



Honor Thy Children

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

BACK TO SCHOOL: NOTICING ABUSE

The new school year is well underway and for many it's a time of excitement and new beginnings, but for some school is only a brief reprieve from the abuse they are facing outside the classroom. Every day in Kentucky children are abused. Places like the school or social settings are a great place to identify abused children. Listed below are just some signs and symptoms of sexual abuse to be on the lookout for as children begin to step outside the home. It's important to remember no one behavioral change by itself indicates a child is being sexually abused, however, a combination of these symptoms should alert you to the possibility of abuse. Kentucky is also a mandatory reporting state. Ken-

tucky Revised Statute 620.030 says "Any person who knows or has reasonable cause to believe that a child is dependent, neglected, or abused shall immediately cause an oral or written report to be made to a local law enforcement agency or the Department of Kentucky State Police; the cabinet or its designated representative; the Commonwealth's attorney or the county attorney; by telephone or otherwise." Failure to do so is punishable by law. Children tend to disclose in different ways, purposefully, accidentally or by immediate and long term. More often children will disclose accidentally by attempting to signal adult care givers they're in pain. Be aware that children are

attempting to "tell" through subtle behaviors. Hence, an attentive adult who notices and attends to these subtle signs in necessary for the disclosure to occur. Immediate disclosure is just that, someone who tells as the abuse is occurring. Long-term disclosure is when someone tells after the abuse has ended. Although the individual may be out of harm's way it may be necessary to create an age appropriate safety plan to deal with the flashbacks, feelings of suicide and self imposed guilt/shame. Whichever way children or adults disclose, it is important to acknowledge the courage it took to disclose and attend to their safety.

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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
- ☺ Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline 800.4.A.CHILD 800.422.4453 www.childhelp.org

Are You Safe Environment Compliant?

Are you working regularly with children?

If so you must have attended an Archdiocese of Louisville Safe Environment Training.

You must also have a satisfactory background check not older than 5 years.

See your Safe Environment Coordinator today to verify your compliance!

POSSIBLE SIGNS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

- Nightmares, trouble sleeping, fear of the dark, or other sleeping problems.
- Loss of appetite, or trouble eating or swallowing.
- Sudden mood swings: rage, fear, anger, or withdrawal.
- Fear of certain people or places (e.g., a child may not want to be left alone with a babysitter, a friend, a relative, or some other child or adult).
- An older child behaving like a younger child, such as bed-wetting or thumb sucking.
- Sexual activities with toys or other children, such as simulating sex with dolls or asking other children/siblings to behave sexually.
- Refusing to talk about a "secret" he/she has with an adult or older child.
- Talking about a new older friend.
- Suddenly having money.

ABUSE: RISK FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE

There's no perfect way to prevent child sexual abuse but knowing some of the risk factors may go a long way curtailing abuse. Here are some of the more prevalent environments that can contribute to child sexual abuse courtesy of defendtheinnocence.org

Stressful Home Environment. Children with low self-confidence in their surroundings, particularly at home, are vulnerable to an adult who promises stability and security, even if the stability comes with other unwanted behaviors. Children with a stressful home life may also feel that they cannot confide in a parent because the parent is already burdened with so many problems and may not respond well.

Low Self Esteem.

Children with low self-esteem are especially. This is especially true for children who are targets of bullying or whose parents also display low self-esteem. Children with low self-esteem are more likely to be drawn to those who offer flattery, gifts, and special attention. Without feelings of self-worth, a child may not see the value in the boundaries, respect, and consent they are entitled to.

Unmonitored Access to Technology. Unfortunately, technology is a perpetrator's playground. The internet provides them with significantly greater access to potential targets along with added anonymity and the ability to keep things secret. The phones, tablets, or laptops in your home can be gateways for interaction between a perpetrator and your child.

Poor Communication. Children who do not feel that they can be open with their parents may become distant, isolated, and insecure, and therefore more susceptible to a perpetrator's grooming. If or when sexual abuse begins, a child who has poor communication with their parents will likely keep it a secret.

Loneliness. Loneliness can lead to feelings of neglect, isolation, and alienation. A crucial step in a perpetrator's grooming is isolating the child from their loved ones, both emotionally and physically. If a child is already feeling isolated, this step will be much easier for a perpetrator to achieve.

Domestic Abuse. Domestic violence fosters a home environment of instability, insecurity, poor communication, and mishandled aggression. It may also correlate with alcohol or substance abuse among one or more family members. Each of these factors increase the risk for child sexual abuse.



Prior Sexual Abuse. This is known as revictimization. A child survivor who lacks the support network and tools to cope with their trauma may become more vulnerable to a recurrence of sexual abuse, whether in childhood, adolescence, or adulthood. Also, a child who has been subjected to sexual abuse that has not been dealt with is likely still in an at-risk environment that allows the abuse to continue.

If you feel yourself affected by any of these and would like help, please reach out to Martine Siegel,

UPCOMING TRAININGS

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

9.30.19

St. Paul

10.8.19

St. Mary Academy

10.14.19

St. Gabriel

10.15.19

St. James (Elizabethtown)

10.21.19

St. Francis Xavier
Mt. Washington

10.28.19

St. Patrick

More trainings are being scheduled for November and will be posted at www.archlou.org/safe

Keep checking this webpage for updates as trainings cancelled due to inclement weather will be posted here

Please note that due to the nature of material discussed at these trainings, children under 16 will not be allowed into the trainings and child care is not provided.



IMPORTANT:

Upon completion of your training you **MUST** return your completion certificate to your parish/school.

Failure to do so may result in delays in getting credit for attending the session.

CARING FOR YOUR CHILD AFTER SEXUAL ABUSE

Annette Curtis, Clinical Therapist

So you've called the local reporting agency in your area and reported the child sexual abuse, one of the biggest steps you can take. Now, what should you do to take care of your child?

Get your child into therapy as soon as possible.

If you do not have health insurance or your health insurance won't pay for therapy, most states have a crime victims fund that will help pay. There may be some limitations to this, such as needing to find a therapist who is approved for crime victims work, or the fund only paying for so much therapy. I have seen the crime victims fund also pay for a medical exam, therapy for the child, mileage to and from the therapist, medication, and possible counseling for parents. Talk to your local crime victims advocate to find out what they can do for your child and for you.

Find a therapist who has been trained in trauma-focused therapy and is trauma-sensitive.

If your child is younger, try to find a therapist trained in a sand tray and/or play therapy that deals with trauma. Many times, children tell their story through their play and share details they can't or don't know how to verbalize. It is okay for you to meet with the therapist to see if they are a good fit for you, but especially for your child. Watch how your child responds to the therapist. Does the therapist get down on their level? Are they condescending to the child? Are they warm and nurturing? Trust your gut on this. It is very important that your child is believed and supported.

I have seen the damage done when parents don't believe their child, minimize what happened, blame the child in any way, or try to brush it under the rug as if the abuse did not happen or wasn't that bad. Remember whether the abuse happened once or several

times, it is trauma. Being there for your child in every way can help to minimize the long-term effects of the abuse. Your child's trust with another person was broken. You can help the child to see that you can be trusted and that not all adults are untrustworthy. Also, make sure you are clear with your child that the abuse was not their fault. Allow your child to talk when they need to, but don't ask a lot of questions. Don't try to solve the child's problems for them. You can offer choices or suggestions, but in the end, your child will become more empowered by making their own decisions.

Your child may experience triggers at any moment.

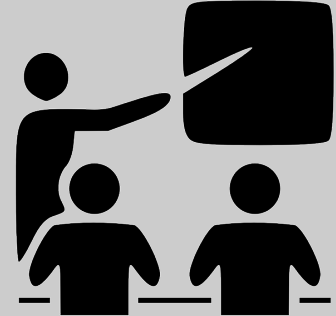
A trigger is something that reminds a person of the trauma they experienced. This could be a place, person, smell, time of day, or many other things. Most likely you may be aware of some of them but not all. When a child experiences a trigger, they may feel like they are back in the moment when the trauma occurred and feel the exact way they did (i.e. scared, helpless, trapped). Work with your child's therapist on techniques to help, such as deep breathing or getting a favorite blanket or stuffed animal. Your child needs to feel safe and supported by you regardless of how you feel or what you believe at the moment. Your reaction and what you do after the abuse are key in helping your child heal. Use the resources available to you to help in the process and take care of yourself as well. Your child needs to interact with a parent or loved one that is healthy and trustworthy. Try to maintain a consistent schedule, routine, and household. This can help your child feel safe and secure and be less anxious about what could happen. Love your child unconditionally and be present for them. Understand that healing takes time and there is no specific time frame in the healing process.

MONTHLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT TIP

A sometimes asked question this time of year.....

"Why can't my parish/school find a record of my Safe Environment?"

At the conclusion of each Safe Environment Training, members are instructed to return their Safe Environment Training Completion Certificate to their parish/school.



Many times we get busy and forget to stop by the parish/school office.

Each parish/school is required to maintain on site verification that each Safe Environment Compliant person has attended a Safe Environment Training

Having that verification on site speeds up the compliance process for everyone involved.

If you don't know who your parish/school Safe Environment Coordinator is, feel free to reach out to:

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



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 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.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE: BE ALERT

Have you ever seen an adult interacting with a child in such a way that made you feel uncomfortable with what you observed? It's human nature to minimize or doubt these suspicious feelings and opt to believe that you are overreacting. These are "uh-oh" feelings and they should not be ignored. Here are a few warning signs that encourage further inquiry when you witness and adult who:



- Refuses to let a child set any of his or her own limits.
- Insists on hugging, touching, kissing, tickling, wrestling with, or holding a child even when the child does not want this affection.
- Is overly interested in the sexuality of a particular child or teen (e.g., talks repeatedly about the child's developing body or interferes with normal teen dating).
- Manages to get time alone or insists on time alone with a child with no interruptions.
- Spends most of his/her spare time with children and has little interest in spending time with someone his or her own age.
- Regularly offers to baby-sit many different children for free or takes children on overnight outings alone.
- Buys a child expensive gifts or gives money for no apparent reason.
- Frequently walks in on children/teens in the bathroom.
- Allows children or teens to consistently get away with inappropriate behaviors.

Should you have any questions or concerns about anything you feel, feel free to contact our victim assistance coordinator, Ms. Martine Siegel, at 502/636-1044; victimassistance@archlou.org