

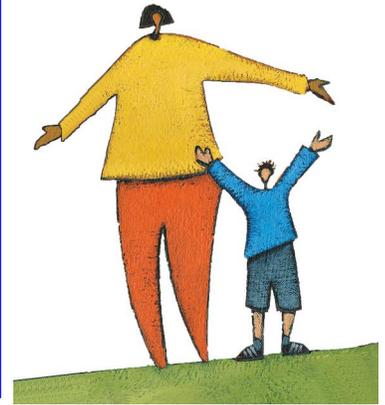
# CHILDREN ARE GIFTS FROM GOD

DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO – SAFE ENVIRONMENT OFFICE

## PARENT FACT SHEET

Keeping Your Children Safe

OUR LORD HAS A SPECIAL PLACE IN HIS HEART FOR ALL CHILDREN. IN THE GOSPELS, HE ILLUSTRATED THE CAPACITY OF ADULTS TO SHOW “THE LITTLE ONES” A PATH TO HIM. PART OF THAT CAPACITY INCLUDES THE RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP ALL CHILDREN SAFE. AS THE PRIMARY EDUCATORS OF YOUR CHILDREN, HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR YOU TO ENSURE THEIR SAFETY.



### RECOGNIZING THE DIGNITY OF EVERY CHILD

All of us are children of God and, as such, must be treated with dignity and respect. Teach your child about this dignity and that no one should touch him or her in a disrespectful way. Children should know the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touches. We teach primary grade children that the parts of our bodies, which are covered by a bathing suit, are private. It is advisable to use proper names for the parts of the body when you have the discussion with your child. Tell your children that no one is ever to touch those private parts of their bodies unless they're at the doctor for a check-up (and you are there with them) or when they might ask you for some assistance. Teach your children that they are very precious to God and, if anyone tries to touch them in a private place, they are to say “NO” in a very loud voice and that they should tell you immediately. Assure your children that if someone touches them, they are NOT at fault—the adult who touched them is.

### COMMUNICATING WITH CHILDREN

- Parent Fact Sheet
- So There is No Doubt
- Sex and Cell Phones
- Practical Advice for Parents on Preventing Child Sexual Abuse

Keep communication open between you and your children. Encourage them to speak about their day and their activities. Parents get busy, but it is important to listen to children respectfully, trying not to overreact when something shocks or surprises you. Children need to know their

parents value their thoughts and want to hear what they have to say. Be ready to discuss, advise, and correct in a calm and loving way. Praise your child whenever possible, and if necessary to discipline, choose your words carefully. Children (yes, even teens) want to please their parents and can

be emotionally hurt (or stop communicating) due to critical comments. Always let your child know you love him or her; even if you do not like their behavior. It is important for a child to know that their parents believe them and trust them. Remind your children you are always there to hear their concerns.

## TRICKS, LURES & WARNING SIGNS

Abusers and sexual predators use various methods to entice children and ensure their cooperation/participation. Here are a few to be aware of...

**Trust Grooming:**  
The predator assists the child or offers to help the family with babysitting, rides, etc.

Both the child and the family begin to trust the predator not anticipating future abuse.

**Drugs and Alcohol:**  
Drugs and/or alcohol can be given to a child to make them more compliant.

**"Accidental" Touching:**  
Wrestling, tickling, accidental

or deliberate contact with genitalia as part of the rules to a game.

**Bribes and Treats:**  
Offers something special that the child may want then asks for sexual favors in return.

**Keeping Secrets:**  
After gift giving or sexual contact insisting that the child keep the secret from the parents to avoid getting in trouble.

**Pornography:**  
Showing "dirty" pictures to children to raise curiosity about sex. Also, speaking profanely and telling sexual jokes.

**Abuse of Power:**  
A predator may be in a position of authority such as coach, security officer, clergy or teacher and use their position to get children to be obedient to his/her request.

## INTERNET SAFETY AND CELLPHONE USE

Parents must take full responsibility for their children's on-line computer use and phone-based internet use. The internet provides immeasurable access to explicit sexual information. In addition, sexual predators often use the internet to sexually exploit children and teens. All children, including teens, should be closely monitored when using the internet.

Here are some common sense rules to set for your children:

- Make the use of the computer a family activity. The computer should NOT be in a child's bedroom (including teens) but in the family room or living room.
- Use software to track websites that your children visit and to deny access to inappropriate material. Ask to see sites (including My Space and Facebook) that your children frequent.
- Never give personal, identifying information (including school names) to anyone on-line.
- Never respond to messages that are suggestive, obscene, or uncomfortable.
- Not everything you read on-line is true. An offer that is "too good to be true" probably is.
- Be suspicious if your child is on the computer late at night or for many hours, and if he/she changes the screen quickly when you are near.
- Talk to your cell phone provider to learn about their safety and blocking features.

## THE COMPANY YOUR CHILD KEEPS

Always know where your children are and who is supervising them. Be aware if an adult chaperone is paying extra attention to your child to the exclusion of others. Be concerned about the adults with whom your child communicates via e-mail or phone, and if the adult seems to monopolize his or her time. Be prudent about excursions and outings your child attends. Try to serve as chaperone yourself. Let your children know their friends are welcome in your home.

## BEHAVIOR CHANGES

If a child is experiencing emotional difficulties, his or her behavior often changes. The talkative child may become moody or reclusive; the quiet child may react with anger or resentment. Parents must be sensitive to these changes in ordinary behavior. This is the time when communication is very important. Sometimes children will speak to another trusted adult before their parents. If you suspect something is wrong use your family support system to help you in this situation.

*Heavenly Father, look with love upon our children and protect them with Your love.*

*May they grow in wisdom and age and strength in Your presence and in the sight of all.*



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Mary Hastings, 916-733-0227  
Safe Environment Coordinator

Esther Castillo, 916-733-0142  
Pastoral Care Coordinator

Yvette Espinoza, 916-733-0237  
Background Check Coordinator

Diocese of Sacramento  
2110 Broadway  
Sacramento, CA 95818  
[www.diocese-sacramento.org](http://www.diocese-sacramento.org)