



# CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

## Diocese committed to creating a safe environment for all

**By Mark Hare**

In a recent update of the Diocese of Rochester's Creating a Safe Environment (CASE) policies and initiatives, Bishop Salvatore R. Matano re-stated his personal hope that "any person who has been harmed by a person in a position of trust and authority within our Church will find the spiritual and emotional healing they deserve."

"As the Shepherd of this Diocese, I will continue to work unceasingly to ensure

that our parishes, schools and every entity connected to our Diocese are safe and holy environments for all," the Bishop said.

The Diocese first developed a process for responding to complaints of clerical misconduct in the early 1990s, said the Reverend Daniel Condon, Chancellor, with the appointment of a Victims Assistance Coordinator and a board to review allegations. The Review Board, whose members represent many areas of expertise, regularly meets to this day and helps immeasurably

in the process of policy development, assessment of sexual-abuse complaints, and the development of services for victims. In addition, there was a willingness to work with law enforcement, Father Condon said, and in those years there were several prosecutions of diocesan priests.

By 2002, Father Condon said, "we thought it was time to take a long, hard look" at the system in place for responding to complaints. We brought a little

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## Tips on how to recognize and respond to cyberbullying

**Article provided by StopBullying.gov**

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place using electronic technology. Electronic technology includes devices and equipment such as cell phones, computers, and tablets as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat, and websites.

Examples of cyberbullying include mean text messages or emails, rumors sent by email or posted on social networking sites, and embarrassing pictures, videos, websites, or fake profiles.

**Why Cyberbullying is Different**

Kids who are being cyberbullied are often bullied in person as well. Additionally, kids who are cyberbullied have a harder time getting away from the behavior.

Cyberbullying can happen 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and reach a kid even when he or she is alone. It can happen any time of the day or night.

Cyberbullying messages and images can be posted anonymously and distributed quickly to a very wide audience. It can be difficult and sometimes impossible to trace the source.



Deleting inappropriate or harassing messages, texts, and pictures is extremely difficult after they have been posted or sent.

**Effects of Cyberbullying**

Cell phones and computers themselves are not to blame for cyberbullying. Social media sites can be used for positive activities, like connecting kids with friends and family, helping students with school, and for entertainment. But these tools can also be used to hurt other people. Whether done in person or through technology, the effects of bullying are similar.

Kids who are cyberbullied are more likely to:

- Use alcohol and drugs
- Skip school

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more structure to some of the things that had been there. A Code of Conduct came out. We upgraded the law enforcement presence on the Review Board. We found out how to do background checks. And we don't get too many adverse reports. Once you tell people you are doing background checks, people who are offenders tend to select out."

The Diocese follows all guidelines in the 2002 *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, promulgated by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. That document called for a code of conduct, a more independent review process, safe environment training and background checks, an enhanced screening process for men seeking to become candidates for ordination, and publication of contact information for the victims' assistance coordinator. Local Dioceses should encourage victims to report any evidence of criminal conduct directly to law enforcement.

In regular audits by an independent firm, the Diocese of Rochester has been found to be in full compliance with all provisions of the Charter since the first audit was done in 2003.

In 2012, the Diocese reported that it had received credible allegations against 23 priests, some of whom were convicted of crimes, since the Charter's promulgation in 2002. Since then, there have been no allegations against any other priests of the Diocese.

The Diocese remains committed to providing comprehensive support and services to victims who come forward—including a prompt investigation of any allegations, no-cost psychological counseling, and opportunities to meet with diocesan leaders, including the Bishop of Rochester

In recent years, absent new allegations, the Diocese has focused more on the prevention of abuse and creating a safe environment.

Father Condon said the Diocese is updating its training model for employees, and later will update Creating a Safe Environment (CASE) training required of all volunteers who work with children or other vulnerable populations.

## Guiding Principles

The Diocese is committed to the following principles to create a safe environment for all:

- The Diocese will respond promptly to all allegations of sexual abuse of minors where there is reasonable belief that abuse has occurred;
- We will reach out to the victims and their families, and communicate sincere commitment to their spiritual and emotional well-being, as well as offer no-cost psychological counseling, opportunities to speak with diocesan leadership, including the Bishop of Rochester, and to take part in spiritual programs to aid healing and reconciliation.
- We will remove ministerial privileges from the alleged offender promptly and refer him for appropriate medical evaluation and intervention if such an allegation is supported by sufficient evidence.
- We will comply with the obligations of civil law by reporting an incident and cooperating with any official investigation.
- We will use open and transparent communications with members of the community, within the confines of respect for privacy of the individuals involved.

The Diocese has launched a quarterly CASE newsletter, intended for both parents and volunteers in parishes, schools, and other diocesan organizations and has established a CASE coordinator in every parish.

The safe environment training and policies, Father Condon said, are designed to help employees and volunteers be more attentive to the people in their care—children and vulnerable adults. When they see something that doesn't look or feel right, they are encouraged to follow their instinct and report their concerns to a supervisor. The Diocese has a wealth of services and resources it can use to assist persons who may have been abused.

"We still need to be vigilant" regarding potential clergy abuse cases, said Karen Rinefierd, diocesan Coordinator of Safe Environment Education and Compliance, a position which was created in 2015. "And part of what we're really paying attention to is helping parents and volunteers, including those who are going into homes visiting vulnerable adults, to be more aware of situations that might be unsafe. For example, I think early on parents did not realize that they and the community were being groomed by predators, just as kids are groomed."

Parents, for example, should be aware that there may be a problem if someone is overly helpful, offering to babysit for a single parent, or offering to drive a child, one-on-one. "We're trying to do our part to create a larger awareness," Rinefierd said.

Nationally, one in seven girls and one in 25 boys will be sexually abused before their 18th birthdays. "So we know in our congregations we have those who have abused and we certainly have those who have been abused," Rinefierd said. "We're trying to create an environment of care so that this won't happen."

The emphasis now is on sharing that message "with consistency and more frequency," Rinefierd said, hence the newsletter, for example. "We regularly share information and resources, places they can go on the Internet to learn more."

This school year, she said, the Diocese is re-vitalizing a program for middle school children in diocesan-run and non-diocesan Catholic schools. Also, she said parishes are offering a one-hour lesson for seventh graders enrolled in faith formation programs.

While public schools generally do a pretty good job of teaching kids the basics of being safe, "we want to provide a Catholic

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- Experience in-person bullying
- Be unwilling to attend school
- Receive poor grades
- Have lower self-esteem
- Have more health problems

### Frequency of Cyberbullying

The 2014–2015 School Crime Supplement (National Center for Education Statistics and Bureau of Justice Statistics) indicates that, nationwide, about 21% of students ages 12-18 experienced bullying.

The 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) also indicates that an estimated 16% of high school students were bullied electronically in the 12 months prior to the survey.

### Be Aware of What Your Kids are Doing Online

Talk with your kids about cyberbullying and other online issues regularly.

Know the sites your kids visit and their online activities. Ask where they're going,

what they're doing, and who they're doing it with.

Tell your kids that as a responsible parent you may review their online communications if you think there is reason for concern. Installing parental control filtering software or monitoring programs are one option for monitoring your child's online behavior, but do not rely solely on these tools.

Have a sense of what they do online and in texts. Learn about the sites they like. Try out the devices they use.

Ask for their passwords, but tell them you'll only use them in case of emergency.

Ask to "friend" or "follow" your kids on social media sites or ask another trusted adult to do so.

Encourage your kids to tell you immediately if they, or someone they know, is being cyberbullied. Explain that you will not take away their computers or cell phones if they confide in you about a problem they are having.

### Steps to Take Immediately

Don't respond to and don't forward cyberbullying messages.

Keep evidence of cyberbullying. Record the dates, times, and descriptions of instances when cyberbullying has occurred. Save and print screenshots, emails, and text messages. Use this evidence to report cyberbullying to web and cell phone service providers.

Block the person who is cyberbullying.

### Report Cyberbullying to Online Service Providers

Cyberbullying often violates the terms of service established by social media sites and internet service providers. Review their

terms and conditions or rights and responsibilities sections. These describe content that is or is not appropriate. Visit social media safety centers to learn how to block users and change settings to control who can contact you. Report cyberbullying to the social media site so they can take action against users abusing the terms of service.

### Report Cyberbullying to Law Enforcement

When cyberbullying involves these activities it is considered a crime and should be reported to law enforcement:

- Threats of violence
- Child pornography or sending sexually explicit messages or photos
- Taking a photo or video of someone in a place where he or she would expect privacy
- Stalking and hate crimes

### Report Cyberbullying to Schools

Cyberbullying can create a disruptive environment at school and is often related to in-person bullying. The school can use the information to help inform prevention and response strategies.



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context," Rinefierd said. "We try to build on the foundations already taught in Catholic elementary schools and faith formation programs, to emphasize that each person is made in the image and likeness of God, so that there is a dignity and a value to each person. If someone is trying to test your boundaries or those of a friend, that is wrong. If you've been abused, you are not to blame. Someone did not respect you as a child of God.

"We so often hear that when someone has been abused, it damages their relationship with God or they can see themselves as not worthy," Rinefierd added. "We're trying to connect all of this in a way that won't happen in a secular school, although the strategies may be very much the same in terms of how to respect your own boundaries and know what to do when someone is trying to violate your physical, emotional or behavioral boundaries. We want our young people to have that confidence, a sense of their own value."

*Mark Hare is a Rochester-based writer.*



**IF YOU HAVE BEEN A VICTIM OF  
SEXUAL ABUSE, YOU SHOULD CONTACT  
THE APPROPRIATE CIVIL AUTHORITIES.**

**To receive help and guidance  
from the Roman Catholic Diocese  
of Rochester, please contact  
Deborah Housel, victims' assistance  
coordinator at (585) 328-3210, ext. 1555  
or (toll-free) 1-800-388-7177, ext. 1555 or  
by e-mail to [victimassistance@dor.org](mailto:victimassistance@dor.org).**

# Halloween Safety Tips to Share With Your Children



Fall celebrations like Halloween are fun times for children, who can dress up in costumes, enjoy parties, and eat yummy treats. These celebrations also provide a chance to give

out healthy snacks, get physical activity, and focus on safety. Check out these tips to help make the festivities fun and safe for trick-or-treaters and party guests.

## Going trick-or-treating?

- S** Swords, knives, and other costume accessories should be short, soft, and flexible.
- A** Avoid trick-or-treating alone. Walk in groups or with a trusted adult.
- F** Fasten reflective tape to costumes and bags to help drivers see you.
- E** Examine all treats for choking hazards and tampering before eating them. Limit the amount of treats you eat.
- H** Hold a flashlight while trick-or-treating to help you see and others see you. WALK and don't run from house to house.
- A** Always test make-up in a small area first. Remove it before bedtime to prevent possible skin and eye irritation.
- L** Look both ways before crossing the street. Use crosswalks wherever possible.
- L** Lower your risk for serious eye injury by not wearing decorative contact lenses.
- O** Only walk on sidewalks whenever possible, or on the far edge of the road facing traffic to stay safe.
- W** Wear well-fitting masks, costumes, and shoes to avoid blocked vision, trips, and falls.
- E** Eat only factory-wrapped treats. Avoid eating homemade treats made by strangers.
- E** Enter homes only if you're with a trusted adult. Only visit well-lit houses. Never accept rides from strangers.
- N** Never walk near lit candles or luminaries. Be sure to wear flame-resistant costumes.



ROMAN CATHOLIC  
DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER

## Creating a Safe Environment Newsletter

is published quarterly by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester with the aim of helping all of us keep children and vulnerable adults safe at home, at church and in all places in our community.

Comments can be directed to:  
Karen Rineferd,  
Diocesan Coordinator  
of Safe Environment Education  
and Compliance,  
585-328-3228, ext. 1255  
or Karen.Rineferd@dor.org.

*Victims of sexual abuse by any employee 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, contact the diocesan Victims' Assistance Coordinator:*

Deborah Housel  
(585) 328-3228, ext. 1555;  
toll-free 1-800-388-7177,  
ext. 1555  
victimsassistance@dor.org.

*All photos in this newsletter are for illustrative purposes only.*

# ADDITIONAL SAFETY RESOURCES

## ONLINE SAFETY RESOURCES

### CHILDREN & TEENS' 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.commonsensemedia.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.faithandsafety.org>  
*Safety in a digital world, a joint project of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Greek Orthodox Church in America*

## LOCAL RESOURCES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

**Bivona Child Advocacy Center**  
(Monroe, Wayne counties):  
[www.BivonaCAC.org](http://www.BivonaCAC.org)  
585-935-7800

**Chemung County Child Advocacy Center:**  
607-737-8449  
[www.chemungcounty.com](http://www.chemungcounty.com)

**Child Advocacy Center of Cayuga County:**  
315-253-9795  
[www.cacofcayugacounty.org](http://www.cacofcayugacounty.org)

**Finger Lakes Child Advocacy Program**  
(Ontario County):  
[www.cacfingerlakes.org](http://www.cacfingerlakes.org)  
315-548-3232

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

**STEBEN 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)**  
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

**Yates County Child Abuse Review Team:**  
315-531-3417, Ext. 6