

The safety of children concerns all of the Christian faithful, whether or not they have young children, and whether or not they are working or volunteering for the Church. Our children are our most precious resource. They are the present and future of the Church and the future of our society. To allow them to be harmed, harms all of us irreparably.

How can all concerned Catholics help protect our children? As a concerned Catholic, you can take the following steps:

1. Take the time to *learn what is happening in your parish* to create and maintain a safe environment.
2. *Ask questions* of parish employees and volunteers regarding the Safe Environment practices in the parish. These practices must include: (a) education for parents, children, employees and volunteers regarding the sexual abuse of children; (b) identifying the warning signs that children may be abused; (c) an awareness of adult behaviors which can signal a danger to children; (d) controlling access to children; and (e) careful monitoring

and supervision of children and parish programs.

3. *Keep your eyes and ears open.* Children talk among themselves. Listen carefully and with a discerning ear to what is being said. If an adult is making them uncomfortable this should be brought to the attention of the proper authorities.
4. A child who comes from a dysfunctional home is exceptionally vulnerable. If there is conflict, divorce, abuse, alcohol or drug dependency in a child's home, *be aware* of it and *help and support* that child in an appropriate manner. *Watch* for changes in the child's behavior, including silence, withdrawal, acting out, and/or slumping grades.
5. *Notice adults who are overly friendly or who place themselves on the same level as adolescents or young children*, those who seem to relate better to adolescents or children than to adults, those who suggest activities of which parents would not approve. Observe any adult who takes pictures extensively -and/or exclusively of adolescents; this behavior could signal problems and should be reported to the appropriate authorities. If an adult offers explicit pornographic

materials to teenagers, report such behavior to the appropriate authorities.

6. *Understand the Church's efforts where employment or volunteer status is denied to an individual.* It is important to appreciate that: (a) such a decision is made based upon a good faith concern for the welfare of children and of our community; and (b) those making the decision may have access to confidential information which they may not legally be allowed to release or disclose. While an individual may not be prevented from challenging the Church's decisions, the Church is constrained from responding or releasing any confidential information it has acquired as the result of a screening process.
7. When an allegation is made against any adult, we all must *be concerned for that person's right to due process and a fair hearing.* We all should presume innocence until guilt is proven in some definitive manner.
8. Similarly, we need to *respect the right* of all of the People of God *to a good name and reputation.* Innuendo, suggestive remarks, snide comments, stereotyping, and generalizations can do just as much damage to a person's reputation as an ad in a newspaper. We should not place

ourselves in the position of judging either accuser or accused unless or until we have access to all of the facts in any given situation.

9. *Familiarize yourself with the Pastoral Code of Conduct* for the Diocese of Norwich, available at www.norwichdiocese.org. Know the rights and obligations of all of the members of the Church community. If you see any member of the community failing in his or her responsibilities, bring it to the attention of the proper authorities (see *Process of Reporting and Addressing Complaints and Allegations* listed under the section entitled *Enforcement*).

10. *Strive to live lives of truth, holiness, and virtue*, treating all human beings as human persons and not as objects for gratification, power, or advancement.



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10 Things

Concerned
Catholics Can Do
To Help Create
and Maintain Safe
Environments at
Church and at
School



"Let the children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." Mark 10:14

Diocese of Norwich