Now that school is back in session family schedules can be hectic with kids and parents routinely heading in different directions. Parents can’t always be with their children, so when it comes to preventing child sexual abuse, now more than ever it is important to keep the focus on adult responsibility while teaching children skills to help them protect themselves when you aren’t there.

To the right, are a few ways (but not limited to) you can work with your child to do this.

Should you have any questions or suspect any questionable situation, please feel free to reach out to Martine Siegel, Archdiocese of Louisville Victim Assistance Coordinator (502.636.1044) or msiegel@archlou.org.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARENT</th>
<th>PARENT/CHILD</th>
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<tr>
<td>Learn who is working with your children. Ask if they have attended Safe Environment Training and if they’ve had a background check within the last five years. Each parish/school has a Safe Environment Coordinator who can confirm this. If you don’t know who that is contact Scott Fitzgerald, Coordinator of Safe Environment Services at <a href="mailto:sfitzgerald@archlou.org">sfitzgerald@archlou.org</a> or 502.471.2132</td>
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<td>Make sure your children know that they can talk to you about anything that bothers or confuses them.</td>
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<td>Monitor children’s use of technology, including cell phones, social networking sites, and messaging. Review contact lists regularly and ask about any people you don’t recognize.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Empower children to make decisions about their bodies by allowing them age-appropriate privacy and encouraging them to say “no” when they do not want to touch or be touched by others—even in nonsexual ways.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trust your instincts! If you feel uneasy about leaving your child with someone, don’t do it. If you are concerned about possible sexual abuse, ask questions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educate children about the difference between good secrets (such as birthday surprises) and bad secrets (those that make the child feel unsafe or uncomfortable).</td>
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<tr>
<td>If your child tells you that he or she has been abused, stay calm, listen carefully, and never blame the child. Thank your child for telling you. Report the abuse right away.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

If you need support or someone to talk to:

© Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky or Indiana: 800.CHILDREN/ 800.422.4453 www.pcaky.org www.pcain.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
Recent events in the news have turned the spotlight to teen sexual assault. According to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, teen sexual assault is any sexual contact that a teen does not freely agree to ("consent"). Agreeing under emotional or physical pressure ("coercion") is not consenting. We use the term "sexual assault" when the person who committed the assault—the perpetrator—is someone outside the family, and the term "sexual abuse" when the perpetrator is a family member. Sexual assault does not always include intercourse. Sexual assault includes any contact with private body parts (e.g., breasts, genitals, buttocks) that is unwanted, not agreed on, or forced on someone. Any teen is subject to sexual assault no matter his or her sexual identity or orientation. Usually the perpetrator (as in many cases of abuse) is someone the teen knows and trusts and that person can be a teen's age or even an adult.

According to the CDC one in 10 high school students has experienced physical violence from a dating partner in the past year. Among adult victims of rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner, 22.4% of women and 15.0% of men first experienced some form of partner violence between 11 and 17 years of age.

The most effective way to help protect our teens is to give them the information and support they need to feel safe. Talking about these topics can be hard, but the more open and honest we are with them, the more likely they will turn to us with questions. A recent survey of American high school students by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy revealed that more teens said it would be easier to delay sexual activity if they were able to have "more open, honest conversations" with their parents about sexual issues.

**TIPS FOR PARENTS AND TEEN SEXUAL ABUSE**

- Teach your teen to decide on what limits he or she wants in relationships and how to express those limits.
- Let your teen know that teens OR adults have the right to change their mind and say "NO".
- Teach them to be safe and vigilant in social settings by pouring their own beverage and never letting it out of their sight. Date rape drugs can often be undetectable.
- Teach your kids to trust their instincts. If they feel a person is not trustworthy or a situation is unsafe, they should leave.
- Tell your teen to always have a back-up plan. For example, if they're going to a party, make sure someone they trust knows where they're going. Teach them to have a person they can call to come and get them if they need to leave without their original ride.

*Where can you go for more information on teen sexual assault?*
- National Sexual Violence Resource Center - [www.nsvrc.org](http://www.nsvrc.org)
- Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network - [www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)
If you've attended one of the Safe Environment training programs, you may recall the subject of disclosure and why some children wait to disclose once abuse happens. This can have long lasting effects not only on the victim, but those around them.

Once abuse has occurred, children don’t always disclose right away, if ever, as the risks of disclosure keep them from coming forward. The majority of perpetrators are someone the child or family knows. As many as 93 percent of victims under the age of 18 know the abuser. Furthermore, a perpetrator does not have to be an adult to harm a child. They can have any relationship to the child including an older sibling or playmate, family member, a teacher, a coach or instructor, a caretaker, or the parent of another child. Only when the abuser is no longer perceived to be a threat does the abused individual generally feel free to disclose.

Children may not disclose out of fear from being removed from the home. They feel punished, which serves to reinforce the shame and misplaced responsibility that the child feels for causing the abuse. Another reason they may not report abuse is the of loss of the relationship to the abuser. Children who are abused usually have mixed feelings about their abuser. They child hates the offending actions but still cares for the abuser. There are cases where the abuser is the primary financial supporter of the family and disclosing may result in the family losing economic support. Family members’ responses can also determine whether or not a victim discloses. They may have varying degrees of believing and supporting the child for many reasons, including the fact that the abuser is most often a relative or family friend.

The effects of not disclosing can be felt into adulthood such as nightmares, difficulty sleeping, physical ailments and depression. Others may have difficulty with relationships with friends, family, spouses and co-workers all stemming from the inability to trust. This is just a small part of understanding the dynamics of child sexual abuse that is addressed in the Archdiocese of Louisville’s Honor Thy Children Safe Environment Training that is mandatory for anyone working or volunteering with children on a regular basis. While mandatory for some, you are always welcome to attend one of the scheduled trainings regardless of your status. For a complete schedule visit www.archlou.org/safe and should you have any questions regarding disclosure or child sexual abuse in general, please feel free to contact the Archdiocese of Louisville’s Safe Environment Victim Assistance Coordinator Martine Siegel at 502.636.1044 or via email (msiegel@archlou.org).
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.

CHILD ABUSE: A LOOK IN THE MIRROR

Without a doubt raising a child can be one of the greatest challenges a parent may face, especially if they grew up in a home where screaming and/or violence was the norm. Some may not know any other way to raise children. The first step in preventing abuse is realizing a caregiver may have a problem. Some red flags include not being able to stop their anger, feeling emotionally disconnected from their child, meeting the child’s daily needs feels impossible and having others express concern.

So what can be done? Start with learning what children can handle at certain ages. Sometimes a child’s behavior is normal for that age.

Others can learn appropriate parenting skills via classes, books and even talking to other parents. Most importantly taking care of one’s self when feeling overwhelmed will go a long way in preventing abuse. Sleep deprivation is common in this ever changing world and adds to moodiness and irritability, the very thing many parents are trying to get away from.

The option of seeking professional help is always a step in the right direction. If you would like to talk with someone please contact Martine Siegel, Archdiocese of Louisville Director of Counseling Services at 502.636.1044 or via email (msiegel@archlou.org) for a referral.