

Myths & Facts

Myth: *Strangers are responsible for most child sexual abuse.*

Fact: 11% by strangers
29% by relatives
60% by others known to the victim

Myth: *Most sexual abusers are Homosexual.*

Fact: The vast majority of molesters are not homosexual.

Studies repeatedly show that most male molesters of boys are not homosexual. Of several hundred molesters studied, 21% of the men who molested boys were exclusively homosexual.

Myth: *Children usually lie about child sexual abuse.*

Fact: Children very rarely lie about sexual abuse.

Less than 5% of allegations turn out to be false.

Myth: *Priests abuse children because of the promise of celibacy.*

Fact: Celibacy doesn't cause anyone to become a child molester.

The few priests who do perpetrate abuse, molest children for the same reasons that other people do. The vast majority of child molesters have not taken a promise of celibacy, and the vast majority of persons who have taken a promise of celibacy do not molest 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 with adults.
- Gives gifts to kids, 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.

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.
- Make sure enough adults are involved in programs.
- Allow parents to drop in on programs.
- Make sure that new programs are approved by the appropriate administration (school, religious education, parish).

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.**
- **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.**
- **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 concerned.**
- **Speak to their supervisor.**
- **Notify a Church official.**
- **Call the child abuse hotline.**
- **Call the police.**

Resources & Contact Numbers

Department of Children and Family Services

To report suspected or known cases of child sexual abuse:

1-800-252-2873

Victims Assistance Coordinator, Mrs. Judith Speckman 815-263-6467

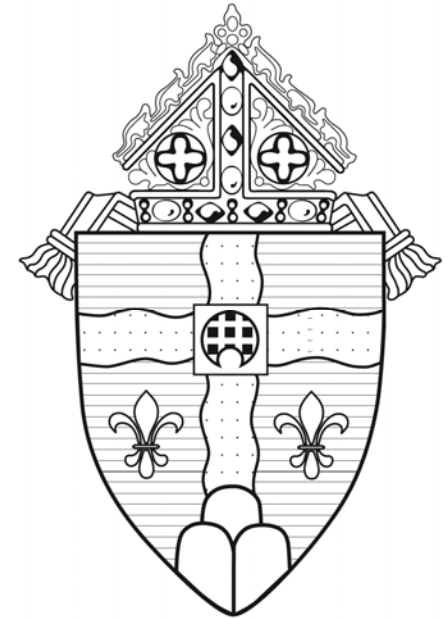
Sexual abuse is a sin and a crime. Victims of sexual abuse, in addition to contacting civil authorities, are asked to come forward in order to receive pastoral assistance. The Church has a responsibility to help victims of sexual abuse and to ensure that offenders are brought to justice. Reports of abuse may be made to any pastor or to the Victims Assistance Coordinator.

Sexual Assault Support Groups

For a list of support groups, please see

www.dioceseofjoliet.org/supportGroups.htm

The Diocese of Joliet



Protecting God's Children