

Reporting Abuse

All observations, disclosures, suspicions, and allegations of abuse are reported to legal authorities, in accordance with Nebraska's Mandated Reporting Law. Volunteers/staff recognize that there are many obstacles to a child disclosing abuse and are trained to respond with active listening and empathy to any disclosure, gathering the minimal facts necessary to report. Abuse is reported to local law enforcement, Nebraska State Patrol, or the

Nebraska

**Child Abuse Reporting Hotline:
1-800-652-1999**

Victim Assistance

Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinators are available to assist individuals in the reporting of abuse, provide support/resources to individuals and families impacted by abuse, and serve as a point of contact with the Church.

1-800-652-2229

English

Cheryl Albright, M.S.

Elizabeth A. Heidt Kozisek, Ph.D.

En Español

Leticia Guerrero

When I ask for help...

Listen.

Don't push me to talk.

Don't ask lots of questions.

Use words I understand.

Don't Make Promises.

Let me know you still care about me.

Don't be angry or upset.

Never say you'll keep this a secret.

But Don't tell Everyone.

Remember that telling you is hard for me.

Tell me that you are glad I told.

Remind me that God loves me.

Never forget—I'm Trusting you to help me.



Diocese of Grand Island
Child Protection Office
2708 Old Fair Road
Grand Island, Nebraska 68803

Diocese of Grand Island



**Child
Protection
Office**

Safe
Environment
Program

Called to Protect

*“And whoever receives
one child such as this in my name receives me.
Whoever causes one of these little ones
who believe in me to sin,
it would be better for him to have
a great millstone hung around his neck and
to be drowned in the depths of the sea.”*
Matthew 18:4-5

As Catholics, we are called to protect children. Our calling is clear in the words of Jesus, in our Catholic social teaching, and in our sacred tradition.

Our call to protect children is nothing new. What has changed over time is our understanding of the dangers faced by children and *how to* best keep them safe.

One of the greatest dangers faced by children today is the potential for sexual abuse. Current statistics suggest that one of every four girls and one of every six boys in our nation will be abused by the time they reach age 18. Most of this abuse does not occur at the hands of strangers, but at the hands of someone the child knows well.

The Diocesan Safe Environment Program is one tool that assists us in answering the call to protect children and youth.

The Safe Environment Program includes three basic components necessary for the prevention of abuse:

- **Recognizing Signs**
- **Reducing Risk**
- **Reporting Abuse**

Recognizing Signs

The first step in the prevention of abuse is recognizing warning signs. Children and youth, parents, staff, and volunteers, are educated in the qualities of right relationships, the warning signs of abuse and how to respond if a relationship isn't right.

Reducing Risk

Risk for abuse is reduced through a number of key safe environment strategies:

- **Restricted Access to Children**
Staff and volunteers who have access to children and youth are required to complete criminal background screening and provide references.
- **Codes of Conduct**
All staff and volunteers contract to follow a specific code of conduct guiding interactions with children and youth.
- **Adequate Supervision**
Adult and peer interactions with children and youth do not occur in isolation, but under the watchful eye of adults trained in recognizing signs of abuse.

- **Team Decision-Making**
Decisions regarding children and youth, and adult-child interactions are made in consultation with other adults, with the focus of providing a safe environment for all children and youth.
- **Clear Boundaries & Consistent Expectations**
Boundaries in adult-child interactions are clearly delineated. Expectations for children / youth are communicated clearly and consistently enforced.
- **Open Communication**
Open communication is encouraged between children and parents, children and adult staff/volunteers, parents and staff/volunteers.
- **Accountability / High Reliability**
All individuals, from parishioners and volunteers to the top tiers of leadership share responsibility for preventing risk.
- **Positive, Protective Adults**
Volunteers / staff are educated in the qualities of right relationships and are encouraged to be “deliberately different” than adults who may have been hurtful. Adults strive to model Christ in adult-child interactions.
- **Trauma-Sensitive Environments**
Staff/volunteers recognize the potential impact of traumatic events on children, responding with effective interventions and creating environments characterized by safety, empowerment, collaboration, choice, and trust.