

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL CHURCH

SAFETY EDUCATION PROGRAM

PARENT PACKET

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DIOCESE OF ORANGE



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Dear Parents,

Thank you for your willingness to be a part of the effort to keep our children safe. As I and my brother bishops have pledged to you in the *Covenant with the Faithful*, "we will implement in every respect the American Catholic Bishops' *The National Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* and our own diocesan policies for the prevention of the abuse of children and young people." The mandate for creating a safe environment for all children requires that we put into place a variety of programs to ensure the safety of children of all ages as they participate in church and religious activities. Besides our written code of conduct for all employees and volunteers who work with young people, we are implementing training for those same adults and conducting background checks.

The production of our interactive DVD, *Breaking the Silence*, is a major step forward in our endeavor to provide educational resources for high school aged youth about the devastating effects of the sexual abuse of minors and how to protect both themselves and their friends. The DVD is an integral piece of the safe environment curriculum in our high schools. I am confident that as it is used with groups of young people, the goal of breaking the silence of the past to protect children in the future will be accomplished. It can also be used as the education component for parents of all ages of children.

Our Catholic school elementary teachers and religious educators have just completed a training program from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. The "Kids and Company: Safety Education Program" will be implemented in every school and parish religious education program at the elementary school level. Age appropriate personal safety education that helps children grow in self-confidence and safety competence empowers them to be less likely victims of sexual abuse.

I am very grateful to you for your participation in our efforts to create and maintain a safe environment and I assure you that this will continue to be a top priority as we go forward together.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tod D. Brown".

Most Reverend Tod D. Brown, D.D.
Bishop of Orange

What Are The Risks To Your Child?

- Children of every age, gender and race are vulnerable to child abduction and sexual exploitation.
- 1,682,000 children were classified as runaways/throwaways in 1999. 21% of endangered runaways had been physically or sexually abused at home the year prior to their run or were afraid of abuse upon their return.
- Approximately 203,900 children were abducted in 1999 in "family abductions"; 98% of these children were located or returned home; none of these children were killed.
- There were approximately 58,200 "non family abductions" in 1999; 99% of these children returned home. Only 115 of these were the most serious "stereotypical kidnappings by strangers"; almost 60% of these children returned home.
- When the abductor is unrelated to the child, the abductor is just as likely to be someone known to the child or family as to be a stranger.
- The sexual victimization of children is overwhelming in magnitude, yet largely unrecognized and underreported. Researchers estimate that 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 10 boys will be sexually victimized before they reach adulthood.
- Many children do not report offenses out of fear, shame or embarrassment. It is estimated that less than 35% of these cases are reported to law enforcement officials.
- The Internet can pose a real threat to children. Approximately 1 in 5 children receive a sexual solicitation or approach over the Internet.

Child Sexual Exploitation

Because there is a distinct relationship between sexual exploitation and abduction, it is important that instructors be familiar with basic sexual exploitation information. Reading the following information can assist even the best instructor to be more prepared to handle a suspicion or disclosure of sexual exploitation that may result from positive and empowering prevention education.

Why don't children tell about abuse?

Many people wonder why so many children keep abuse a secret, particularly if it occurs when they are old enough to realize that abuse is "wrong". It is difficult for a child to tell even a trusted adult. Before talking to someone, he or she must climb a mountain of overwhelming feelings. A child may:

- Not recognize the activity is inappropriate, or only realize it later.
- Feel guilty, ashamed, or think "it's my fault" or "I deserved it".
- Be afraid of threats, especially if the abuser has threatened to hurt a family member or pet.
- Love the abuser or have confused feelings about him or her.
- Not want to get the abuser in trouble or lose the abuser's love and care.
- Be unsure what will happen.
- Think that no one will believe him or her.

- Be afraid of getting into trouble. Teenagers may fear that their parents will “tighten the reins” if the abuse occurred while they were out on their own or if they used bad judgment.
- Be afraid of what other people will say. Teenagers and preteens are particularly sensitive to peer pressure and fear having their friends find out. They may fear being called “slut” or “homosexual”.

What are the effects of abduction or sexual abuse on the victim?

The effects of abduction and sexual abuse on a child can vary widely. In abductions, it will depend on the events of the abduction, how long the child was gone how the child was treated, what the child understood or believed about the abduction, and other factors. For instance, where children have been gone for a long time, they may no longer remember their parent/guardian or may have believed that a parent/guardian was dead. Some children may show signs of upset or trauma for a long time afterward. When children are found, professionals in law enforcement, counseling and child welfare can often help families and children cope with the aftereffects¹. Sexual abuse also can have very negative psychological effects on the child. Children may suffer from:

- Fear
- Anxiety
- Difficult concentrating
- Feelings of helplessness
- Low self esteem
- Self-blame
- Depression
- Anger

The reactions can be very long lasting. In later life, some victims may suffer chronic depression, may abuse alcohol or drugs, or have trouble developing close relationships. However, some victims of child abuse suffer no obvious aftereffects at all. It may depend on the type of abuse that occurred, who was involved, and the personality of the child. For example, one incident involving a casual acquaintance might not be as traumatic as repeated abuse by a close family member. The way that parents react to the abuse can be very important.² Most experts recommend that every abused child be assessed by a qualified mental health professional that can advise parents whether any treatment is needed.³

Sexual abuse in childhood does not mean that a child will grow up to be a sexual abuser. Although many child molesters report a history of sexual abuse, most child victims do not become child molesters.⁴ Nor does sexual abuse by a person of the same sex mean that a child will grow up to be a homosexual.

¹ Kathryn M. Turman (Ed.),
Recovery and Reunifications of Missing Children: A Team Approach.
Arlington, CA: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, March 1995

² John N. Briere and Diana M. Elliott,
“The Immediate and Long Term Impacts of Child Sexual Abuse,”
The Future of Children: Sexual Abuse of Children, Vol. 4, No. 2, Summer/Fall 1994.

³ “Sexual Abuse of Children: Recommendations and Analysis,”
The Future of Children: Sexual Abuse of Children, Vol.4, No 2, Summer/Fall 1994.

⁴ Cathy Spatz Widom,
Victims of Child Sexual Abuse – Later Criminal Consequences.
Washington, CD: National Institute of Justice, March 1995.

Legislation

Sex Offender Registration

The 1994 federal law orders all states to require released sex-offenders to register with law enforcement for at least ten years. When an offender moves, he/she must re-register. Failure to register is a crime, the penalty for which varies from state to state.

Community Notification

The federal law required all 50 states to release information to the public about known convicted sex offenders when it was necessary to protect their safety but did not mandate active notification. There is a significant difference between simply releasing information (making it available for the public to access on its own) and active community notification, where law enforcement officers go door to door to inform neighbors and schools.

For more than 50 years California has required dangerous sex offenders to register with their local law enforcement agencies. However, information on the whereabouts of these sex offenders was not available to the public until the implementation of the Child Molester Identification Line in July 1995. The information available was further expanded by California's Megan's Law in 1996 (Chapter 908, Stats. of 1996). Now, California's Megan's Law arms the public with certain information on the whereabouts of dangerous sex offenders so that members of our local communities may protect themselves and their children. The law also authorizes local law enforcement to notify the public about high-risk and serious sex offenders who reside in, are employed in, or frequent the community. The law is not intended to punish the offender and specifically prohibits using the information to harass or commit any crime against the offender. For further information, contact the California Department of Justice at (800) 952-5225.

AMBER Plan

The AMBER Plan was created in 1997 as a powerful legacy to 9-year-old Amber Hagerman, who was kidnapped and brutally murdered while riding her bicycle in Arlington, TX. The tragedy shocked and outraged the entire community. Residents contacted radio stations and suggested they broadcast special "alerts" over the airwaves so that they could help prevent such incidents in the future. In response to the concern for the safety of local children, the Dallas/Fort Worth Association of Radio Managers teamed up with law-enforcement agencies and developed this innovative early warning system to help find abducted children. Broadcasters use the Emergency Alert System (EAS) to air a description of the child and suspected abductor. This is the same concept used during severe weather emergencies. The goal of the AMBER Alert is to instantly galvanize the entire community to assist in the search for and safe return of the child.

The California Highway Patrol (CHP) is responsible for statewide coordination of AMBER Alert and the other emergency response activities associated with a child abduction. The AMBER Alert Program has helped in successfully recovering over a dozen children since it was established statewide in California on July 31, 2002.

Recognizing the Signs of Child Exploitation and Abuse

To be a proactive protector or partner in prevention, you need to know some of the signs that indicate a child is being abused. Although *KIDS AND COMPANY*® focuses specifically on child sexual abuse, this section also provides guidance on signs of physical abuse. For further information, you may also check with your local child protective services agency.

Sometimes, children are unable to tell adults that they have been abused because they are shy, embarrassed, or afraid. Here are some possible warning signs of abuse. No one of these actions, alone, necessarily means there has been abuse. They are provided to help you become aware of the most common signs and not intended to be proof.

Many of these behaviors are signs of some type of psychological stress that the child may be feeling. No matter what the cause, they are warning signals that alert us that something distressful is occurring in the child's life. The source of the problem needs to be explored and the child needs help and support.

Behaviors That May indicate Sexual Abuse:

- Bizarre, sophisticated, seductive, promiscuous, or otherwise unusual sexual behavior or knowledge.
- Sudden changes in behavior: extreme mood swings, withdrawal, fantasy, fearfulness, excessive crying, or infantile behavior.
- Fear of certain places, people, or activities, especially fear of being alone with a particular person.
- Sudden acting out of feelings, or aggressive or rebellious behavior.
- Suddenly starts doing poorly on school work or has difficulty concentrating.
- Unwillingness to change for gym or participate in physical education class.
- Extreme fear of being touched or unwillingness to submit to a physical examination.
- Sudden excessive weight gain or loss.
- Poor peer relationships.
- Delinquency, truancy, or running away.
- Forcing sexual acts on other children.
- Brothers or sisters who complain of sexual or physical mistreatment.
- Reports sexual assault by caretaker or other person.
- Self-injurious behavior, including suicide attempts.
- Prostitution.

Physical Indicators of Sexual Abuse

- Difficulty in walking or sitting.
- Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing.
- Complaints of pain or itching in genital area (between legs).
- Bruises, bleeding, swelling, or cuts in between legs, front or back.
- Venereal disease.
- Bruising around the mouth on infants
- Bruises or cuts on penis, in area between penis and anus, or area between vagina and anus; open sores in these areas; vaginal discharge.
- Difficulty with urinations,
- Complaints of pain when there seems to be no reason for the pain, such as stomachaches, backaches, and headaches.

Sex Play Between Children

People are often uncertain about what is normal sexual behavior among children. Typically, young children are curious about their own body parts and may compare them with their friends. It also is quite common for young children to masturbate – to touch their own genitals – in front of other people or in public. Around age 6 or 7, children tend to become more modest, although they may continue to show sexual curiosity and play sexual games with children of the same or opposite sex. Children's knowledge of sexual behavior also tends to be very limited until around age 10 or older. By the early teens, some children are becoming sexually active. However, anytime children are involved in sexual activity in which there is an unequal distribution of power, or if an element of force or bribery is involved, that activity needs to be viewed as potentially abusive. Power may be unequal if one of the children involved:⁵

- Is much larger than the other
- Is more than 3 years older
- Has greater mental, emotional, or physical ability
- Has a higher status (such as group leader or babysitter)

⁵ STOP IT NOW! *Because There Is a Way to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse: Facts About Abuse and Those Who Might Commit It*
Brandon, VT: The Safer Society Press, 1998.

Factors That Make Children Vulnerable To Victimization

- Children, particularly young children, have trouble knowing the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behavior – especially when it involves an adult that they know or care about.
- Children are taught to be polite and to obey adults. They may have trouble resisting if it means being rude, hurting someone's feelings or lying.
- Children can be tricked or manipulated more easily than adults. Even teenagers fall for "lines", although the line may be different - "I'll make you a model" rather than "I'll buy you ice cream".
- Children can be threatened easily and may be unable to judge whether the threats are realistic. Older children and teens can be "blackmailed" emotionally. "If you love me, you won't tell".
- Children are naturally curious. As they enter adolescence, they may become intensely curious about sex. At younger ages, a new toy or a cute pet may be the lure.
- As children enter their teens they want to assert their independence. For many, it is a time to experiment and take greater risks, which may put them in harm's way.

KIDS AND COMPANY: Safety-Education Program™

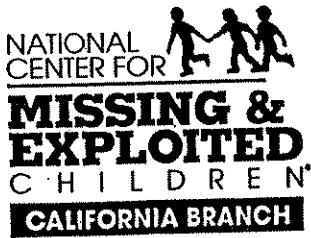
Prevention education is one of the key components in a comprehensive approach to ending child victimization. KIDS AND COMPANY: Safety-Education Program utilizes the basic safety rules for children in a comprehensive, interactive program that promotes the integration of life long personal safety habits for children in kindergarten through eighth grade. Research shows that children who have a sense of confidence and self-esteem are less vulnerable to sexual victimization by adults and older children. KIDS AND COMPANY: Safety-Education Program provides age appropriate materials and activities to teach children safety skills and help build self-esteem to make children less vulnerable for abduction and sexual exploitation.

The program takes a positive and constructive approach. It does not teach children to be antisocial or afraid. Instead the program helps children learn to recognize and avoid situations that place them at increased risk and teaches them how to respond to situations and make safe decisions. Through age appropriate games, songs and other activities, KIDS AND COMPANY: Safety-Education Program reinforces each child's awareness, assertiveness and judgment. It helps them to reverse their traditional role as helpless victims and teaches them that they are capable and worthwhile individuals.

At the same time, the program emphasizes the importance of community. It teaches children that they are not alone. Children learn when and how to get help from peers and adults. The program provides opportunities for parental involvement and teaches parents how they can help keep their children safe.

For further information about KIDS AND COMPANY: Safety-Education Program or to order NCMEC literature, contact:

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Branches:
California
Florida
Missouri
New York
South Carolina

*Founded in Honor of Adam Walsh
and America's Missing Children*

Introduction to **KIDS AND COMPANY: Safety-Education Program™**

The **KIDS AND COMPANY: Safety-Education Program** is a comprehensive program for Grades K-8 that helps develop a child's knowledge, skills, information, and self-confidence in a way to help enhance the child's self-esteem and help prevent abduction and sexual exploitation.

The program takes a positive and constructive approach. It does not teach children to be antisocial or afraid. Rather it teaches them how to respond to situations and make safer decisions.

At the same time, the program emphasizes the importance of community. It teaches children that they are not alone. Children learn when and how to get help from peers and adults. The program provides opportunities for family involvement and teaches parents, grandparents, and guardians what they can do to help keep their children safer.

Prevention education is more effective when parents, grandparents, guardians, teachers, and other members of the community work together to help make childhood a safer and happier place to be.

Why Safety Education is Needed

Our efforts to prevent crimes against children have not kept pace with the increasing vulnerability of our youngest members of society. After hearing the tragic stories about abducted or sexually exploited children, most people are surprised to learn many crimes that are committed against children can be prevented by teaching children some basic safety skills.

Unfortunately, the rising awareness of crimes against children has left many families and communities with a real sense of fear. Families may inadvertently scare children by telling them about the tragic consequences of not being careful. We have also learned traditional safety messages, such as "never talk to strangers," are not effective.

There are particular problems involved in teaching children about "strangers." First, most cases of abduction or sexual exploitation involve someone the child knows, such as a family member, friend of the family, or someone from the community. Teaching children to avoid "strangers" will not prevent most crimes that are committed against children.

Secondly, there are many cases in everyday life - at school, in the community, or away from home - when children need to interact with people they don't know. They need to learn to make safer decisions about the people they ask for help.

Thirdly, it is almost impossible to define a "stranger." Anyone who has tried to do so has found him- or herself making all kinds of exceptions and qualifications. When children are asked to describe or draw a picture of a "stranger," they usually portray someone who is ugly or mean looking. A "stranger," however, can be anyone and look like anyone.

You don't need to be an expert on child abduction and sexual exploitation to teach **KIDS AND COMPANY**; however, it helps to have some background about the nature of the problem and how often it occurs. It is best when someone who has regular contact with children teaches the program since children may have a variety of responses to the information, including making disclosures. Adults familiar with the children are more likely to be perceptive about a child's concerns or reactions.

REVIEW OF PROGRAM OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM



Philosophy

A fundamental premise of prevention education is that children with self-confidence, grounded in safety competence and high self-esteem, are less vulnerable targets for victimization.¹

Goal

Children will be able to use safety strategies to help reduce the possibility of victimization from abduction and sexual exploitation.

Objectives

- Teach children age-appropriate safety rules and self-protective skills.
- Enhance children's sense of self-worth.
- Provide opportunities to practice safety skills and habits.
- Incorporate safety rules and vocabulary into daily practice at school, in the community, and at home.
- Encourage parents, grandparents, or guardians to participate in the program and work to make a safer community.

Key Messages for Children

Use Your BRAIN

Make safe decisions and avoid dangerous situations.

Know what to do in a situation that makes you feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused.

Know who to seek out for help.

Train your BODY

Use effective facial expressions.

Use the "I mean business" tone of voice.

Trust your FEELINGS

Recognize that feelings can be used to keep you safer.

Learn what to do when you have these feelings.

Ask for HELP

You are not alone.

Learn to identify people you can trust.

Get help when feeling scared, uncomfortable, or confused.

¹ *Guidelines for Programs to Reduce Child Victimization: A Resource for Communities When Choosing a Program to Teach Personal Safety to Children.* Alexandria, Virginia: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, 1999, page 4.

Stranger Danger Myth

“Stranger Danger” has been a popular warning to children to prevent abduction and sexual exploitation. However, we have come to realize that this message does not fully protect children.

It Is Statistically Incorrect - Children are at greater risk of being abducted or sexually exploited by a family member or by someone they know than by a stranger.

Kids Don't Get It - When asked, children describe a stranger as a scary looking person, most often a male, and may even describe someone with almost cartoon-like features. On the other hand, kids often feel that they know someone who is an acquaintance or someone they have only met once.

We Don't Model It - Adults talk to strangers all the time. In order to conduct life's business we are often required to speak with someone we don't know. It is confusing to children when we tell them not to talk to strangers and then they see us doing the opposite.

Inability To Access Help - Teaching stranger danger takes away children's ability to access help. If a child is lost, he or she feels totally powerless because they have been told not to talk to strangers. The world can seem like a pretty scary place if everyone you do not know is a dangerous stranger. Children can learn to identify “low risk helpers” such as store clerks, police, groups of people, or adults accompanied by children. This type of education is empowering to children.

Basic Safety Rules for Children

Following are four basic child safety-education rules. These rules constitute the foundation on which children can act to contribute to their own personal safety.

Check First - Children should always check first with parents or the adult in charge before doing anything, going anywhere or making any change in plans. The Check First rule removes the responsibility of decision making from the child and places it where it properly belongs on the adults who are caring for them.

Go With Friends - Since children are safer when they are not alone, this rule is intended to improve the safety of children by encouraging them to avoid going places by themselves and call on their friends or family members to accompany them. Not only is this safer, it is generally more fun.

It's My Body - This message empowers children to set personal limits. They should learn that, with few exceptions, no one should touch the parts of their body that are covered by their swimsuits – that they have the right to resist any inappropriate touching. It is important for children to learn the correct anatomical names for their “private parts”. Children with proper language and information about telling when touched in these areas are able to express concerns clearly.

Tell A Trusted Adult - Youngsters should be encouraged to ask a trusted adult for help anytime they feel threatened. This rule reinforces the implicit social contract between children and adults and places ultimate responsibility on adults for protecting children.

Trick Alert Handout

Here are 10 kinds of tricks often used by people who hurt children. The goal of these tricks is to get you to a place where other people would not be there to help you. By learning about these tricks and using your safety rules, you can be safer.

- The **secret trick** is when someone asks you to keep a “run secret.” The person tries to trick you by telling you that you will be in trouble if you tell or no one will believe you or you are to blame for what happened. The person may tell you that if you tell something bad will happen to you or your parents, your grandparents, your guardians, or your pet. It’s all part of trying to trick you into keeping a secret about a situation that you should immediately run away from and tell your parents, your grandparents, your guardians, or another trusted adult.
- The **offer trick** is when someone offers you something that you want. It might be candy, a toy, money, food, a ride, or a trip to someplace fun.
- The **animal trick** is when someone tells you that he has a puppy or kitten or some other cute animal. He asks you to go with him to see or play with the animal.
- The **help trick** is when someone older asks you for help or offers to help you. The person may ask for directions; to use your telephone; or for help looking for a lost pet, child, or money. The person could say something bad has happened like a fire or serious illness and then offer to take you home or to your parents, grandparents, or guardians. A person may also ask you to carry something or help open a door.
- The **friend trick** is when a person pretends to know your parents, grandparents, or guardians and says they have asked her to get you.
- The **bad-child trick** is when someone accuses you of doing something wrong and tells you that you have to go with him. The person may show a fake badge. The person may lie and tell you that you are so bad your parents, grandparents, or guardians don’t want you around anymore.
- The **flattery trick** is when someone may tell you that you are so pretty or handsome they want you to go with them so they can take your picture and make you famous.
- The **love trick** is when someone may tell you that he or she loves you and if you loved him or her you would do something like go someplace together, touch him or her in the private parts, or let him or her touch you in the private parts.
- The **open-the-door trick** is when someone tries to get you to open the door when your parents, grandparents, or guardians are not home. The person might wear a uniform and look like a repairperson or say that he needs to make a telephone call or deliver a package.
- The **false-identity-online trick** is when someone you first “met” online tricks you into sharing personal information or agreeing to meet in person by pretending to be someone your age interested in the same things you are.

Anytime anyone tries to use any of these tricks on you, remember your safety rules of

- Check first
- Go With Friends
- It’s My Body
- Tell An Adult You Trust

My Rules for Online Safety

1. I will tell an adult I trust if anything makes me feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused.
2. I will ask my parents or guardian before sharing my personal information.
3. I won't meet in person with anyone I have first "met" online.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN

where to go for more help

In an Emergency or if you have information about a missing or exploited child:

Call 911 and notify your local police

Call 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678)

To report information about child pornography, child molestation, child prostitution,
and the online enticement of children:

Log on to NCMEC's CyberTipline at:
www.cybertipline.com

The following websites provide additional information about
protecting children from abduction and exploitation:

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Department of Justice
OJJDP Publications- Child Protection
<http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/pubs/missing.html>

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)
<http://www.missingkids.com>

NCMEC's website to teach children about dangers on the Internet
<http://www.netsmartz.org>

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Crime Against Children Program webpage
<http://www.fbi.gov/hq/cid/cac/crimesmain.htm>

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Tip and Public Leads webpage
<https://www.ifccfbi.gov/complaint/terrorist.asp>

McGruff the Crime Dog
Information for child safety, identification, abduction,
fingerprinting, and crime prevention
<http://mcgruff-safe-kids.com/>