



Archdiocese of Milwaukee Child and Youth Protection and Compliance Safe Environment Week - Proclamation

WHEREAS, Safe Environment Week is for every parish and school, as well as the entire faith community to focus, at the same time, on the importance of keeping our children and youth safe;

WHEREAS, child abuse and neglect are societal problems whose prevention depend on involvement among people throughout the faith community;

WHEREAS, our children are our most valuable resources and will shape the future of not only the Archdiocese of Milwaukee but also the entire Church;

WHEREAS, the theme for this years' Safe Environment Week will be "Strengthening Trust Through Protection, Prevention, and Compliance."

WHEREAS, acknowledging that as a Church we have much work to do to rebuild the trust that has been broken;

WHEREAS, we acknowledge that as bishops, clergy and church leaders we must work together as a community to increase awareness about child abuse and neglect and work to promote the social and emotional well-being of children, youth and families in a safe, healthy and nurturing environment;

THEREFORE, I, Archbishop Jeffrey S. Grob proclaim the week of April 19th– April 25th, 2026 as Safe Environment Week in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. I ask that all participate and acknowledge each other with the love, respect, and mercy as brothers and sisters in Christ.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey S. Grob". The signature is stylized and includes a small cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Jeffrey S. Grob
Archbishop of Milwaukee

Every April, Catholic parishes and schools across the United States participate in National Child Abuse Prevention Month. While dioceses work year-round to prevent abuse, during this month a special emphasis is placed on the importance of learning how to protect the vulnerable from this evil.

Together, for the next nine days, let's pray that the vulnerable are protected from abuse, and that survivors of abuse may be accompanied on their paths to healing.

Novena

for Protection and Healing from Abuse

Intercessions

- Day 1:** May the most vulnerable be protected from all types of abuse and exploitation.
- Day 2:** May those who have been sexually abused receive comfort and healing.
- Day 3:** May those who work with children and young people be vigilant in protecting them from harm.
- Day 4:** May those who provide help for the abused act with wisdom and compassion in their healing ministries.
- Day 5:** May all families strive to provide safe and nurturing environments for children and young people.

Day 6: May all those who have committed abuse acknowledge the harm they have done, repent, and accept justice that ultimately comes from God.

Day 7: May those who have been abused receive the courage to tell their story, and may they be believed and supported.

Day 8: May Church leaders, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, promote justice and healing for survivors of abuse.

Day 9: May our Holy Father, Pope Francis, fulfill his role as good shepherd and protect the most vulnerable in his flock.

Prayers

Our Father, 3 Hail Marys, Glory Be, Prayer for Healing

Prayer for Healing

God of endless love,
ever caring, ever strong,
always present, always just:
You gave your only Son
to save us by the blood of his
cross.
Gentle Jesus, shepherd of
peace,
join to your own suffering
the pain of all who have been
hurt
in body, mind, and spirit
by those who betrayed the
trust placed in them.

Hear our cries as we agonize
over the harm done to our brothers and sisters.
Breathe wisdom into our prayers,
soothe restless hearts with hope,
steady shaken spirits with faith:
Show us the way to justice and wholeness,
enlightened by truth and enfolded in your mercy.
Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts,
heal your people's wounds
and transform our brokenness.
Grant us courage and wisdom, humility and grace,
so that we may act with justice
and find peace in you.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.





5 FIVE WAYS

to protect your children from sexual abuse

Parents play the primary role in educating their children about sexual abuse. Here are 5 tips for teaching safety to the little ones God has entrusted to you.

1

Keep it practical. Teach your children the differences between safe touches and unsafe touches.

2

Tell your children that saying “no” is okay. Empower your children to say “no” if anyone makes them feel uncomfortable or touches them inappropriately.

3

Give your children a way to alert you. Tell your children they can use an excuse or share a special “code-word” with you to alert you about an unsafe person or situation.

4

Tell your children to report an unsafe touch.

Let your children know they should tell you if they feel uncomfortable or unsafe around any adult or peer. You can also identify other adults they can tell about unsafe touches.

5

Tell your children you trust them. If your child makes a report to you, believe him or her. Tell them it is not their fault and that you love them. Immediately bring the allegation to the attention of public authorities.



Promise to Protect

Pledge to Heal

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Keeping Children and Teens **SAFE ONLINE**

Computers and mobile devices can be helpful tools for children and teens to learn and grow in faith and fellowship. Unfortunately, the digital world is also full of unsafe and explicit content. You wouldn't hand a teen the car keys without first teaching them how to drive. The same should be true for using technology—teach them how to keep themselves and others safe while using it.



You can use the following tips to better protect young people from harm online:

1 Model appropriate online behavior for young people. Children look to their parents to teach and show them the ways to appropriately use technology. The biggest influence on what children see as acceptable or unacceptable is you.

2 Teach your children not to share private information or images online. Strangers posing as online friends can try to gain the trust of minors. Personal information such as name, address, and phone number should never be shared with an unknown person. Tell your children to immediately tell a trusted adult if anyone makes them feel uncomfortable.

3 Limit usage of computers and mobile devices to public spaces in the home. Not only will this help to prevent young people from accessing unsafe websites, it will also help them to develop safe browsing habits later in life.

4 Install software that can block or monitor explicit website use. Open access to harmful websites, like those that include pornography, is a constant threat to

young people. Website filters can prevent access to harmful and explicit sites and some can even alert you when such a site is accessed.

5 Review and discuss the websites your child has visited and apps they have used. Oversight of your child or teen's browsing history and app usage can help to keep them safe online. If you notice your child has browsed an unsafe website or app, discuss why that behavior is harmful. Learn about current apps that could be harmful to children and teenagers, especially those that involve image sharing, private communication, or the illusion of privacy.

6 Report online exploitation of minors to public authorities. If you become aware of explicit content involving minors, such as solicitation, explicit images or videos, you should submit a report to law enforcement or through resources like CyberTipline from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.



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Ten Tips for Protecting Children and Offering Outreach to Victims/Survivors

1 Sexual abuse is about the victim.

Many people are affected by abuse but the individual most impacted is the victim who has suffered a violation of trust that can affect his or her entire life.

2 The residual effects of having been abused can last a lifetime.

The sense of violation goes deep into a person's psyche and feelings of anger, shame, hurt and betrayal can build long after the abuse has taken place. Those who have been abused can heal, but it often takes time, therapy, and the support of loved ones.

3 No one has the right to have access to children.

No one, no matter who they are, has an automatic right to be around children or young people who are in the care of the Church without proper screening and without following the rules.

4 Common sense is not all that common.

Dioceses, schools, parishes, and especially families, must educate themselves and others on how to protect children.

5 Child sexual abuse can be prevented.

It is critical to build safety barriers around children and young people to keep them from harm—such as protective guardians, codes of conduct, background evaluations, policies and procedures, and safety training programs.

6 Feeling heard leads toward healing.

Relief from hurt and anger often comes when one feels heard, when one's pain

and concerns are taken seriously, and a victim/survivor's suffering, pain, and anger are acknowledged.

7 You cannot always predict who will be an abuser.

Experience shows that most abuse is committed by someone who has gained the trust of a victim/survivor and his/her family.

8 There are behavioral warning signs of child abusers.

Some abusers isolate a potential victim by giving him or her undue attention or lavish gifts, others allow young people to participate in activities which their parents or guardians would not approve, such as watching pornography, drinking alcohol, using drugs, and excessive touching, such as wrestling and tickling.

9 People can be taught to identify grooming behavior.

Grooming behaviors are the actions which abusers take to project the image that they are kind, generous, caring people, while their intent is to lure a minor into an inappropriate relationship. Offenders can be patient and may groom their victim, his or her family, or community for years.

10 Background checks are important.

Background checks in churches, schools and other organizations keep predators away from children both because they scare off some predators and because they uncover past actions which should ban an adult from working or volunteering with children.



Keeping Your Family Strong



Every family has strengths, and every family faces challenges. When you are under stress—the car breaks down, you or your partner lose a job, your child’s behavior is difficult, or even when the family is experiencing a positive change, such as moving into a new home—sometimes it takes a little extra help to get through the day.

Protective factors are the strengths and resources that families draw on when life gets difficult. Building on these strengths is a proven way to keep the family strong and enhance child well-being. This tip sheet describes six key protective factors and some simple ways you can build these factors in your own family.

Protective Factor and What It Means	What You Can Do
<p>Nurturing and Attachment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our family shows how much we love each other. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take time at the end of each day to connect with your children with a hug, a smile, a song, or a few minutes of listening and talking. • Find ways to engage your children while completing everyday tasks (meals, shopping, driving in the car). Talk about what you are doing, ask them questions, or play simple games (such as “I spy”).
<p>Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know parenting is part natural and part learned. • I am always learning new things about raising children and what they can do at different ages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore parenting questions with your family doctor, your child’s teacher, family, or friends. • Subscribe to a magazine, website, or online newsletter about child development. • Take a parenting class at a local community center (these often have sliding fee scales). • Sit and observe what your child can and cannot do. • Share what you learn with anyone who cares for your child.
<p>Parental Resilience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have courage during stress and the ability to bounce back from challenges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take quiet time to reenergize: take a bath, write, sing, laugh, play, drink a cup of tea. • Do some physical exercise: walk, stretch, do yoga, lift weights, dance. • Share your feelings with someone you trust. • Surround yourself with people who support you and make you feel good about yourself.

Protective Factor and What It Means	What You Can Do
<p>Social Connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have friends, family, and neighbors who help out and provide emotional support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in neighborhood activities such as potluck dinners, street fairs, picnics, or block parties. Join a playgroup or online support group of parents with children at similar ages. Find a church, temple, or mosque that welcomes and supports parents.
<p>Concrete Supports for Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our family can meet our day-to-day needs, including housing, food, health care, education, and counseling. I know where to find help if I need it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make a list of people or places to call for support. Ask the director of your child’s school to host a Community Resource Night, so you (and other parents) can see what help your community offers. Dial 2-1-1 to find out about organizations that support families in your area.
<p>Social and Emotional Competence of Children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> My children know they are loved, feel they belong, and are able to get along with others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide regular routines, especially for young children. Make sure everyone who cares for your child is aware of your routines around mealtimes, naps, and bedtime. Talk with your children about how important feelings are. Teach and encourage children to solve problems in age-appropriate ways.

This tip sheet was created with information from experts in national organizations that work to prevent child maltreatment and promote well-being, including the Strengthening Families Initiatives in New Jersey, Alaska, and Tennessee. At <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/resources/tip-sheets/>, you can download this tip sheet and get more parenting tips, or call 800.394.3366.

Watch for These Warning Signs of Abuse in Minors

No longer wants to see a **particular person** they had been close to

Declining **academic** performance

Tries to hide use of **technology**

No longer interested in **activities** they used to enjoy

Changes in **personality**

Demonstrates **aggressive behavior** or constantly angry

Tries to get minors **alone**



Commits physical and emotional **boundary violations**

Withdraws from family or friends

Keeps **secrets** with minors

Gives lavish **gifts** to minors

Allows or encourages minors to **break laws** or rules

Is overly interested in **spending time** with minors

Has **inappropriate** or suggestive conversations with minors

Does not believe the **rules** apply to them (or, does not follow rules or protocols)

Takes **photos** without approval, or asks minors to send them photos

... and These Warning Signs of Perpetrators

Prayer for Healing

A PRAYER FOR HEALING VICTIMS OF ABUSE

God of endless love,
ever caring, ever strong,
always present, always just:
You gave your only Son
to save us by his blood on the cross.



Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace,
join to your own suffering
the pain of all who have been hurt
in body, mind, and spirit
by those who betrayed the trust placed in them.



Hear the cries of our brothers and sisters
who have been gravely harmed,
and the cries of those who love them.
Soothe their restless hearts with hope,
steady their shaken spirits with faith.
Grant them justice for their cause,
enlightened by your truth.



Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts,
heal your people's wounds
and transform brokenness into wholeness.
Grant us the courage and wisdom,
humility and grace, to act with justice.
Breathe wisdom into our prayers and labors.
Grant that all harmed by abuse may find peace in justice.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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UNA ORACIÓN DE SANACIÓN VÍCTIMAS DE ABUSO

Dios del amor infinito,
Siempre presente, siempre justo;
Tú nos cuidas y nos proteges
Y nos diste a tu único Hijo
Para salvarnos con su sangre en la cruz.



Jesús manso, pastor de la paz,
Dígnate unir a tu propio sufrimiento
El dolor de todos los que han sido heridos
De cuerpo, mente y espíritu
Por parte de aquellos que traicionaron la confianza puesta en ellos.

Escucha el clamor de nuestros hermanos y hermanas
Que han sido lastimados gravemente,
Así como el clamor de aquellos que los aman.
Dales la esperanza que mitigue el desosiego de
sus corazones,
Dales la fe que calme sus espíritus perturbados.
Concédeles justicia para su causa,
Ilumínalos con tu verdad.



Espíritu Santo, consolador de corazones,
Cura las heridas de tus hijos e hijas
Y devuelve la integridad a lo que ha sido quebrantado.
Concédenos el valor y la sabiduría,
La humildad y la gracia, para actuar con justicia.
Sopla tu sabiduría en nuestras oraciones y empeños.
Que todos los que han sido heridos por el abuso
encuentren paz y justicia.
Te lo pedimos por Cristo, nuestro Señor. Amén.

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