

To Protect and to Heal Safe Environment for Parents

Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains for ever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. CCC 2258

What constitutes child abuse, including sexual abuse?

Sexual Abuse: includes sexual molestation or sexual exploitation of a minor and other behavior by which an adult uses a minor as an object of sexual gratification.

Other Physical Abuse: the infliction or attempted infliction of physical injury or, as a result of inadequate supervision, the allowance of physical injury to a minor.

Neglect: The refusal or willful failure by a caretaker to provide for a minor the proper or necessary medical care, nutrition, or other care necessary for a minor's well-being.

Note: There are more than 2 million reported cases of abuse or neglect in the United States each year. Offenders come from all economic, ethnic, racial, and educational backgrounds and religious traditions. They may be respected members of the community or church.

What actions, procedures and policies are used to prevent child abuse in any of its forms?

Safe Environment Policy

The Archdiocese of New Orleans will ensure that children and youth who worship, study, and participate in activities sponsored by the Archdiocese can do so in the safest and most secure setting possible.

The Archdiocese of New Orleans will provide training for clergy, minors, parents, and archdiocesan employees and volunteers who have regular contact with minors to make clear the standards of conduct for all persons in positions of trust with regard to abuse and neglect of minors.

A minor is any individual under the age of 18.

Training programs for adults will include the following:

- A. Definitions of abuse and neglect
- B. Procedures and policies used by the Archdiocese of New Orleans to prevent abuse/neglect
- C. Signs to look for in identifying abuse/neglect of a minor
- D. Signs to look for in identifying an adult who may be abusing a minor (in any way)
- E. Louisiana law, archdiocesan policies regarding the reporting of abuse or neglect of a minor



Training programs for minors will include the following:

- A. Age appropriate materials to teach personal respect and safety, including information about improper touching and relationships
- B. Identification of trusted adults to whom they can go for help if he/she is abused

Background investigations of all volunteers and employees are to be completed prior to the time an adult begins working with minors.

Disclosed information is kept on file in the parish, school, office, or agency in a secure place. It is confidential and must be kept permanently in the personnel records.

The Policy Concerning Abuse or Neglect of Minors, the Principles of Ethics and Integrity in Ministry: Code of Ethics, and Archdiocesan Policy Regarding Youth Activities of the Archdiocese of New Orleans must be read by an employee/volunteer prior to working with minors. The appropriate forms must be completed, signed, and on file in the parish, school, office of the Archdiocese, or agency prior to working with minors.

Principles of Child Protection

Our dignity of belonging to Christ entails the demand that we should treat our bodies and the bodies of others with respect. (paraphrase CCC1004)

Each person has dignity and must be treated with respect. We show respect for each other in our language, behavior, and interactions with each other. Our respect includes the right to privacy for our own bodies.

*”Teaching modesty to children and adolescents means awakening in them respect for the human person.
(ccc 2524)*

The Christian family is a communion of persons, a sign and image of the communion of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. (CCC 2204)

Parents are the primary educators of their children. The Church and school are partners with the family in educating, nurturing and protecting children.

Human beings were not made for solitude; they bear within themselves a relational vocation, rooted in their spiritual nature. Because of this vocation, they grow to the extent that they enter into relationships with others, fully discovering themselves only in “a sincere giving of self.” (Gaudium et spes, #24)

Human beings are physical beings sharing a world with other physical beings. Implicit in the Catholic theology of the Imago Dei is the profound truth that the material world creates the conditions for the engagement of human persons with one another. (Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God, #26)

Sexual abuse usually takes place in secret and is kept secret because the abuser fears discovery. Sexual abuse is often more difficult for a child to acknowledge than physical or emotional abuse, and the sexually abused child may feel more isolated. Children often blame themselves for the abuse; therefore, it is important to reassure the child that he or she is not responsible. The adult, not the child, is responsible for violating boundaries that the child could not maintain alone. (Walking in the Light: A Pastoral Response to Child Sexual Abuse)

"Only the light of divine Revelation clarifies the reality of sin... Only in the knowledge of God's plan can we grasp that sin is an abuse of the freedom that God gives to created persons so that they are capable of loving him and loving one another." (CCC 387)

"Our obligation to protect children and young people and to prevent sexual abuse flows from the mission and example given to us by Jesus Christ himself." (Charter for the Protections of Children and Young People, Revised Edition, 2002)

Parents and teachers have the responsibility to teach children to seek help when they are confronted with abuse, whether it be sexual, physical or any other abuse.

How does an adult identify instances of abuse of a child, including sexual abuse?

What signs should an adult look for in a child who may be abused?

Sexual abuse may be indicated by certain physical and behavioral signs as well as by indirect comments made by the child. There are several clues to look for when one suspects the possibility of child sexual abuse. Physical signs include irritation, pain or injury to the genital area, and genital or urinary infection. A child may withdraw or show a sudden, unexplained change in behavior. Other signs may be nervous, aggressive, hostile, or disruptive behavior toward adults, especially parents. A child may manifest eating or sleep disturbances, including nightmares or insomnia. One should also be alert to knowledge or actions of a sexual nature that are not age-appropriate. One sign alone may not be a

positive indication, since any of these signs can point to other conditions as well. However, if a number of signs are present, the possibility of sexual abuse should be considered and appropriate action taken, including seeking medical evaluation. (Walk in the Light: A Pastoral Response to Child Sexual Abuse, USCCB)

What signs should an adult look for in a person who may be abusing a child in any way?

Abusers come from all walks of life, all economic backgrounds, and all ethnic groups. Men commit 90 percent of sexual abuse, and 70 to 90 percent is committed by persons the child knows. Family members make up one-third to one-half of the perpetrators against girls and 10 percent to 20 percent of the perpetrators against boys.

It is impossible to reliably identify potential sex abusers. Various studies indicate that they may be more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol; may have been abused as children or have witnessed abuse; have low self-esteem; consider a sexual relationship with a child easier and less threatening than with an adult; maintain rigid expectations of roles within the family, and view anyone outside the family with suspicion; rationalize their actions; and do not consider their abuse to be morally offensive. Some sex abusers, however, display none of these characteristics, while others display only a few. Others may display many characteristics and never even contemplate abuse of children.⁸ (Walk in the Light: A Pastoral Response to Child Sexual Abuse, USCCB)

What actions should an adult take when they believe that child abuse, to include sexual abuse, may be occurring?

(see Addendum 3: Alleged Child Abuse and/or Neglect Reporting Form)

What are the laws and policies regarding the reporting of abuse, to include sexual abuse, of children?

(see Addendum 4: Summary of LS.A., RS. 14:403; LA. CHILDREN'S CODE ARTS, 601 –616)

What are the lifetime effects of physical and/or sexual child abuse?

Approximately 40% of all victims and survivors suffer after-effects serious enough to require physical and/or psychological assistance. After-effects can include:

- Difficulties with trust
- Difficulties with self-protection
- Difficulties with self-esteem
- Difficulties with fitting in
- Difficulties with love relationships
- Difficulties with sexual behavior
- Physical difficulties like urinary tract infections, sexually transmitted disease, speech impediments, nightmares, headaches, stomach aches
- Spiritual difficulties like angry feelings toward God and inability to pray

Archdiocese of New Orleans
Victims' Assistance Coordinator

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7887 Walmsley Avenue
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(504) 861 – 6253
Sex Abuse Hot Line (504) 522 – 5019

CHILD PROTECTION TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Jefferson (East)	504 - 736 - 7033
Jefferson (West)	504 - 361 - 6083
Orleans	504 - 680 - 9000
	504 - 680 - 9001
Plaquemines	504 - 393 - 5618
St. Bernard	504 - 278 - 7382
St. Charles	985 - 652 - 2938
St. John	985 - 652 - 2938
St. Tammany	985 - 893 - 6225
Washington	985 - 732 - 6800