

What Parents Can Do to Protect Children and Youth from Abuse

1. Talk to your child. Psychologists tell us that the majority of children have fewer than ten minutes of daily “talking time” with parents.
2. Be sure that your child knows that he or she can tell you anything, no matter how terrible the thing.
3. Teach your child that certain parts of their body are private. Never make a child show affection to anyone.
4. Observe your child when he/she is not aware that you are watching. What do you see? Is your child worried? Distracted? Not eating? Uninterested in favorite activities?
5. Know your child’s teachers and the adults in the school, parish and other settings.
6. Support your parish and school’s efforts to fingerprint and screen persons who work with young people.
7. Do talk with your children about sex. Answer questions honestly at an age appropriate level. If your child cannot get a straight answer from you, he or she will get an answer of some sort somewhere else.
8. If your child tells you that someone has made a sexual overture toward him or her, believe the statement until you have clear evidence that the child is mistaken or lying.
9. Trust your instincts. You know your child. If a person or situation make you uncomfortable, talk to your child and take appropriate action.
10. Tell your children that “if someone tries to touch your body and do things that make you feel funny, say **NO** to the person and tell you right away.
11. Teach children that respect does not mean blind obedience to adults and to authority – for example, don’t tell children to “always do everything the teacher or baby-sitter tells you to do.”
12. Teach your children the names of their body parts and that their body is private and not supposed to be touched without their permission. Practice saying “no” to a touching request that they do not like or understand. Give them your unconditional permission to say “no” even to a family member.
13. Teach your children that no adult should require them to keep “secrets.” Talk about good fun secrets and bad uncomfortable secrets.
14. Tell your children about the lures used by child abusers.
15. Tell children to inform you immediately when they feel uncomfortable about how a relative, neighbor, family friend or authority figure is touching them or showing affection.
16. Alert children about persons asking for help or directions and to ignore the request and quickly leave or run from the person.
17. Remind children that no photos should be taken of them without prior parental permission.
18. Make children feel good about themselves and instill self-esteem and self-confidence.

19. If possible, walk with your child to the bus-stop and wait with him/her or walk with your child to and from school.
20. Teach your child to walk in groups of two or more on the sidewalk walking against the flow of traffic.
21. Tell your child to speak with you or a teacher about anything that seemed different or made him/her uncomfortable on the way to or from school or other daily activities.
22. Know the adults with whom you entrust your children. Have a back-up plan if your primary caregiver or babysitter is unavailable. You should know the alternate caregiver or babysitter as well as you know the primary one.
23. Inform your child's caregiver or babysitter of boundaries for your child, such as those with whom your child can play, speak, etc.
24. Monitor your children's use of the Internet including e-mail. Alert them to the dangers of the Internet and e-mail. Teach them never to give personal information to anyone, including on-line acquaintances. Teach them never to download pictures from an unknown source or download sexual-oriented materials of any type. Teach them to never reply to messages or postings on an Internet bulletin board regarding suggestive, sexual, or threatening matters or topics.
25. Install software on your home computers that blocks objectionable and sexually explicit materials and sites.
26. Discuss with middle and high school children appropriate and inappropriate activity and sexual behavior.
27. Discuss acceptable and unacceptable social relationships with middle and high school children.
28. Know where your teenagers are at all times and direct them to call you for a ride home at anytime, from any place, when they feel uncomfortable or unsafe.