

Archdiocese of Dubuque Children and Adolescents Protection Program

Introduction: This material is designed to provide age appropriate lessons on creating a safe environment for parish and school children and adolescents, K-12. The first article gives some general guidance on speaking to young people about child abuse. It is followed by objectives and lesson plans for various grade levels. Please feel free to infuse the lessons into your present curriculum or create a separate opportunity for discussion. The materials are adapted from the Archdiocese of Mobile, *Children and Adolescents Protection Program*, and we gratefully acknowledge their assistance.

SPEAKING WITH PARISH/SCHOOL YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT CHILD ABUSE

•Remember in “talking” with young people, seek first to listen and understand what the young people might be thinking or feeling.

Ask them about their questions, concerns, and issues. Their issues are certainly not all the same as ours.

Try to understand what young people have heard from the media, teachers, parents, and friends. So much of what they hear from friends and family can be distorted. Unfortunately, much of the bad news that they are hearing in the media will be accurate.

Please remember in speaking with groups or individuals that some young people will have abuse in their background. Always be sensitive to this. Be pastoral. This is an opportunity to express feelings, fears, confusions, and doubts.

•Before speaking with young people:

Pray. Ask God for the guidance and wisdom you will need.

Take time on your own to honestly assess your thoughts and feelings about child abuse, especially sexual abuse by adults who are in positions of trust like clergy, principals, teachers, youth ministers. You may find it helpful to process these thoughts and feeling with a mentor or spiritual director. It is important to know where you are with the issue.

If you are not comfortable with talking about child /sexual abuse, find someone who is.

•When we speak, be honest. Here are some things you might consider addressing:

Lack of honesty has caused some of our problems. Secrecy may have been intended to spare both victims and perpetrators from embarrassment, but it has led only to greater harm in most cases. All professions are made up of human beings. We see both good and bad behaviors in all of the professions.

The sexual abuse of children is found in the general population, including other churches, in

professions where there are coaches and teachers as well as other youth-serving organizations. Let young people know that those who are victims of abuse are victims of violence and that one victim is one too many. When abuse by a member of the clergy or church personnel occurs, victims often lose trust in authority and church. The church seeks to restore any broken relationship. This is sometimes difficult. This is the humanness of the Church. It is good to reiterate, the school, the religious education classes, the youth ministry program are part of the Catholic Church. It is not healthy to separate “the church” from these other areas. We are all church.

Talk to young people about the importance of getting help for their friends (or selves) that are victims of abuse. Make sure conversation does not lead to “blaming the victim.” It is wrong to say “he’s 15, he should have known better” or “why did she keep seeing him if he was abusing her ...it’s her fault too.” The adult is always in the position of power. That should be made clear.

Be clear about child abuse. Lots of things are getting jumbled in the media. It is helpful to give young people accurate information. Let young people know what is being done in this diocese to safeguard them. Let them know that there is a diocesan policy about those who sexually abuse a child and what it says.

Reminders:

Be age appropriate. Talking with Prekindergarten and Kindergarten will be a whole lot different from talking with middle school six grade students and certainly different from high school students.

Keep your sense of humor - Help the group to be mindful of the effect of inappropriate jokes that are inevitable.

Affirm young people for asking their questions, and stating their opinions. Affirm the courage in victims who have come forward. When appropriate review the principles of “good touch,” “bad touch.”

The church is larger than the persons in charge of the church. We need to help young people see that their faith is larger than individuals or specific crises. The church is ultimately the relationship of our believing community with God across time.

Be a Good Role Model

This would be a good time to highlight things you have done to make the young people feel safe. They can learn much about an environment of safety from your modeling. They should know from watching you:

- Adults are always present when there are activities and events for young people.
- Adults purchase or bring for the group’s use things that are appropriate to young people.
- The “Buddy System” of a young person with another young person when away from campus is a good safety requirement.
- It is not appropriate for an adult to share a bed with young people when on a trip, or for a young person to sit on an adult’s lap.

- If a young person is uncomfortable with a hug, then we do not hug or ridicule that person.
- You meet with young people in areas that are accessible and visible.
- You carefully select volunteers in consultation with others to ensure the quality of adults working with your young people.
- It is always a safe practice to have two adults in the area.

These are all things to keep in mind when working with young people in parishes and schools. They are not meant to be a check list of items to be read to students but rather information to assist the adult leaders to be in an ongoing dialogue with the young people they serve.

Archdiocese of Dubuque

Elementary Safe Environment Curriculum

Children and Adolescents Protection Program Program Learning Objectives

1. I am God's child.
2. I must receive and give respect in the ways I talk and act and in the ways others treat me.
3. I learn the difference between true friendship and false friendship
4. My body is private and must be respected.
5. I learn the difference between good play and bad play.
6. I learn the difference between good touch and bad touch.
7. Secrets are not good when they separate us from others and harm us.
8. People make good choices and bad choices and I learn how to tell the difference.
9. When someone does something wrong, I must tell someone I trust.
10. I name people to whom I will go for help.

Adapted and developed from information provided by the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry

GRADES 2, 3, and 4
CHILD PROTECTION CATECHESIS
TEACHING OBJECTIVES

1. God created me and I am unique and unrepeatable. Because I am created in God's image and likeness, I must give and receive respect.
2. Our families and trusted adults and teachers work together to help us grow.
3. Safe touch makes a person feel loved and cared for. Unsafe or unwanted touch makes a person feel uncomfortable and unhappy. Unsafe and unwanted touch must be avoided or immediately reported to a parent or trusted adult.
4. We show respect for ourselves and others by how we talk and how we act and interact. Inappropriate language, jokes, and actions are not acceptable. The privacy of our bodies may never be violated by anyone of any age.
5. We identify good and bad choices and determine how they affect us and others. Sometimes other people make bad choices that affect us, so we must tell and get help.
6. Adults and even children sometimes engage in actions or behaviors that are wrong and sinful. The harmful consequences of these actions and behaviors can damage our bodies, our minds, and our spirits. They must be avoided or reported to a trusted adult.
7. Secrets can separate us from others and harms us in many ways.
8. Games and play activities with friends should be fun and enjoyable. Some play and games can be wrong and very harmful and must be avoided and reported to a trusted adult.
9. We must learn who is a good friend and who is not. When people misuse our friendship by asking us to do something wrong, they are not friends. It is painful to be mistreated or misused by someone we think is a friend. We must report any misuse or mistreatment to a trusted adult.
10. Even though the world is not always a safe place, my parents and other trusted adults will keep me safe. While there are people who make bad choices and who harm others, there are good and loving people to help me.
11. My parents and family members and other trusted adults will listen to me and help me. I will make a list of three trusted adults I can go to with any problem in addition to my parents and family members. My parents and I will make this list together.

LESSON PLAN
GRADES 2, 3, and 4
CHILD PROTECTION CATECHESIS

1. Ask children what they think it means to be safe. What are some of the things we do to be safe?
2. Talk about what we have heard lately on television about children, abductions, children being hurt. Talk about how that makes them feel. Ask what are some of the safety rules their parents have given them. Help the class to realize that these are family safety rules because our safety and the safety of others in our family are something God wants all of us to take care of.
3. Ask children why do they think God wants us to make sure that we take care of ourselves and the others in our family, and our friends, and all of God's creation? We are gifts from God. People give us gifts because they love us and want us to be the best persons we can be. When someone gives us a gift, we take care of it because it is from someone who cares about us and who we care about. For that reason we keep it safe and use it well and in the way it was meant to be used. We are gifts to each other. God wants us to take care of each other by keeping each other safe and by helping us to do what needs to be done to be the best we can be.
4. To do what we must do, requires making good choices. The choices we make affect not only us but other people as well. Talk about how it takes courage to make good choices. Talk about how sometimes when we make the wrong choice or mistake or someone else makes a bad choice or mistake we want to keep it a secret.
5. Secrets can be good when we are trying to surprise someone in a good way. When we keep something secret because we want to hide a mistake or something we have done wrong it is a bad secret or a mistake or something done wrong by someone else. That is a bad secret. There should always be someone you can tell a secret to. When something has been done to you, that hurts you, you have to report it to a trusted adult.
6. There are things we know that will help us to remember to always do our best to keep safe. Give out the handout. Read through the list of objectives. Talk about these things, one by one.
7. When you get to the last item on the sheet explain that God wants us to be the best we can be so he gives us grownups in our lives who love us and help us. Even though the world is not a safe place, parents and adults you can trust will keep us safe. While there are people who make bad choices and who harm others, there are good and loving people to help us.
8. Help children to identify these people. Allow the children to color the three little people and tell them to take home their sheet. They are to talk with their parents to identify three trusted adults (other than their parents) whom they can go to with a problem.

KEEPING SAFE
I am God's Child

I must receive and give respect in the ways I talk and act and in the ways others treat me

I learn the difference between true friendship and false friendship

My body is private and must be respected

I learn the difference between good play and bad play

I learn the difference between good touch and bad touch

Secrets are not good. Secrets can separate us from others and can harm us.

People make good choices and bad choices and I learn how to tell the difference.

When someone does something wrong, I must tell someone I trust.

My parents and I name three people I can go to for help besides my parents:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Elementary Safe Environment Curriculum