Honor Thy Children

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

2019 SCHOOL YEAR IS HERE. ARE YOU SAFE ENVIRONMENT COMPLIANT?

Volunteers and staff gather at St. Albert the Great for a recent Safe Environment Training.

It's that time of the year when many call silly season or better known as "back to school". Chances are you're being pulled in several different directions. The last thing most are thinking about is child sexual abuse, but this is when we need to pay the most attention.

Volunteers and staff gather at St. Albert the Great for a recent Safe Environment Training.

What would you do today if a child told you they were being abused? Would you know where to turn? What would you say? Perhaps you're suspecting abuse now or you have in the past. How do you know if you should say something?

If you're a parent of a school-aged child (elementary or high school) you've probably been asked to help volunteer in some capacity. If that involves working regularly with children within the Archdiocese Of Louisville you are required to have a satisfactory background check not older than five years and have attended the Archdiocese of Louisville's "Honor Thy Children" Safe Environment Training.

Why the training? Upon completion of the course, participants will be able to identify signs of child sexual abuse, understand the dynamics of child sexual abuse, including how children are groomed and how they may attempt to reveal their experience. Participants will also know how to take action in response to child sexual abuse, including obligation to report and caring for the abused child and becoming familiar with new Archdiocesan policies and Code of Conduct regarding work with children. More importantly, participants will receive a copy of the new Sexual Abuse Policies and a resource manual to help guide them while working with children.

If you are working with children (or will be soon) and you haven't been to a training, please see your parish/school Safe Environment Coordinator. If you don't know who that is, contact Scott Fitzgerald, Archdiocese of Louisville Coordinator of Safe Environment Services (502.471.2132 or fitzgerald@archlou.org).

Archdiocese of Louisville

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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.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
- Withdrawing 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.
A SAFE ENVIRONMENT:
STARTING THE CONVERSATION

Many times the conversation surrounding child sexual abuse and prevention isn’t brought up until there is a reason. Perhaps someone saw or heard something. Maybe it’s just a hunch. Let’s be honest, most people aren’t in the habit of just bringing up child sexual abuse in casual conversation.

That said, if we are truly going to have safe environments in our parishes and schools we have to start talking about keeping our kids safe before something happens. Isn’t it easier to ask the questions now, than after abuse has occurred and have to ask someone about their behavior? By starting the conversation now, before there is a cause for concern, we eliminate blaming, shaming or confrontation.

So how do you start the conversation within your school or parish? It starts with you. Do you understand the policies and procedures of the Archdiocese of Louisville when it comes to Safe Environment? A great place to start is attending one of the scheduled Safe Environment Trainings. A complete schedule can always be found at www.archlou.org/safe. Once you have an understanding of what’s expected, reach out to others. A good conversation starter can be something like “I saw a story in the news last night about child sexual abuse and it got me thinking about our own safety here at (insert parish/school name).”

For parents of children who are involved in extracurricular activities ask the school/parish Safe Environment Coordinator if those working regularly with children have a current background check on file not older than five years. If you don’t know who that is reach out to Scott Fitzgerald, Archdiocese of Louisville Coordinator of Safe Environment Services (502.471.2132) or (fitzgerald@archlou.org)

Starting the conversation is only half the battle, but once you do, you’ll find there are others that feel the same way but were perhaps reluctant to bring up the conversation, much like you were.

A parish is only as strong as its parishioners. Working together and asking questions now before abuse happens will go a long way to preventing abuse.

It all starts with you and you can start the conversation today.

“There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children.”

- Nelson Mandela
How informed are you when it comes to Safe Environment? How would you handle the following scenarios?

**Scenario A**
You’re the coach of the soccer team who doesn’t have any kids on the team. A parent who you know well and have known for years, calls and says they’re running late. They ask if you can drop them off at home on your way home. What do you do?

**Scenario B**
A relative approaches you at a holiday family gathering and tells you a younger family member mentioned they were touched inappropriately by a well liked older family member. What do you do?

**Scenario C**
You’ve decided to take a small group of parish youth to a baseball game as a reward for fund raising efforts. Being it’s a small group/parish, you and the parents know each other well. After meeting with them, they all tell you it’s ok. Are you good to go?

Head to page 4 to see how you fared!

REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE: IMMUNITY

You want to report suspected abuse, but you’re afraid that you will face prosecution if it turns out no abuse occurred.

In Kentucky you have immunity when reporting suspected abuse. Kentucky Revised Statute 620.050 Immunity for good-faith actions or reports says....  
“Anyone acting upon reasonable cause in the making of a report or acting under KRS 620.030 to 620.050 in good faith shall have immunity from any liability, civil or criminal, that might otherwise be incurred or imposed. Any such participant shall have the same immunity with respect to participation in any judicial proceeding resulting from such report or action. However, any person who knowingly makes a false report and does so with malice shall be guilty of a Class A misdemeanor.”

Don’t let fear of backlash stop you from reporting suspected abuse. These laws were made to encourage reporting.

Should you have any questions about suspected abuse and reporting please feel free to contact Martine Siegel, Archdiocese of Louisville Victim Assistance Coordinator at 502.636.144 or msiegel@archlou.org.

MONTHLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT TIP

Late summer and early fall tend to see an arrival of new faces to parishes and schools.

Like the Archdiocese of Louisville other dioceses around the country require some form of Safe Environment Training

A popular question this time of year?

“Will my Safe Environment Training from my old diocese transfer to the Archdiocese of Louisville?”

The answer unfortunately is no. The main reason for this is we have an Archdiocese of Louisville specific code of conduct that is reviewed in our trainings. At the conclusion of the training you certify that you have been made aware of this code and that you accept and agree to abide by said code.

Along those lines each member coming into the Archdiocese of Louisville is required to have a background check not older than 5 years on file through selection.com.

Like the Safe Environment Training, background checks from another Archdiocese cannot transfer in .

See your parish/school Safe Environment Coordinator for an updated background check.

Should you have any questions concerning your status, feel free to reach out to your parish/school Safe Environment Coordinator or

Scott Fitzgerald  
Coordinator of  
Safe Environment Services  
(sfitzgerald@archlou.org)  
502.471.2132

Honor Thy Children
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 Pastoral Center 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.

How informed are you when it comes to Safe Environment?  How did you do?

**Scenario A**
If you told the parent they would have to make arrangements to have their child picked up because it’s just you driving home, you are correct. The Archdiocese of Louisville Code of Conduct states you must avoid driving alone in a vehicle with a young person.

**Scenario B**
If you said report this to Child Protective Services, you are correct. Commonwealth of Kentucky Law says all adults who have any reason to suspect child abuse are legally required to contact Child Protective Services within 24 hours.

**Scenario D**
If you answered no, you are correct. According to the code of conduct, adults must obtain written parental permission, including a signed medical release form, before taking minors away from the parish, school, or agency for events, field trips, etc. Permissions slips should include the type, location, dates, and times of the activity and emergency contact numbers.

These are just a sample of the many topics covered in the Archdiocese of Louisville’s Safe Environment Training.

This training is mandatory for ANY parish/school staff or volunteer that works regularly with children.

You can find a complete list of scheduled trainings at www.archlou.org/safe

As adults in a major youth-serving community organization, it is our obligation to model effective safeguards and proactive initiatives when fostering a safe environment for our children.

**WHAT OTHERS HAVE TO SAY WHO ATTENDED RECENT TRAININGS**

“This program was incredible! You were right on target! Appreciate all that the Archdiocese is doing!” - Local Psychiatrist and parent of an Archdiocesan elementary student.

“This program was amazing! The presenters were fantastic, and everything was spot on!” - Pediatric Emergency Room Physician and parent of an Archdiocesan elementary student.

"I just want to thank you all for that all you are doing. The program was powerful! As a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, I can tell you your information is invaluable" - Parent of an Archdiocesan elementary student.