

- PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE
- DID YOU KNOW????

- # 1

Did You Know?

Take the Child Safety Quiz

Parents, guardians, and adults who care for children face constant challenges when trying to help keep children safer in today's fast-paced world. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) offers easy-to-use safety resources to help address these challenges. NCMEC's Web site offers a range of practical information for parents and guardians that will help keep children safe from harm. The site also features an interactive quiz on child safety designed for both adults and children. To take the quiz, visit the NCMEC Web site and click on "Child Safety": www.missingkids.com. For particular help you may call: Judith Audette, Director of Office for Healing and Prevention at (508) 929-4363

- # 2

Did You Know

Who Are the Abusers?

Estimates are that approximately 60% of abusers are men, 15 to 20% are women, and 20 to 40% are men and women acting together. So while men are indeed the majority of sexual abusers, it is dangerous to underestimate the risk that female sexual abusers also pose to children. Among educators, 57.2% of abusers are male, and 42.4% of abusers are female. For particular help you may call: Judith Audette, Director of Office for Healing and Prevention at (508) 929-4363

Source: Charol Shakeshaft, Hofstra University, from speech given at the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

- # 3

Did You Know?

The Prevalence of Abuse in Society

In surveys of adults, one out of five women and one out of ten men reported that they were sexually molested before they were 18 years old. This means that an estimated 40 million adult survivors of child sexual abuse are living in the United States today. An estimated 9.6% of all school children will be molested by an educator or an employee of a school between kindergarten and 12th grade. Between 13 and 34% of all females will be victims of sexual assault before the age of 18, and 7 to 16% of all males will also be victimized before they are 18. For particular help you may call: Judith Audette, Director of Office for Healing and Prevention at (508) 929-4363

Source: D. Finkelhor, "Current Information on the Scope and Nature of Child Sexual Abuse," *The Future of Children* 2 (1994): 31-53.

- # 4

Did You Know?

Child Abuse Prevention Month

April is national Child Abuse Prevention Month. It is most appropriate that Child Abuse Prevention Month is held during the Easter season. There is no better time than Easter to celebrate the protection of our most valuable gift from God—our children. For information on how you can become more informed and involved in keeping our children safe, please call: Judith Audette, Director of Office for Healing and Prevention at (508) 929-4363

Source: www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/preventionmonth

- # 5

Did You Know?

Test Your Knowledge of Abuse Prevention: True or False?

True or false: It is common for both child and adult victims of sexual assault to wait some time before telling someone about the abuse. True. It is common for victims of sexual assault to wait some time before telling someone. When the person was assaulted as a child, he or she may wait years or decades. The reasons for this are numerous: victims may want to deny the fact that someone they trusted could do this to them; they may want to just put it behind them; they may believe the myth that they

caused the assault by their behavior; or they may fear how other people will react to the truth. For particular help you may call: Judith Audette, Director of Office for Healing and Prevention at (508) 929-4363

6

Did You Know?

Test Your Knowledge: True or False?

True or false: Child sexual abusers are only attracted to children and are not capable of appropriate sexual relationships. False. While there is a small subset of child sexual abusers who are exclusively attracted to children, the majority of the individuals who sexually abuse children are (or have previously been) attracted to adults. Child predators are difficult to identify precisely because they look just like everyone else. In some cases, they are our most trusted friends and even our family members. For particular help you may call: Judith Audette, Director of Office for Healing and Prevention at (508) 929-4363

7

Did You Know?

How Old Does a Child Need to Be in Order to Stay Alone?

Don't assume that when your child understands what you're saying, he's ready to walk out the door by himself. Besides the fact that many states have laws against leaving children of certain ages alone (for example, younger than 12), experts say children shouldn't be left by themselves until they're capable of fighting off an abductor or handling a crisis situation. Experts also say children do not have the mental maturity to cross busy streets by themselves until they're about 10 or 12 years old. (Did you know that pedestrian injuries rank third in child fatalities, behind traffic accidents and drowning?) Finally, parents who are certain their young children would never walk away with a stranger will be shocked to learn that studies show they probably will. Stay alert and vigilant, even if you believe your child is aware of possible dangers from others. For particular help you may call: Judith Audette, Director of Office for Healing and Prevention at (508) 929-4363

Source: "Know the Rules . . . After-School Safety Tips for Children Who Are Home Alone," www.missingkids.com.

8

Did You Know?

Learn to "Stop" Inappropriate Activity Before It Happens

Child safety tip: Teach your child to respect the word "stop!" Teach your preschooler that "stop" means "stop," and that your child has the right to stop people from touching his or her body. Obviously, exceptions will have to be made for doctors and parents, but even parents must listen when a child doesn't want to be tickled or hugged anymore. Reinforcing this excellent lesson gives your child the power to recognize—and to stop—"bad touching" by others if it should happen. For particular help, you may call: Judith Audette, Director of Office for Healing and Prevention at (508) 929-4363

Source: "Know the Rules . . . After-School Safety Tips for Children Who Are Home Alone," www.kidsafe.com.

9

Did You Know?

Recognizing Signs of Child Sexual Abuse

Changes in behavior, extreme mood swings, withdrawal, fearlessness, excessive crying, bed-wetting, nightmares, fear of going to bed, sleep disorders, and a fear of certain places, people, or activities can be signs that a child has been traumatized by sexual abuse. For particular help you may call: Judith Audette, Director of Office for Healing and Prevention at (508) 929-4363

Source: Philip J. Lazarus, "Trauma and Children: A Parent Handout for Helping Children Heal," VIRTUS, May 12, 2003.

10

Did You Know?

Teach Kids to Protect Themselves at Home

We consider our homes to be safe places for our children. But being home alone can pose risks for children. Here are a few tips to teach kids that will help keep them safe when you are not with them at home: Never answer the door if alone. Do not invite anyone in the house without the permission of a parent or babysitter. Don't tell anyone on the phone that your parents are not home. Instead tell them that your parents can't come to the phone, and take a message. For more tips, please visit www.kidsafe.com.

For particular help you may call: Judith Audette Director of Office for Healing and Prevention at (508) 929-4363

Source: "Know the Rules . . . After-School Safety Tips for Children Who Are Home Alone," www.kidsafe.com.

11

Did You Know?

Help Reduce Abuse Statistics

Nationally, more than 2 million reports of abuse or neglect of minors are made each year. Only a small percentage of child abuse is ever reported. Learn how to spot suspected abuse or neglect, and how to report it to the proper authorities. For more information, please contact those in your parish who are in charge of programs to safeguard children. For particular help, you may call: Judith Audette, Director of Office for Healing and Prevention at (508) 929-4363

Source: www.missingkids.com

12

Did You Know?

Know Your Kids' School

Parents and guardians have the primary responsibility for protecting their children from all potential harm. When choosing a nursery, daycare center, or school, parents should inspect the building and grounds to make sure there are no areas where children play or work that are "off limits" to parents. Such facilities should have a policy that welcomes parents to visit the center or school without prior appointment. For particular help you may call: Judith Audette, Director of Office for Healing and Prevention at (508) 929-4363

Source: Philip J. Lazarus, "Characteristics of Safe and Responsive Schools," VIRTUS, January 14, 2002.

13

Did You Know?

An Appropriate Way to Report Inappropriate Behavior

How should you communicate your concerns to someone who may be behaving inappropriately with children? The "I" message is a simple way to reframe what you want to say so that the listener hears you speak of your feelings and concerns rather than hearing a complaint against him- or herself. The "I" message, simply diagrammed, says, "I feel [feeling] when [situation] because [reason]." For example, you can say, "I feel anxious when you drive a child home alone after religious education classes, because that could put you or the child in a potentially risky situation." It is a much more constructive approach than saying, "You shouldn't be driving children home alone because it is against the rules and puts them in danger." For particular help you may call: Judith Audette, Director of Office for Healing and Prevention at (508) 929-4363

Source: Paul J. Ashton, "CAREfronting vs. Confronting Those Who Behave Inappropriately," featured August 9, 2004, at www.virtusonline.org/virtus.

14

Did You Know?

Road to Priesthood Involves a Rigorous Formation Process

Seminary formation involves much more than academic study. Prior to Ordination, a candidate for priesthood goes through a lengthy evaluation period, including an internship during which he lives in a rectory and works with priests, staff, and parishioners. During this time, the candidate is judged as to his suitability to be a priest. No one is ordained unless the seminary staff, including the lay faculty and formation advisers, concludes that the candidate has attained an emotional, psychological, and sexual maturity appropriate for his age and for the celibate life of a priest. For particular help you may call: Judith Audette, Director of Office for Healing and Prevention at (508) 929-4363

15

Did You Know?

Internet Safety for Kids

The Internet has become the new schoolyard for child molesters seeking girls or boys to victimize. Internet "chat rooms" provide a teenager with an opportunity to engage in a "live" conversation with friends from school or church, or with other teenagers from around the world. A chat room is similar to an old-style telephone party line, except that the teens are typing. Law enforcement has found that child molesters use chat rooms to gain easy and safe access to teens. Because of the seemingly caring and seductive talent of child molesters, teenagers should be warned that when they are in a chat room, they should never provide anyone with private information, personal information, and especially their specific physical location.

For particular help you may call: Judith Audette, Director of Office for Healing and Prevention at (508) 929-4363.

Source: Bob Farley, "Exposing the Dangers of Chat Rooms," featured March 14, 2005, at www.virtusonline.org/virtus.

16

Did You Know?

Educational Materials on the Danger of Abuse

The overwhelming majority of our clergy and lay leaders are hardworking individuals who are dedicated to serving the People of God in our parishes and schools. All of us together are responsible for making sure that all of our ministries are as safe as possible for our children and young people. That means each of us has a responsibility to educate ourselves about the real danger of sexual abuse. For particular help you may call: Judith Audette, Director of Office for Healing and Prevention at (508) 929-4363.

17

Did You Know?

Where Do Your Kids Spend Their Time?

You can help keep your children safe by knowing where they spend their time. Get to know the adults who show up at the various locations in the community where children gather and where they play together. Be wary of any adult who seems more interested in creating a relationship with a child than with other adults. Pay attention when an adult seems to single out a particular child for a relationship or for special attention. Warning signs include treats, gifts, vacations, or other special favors offered only to one specific child. For particular help you may call: Judith Audette, Director of Office for Healing and Prevention at (508) 929-4363.

Source: "Know the Rules . . . After-School Safety Tips for Children Who Are Home Alone," www.missingkids.com.

18

Did You Know?

Get Involved in Parish Safety Programs

Parents and guardians play a key role in the success of parish programs for young people. Parents and guardians who are involved in parish programs and events will be in the best position to protect their own children as well as all the children in the parish community. Involvement and communication are important factors in helping to ensure safe environments for all of our children. Contact the parish office for more information on how you can become actively involved in the safe environment training programs in our parish.

For particular help you may call: Judith Audette, Director of Office for Healing and Prevention at (508) 929-4363.

19

Did You Know?

Listen to Your Children

This summer, when your children are out of school and on different schedules, meeting new people and going to new places, make sure that you talk to them often about their experiences and the people they've met. Listen carefully to your children. If possible, observe and get to know the other children and adults who are part of your children's summertime fun. Above all, communicate your safety concerns to your children. Make sure they know that they can come to you with any concerns they may have about the people they interact with. And if you hear of or observe behaviors that may be inappropriate, make sure to communicate your feelings to people who are in a position to intervene. Communication is key to creating and maintaining a safe environment all year round. For particular help you may call: Judith Audette, Director of Office for Healing and Prevention at (508) 929-4363.

Source: www.kidsafe.com

20

Did You Know?

Summertime, Safe Time

All teachers, staff, and volunteers in the Diocese of Worcester who work with children must undergo criminal background checks. Worcester Diocesan guidelines and abuse prevention training programs currently in use emphasize the importance of parents' knowing who has access to their children at school and other Church-sponsored activities. Summertime is here, and parents should remain vigilant regarding who is granted access to their children. Make sure camp counselors have undergone criminal background checks. And make sure you know the camp's daily routine. In particular, make sure that no camp activity results in a child being left alone with one adult. All activities should be supervised by more than one adult, and the camp should be open to unannounced drop-in visits from parents. For particular help you may call: Judith Audette, Director of Office for

Healing and Prevention at (508) 929-4363, also the local police department or the [Massachusetts Department of Children and Families](#).

Source: Sharon Womack Doty, "Summer Safety—Monitor All Programs!", VIRTUS, July 17, 2006.

21

Did You Know?

Tips for Summer Camp Safety

Summer is almost here. School is almost out, and a whole host of new opportunities for recreation and relaxation await. Maybe you are sending your children to a music or sports camp. Or maybe they have been invited by their friends to go camping in the mountains or at the beach. Whatever the situation, it is important to remember that parents still have the responsibility of controlling access that new people will have to their children. If your children are attending a summer camp, insist that every counselor or anyone else who might have access to your children has undergone an application process that includes a criminal background check and reference checks. For particular help you may call: Judith Audette, Director of Office for Healing and Prevention at (508) 929-4363.

Source: Sharon Womack Doty, "Summer Safety—Monitor All Programs!", VIRTUS, July 17, 2006.

22

Did You Know?

Preventing Child Abuse Is Everyone's Responsibility

It is every adult's moral responsibility to protect possible victims by reporting the suspected abuse or neglect to the responsible authorities. Sexual abuse of minors is a pervasive societal problem, and only concerted and sustained efforts by all adults in every segment of society can help to protect children and youth. For particular help you may call: Judith Audette, Director of Office for Healing and Prevention at (508) 929-4363.

[Procedures for Reporting Sexual Misconduct](#)

If you are aware of an incident of sexual misconduct and the suspected offender is a priest, deacon, candidate, seminarian, religious, lay minister, employee or volunteer, you are encouraged to report the matter to the Diocese of Worcester. The report can be made by phone, contact Judith Audette, Director of the Office for Healing and Prevention, (508) 929-4363 or in writing, and sent to Office for Healing and Prevention, 49 Elm Street, Worcester, MA 01609.