

Reporting Sexual Abuse of a Minor

If you suspect or a child discloses abused you should:

- *Believe your child.
- *Stay calm. Intense reactions tend to frighten the child and may keep them from opening up to you.
- *Do not blame the child. Most children feel guilt, shame and embarrassment after they have been abused. Let them know it is not their fault.
- *Thank the child for sharing this difficult information with you.
- *Report to law enforcement and Child Protective Services with 48 hours.
- *Seek medical attention for your child. Counseling services are also very helpful for victims and their families during the healing process.

St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church Safe Environment

During your child's Faith Formation year your child will learn Anti-Victimization Skills.

Kinder through 5th Grade:

- Yellow Dino curriculum with songs
- Non-threatening approach to safety
- Teaches about "Tricky People"
- Teaches how to say "No" and tell a trusted adult



6th through 12th Grade:

- Child and Teen Lures Prevention
- Teaches 16 different "lures" that predators use
- Conversational approach to safety
- Teaches internet safety



IMPORTANT CONTACTS

Office of Victim Assistance & Safe Environment: (210)734-7786, (877)700-1888
Child Protective Services: (800)252-5400
National Sexual Assault Hotline: (800)422-4453
Sex Offender Registry: <https://records.txdps.state.tx.us/sexoffender>
Fr. Norman Ermis: (830)431-4181
Safe Environment Coordinator, Julia Cortez: (830)816-5667



St. Peter the Apostle
CATHOLIC CHURCH

Safe Environment Information

Dear St. Peter the Apostle Parishioners,

In my homily about the clergy sexual abuse scandal at all masses on the weekend of August 25-26th, I promised to follow-up with additional means of helping parishioners navigate through this terrible crisis in our church.

This pamphlet has been put together by our parish staff from selected information available through the Office of Victim Assistance & Safe Environment of the Archdiocese of San Antonio. While we know that this abuse scandal needs international solutions, we also know that the greatest change can be made in local communities, such as ours. That is what we hope to effect in making this information available to you, your family and friends.

Parents and those in supervisory roles with children and teens are their guardians and protectors on the one hand, and on the other hand, must help prepare children to navigate an often dangerous world by enabling them to identify and name what is bad, evil, and harmful, to avoid it, and live a virtuous life. Parents and supervisors must be well-informed and incredibly wise to accomplish this dual role.

This pamphlet contains information of immense insight and value regarding abuse by anyone, not just the clergy. The content herein is meant as a quick study to inform and educate parents, grandparents, and anyone who has children in their care or supervision about this issue. Read, study, and integrate the lessons herein. Find a way which is age appropriate to inform and instruct children in your care to be prudent, vigilant, and wise in all their relationships. Always foster and maintain an open relationship of communication with your children, so they will confide in you about any matter, including possible abuse.

Remember that an abuser is typically not some “boogeyman,” but a relative, friend, or close associate, well-known and trusted who has gained your confidence and that of your child. This fact makes abuse all the harder to detect, confront, report, and navigate through to a point of healing.

Any type of abuse ultimately has spiritual ramifications. This is all the more true when clergy, a volunteer, or employee of a faith community is the perpetrator. We want our Catholic Parish and Archdiocese to be a truly safe environment where we come to know the love and care of Jesus Christ.

All this information has equal importance for a holistic understanding of the issue and practical applications, but the section on “Types of Lures” is an extremely helpful section to build skills for detecting the “grooming” process leading up to abuse. Identifying such lures can set off ‘alarm bells’ to be proactive and preventive as a parent or guardian. This could save a lifetime of harm to your child(ren) and family.

Please feel free to share this information with other family members, friends, neighbors, and associates. The more we are all informed and equipped to address this scourge in our church and society, the healthier we can all remain. God’s blessings as we become all the wiser!

Sincerely,

Fr. Norman A. Ermis
Pastor

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| <p><i>Pornography Lure</i> Children are curious about sex, so predators show them porn. Never remove clothing for photos, sexting or videotaping.</p> | <p><i>Bribery Lure</i> Gifts do not come with strings attached. Nothing should be expected in return with secrets. Never keep secret about something wrong or a lie.</p> | <p><i>Ego/Fame Lure</i> Children/teens want to be famous. Talent agents must first talk to parents. Only parents can sign contracts.</p> |
| <p><i>Emergency Lure</i> Predators may lie and fake an emergency. Verify emergencies by calling or running home. Create a “Family Plan of Action” possibly with a “secret” word.</p> | <p><i>Fun & Games Lure</i> No games should use rope, handcuffs, or duct tape. Beware of tickling games where the predator touches swim suit zone.</p> | <p><i>Hero Lure</i> Children want to meet famous people. Don’t go with someone to meet a famous person or with someone looks famous. Ask parents’ permission.</p> |
| <p><i>Job Lure</i> Parents accompany all children (even teens) on job interviews. Parents know everything about a child’s job (employer, hours, and pay). Children never go to a customer’s house alone. Children ask parents before accepting a job or chore.</p> | <p><i>Name Recognition Lure</i> Children, don’t go with someone just because they know your name. Place child’s name where not visible to a stranger (including backpacks & clothing). Avoid repeating child/s name loudly in stores, etc. Be careful of names on cars, especially with teenage drivers.</p> | <p><i>Online Computer Lure</i> People online are not who they claim. Predators pretend to be another child. Never give out personal information while online. Never meet an online acquaintance. Tell parents about such requests. Pornography should be reported to an adult, your provider, or www.cybertipline.com.</p> |
| <p><i>Threats & Weapons Lure</i> Rare, highly publicized occurrences. Weapons intimidate. Children should make commotion and try to get away.</p> | <p><i>Hate & Violence Lure</i> We should accept people’s differences. Bullying, sexual harassment, weapons & threats are wrong. There are consequences to our words & actions.</p> | <p><i>Playmate Lure</i> Predator will use another child as a lure. Playmates/Friends should never entice others to make body contact or view pornographic materials.</p> |
| <p><i>Drug Lure</i> Drugs inhibit children, are potentially dangerous, and addictive. Teens need to be on guard for being drugged at parties.</p> | <p><i>Pet Lure</i> Never go with someone to help find a lost pet or see a pet. Don’t be lured close to someone because of an unusual pet.</p> | <p><i>If you receive a sext message...</i> Take your phone to the police, so the message can be handled properly and then deleted. The message is evidence.</p> |

Children's Curriculum

The Archdiocese of San Antonio has accepted the use of the Yellow Dyno's "Fun Way to Safe Kids" program for children through Grade 5 and Child Lures program developed by Kenneth Wooden for 6th Grade through 12th Grade.

Yellow Dyno's "Fun Way to Safe Kids" uses songs to help teach safe concepts of beware of tricky people, trusting our feelings, and my body's mine. We invite you to visit www.yellowdyno.com for more information about this specific program.

Child Lures has been advocated as a nationally recognized child safety program for all ages. The Archdiocese of San Antonio and St. Peter the Apostle Parish have implemented the program into all levels of faith formation. We invite you to also visit www.childlures.com for more information about this specific program.

So why the name Child Lures?

Think of a fishing lure, an offender will often use these lures or tactics to confuse and abduct a child.

So why not teach Stranger Danger?

It is reported that 90% of children actually know their offender and are often "groomed" for months or even years by an offender.

-Never leave Your Child Unattended

It only takes a second for a child to be abducted
Parents are the main source of protection
Incorporate a buddy system

-Promote Self-Esteem

Self-esteem comes from confidence and knowledge builds confidence
Allowing a child to say "No" builds confidence

-Listen to Your Child (Open communication is essential to safety!)

Parents must listen without being judgmental
Allow the child to discuss uncomfortable issues

-Knowing the Lures Helps Decrease Abuse

-Take Time to Create an Emergency Family Plan of Action

Types of Lures

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| <p><i>Affection Lure</i> Predators befriend the lonely child. Understand the difference of real love versus fake love. Love does not force you to do something you don't want to do. You have the right to say NO!</p> | <p><i>Assistance Lure</i> Adults ask other adults for help. We want children to be helpful, but children ask parents before helping other adults. Take 3 steps back from a car and run the other way.</p> | <p><i>Authority Lure</i> Children are taught to obey adults... Predators pretend to be policemen, firemen, etc. Legal right to request badge number or a uniformed police officer in a marked car.</p> |
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Office of Victim Assistance & Safe Environment
(OVASE)

Archdiocese of San Antonio
**Protecting all of God's Children from Abuse
and providing them with a Safe Environment.**

St. Peter Prince of the Apostles Campus
135 Barilla Place, San Antonio, TX 78209
210-734-7786, 1-877-700-1888,
www.archsa.org, ovase@archsa.org

Dear Parents,

This guide was created by the Office of Victim Assistance & Safe Environment through the Archdiocese of San Antonio to teach parents how to identify child abuse, how to respond to abuse, how to help protect your child and encourage a safe environment. As parents we are the primary educators of children and hope that this booklet will help you to begin a conversation with your child on safety issues according to their age and level of development. For further information, comments or questions please contact the Office of Victim Assistance & Safe Environment @ 210-734-7786.

OVASE MISSION

To serve communities of faith where every person is safe from harm and respected throughout life.

OVASE GOALS

- No More Victims.
- Offer immediate pastoral care to those who have been sexually abused by clergy, archdiocesan staff, or church volunteers.
- Provide educational leadership training for chancery and parish clergy and staff regarding the effects of abuse on victims and appropriate ministerial boundaries.
- Educate children and adults about preventing abuse, encouraging behaviors that keep children safe, and acting to protect children if abuse occurs.

OVASE SERVICES

- Intakes (where victims report clergy abuse)
- Assessments
- Counseling on sexual abuse
- Spiritual support groups
- Referrals
- Development, training and implementation of abuse prevention program within the diocese.

Child Abuse

Any behavior directed toward a child by an adult that harms a child's physical or emotional health and development.

The four categories of abuse are:

NEGLECT is the most reported form of child abuse in Texas and occurs when a caretaker fails to provide for a child's basic needs which include the following:

- Physical Neglect (food, clothing, shelter, etc.),
- Neglectful Supervision,
- Medical care (head lice, special needs of child),
- Abandonment, and
- Refusal to accept parental responsibility.

PHYSICAL ABUSE occurs when a caretaker allows or inflicts non accidental physical injury that causes a substantial risk to the child's physical well being and health. Physical injuries may include the following:

- Welts
- Kicking
- Burning
- Pushing
- Slapping
- Biting
- Hitting
- Black Eyes
- Fractured/Broken Bones
- Bruises that are not appropriate with the age development of a child

EMOTIONAL/VERBAL ABUSE (Psychological abuse) is a pattern of behavior that retards a child's development and sense of self worth by conveying to the child that they are worthless, flawed, unloved, or unwanted. Psychological abuse may include the following:

- Constant name calling/criticism,
- Degradation/Insults,
- Tormenting/Yelling, and
- Terrorizing/threats.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE is any sexual contact by force, trickery, or bribery where there is an imbalance in age, size, power or knowledge. Texas Penal Code states that no child under the age of 18 can consent to sex. Examples of sexual abuse include:

- Pornography;
- Masturbation;
- Fondling, kissing, or holding a child that is uncomfortable; and
- Forced to perform oral or anal sex.

Signs, Symptoms & Behaviors of Abuse

Children who are experiencing trauma many times experience emotional and behavioral changes. Children who are sociable and outgoing become withdrawn and moody. Quiet children often become very angry and violent. It is extremely important to talk to your child and reaffirm you love them and that they can talk to you about their feelings. Communication is key during this time and a caring approach allows the child to open up to what is causing them distress. Children may find it difficult talking directly to their parent, don't take this personal. Allow the child to confide in a grandparent, uncle, teacher that can help support the family.

Talking to Children about Sexual Abuse

It is difficult to think about your child becoming a victim of sexual abuse. However, 1 in 3 girls will be sexually assaulted before age 18 and 1 in 5 boys. Most children love and care about their abusers, 90 percent of the time the abuser is a friend, coach, teacher, etc. In 65% of sexual abuse cases the perpetrator is a family member. The best way to reduce your child's risk of becoming a victim is to talk and know your child.

Utilize teachable moments to begin the conversation with your child. Always begin the conversation during a calm time while you are watching television, making dinner or they are on the internet. Always express that you care about your child as well as their safety is very important to you. Do not be afraid to teach a child the correct names of all body parts. Point out that their body belongs to them and they always have the right to say NO! to unwanted touching, even if the person is an adult. If a person makes them uncomfortable they can always talk to you.

Internet Safety

The internet predator takes on many roles, but the goals are the same: to either set up a meeting or to have the child send an inappropriate picture of him/herself. Here are some basic rules to follow:

- Have the computer in an open area, not the child's room.
- Have rules for the computer: sites to visit, times to use, etc..
- Be present when your child is on the computer: if you are there he/she will not be doing anything they are not supposed to.
- Do not allow your child to use any specific personal information on any social networks.