



# CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT



*This newsletter on Creating a Safe Environment is published quarterly by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester with the aim of helping all of us keep children safe at home, at church and in all places in our community. We welcome article ideas and feedback. Contact [communications@dor.org](mailto:communications@dor.org).*

*Victims of sexual abuse by any employee or volunteer of the Church should always report to the civil authorities.*

*To report a case of possible sexual abuse and to receive help and guidance from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester, victims are encouraged to contact the victims' assistance coordinator:*

**DEBORAH HOUSEL**

Phone (585) 328-3228, ext. 1555

Toll-free 1-800-388-7177

E-mail: [dhousel@dor.org](mailto:dhousel@dor.org)



## How You Can Promote Online Safety

All safety—including mobile and online safety—begins at home. The habits you exhibit about technology use in your home will be the same habits your children learn. Ask yourself what you consider appropriate or inappropriate uses of technology and then compare that with how you might be acting.

Do you use your phone at the dinner table? Do you text while talking with others? Do you instantly pull out your phone when a new message arrives? Do you text while driving? Do you use computers in public areas of the house or do you habitually bring them into your bedroom behind a closed door? Model the behavior you yourself expect from your children.

In addition to your *living* example, consider following some of these steps:

- 1) **Use anti-virus, firewall, and anti-malware software.** These software packages provide a baseline of protection. However, also make sure you and your children don't visit file sharing web sites or open email attachments from people you don't know or open attachments that look suspicious. Consider using a web filter (e.g. see [covenanteyes.com](http://covenanteyes.com) or [netnanny.com](http://netnanny.com))
- 2) **Put all computers in a public space.** A central place in the house where you can see what is on the screen is preferred. Don't put computers in children's rooms. Refrain from using laptops in bedrooms or private areas. If computers absolutely must be put in a private room, have a policy that doors must be open when they are in use. Internet connected devices in concealed areas just offers children too much unnecessary temptation.
- 3) **Review where your children go online.** Let your children know that you will be periodically reviewing the sites that all of you, as a family, visit. Don't do this in an authoritarian way, but rather as a way to engage your children in dialogue.
- 4) **Teach Internet Safety.** It may seem self-evident, but before you let your children have online access, teach them ethical behavior and Internet basics, which include: making sure they use strong passwords; not give out personal or identifiable information about themselves or their family; not talking to strangers online. Also remind children that

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### RESOURCES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

**Bivona Child Advocacy Center**

(Monroe, Wayne counties):

[BivonaCAC.org](http://BivonaCAC.org) / 585-935-7800

**Chemung County Child Advocacy Center:**

607-737-8479 / [chemungcounty.com](http://chemungcounty.com)

**Child Advocacy Center of Cayuga County:**

315-253-9795 / [cacofcayugacounty.org](http://cacofcayugacounty.org)

**Finger Lakes Child Advocacy Program**

(Ontario County):

[cacfingerlakes.org](http://cacfingerlakes.org) / 315-548-3232

**Darkness to Light organization:** [d2l.org](http://d2l.org)

Steuben County:

**Southern Tier Children's Advocacy Center:**

[www.sthcs.org](http://www.sthcs.org) / 716-372-8532

**NYS State Central Registry**

(Child Abuse Reporting Hotline):

1-800-342-3720

**NYS Child Advocacy Resource and Consultation Center (CARCC)**

[nyscarcc.org](http://nyscarcc.org) / 866-313-3013

**Tompkins County Advocacy Center:**

[www.theadvocacycenter.org](http://www.theadvocacycenter.org)

607-277-3203

**Wyoming County Sexual Abuse Response Team:** 585-786-8846

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nothing on the Internet is private and that people online are not always truthful and may not be who they say are.

- 5) **Review Internet Safety with your children** . Once you've taught your children some basics, review those basics and even do some role play. Just because you have told your children something doesn't mean that they will be able to actually do it. Role playing can help.
- 6) **Discuss what your children see online.** Interact with your children regularly about their online behavior. Computers are not baby sitters or a substitute for interactive parenting.
- 7) **Consider an online contract as a family.** Several web sites offer "family Internet use contracts" that clearly define the boundaries for Internet usage, what they should ask for, and permissible behavior. Both parents and children sign the contract. Examples can be found at [www.faihandsafety.org](http://www.faihandsafety.org).
- 8) **Review internet safety literature** and share as appropriate. You, your example, and your attitudes are among the most important parts of any safety plan for your family. Internet safety starts with you!

Article courtesy of [faihandsafety.org](http://www.faihandsafety.org)

## Child Sexual Abuse: The Silent Epidemic

Child sexual abuse is an epidemic that most people would prefer to ignore or choose to believe does not occur in their community. The issue of child sexual abuse knows no socioeconomic barriers and happens each day to the rich and poor, to all races and in all neighborhoods.

The statistics are startling: 1 in 10 children will be sexually abused before their 18th birthday; yet many children keep the abuse secret because 90 percent of offenders are someone the child knows, loves and trusts.

Sixty percent of child sexual abuse victims never tell anyone.

A sexually abused child means a child less than the legal age of consent who is the victim of sexual mistreatment. Sexual mistreatment can be in the form of touching, speaking sexually, exposing oneself, or exposing a child to anything sexually suggestive.

Recognizing the signs of child sexual abuse is not always obvious and in some children there are no signs whatsoever.

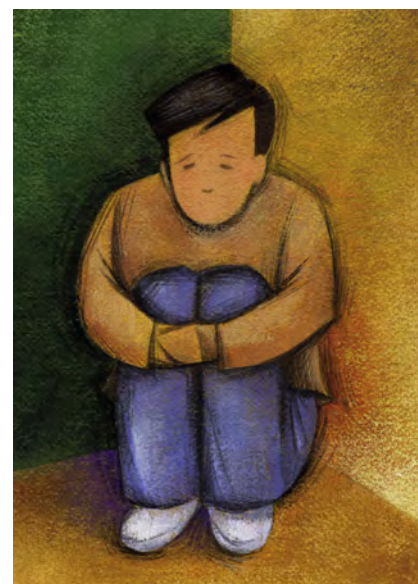
Physical signs of sexual abuse are not common, although redness, rashes/swelling in the genital area, recurring urinary tract infections, or other such symptoms should be carefully investigated. Issues associated with anxiety, such as chronic stomach pain or headaches, may occur.

Abrupt emotional or behavioral changes are more common. These can run from "too perfect" behavior, to withdrawal and depression, to unexplained anger and rebellion. Sexual behavior and language that are not age-appropriate can also be a red flag.

If you know or suspect someone who is being abused trust your gut and don't ignore it. Bivona Child Advocacy Center is the community resource in Monroe and surrounding counties for child sexual abuse, severe physical abuse, and child fatalities. Bivona staff facilitates a one-site collaboration of social and legal agencies to protect, treat and counsel child victims and their families, and to investigate and prosecute the abusers. If you suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, call Bivona Child Advocacy Center at (585) 935-7800 or the New York State Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-342-3720.

For more information on child sexual abuse visit [www.BivonaCAC.org](http://www.BivonaCAC.org)

Article courtesy of the Bivona Child Advocacy Center, Rochester, NY.



### MORE ONLINE RESOURCES CHILDREN & TEENS' INTERNET SAFETY SITES:

#### Webonauts Internet Academy:

<http://pbskids.org/webonauts/>

*PBS Kids game that helps younger children understand the basics of Internet behavior and safety.*

**NSTeens:** <http://www.nsteens.org/>

*A program of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children that has interactive games and videos on a variety of Internet safety topics.*

#### FOR PARENTS:

##### Common Sense Media

<https://www.common sense media.org/parent-concerns>

*A comprehensive and frequently updated site that is packed with resources. Dedicated to improving the lives of kids and families by providing information and education*

**Family Online Safety Institute:** <http://www.fosi.org/>

**iKeepSafe:** <http://www.ikeepsafe.org/>

*Resources for parents, educators, kids and parishes on navigating mobile and social media technologies*

**Faith and Safety:** <http://www.faihandsafety.org>

*Safety in a digital world, a joint project of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Greek Orthodox Church in America*

## Cell phones and children

In his commentary on Ephesians 6:4, St. John Chrysostom wrote, "Let everything take second place to our care for our children, our bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. If from the beginning we teach them to love true wisdom, they will have greater wealth and glory than riches can provide."

For the saints of the Church, raising our children responsibly and instructing them in the ways of the Lord is our chief responsibility. When it comes time to give your child a cell phone, it's important to take St. John Chrysostom's words to heart. Don't simply give them the phone. Rather, teach them responsible and appropriate uses.

Engage them in an ongoing dialogue. Help them cultivate good habits.

"With great power comes great responsibility" is a phrase frequently used in the Spiderman comic books. That phrase is also applicable to children and cell phones. Cell phones are powerful communication tools that can easily be misused and abused. Help your child understand the great responsibility that comes with the privilege of a cell phone. Through your Christ-centered guidance, you will be fulfilling the words of St. John Chrysostom with those entrusted in your care.