



PARENT FACT SHEET

Keeping Your Children Safe

CHILDREN ARE GIFTS FROM GOD

OUR LORD HAS A SPECIAL PLACE IN HIS HEART FOR ALL CHILDREN. IN THE GOSPELS, HE ILLUSTRATED THE CAPACITY OF ADULTS TO SHOW "THE LITTLE ONES" A PATH TO HIM. PART OF THAT CAPACITY INCLUDES THE RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP ALL CHILDREN SAFE. AS THE PRIMARY EDUCATORS OF YOUR CHILDREN, HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR YOU TO ENSURE THEIR SAFETY.



Communicating With Children

Always keep communication open between you and your children. Encourage them to speak about their day in school and afterward. Always listen respectfully and try not to react with emotion if you hear something, which shocks or surprises you. Be ready to discuss, advise, and correct them in a calm and loving way. Praise your child whenever possible. and, if it is necessary to be disapproving, choose your words carefully and be as kind as possible when speaking. Young children want to please their parents and can be emotionally hurt by critical comments. Always let the child know you love him or her; it is the behavior you may not like. The more open a parent can be, the more interested in the child's behavior, the easier it will be for the child to speak to the parent if serious problems occur. Be a good listener.

Recognizing The Dignity Of Every Child

All of us are children of God and, as such, must be treated with dignity and respect. Teach your child about this dignity and that no one should touch him or her in a disrespectful way. Children should know the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touches. We teach primary grade children that the parts of our bodies, which are covered by a bathing suit, are private. It is advisable to use proper names for the parts of the body when you have the discussion with your child. Tell the child that no one is ever to touch those private parts of their bodies unless they're at the doctor for a check-up (and you are there with them) or when they might ask you for some assistance. Teach your children that they are very precious to God and, if anyone tries to touch them in a private place, they are to say "NO" in a very loud voice and that they should tell you immediately. Assure your children that if someone touches them, they are NOT at fault - the adult who touched them is.

All parents are welcome to attend Safe Environment awareness sessions about child abuse and child sexual abuse. Workshops are free of charge and range from 1-3 hours long. Contact your local parish or the Safe Environment Office for details (212-371-1000). Information is also available on the Archdiocesan web site: www.archnyc.org

Tricks, Lures, & Warning Signs

Abusers and sexual predators use various methods to entice children and ensure their cooperation/participation. Here are some you can warn your children about.

Bad News Trick:

The predator tells a child that something has happened (sickness or death of a parent, fire...), and that they have come to pick up the child and bring him/her home.

Bribes And Treats:

Offers of something special that the child may want, and then asking for sexual favors in return.

Trust Grooming:

The predator gives assistance to a child when needed or may offer to help the family of the child by offering rides or babysitting. This puts the predator in a position of trust for future abuse.

Drugs and Alcohol:

Drugs and/or alcohol can be given to a child to make them more compliant.

“Accidental” Touching:

Wrestling, tickling, accidental or deliberate contact with genitalia as part of the rules to a game.

Keeping Secrets:

The predator leads the child to believe that there is some secret that is just between them and shouldn't be told to parents.

Pornography:

Showing “dirty” pictures to children to raise curiosity about sex. (Speaking profanely and telling sexual jokes can also be used to gain a child's interest in sex.)

Help Me Tricks:

Requesting help from a child, i.e. asking for directions, finding a lost pet, carrying heavy packages.

Internet lures:

A predator will try to get personal information from the child. The predator may act as though he or she is the same age as the child in order to establish a friendship. He or she often will send the child sexual material and will try to set up a meeting with the child.

Abuse of Power or Authority:

A predator may be in a position of authority such as a coach, police officer, priest, or teacher and use this position to get children to be obedient to his or her request.

Special Attention/Favoritism:

The predator gives special attention or favor to a child to gain trust for future sexual abuse.



Internet Safety

Parents must take a full responsibility for their children's on-line computer use. Sexual predators often use the internet to sexually exploit children and teens. School age children should be strictly monitored whenever they use the computer. Here are some common sense rules to set for your children.

- * Never give personal, identifying information to anyone on-line.
- * Never respond to messages that are suggestive, obscene, or make you feel uncomfortable.
- * Not everything you read on-line is true. An offer that is "too good to be true" probably is.
- * Make the use of the computer a family activity. The computer should not be in a child's bedroom but in the family room or living room.
- * Use a filter to deny access to certain types of material.
- * Be suspicious if your child spends late-night time on the computer or if he or she changes the screen quickly when you come near.

Behavior Changes

If a child is experiencing emotional difficulties, his or her behavior often changes. The talkative child may become moody and reclusive; the quiet child may react with anger in fits of temper or voiced resentment. The vigilant parent must be sensitive to these changes in ordinary behavior. This is the time when communication is very important and a kind and caring approach is necessary. Make sure your children know your love for them and your interest in their concerns. Sometimes children will speak to a grandparent, aunt, or uncle if they are reluctant to speak to parents. Remember, if you suspect that something is wrong, it probably is. Bring in your family support system to help you in this situation.



The Company Your Child Keeps

Always know where your children are and who is supervising them. Be aware if an adult chaperone is paying attention to your child to the exclusion of others. Be concerned about the adults with whom your child communicates via e-mail or phone, if the adult seems to monopolize his or her time. Be prudent about excursions and outings which you allow your child to attend, try to serve as chaperone yourself as often as possible. Let your children know that their friends are welcome in your home.

All education programs present age-appropriate and doctrinally sound material to their students. Contact the Department of Education for details.

*The Mission of the Department of Education is to bear witness to Jesus Christ through the education, religious formation and spiritual development of the people of God particularly through parishes, schools and institutes of higher learning. Please contact them if you have questions about your child at:
Dept. of Education, Archdiocese of New York, 1011 First Ave., New York, NY 10022-4134, 212-371-1000*