



DIOCESE OF DAVENPORT

• WALKING TOGETHER IN FAITH •

EMPOWERING GOD'S CHILDREN SAFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM KINDERGARTEN THROUGH 12TH GRADE

Dear Parent(s),

In response to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, we have a program for the safe environment education of children and young people that is supported and mandated by the Diocese of Davenport for all our Catholic schools, parishes and programs.

According to the Charter:

Safe environment programs are in place to assist parents and children—and those who work with children—in preventing harm to young people. These programs continually seek to incorporate the most useful developments in the field of child protection. Through these steps and many others, we remain committed to the safety of our children and young people.

Dioceses/eparchies are to maintain "safe environment" programs which the diocesan/eparchial bishop deems to be in accord with Catholic moral principles. They are to be conducted cooperatively with parents, civil authorities, educators, and community organizations to provide education and training for minors, parents, ministers, employees, volunteers, and others about ways to sustain and foster a safe environment for minors. Dioceses/eparchies are to make clear to clergy and all members of the community the standards of conduct for clergy and other persons with regard to their contact with minors.

This program is called "**Empowering God's Children**". The job of ensuring children's safety is a challenging undertaking. The prevention of child sexual abuse requires more than adult awareness, education, and training about the nature and scope of the problem. We must also give our children the tools they need to overcome the advances of someone who intends to do them harm. The "*Empowering God's Children*" program is a vehicle through which parents, teachers, catechists, and youth ministers give children and young people the tools they need to protect themselves from those who might harm them. The program lessons were created for four specific age groups: Grades K through 2, Grades 3-5, Grades 6-8 and Grades 9-12.

What is "Empowering God's Children?"

The program is sponsored by the VIRTUS program we are currently using to educate adults that are working or volunteering within our diocese.

This program lessons are founded on the principles of appropriate relationship boundaries in the broader context of Christian values. All lessons are age-appropriate and help children and young people develop the vocabulary and boundary distinctions necessary to empower them to begin to recognize inappropriate behavior by others, while practicing appropriate relationship boundaries in their own lives.

The focus is on an age-appropriate discussion of touching safety relative to the specific roles that different people play in a child's life. All of the lessons stress the importance of keeping private body parts "private," and of telling a trusted adult about anyone's behavior that causes a child to feel uncomfortable or threatened.

In an effort to assist in protecting youth, all of our programs, including our school-based curriculum, provide for collaboration between parents and lesson leaders in establishing safety guidelines and principles. Through these programs, caring adults become partners with parents to ensure that all children are protected and that youth also have the tools they need to protect themselves.

Please feel free to contact your school or parish office if you have questions or want to review the curriculum your child will be receiving throughout the year.