

A Plan To Protect God's Children®



Step 1: Know the Warning Signs

Knowing the warning signs means that we can recognize the early signs of an inappropriate relationship with a child. If we know the warning signs, then we can identify potential abuse before it happens. If we know the warning signs, we do not have to rely on a child to report an incident.

- Discourages other adults from participating or monitoring.
- Always wants to be alone with children.
- More excited to be with children than adults.
- Gives gifts to children, often without permission.
- Goes overboard touching.
- Always wants to wrestle or tickle.
- Thinks the rules do not apply to them.
- Allows children to engage in activities their parents would not allow.
- Uses bad language or tells dirty jokes to children.
- Shows children pornography

Step 2: Control Access

Controlling access means that we are careful about whom we allow to work with our children. It also sends a message to potential child molesters that we are alert about child sexual abuse.

- Communicate the church's commitment to keeping children safe.
- Use written, standard applications.
- Require criminal background checks.
- Complete face-to-face interviews.
- Check references.
- Make sure computers with Internet access are located in open areas.

Step 3: Monitor all Programs

Child molesters look for ways to spend time alone with children. If they know someone is watching, they have more trouble finding opportunities to abuse without getting caught.

- Identify secluded areas, lock empty rooms.
- Develop policies regarding use of secluded areas. For example, staff should check bathrooms before sending children in alone.
- Do not permit children to enter staff-only areas.
- Only meet with children where other adults can pass by.
- Supervisors should look in on activities and monitor computer usage.
- Make sure enough adults are involved in programs.



- Allow parents to drop in on programs.
- Don't start new programs without approval from the pastoral council, the pastor, and/or the children's ministry committee.



Step 4: Be Aware

Being aware means that parents should know what is going on in the lives of their own children and pay attention to subtle signs of a problem. Parents should talk to their children, listen to them, and observe them. When we observe and communicate with our children, we are more likely to detect the signs if they are in danger. We can notice a sudden change in behavior, if they get moody or aggressive, lose interest in school, or stop taking care of their personal hygiene.

- Talk to your children.
- Listen to your children.
- Observe your children and their online activity.
- Let your children know they can tell you anything.
- Teach your children where their private parts are.
- Talk to your children often about protecting themselves online.
- Teach your children what to do if someone tries to touch them.
- Teach your children what to do if someone makes them uncomfortable.



Step 5: Communicate Your Concerns

Communicating concerns means telling someone when you are uncomfortable with a situation or if you suspect abuse. It means paying attention to your own feelings and not waiting until it is too late.

Only by communicating concerns can we use our knowledge to protect children. Even if abuse is not occurring, it is still important to let others know when you have concerns.

- Talk to the person involved, and/or
- Speak to their supervisor, and/or
- Notify a church official, and/or
- Call the child abuse hotline, and/or
- Call the police.

VIRTUS[®] is registered trademark of National Catholic Services, LLC. ("National Catholic") in the United States. Protecting God's Children[®] and *A Plan to Protect God's Children*[™] are trademarks of National Catholic. National Catholic has licensed use of its Protecting God's Children[™] programs to the Diocese of _____ ("Diocese"). National Catholic owns the copyrights in the artwork and substantive text appearing in this brochure. In addition, National Catholic has authorized the Diocese to distribute the artwork and text in this brochure to employees and volunteers of the Diocese. Neither the artwork nor text may be reproduced or further distributed in any form or manner, without the prior written permission of National Catholic. Please feel free to contact National Catholic for more information about its products and services. You may contact:

Pat Neal
Director of the VIRTUS Programs
VIRTUS Programs
321 S Boston Ave, Suite 900
Tulsa, OK 74103
888-847-8870

©2002-2010 by National Catholic Services, LLC. All rights reserved.



To report abuse in Pennsylvania

If you suspect a child is in imminent danger from abuse, please call 911 immediately.

To report suspected child abuse, contact:

Childline 24/7 1-800-932-0313

**Victim Assistance Coordinator
Joseph DeVizia 570-862-7551**

Diocese of Scranton



National Catholic Services, LLC

Protecting God's Children[®]

Quick Reference Guide

