

# KEEPING KIDS SAFE

A PARENTS' GUIDE

The Archdiocese of Washington is dedicated to promoting and ensuring the protection of all children. This flier is one in a series produced by the archdiocese to help parents better understand how to protect their children from victimization, both inside and outside the home. This guide explains how the archdiocese works to protect children in our parishes and schools.

## Some signs that a child is being sexually abused:

- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities
- Reports nightmares or bedwetting
- Experiences a sudden change in appetite or behavior
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease, particularly if under age 14
- Runs away

**Note:** Victims of sexual abuse do not necessarily exhibit physical signs of the abuse and some sexually abused children may exhibit no signs of abuse at all.

*Information from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*

## A long standing commitment to protecting children

The Archdiocese of Washington was one of the first dioceses in the nation to have a written Child Protection Policy, education on child protection and the first to use electronic fingerprinting for background checks. Our policy has become a model for dioceses nationwide and is available online at [www.adw.org](http://www.adw.org).



If you have worked with children in our parishes and schools, you know that any adult who has substantial contact with children must complete an application, be fingerprinted for a criminal background check and attend a child protection education workshop. The program used for these workshops, *Protecting God's Children for Adults*, is nationally recognized and held across the archdiocese throughout the year in English and Spanish.

Children in archdiocesan schools and religious education programs also receive education on how to recognize abuse and protect themselves. In fall 2008, *Touching Safety*, a safe environment program that has been successfully used in 50 other dioceses, was implemented as the core curriculum for schools and parishes. The program supports the teachings of the Catholic Church, has age-appropriate lessons and connects with the education for adults.

An archdiocesan Child Protection Advisory Board of lay experts (including at least one victim-survivor) monitors the archdiocese's outreach and compliance with the Child Protection Policy. In addition, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops audits all dioceses on their compliance with the U.S. Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. The auditors conduct interviews and review records and materials relating to education, background checks, compliance monitoring, reporting and healing. The archdiocese has been found in full compliance every year.

Since 1993, the archdiocese has had a Case Review Board to assist the Archbishop in assessing allegations of child sexual abuse against clergy and fitness for ministry.

Learn more about the Archdiocese of Washington's commitment to protecting children  
[www.adw.org](http://www.adw.org) • Office of Child Protection Services • 301-853-5328



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**CHILD  
 PROTECTION**

## Help, healing and support for victims

The Archdiocese of Washington has long been committed to the treatment and healing of those harmed. These are some of the ways the archdiocese has reached out to victims of abuse by archdiocesan personnel:

- Apology and statement of remorse by a bishop and leadership.
- Immediate offer of paid counseling, therapy and other assistance (1) of an individual's choice, (2) for as long as needed to heal and (3) for family members, in some situations.
- Assistance regardless of legal claims. The archdiocese has paid for counseling even after being sued and even after the suit was thrown out of court on its merits, because we believe it is the right thing to do.
- Opportunity to meet with a bishop. Our bishops have traveled to meet with victims, provided them with a private phone number and e-mail, and set aside regular office time just for victims who would like to meet.
- Immediate reporting of allegations and support for victims in pursuing criminal prosecution.
- More than \$6 million in direct assistance has been provided to victims and millions more spent on prevention efforts. Settlements have been made, if appropriate in an individual's situation.
- Licensed clinical social worker on staff to assist those coming forward and Office of Child Protection Services to assist victims and implement prevention programs.



## Reporting abuse

- If you suspect child abuse (sexual, physical or neglect of anyone under the age of 18) or have been a victim of child abuse, report it immediately to the local law enforcement agency or the local department of social services (Department of Child Protective Services in the District of Columbia).
- If you suspect child abuse involving any archdiocesan personnel, also report it immediately to Marcia Zvara, MSW, LCSW-C, Director of Child Protection Services for the Archdiocese of Washington, at 301-853-5328.
- The complete Child Protection Policy, which includes a form to report suspected abuse by archdiocesan personnel and details on where to report to civil authorities (Appendix A) is available online at [www.adw.org](http://www.adw.org).

## By the numbers

Between July 2008 and June 2009 in the Archdiocese of Washington:

- **90** child protection workshops were held for adults who work with children in the archdiocese
- **5,400** people, including clergy, new employees and volunteers attended those workshops
- **16,952** Catholic school children received safe environment education
- **22,803** children in religious education programs received safe environment education
- **3,979** employees, volunteers and clergy were fingerprinted

Between 2003-2007 the Catholic Church in the United States:

- Trained more than 1.8 million clergy, employees and volunteers in parishes in creating safe environments and preventing child sexual abuse
- Prepared more than 5.8 million children to recognize abuse and protect themselves