

Diocese of Manchester Safe Environment Bulletin Announcements

Use these announcements in your bulletin or newsletter during April (Child Abuse Prevention Month) and throughout the year to inform your parishioners, parents, and volunteers about our diocesan safe environment policies, procedures, and child safety materials.

#1 April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

The month of April is designated as Child Abuse Prevention Month in the United States. The Diocese of Manchester provides child safety articles, parent guides, and other helpful information about child protection on its website. For more information, please visit www.catholicnh.org/safety during April and share this information with others.

#2 Keep Kids Safe- Abuse Awareness Training

Did you know? The Diocese of Manchester requires all those who work with children and youth in our parishes, schools, and camps to complete “safe environment” training. This training teaches adults to recognize and report suspected abuse and boundary violations. Training is offered free of charge to **all** NH Catholic adults and is available online at <https://manchester.cmgconnect.org>

For more information about child safety, visit www.catholicnh.org/safety

#3 Keep Kids Safe- Background Checks

Did you know? The Diocese of Manchester requires all adults who regularly work with children and youth in our parishes, schools, and camps to complete background checks. Recently, we began renewing these background checks every 4 years. This is just one of the efforts undertaken by our diocese to protect children! For more information about child safety in the Diocese of Manchester, visit www.catholicnh.org/safety

#4 Keep Kids Safe- Code of Conduct

Did you know? The Diocese of Manchester has established a Code of Conduct, known as *Serving Christ, Serving Others*, which requires that all “Church personnel” (priests, deacons, religious men and women, and laypeople who work or volunteer at diocesan parishes, schools, administration, and camps) exhibit the highest ethical standards and personal integrity at all times. The Code includes, among other things, standards for appropriate conduct and boundaries when working with minors. The *Serving Christ, Serving Others* Code of Conduct is available here: www.catholicnh.org/code

#5 Keep Kids Safe – New Hampshire Reporting Requirements

Did you know? In New Hampshire, it is the responsibility of all adults (not just doctors, school counselors, therapists, ministers, etc.) to report suspected abuse or neglect of a minor (a child under the age of 18) to the Division for Children, Youth & Families (800-894-5533). Failure to report suspected abuse or neglect is a misdemeanor.

For more information, visit www.catholicnh.org/safety

#6 Keep Kids Safe- Personal Safety Lessons for Children & Teens

Did you know? All students in our NH parishes and Catholic schools are taught personal safety lessons annually. The lessons help them to identify trusted adults, respect themselves and others, stay safe online, and more. These lessons are offered through the *Circles of Care* and *Netsmartz* programs. To learn more about the personal safety lessons for children, visit www.catholicnh.org/circles

#7 Keep Kids Safe- Boundaries in Ministry

Boundaries are limits—lines in relationships that should not be crossed. Maintaining boundaries protects minors as well as adults. Adults can maintain clear boundaries with minors by:

- Expressing affection in appropriate ways
- Communicating carefully
- Using technology safely

We will examine each of these areas in more detail in upcoming announcements. For more information about child safety, visit: www.catholicnh.org/safety

#8 Keep Kids Safe- Boundaries in Ministry: Expressing Affection

We all care about children and want to communicate our affection to them. However, physical boundaries, in other words, “personal space,” must be respected. Here are some appropriate ways of expressing affection towards minors when ministering to them: Verbal praise and encouragement * Handshakes or “high-fives” * Pats on the shoulder, back, or head (when culturally appropriate) * Side or shoulder-to-shoulder hugs * Sitting beside small children * Holding hands during prayer

For more information about child safety, visit: www.catholicnh.org/safety

#9 Keep Kids Safe- Boundaries in Ministry: Communicating with Minors

Adults who minister to minors must be mindful of their interactions with minors. Remember that words as well as actions can easily be misinterpreted. When communicating with minors, keep these boundaries in mind: Speak to minors in a

respectful manner * Keep conversations ministry-focused * Ask minors to refer to you as Mr., Mrs., Ms., etc., rather than by your first name * Do not discuss your personal life or problems with minors * When meeting with individual students, do so in an area that is visible to others

For more information about child safety, visit www.catholicnh.org/safety

#10 Keep Kids Safe- Boundaries in Ministry: Use Technology Safely

Church personnel must take great care when communicating with minors via electronic means such as email, social media sites, or texting. Here are some rules to remember: Obtain permission from the pastor/principal and parents before communicating electronically * Do not use electronic means of communication with minors younger than high school age * Communicate with the entire group, not individual minors * Use official parish accounts * Copy parents on all communications * Keep all communications ministry-focused * Do not “friend request” minors to whom you minister * Keep copies of all messages and posts

For more information about child safety, visit www.catholicnh.org/safety

#11 Keep Kids Safe- Boundaries in Ministry: Tips for Coaches

The role of a coach is to be supportive, encouraging, and to teach new skills and sportsmanlike conduct. Coaches must be aware of boundaries on the field, court, and in the locker rooms. Be mindful of the following: * Demonstrate new skills with another coach rather than with students * Make sure that at least 2 adults supervise locker rooms * Avoid entering areas where students are showering and changing * Speak respectfully to your players * Includes parents in all communications

For more information about child safety, visit www.catholicnh.org/safety

#12 Keep Kids Safe- Away from Home

As children become older, parents are able to drop them off at activities and return later to pick them up. When you are ready to take this step, do not hesitate to ask the following questions: Do at least 2 adults supervise the children at all times? * Does your organization conduct background checks? * Does your organization provide training to adults? * Do adults and minors have separate restroom facilities? * Are isolated areas locked or restricted?

For more information about child safety, visit www.catholicnh.org/safety

#13 Keep Kids Safe- Technology Tips: Online Safety

As caring adults, we are all concerned about what our children may be exposed to on the internet, including “smart” devices. Here are some tips to help keep your children safe when they are online:

- Keep your computer and other devices in high traffic areas of the home.
- Set rules about what sites your child is allowed to visit.

- Make sure your child does not use their name or identifying information as their user name.
- Remind your child that he or she should never give out personal information.
- Activate the parental controls on all devices, including laptops, phones, TVs & gaming systems.
- Know your children's passwords and make it clear that you will periodically check on their online activity.
- Have your children turn in their devices to you at a designated time each evening.

For more information about child safety, visit www.catholicnh.org/safety

#14 Keep Kids Safe- Technology Tips: Social Media

Teens today (as well as adults!) spend a lot of time socializing online. A 2016 survey of 13-24 year olds indicated that the 5 most frequented social media sites are Snapchat, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Kik, in that order. Other popular sites include YouTube, Pinterest, Vine, Tumblr, Oovoo, and Google Plus. Parents should familiarize themselves with these sites/apps, learn how they work, and talk with their kids about what they are doing online.

For more information about child safety, visit www.catholicnh.org/safety

#15 Keep Kids Safe- Technology Tips: Gaming Guidelines

Gaming is a popular pastime, especially for many boys. Most video game platforms have internet connectivity, meaning that kids can go online while playing games. This allows for chatting and website browsing. Here are some tips to help make gaming safer:

- Before allowing your child to play a new game, check ratings and reviews
- Use parental controls to restrict use to the ratings and features you approve
- Keep gaming systems in a public area of the home
- As with any technology, remind your child not to give out personal information
- Check out www.esrb.com, which provides additional tips and ratings information

For more information about child safety, visit www.catholicnh.org/safety

#16 Keep Kids Safe- Technology Tips: Smartphone Safety

Smartphone technology means that the internet is literally at our fingertips! This is both a blessing and a challenge. When your kids are ready for a Smartphone, keep the following in mind:

- Use parental controls to limit access to inappropriate content
- Set the device so that app purchases require parental approval
- Make a contract with your child listing rules you expect him or her to follow
- Be aware that in-phone apps sometimes provide access to sites you've blocked
- Consider having children turn in their phones to you at a certain time each night
- Know passwords & make it clear that you will be checking the phone periodically
- Tell your kids that they will not be punished if they come to you and report that they received inappropriate content or messages—you will help them!

For more information about child safety, visit www.catholicnh.org/safety

#17 Keep Kids Safe- Technology Tips: Instagram

Instagram is a popular photo sharing app; it is the number one social media platform used by teens. Here are some tips for parents whose children want to use Instagram:

- Instagram states that users should be at least 13 years old
- Private accounts are safer because the user has to approve follower requests
- Advise children not to share photos of friends without their permission
- Remind children to only post appropriate photos and comments
- Be aware the in-app private messaging can occur
- Consider obtaining your own account to understand how Instagram works

For more information about child safety, visit www.catholicnh.org/safety

#18 Keep Kids Safe- Technology Tips: Cyberbullying

43% of students report that they have been cyberbullied. The following tips can help parents and kids prevent and respond to cyberbullying:

- Teach your kids to “think before they post”
- Encourage children to speak up if they or someone they know is being bullied, whether in person or online
- Tell your children not to forward mean or embarrassing posts or photos
- Let children know that you want them to come to you if there is a problem
- Remind children to treat others as they wish to be treated

For more information about child safety, visit www.catholicnh.org/safety

#19 Keep Kids Safe- Report Suspicions

Be alert to situations in which you observe potentially inappropriate behavior between an adult and a child. Be aware of warning signs that may indicate that a child is being abused, and do not delay in reporting any suspicions.

Division of Children, Youth and Families: 1-800-894-5533

Diocese of Manchester Delegate for Ministerial Conduct: 603-669-3100 or delegate@rcbmnh.org

For more information about child safety, visit www.catholicnh.org/safety

#20 Keep Kids Safe- Warning Signs of Abusers

90% of sexual abuse is committed by someone known to the child or his/her family. You can stop abuse before it begins by looking for these warning signs in an adult’s behavior:

- Always wants to be alone with a child
- Goes overboard with touching, tickling, or wrestling children
- Gives gifts to a child without parental permission
- Breaks established rules
- Uses bad language or tells dirty jokes to children

Note that these behaviors may take place in person but often there is also an online component!

For more information about child safety, visit www.catholicnh.org/safety

#21 Keep Kids Safe: Talk with Your Child

Open communication with your child is a key factor in helping to keep him or her safe. It's important to start talking about safety matters with children from a young age. Let children know that you want them to tell you if anyone touches them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable or sends them inappropriate messages or pictures. Role play different safety-related scenarios to help teach skills such as saying no, telling a trusted adult, and resisting peer pressure.

Use our *Family Discussion Cards* to help jump-start these important conversations: www.catholicnh.org/cards

#22 Keep Kids Safe: Parent Guide about Sexual Abuse

Sadly, in the United States, 1 in 10 males and 2 in 10 females report having been sexually abused as a child. It is important for parents to talk with children about personal safety and make sure they know what to do if an adult or older person's behavior makes them feel uncomfortable. This is not an easy conversation. The Diocese of Manchester has prepared a guide for parents entitled, *Talking with Your Children About Sexual Abuse*. The guide can be found online at: www.catholicnh.org/parentguide

#23 Keep Kids Safe: Prayer for Victims of Abuse

Sadly, in the United States, 1 in 10 males and 2 in 10 females report having been sexually abused as a child. Praying for victims of child abuse is something we all can do to support those who were abused. If your parish or school prayer group or Eucharistic Adoration ministry is interested in praying for victims of abuse through the diocesan *Cry to Heaven* prayer program, please contact the Director of the Office for Healing and Pastoral Care at jnaff@rcbm.org or (603) 663-0125 for further information.

For more resources to assist victims of abuse, visit www.catholicnh.org/healing

#24 Assistance for Victims of Abuse

The Office for Healing and Pastoral Care provides services and support, promotes healing, and supports the emotional and spiritual well-being of survivors of sexual abuse in the Church. The Office also seeks to be a source of comfort and support for anyone who is a survivor of sexual abuse in any walk of life. If you are a victim of abuse by someone representing the Catholic Church, we encourage you to contact the Director of the Office for Healing and Pastoral Care at jnaff@rcbm.org or (603) 663-0125.

For more resources to assist victims of abuse, visit www.catholicnh.org/healing