By Christ's sacrifice, we are united as his flock, a people of God. In this unity we have been given a pure gift from God, the gift to shepherd those around us. Each and every one of us needs to be shepherds, shepherds of one another, and more importantly, shepherds of our children and young people. We are all connected as one flock, one people, God's family, in companionship with the Lord.

As Christ protects us from spiritual predators, we are reminded that there are very real reasons that the sheep, our children, need protection. The reality is that there are those who want to harm the sheep, the vulnerable, our children and youth. We warn of these dangers, not to offend or scare but to protect. It is when we understand and make ourselves aware of the reality of these dangers that we can truly comprehend, trust and strive to imitate the Shepherd who laid down his life for us and protects us always.

The children and youth of today are our future and it is our moral obligation to do everything in our power be good shepherds and to remain vigilant in their protection. At all times, we are all called to reflect on the need to be good shepherds, to protect our children and to safeguard them from harm. Let us always remind ourselves that as a people of God, we each have a role to play in protecting our children and youth. It is the responsibility of clergy, educators and all adult role models, to be aware of the dangers surrounding our children and youth. We must always continue to show them the way forward by protecting them, encouraging them in their personal development and providing them with the necessary resources for their growth and success.

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