



Honor Thy Children

Archdiocese of Louisville continuing education for the awareness and prevention of child abuse

CHILD ABUSE: MYTH VS. FACT

Prevention starts with understanding

Child abuse is more than bruises or broken bones. While physical abuse is shocking due to the scars it leaves, not all child abuse is as obvious. Ignoring children's needs, putting them in unsupervised, dangerous situations, or making a child feel worthless or stupid are also child abuse. Regardless of the type of child abuse, the result is serious emotional harm. Here are some common myths surrounding child abuse debunked by real facts

MYTH #1: It's only abuse if it's violent.

Fact: Physical abuse is just one type of child abuse. Neglect and emotional abuse can be just as damaging, and since they are more subtle, others are less likely to intervene.

MYTH #2: Only bad people abuse their children.

Fact: While it's easy to say that only "bad people" abuse their children, it's not always so black and white. Not all abusers are

intentionally harming their children. Many have been victims of abuse themselves, and don't know any



other way to parent. Others may be struggling with mental health issues or a substance abuse problem.

MYTH #3: Child abuse doesn't happen in "good" families.

Fact: Child abuse doesn't only happen in poor families or bad neighborhoods. It

crosses all racial, economic, and cultural lines. Sometimes, families who seem to have it all from the outside

are hiding a different story behind closed doors.

MYTH #4: Most child abusers are strangers.

Fact: While abuse by strangers does happen, most abusers are family members or others close to the family.

MYTH #5: Abused children always grow up to be abusers.

Fact: It is true that abused children are more likely to repeat the cycle as adults, unconsciously repeating what they experienced as children. On the other hand, many adult survivors of child abuse have a strong motivation to protect their children against what they went through and become excellent parents.

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If you need support or someone to talk to:

- ☉ Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky or Indiana: 800.CHILDREN/800.422.4453 www.pcaky.org www.pcaain.org
- ☉ Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline 800.4.A.CHILD 800.422.4453 www.childhelp.org

Signs of Possible Sexual Abuse

- Unexplained pain, itching, redness or bleeding in the genital area
- Increased nightmares or bedwetting
- Withdrawn behavior
- Angry outbursts/mood swings
- Loss of appetite or difficulty swallowing
- Sudden/unexplained avoidance of certain people or places
- Sexual knowledge, language or behavior that is unusual for the child's age.

HONOR THY CHILDREN TRAINING

Those employed or volunteering with youth must undergo a background check every 5 years as well as attend the "Honor Thy Children Training" that addresses child abuse, how to recognize it and how to report it. See your parish/school Safe Environment Coordinator if you have not sat-

isfied either of these requirements. The "Honor Thy Children" training is a one time requirement and is normally completed within 30 days of beginning service. Each training session lasts 2 hours. The background check MUST be completed BEFORE any service/employment begins.

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE—ANONYMOUSLY

If you suspect a child is being abused, it's critical to get them the help he or she needs. Reporting child abuse seems so official. Many people are reluctant to get involved in other families' lives. Here are some answers to common questions many face before reporting.

I don't want to interfere in someone else's family. The effects of child abuse are lifelong, affecting future relationships, self-esteem, and sadly putting even more children at risk of abuse as the cycle continues. Help break the cycle of child abuse.

What if I break up someone's home? The priority in child protective services is keeping children in the home. A child abuse report does not mean a child is automatically removed from the home—unless the child is clearly in danger. Support such as parenting classes, anger management or other resources may be offered first to parents if safe for the child. **They will know it was me who called.** Reporting is anonymous. In most places, you do not have to give your name when you report child abuse. The child abuser cannot find out who made the report of child abuse.

It won't make a difference what I have to say. If you have a gut feeling that something is wrong, it is better to be safe than sorry. Even if you don't see the whole picture, others may have noticed as well, and a pat-

tern can help identify child abuse that might have otherwise slipped through the cracks.

Reporting child abuse can bring up a lot of difficult emotions and uncertainty. Here are some tips for communicating effectively in difficult situations:

Try to be as specific as you can. For example, instead of saying, "The parents are not dressing their children right," say something like, "I saw the child running outside three times last week in subzero weather without a jacket or hat. I saw him shivering and uncomfortable. He seemed to want to come inside." However, remember that it is not your job to "prove" abuse or neglect. If suspicions are all you have, you should report those as well.

Understand that you may not learn of the outcome. Due to confidentiality laws in the U.S., unless you are a mandated reporter in an official capacity, you probably won't be updated by Child Protective Services (CPS) about the results of their investigation. If you see future incidences, continue to call and report them. Each child abuse report is a snapshot of what is going on in the family. The more information that you can provide, the better the chance of getting the best care for the child.

UPCOMING TRAININGS

A current list of trainings is always available at www.archlou.org/safe
All trainings are at 6:30p unless otherwise indicated

10.19.15

St. Paul

10.19.15 (Spanish)

Annunciation (Shelbyville)

10.26.15

St. John the Apostle (Brandenburg)

11.2.15 (English)

Annunciation (Shelbyville)

11.9.15

St. James (Louisville)

11.16.15

St. Rita

11.30.15

St. Patrick

There are additional trainings scheduled. Be sure to check archlou.org/safe for a complete list. Dates are subject to change and of course weather delays also effect training dates



RECOGNIZING ABUSIVE BEHAVIOR IN YOURSELF

Do you see yourself in some of these descriptions, painful as it may be? Do you feel angry and frustrated and don't know where to turn? Raising children is one of life's greatest challenges and can trigger anger and frustration in the most even tempered. If you grew up in a household where screaming and shouting or violence was the

norm, you may not know any other way to raise your kids.

Recognizing that you have a problem is the biggest step to getting help. If you yourself were raised in an abusive situation, that can be extremely difficult. Children experience their world as normal. It may have been normal in your family to be slapped or pushed

for little to no reason, or that mother was too drunk to cook dinner. It may have been normal for your parents to call you stupid, clumsy, or worthless. Or it may have been normal to watch your mother get beaten up by your father.

It is only as adults that we have the perspective to step back and take a hard look at what is normal and what is abusive. Read the above sections on the types of abuse and warning signs. Do any of those ring a bell for you now? Or from when you were a child? The following is a

list of warning signs that you may be crossing the line into abuse:

You can't stop the anger. What starts as a swat on the backside may turn into multiple hits getting harder and harder. You may shake your child harder and harder and finally throw him or her down. You find yourself screaming louder and louder and can't stop yourself.

other people expressing concern. However, consider carefully what they have to say. Are the words coming from someone you normally respect and trust? Denial is not an uncommon reaction.

Do you feel angry and frustrated and don't know where to turn? In the U.S., call **1-800-4-A-CHILD** to find support and resources in



You feel emotionally disconnected from your child. You may feel so overwhelmed that you don't want anything to do with your child. Day after day, you just want to be left alone and for your child to be quiet.

Meeting the daily needs of your child seems impossible. While everyone struggles with balancing dressing, feeding, and getting kids to school or other activities, if you continually can't manage to do it, it's a sign that something might be wrong.

Other people have expressed concern. It may be easy to bristle at

your community that can help you break the cycle of abuse. You of course may always call the Archdiocese of Louisville Victim Assistance coordinator, Ms. Martine Siegel, at 502/636-1044; victimassistance@archlou.org or the Chancery at 502/585-3291 for help if you feel you are at risk of abusing a child.

**Archdiocese of Louisville
Office of Safe Environment**

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No child or adult should ever experience abuse by anyone, especially a church minister. We all have the right to be treated with dignity and to expect our church to reflect the goodness of God in all of its dealings.

We hope that this information is helpful to all in our communities who are working to prevent and respond to childhood sexual abuse. Please let us know if you need further assistance or information by calling or emailing our victim assistance coordinator, Ms. Martine Siegel, at 502/636-1044; victimassistance@archlou.org or the Chancery at 502/585-3291.

We must heed God's call to care for the most vulnerable among us and to continue our efforts toward wholeness and health in dealing with sexual abuse.

REPORTING ABUSE IN YOUR HOME OR IN CHILD CUSTODY SITUATIONS

Witnessing abuse in some homes or suspecting abuse in a custody situation brings its own set of challenges and concerns. Some may be afraid of what the abuser will do to them and their children if they speak up. They may also be concerned that the abuser will be able to cover his or her tracks or even turn the abuse around onto them. Culturally, it may not be acceptable for them to separate, adding additional feelings of shame and isolation. They may also be afraid of having their children taken away from them.



Domestic violence isn't just about black eyes. Manipulation and emotional threats to the victim and their children are also a form of abuse, power, and control. Fear of losing custody of the children can be extremely stressful for both women and men in abusive relationships. Child abuse allegations in divorce or child custody issues are viewed very carefully to ensure they are not motivated by vindictiveness. However, if the abuser appears professional, well-groomed, and well-spoken to the outside world,

the victim may feel like their concerns aren't being taken seriously. Worse, if the allegations remain unproven, they may even result in the abuser being given custody. Therefore, if a victim is planning to separate, or have already separated and are in a custody battle, it is essential to get support and legal advice. Domestic violence organizations can help them connect with legal resources in your community, and may be able to provide an advocate to assist your case and attend court hearings. Domestic violence organizations can help you work out a safety plan for both you and your children, and in the U.S. can also help you make calls to CPS if needed.