

Five Easy Steps You Can Take to Protect Children in Your Care

Since 2001, over 34,000 people who work or volunteer in the Diocese of Manchester have completed training about how to prevent and report child abuse. The focus of our training is to increase awareness about the problem of child abuse, particularly child sexual abuse, and to prepare our clergy, parents, volunteers, teachers, and other concerned adults to take steps to prevent abuse. It is up to all of us to protect the children we care for in our schools, in parish programs, and in our communities.

The following is an overview of five important steps that you can take to protect children:

Step 1: Know the Warning Signs

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
- Wants to take a child on trips alone
- Uses bad language or tells dirty jokes to children

Step 2: Control Access

Adults who supervise youth programs should ensure that all adults who work with minors receive training about appropriate boundaries and undergo background checks and other screening. Additionally, each person needs to be aware of and abide by the Diocese of Manchester's *Code of Ministerial Conduct*.

Step 3: Monitor All Programs

All activities must be carefully supervised by an adequate number of adults. Adults should avoid being alone with a child and secluded areas should be locked when not in use. Any time that a new youth program or activity is being planned, the activity or program should be discussed with and approved by the pastor, principal, or director.

Step 4: Be Aware

Adults need to be aware of the signs and symptoms of child abuse and should take note of changes in a child's behavior or personality. Adults should also be aware of the typical behaviors of a perpetrator of abuse, such as grooming, boundary violations, and warning signs listed above.

Step 5: Communicate Your Concerns

Be alert to situations in which you observe inappropriate behavior between an adult and a child. Pay attention to your feelings and intuitions. Do not delay in reporting any suspicions of abuse.

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