



CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Protecting children from Internet pornography

By Jane Sutter

If your image of someone who views pornography is that of a male pervert hunched over his computer in a dark room, think again: the largest consumers of Internet pornography are youths ages 12 to 17. And they're viewing it on their smart phones.

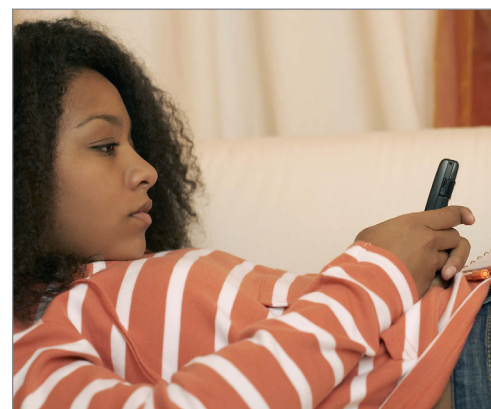
"Pornography is really rampant out there and it's affecting the way kids view themselves, the way they view relationships, sex-

uality, all of that," said Dr. Peter Kleponis, a licensed clinical therapist who works with both teens and adults who are addicted to pornography. He is the author of *Integrity Restored: Helping Catholic Families Win the Battle Against Pornography*.

The average age of when a child first encounters pornography is age 11, and 80 percent of 15- to 17-year-olds have had multiple exposures to pornography, Kleponis said. While boys tend to view Internet pornography in higher numbers than girls, statistics show that girls are not immune. For example, 57 percent of girls and 83 percent of boys have seen group sex on the Internet.

What qualifies as pornography? Kleponis defines pornography as "any image that leads a person to use another person for their own sexual pleasure. It is devoid of love, intimacy, relationship or responsibility. It can be highly addictive."

Children may first encounter pornography accidentally. Often times young children come across images because they're curious and they do an Internet search for various words, said Karen Painter, a member of the National Council of Catholic Women who is that group's liaison with the Religious Alliance Against Pornography. RAAP was found-



ed by a group of religious leaders assembled in the living room of Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York City in 1986. RAAP's mission is to create a broad interfaith effort to alert, educate and mobilize all people to understand and combat pornography.

Because a young person's brain is still developing and very malleable, he or she can be especially susceptible to developing an addiction to pornography, Kleponis said. In fact, Kleponis said because of the effect pornography has on a young brain, it takes longer for a teen to recover from a pornography addiction than an adult who became addicted while an adult.

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Abuse prevention remains 'highest priority'

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following article is reprinted with permission from the **Catholic Courier**, newspaper of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester.

By Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

Nearly a decade before news reporting out of Boston focused public attention on cases of priestly sexual abuse nationwide, the Diocese of Rochester steadily had begun implementing measures to prevent sexual abuse of young people in parishes, schools and other settings.

A quarter century later, however, the potential for abuse continues to exist anywhere an adult and a minor may be alone, noted Karen Rinefierd, diocesan coordinator of safe-environment

education and compliance. As she lauded the effectiveness of such diocesan measures as mandatory background checks, training sessions and signed codes of conduct for employees and volunteers, Rinefierd said the diocese can never rest on its laurels.

"Complacency is our biggest enemy," she said. "If people get comfortable, thinking that there's nothing going on and that it's all in the past, we as a diocese could slip into not taking this (effort) seriously."

Rinefierd noted that Bishop Salvatore R. Matano remains emphatic about maintaining a safe environment for his people, calling it "his highest priority." Bishop Matano, who has led the

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The free booklet *Protecting Your Family Online* from the Internet security firm Covenant Eyes notes that a lot of research helps to explain what happens neurologically when a person looks at porn. First, the body and brain release powerful hormones and chemicals like dopamine. As the brain becomes used to porn, it takes harder images or a greater variety to get a fix. The more pornography a person views, or the earlier a child is exposed to it, the more likely they are to develop a chemical dependency on porn.

Both Kleponis and Painter are adamant that parents need to understand the dangers of the Internet and the dangers of porn.

"You never leave your child alone with the Internet," Kleponis said firmly. "If you leave your child alone with the Internet, you might as well leave them alone with a perfect stranger."

Parents of children in elementary and middle school should watch everything their children are doing on a computer, standing behind them. Kleponis said. He's adamant that children that age should not have a smart phone (a flip phone for just calls and texting is fine for a middle school child). "What parents don't realize is when they give their child a smart phone and it doesn't have any parental controls on it or there's no monitoring, they're giving their child full access to pornography on the Internet. In addition, they're giving every single sexual predator out there access to their kids."

Painter is blunt in her assessment of the dangers of children accessing pornography on a phone. "If you have a phone, you have access to the biggest smut machine you've ever seen in your life."

Painter and Kleponis urged parents to install controls and filters on phones, tablets and computers. They recommend the services offered by Covenant Eyes, a company

founded on Christian values. Services include monitoring Internet traffic on devices and sending a weekly report to parents, to alert them to questionable searches or sites that Covenant Eyes blocked. Information about other Internet filters can be found at <https://www.common sense media.org/blog/everything-you-need-to-know-about-parental-controls>

Kleponis also noted that parents need to make sure computers at a child's school are monitored, and parents should know that computers in public spaces, such as libraries, may have full access to pornography. While some kids may complain that their parents are installing controls because they don't trust their kids, Kleponis noted: "It's not the kids that we don't trust, it's the pornographers that we don't trust."

Painter agreed that parents should not think they are invading their children's privacy but tell them: "I love you unconditionally but I'm not here to be your buddy and your friend. I'm here to be your mother or your father to love and protect you... I don't want to see something bad happen to you."

Children and teens often welcome this type of protection, Kleponis said. "Believe it or not, most kids understand. They actually get this. Most kids are grateful their parents are doing this."

If parents discover that their child has been viewing pornography, Kleponis' advice is don't "freak out" or get angry at the child. "Realize that your child is the victim here ... Too often parents treat their children like they are the perpetrator." Parents should understand that the child is the victim of the culture created by the porn industry and the mass media.

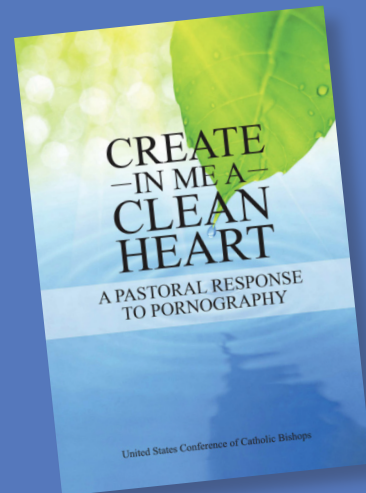
Parents should tell their children what they know, and not shame them, Kleponis emphasized. If the issue becomes chronic, parents

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"Never leave your child alone with the internet," Dr. Kleponis warns.

RESOURCES:



Create in Me a Clean Heart:

A Pastoral Response to Pornography from the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops.

Available for download at <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/pornography/index.cfm>.

Also available on the site is the helpful article *Raising Chaste Children in a Pornographic World* by Ryan Foley, vice president of development for Covenant Eyes.

Websites: See back page of newsletter for many helpful sites.

Protect Young Minds

<https://protectyoungminds.org/>
Many free resources, including the downloadable guides *3 Secrets to Porn-Immune Kids* and *5 Things Teens Wish Their Parents Knew About Porn*.

Pure Hope

<http://purehope.net/>
This group offers Christian-based solutions to parenting in this highly sexualized culture. Resources include a video series for parents.

Religious Alliance Against Pornography

<https://www.religiousalliance.org/home>

Offers helpful information for parents and those affected by pornography addiction, including recorded webinars on a variety of topics.

diocese since 2014, affirms his ongoing commitment in a message that appears on the first page of the diocesan website's safe-environment section (www.dor.org/protecting-our-children/protecting-our-children).

"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 stated in his message, noting that background checks and safe-environment training have been conducted for more than 25,000 workers and volunteers in the diocese since 2002.

Thorough approach

All clerics, educators and employees serving the diocese and diocesan-affiliated agencies are required to submit to background checks and to undergo safe-environment training. The same stipulations are made of candidates for the priesthood and permanent diaconate, as well as thousands of people who volunteer to work with children, youths and vulnerable adults in such roles as catechists and youth-group assistants.



All clergy, employees and volunteers working with children undergo background checks and training.

Employees and volunteers also are required to affirm in writing that they agree to abide by a diocesan code of conduct. The code, reinforced by safe-environment training, covers prohibitions against working alone with a child, youth or vulnerable adult, as well as one-on-one and/or inappropriate

communication with minors or vulnerable adults, either in person or using electronic devices. The code also requires employees and volunteers to immediately report suspected sexual abuse to the proper supervisor.

According to Rinefierd, a total of 1,237 clergy, parish, school and Pastoral Center employees — as well as 8,270 parish and school volunteers — worked in the Rochester Diocese as of June 2017.

New employees and volunteers with the diocese, parishes, schools and diocesan affiliates — including privately run Catholic schools — must undergo background checks before beginning work. Immediately thereafter they also must complete safe-environment training and agree in writing to comply with codes of conduct.

Beginning in 2014, a Creating a Safe Environment (CASE) coordinator — usually an existing member of the staff — has been designated in every parish to ensure adherence to CASE standards. These appointments formalized longstanding lines of accountability at the parish level, Rinefierd noted.

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can seek out the services of a professional therapist for the child. Using age-appropriate resources regarding the human body and sexuality from the time a child is a few years old can help create a climate of trust and sharing, Painter and Kleponis said.

"The Catholic teachings are very beautiful," Kleponis said, portraying sex as a wonderful celebration of love between a husband and wife that's open to new life.

Painter suggests that parents start teaching children about their bodies when they are very young, age 2 or 3, with the message about "how beautiful they are, that God created them, that they are special, and that we are all made differently."

To teach young children about the dangers of pornography, Painter and Kleponis recommend the book *Good Pictures Bad Pictures*; there is also a junior version for children ages 3 to 6.

For middle school-age children and teens, Kleponis recommends the book *@ Sophie Takes a #Selfie*, which focuses on the dangers of social media, and how once a photo is put on the Internet, it's there forever.

Grandparents, too, can play a role by consulting with their own children to get

permission for them to read appropriate books to their grandchildren and talk to them. Often grandparents are caregivers while parents are at work, Kleponis noted. Children may open up more to their grand-parents, who may be viewed as less likely to punish them.

Conversations about what is a healthy relationship help children and teens better understand why viewing pornography is harmful, Kleponis said. Teens need to learn about healthy dating relationships, too.

Despite the proliferation of pornography, Kleponis said he is hopeful that the tide will turn, but he estimates it will take about 50 years. He compares the porn industry to the proliferation of cigarettes 50 years ago, when most people smoked. Intensive education of the dangers of smoking has decreased the demand for cigarettes and the supply.

"That's what has to happen to pornography," Kleponis said. "Through intensive education, protecting our kids, we need to change the cultural attitude toward pornography so we can decrease the demand and decrease the supply."

Jane Sutter is a Rochester-area freelance writer.

HOW TO PROTECT YOUNG CHILDREN

- Limit all screen time to less than 2 hours a day. This includes television, computer, cell phone, tablet, video games, etc.
- Supervise your child's use of the Internet. Never leave him/her alone on the internet.
- Use Internet filtering software

PROTECTING TEENS

- Limit screen time to less than three hours a day.
- Learn about the dangers of pornography together with your teen(s).
- Use Internet accountability software on all the devices your family uses that have access to the internet.
- Never let a teen isolate with the Internet.
- Stress to your teen the importance of respecting other people and not using them sexually.

Source: <https://integrityrestored.com/getting-help/parents/>

Many of the local guidelines relate to the "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People," adopted in 2002 by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in response to cases of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy. The charter — which the bishops updated in June to tighten some requirements and clarify certain terms — set specific guidelines for responding to allegations of sexual abuse of minors, implementing safe-environment programs and developing codes of conduct. Also in 2002, the USCCB established a National Review Board to collaborate in these efforts.

Like every U.S. Catholic archdiocese and diocese — except for the Diocese of Lincoln, Neb., which has declined to participate — the Diocese of Rochester is monitored annually by independent auditors engaged by the USCCB to ensure that all aspects of the bishops' charter are being followed. In addition, the USCCB engages a firm to conduct on-site audits of each diocese every three years; the next such audit of the Rochester Diocese is scheduled to take place in October 2018.

The Diocese of Rochester has been found to be in compliance every year since the annual audits began in 2003, and during the last on-site audit — conducted in September 2015 by the independent firm StoneBridge Business Partners — auditors praised the diocese for several new steps it had implemented. Among those measures were the appointment of parish CASE coordinators and requiring that employees and volunteers every three years renew their CASE training, background checks and promises to comply with codes of conduct.

"Our diocese goes beyond what the (USCCB) charter requires," Rinefierd observed.

As a new school year is about to begin, many new teachers and volunteers are being screened and trained in safe-environment procedures, noted Anthony S. Cook III, diocesan schools superintendent.

"I just think it's important that people who interact with our schools know we do encourage volunteerism and a family environment, but still require this (safe-environment) training," Cook said. He added that the training covers such aspects as reminding adults to always work with children in areas where other students and/or adults are present, and to keep windowless doors open at all times.

Broader concern

Efforts by the Diocese of Rochester to prevent sexual abuse of minors predated the U.S. bishops' charter by several years. In 1993, then-Bishop Matthew H. Clark established an independent local review board made up of experts in child protection, law enforcement and mental health. That board continues today, assisting with policy development, the assessment of sexual-abuse complaints and development of services to victims.

Also in 1993, victim advocates were appointed and training of diocesan employees began.

Shortly after the USCCB charter was enacted in 2002, additional measures were added locally, such as heightened screening of men applying for priestly and diaconal formation; implementation of background checks on employees and volunteers; development of a code of conduct; and required training for

volunteers working with children, teens and vulnerable adults.

Rinefierd said all these efforts are geared toward further increasing awareness and prevention of sexual abuse, not only in the Catholic Church but in the broader society as well.

Although the sexual-abuse crisis in the U.S. initially centered on Catholic priests and Scout leaders, Rinefierd noted that it has proven to extend much further, pointing to recent scandals in the athletic programs at Penn State, Ohio State and Michigan State universities as examples.

"This is happening in a wide variety of situations, and we need to pay attention the best we can," Rinefierd said.

While acknowledging that the priestly sexual-abuse crisis "was a profound, horrible thing that's happened in the church," Rinefierd expressed hope that the Rochester Diocese's efforts over these last 25 years can help strengthen safe-environment practices in a variety of settings.

"We want people to take what they learn in our training and apply them in all aspects of their lives," she said.

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Tips for a Happy and Safe Halloween



Halloween is just around the corner! Below are links to important safety reminders.

Safe Kids <http://www.safekids.org/tip/halloween-safety-tips>

American Academy of Pediatrics: <http://bit.ly/2cUxXi1>

Kids Health <http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/halloween.html>



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 Rinefield,
Diocesan Coordinator
of Safe Environment Education
and Compliance,
585-328-3228, ext. 1255
or Karen.Rinefield@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 Victim Assistance Coordinator:

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

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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
585-935-7800

Chemung County Child Advocacy Center:

607-737-8449

www.chemungcounty.com

Child Advocacy Center of Cayuga County:

315-253-9795

www.cacofcayugacounty.org

Finger Lakes Child Advocacy Program

(Ontario County):

www.cacfingerlakes.org
315-548-3232

Darkness to Light organization:

www.d2l.org

STEBEN COUNTY: Southern Tier Children's Advocacy Center:

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
607-277-3203

Wyoming County Sexual Abuse Response Team:

585-786-8846

Yates County Child Abuse Review Team:

315-531-3417, Ext. 6