

**Presentation to Parents on Child Abuse Prior to Presentations to Children/Youth
Diocese of Boise Safe Environment Program**

**PERSONAL SAFETY AWARENESS
*A PROGRAM FOR PARENTS***

- Program to be Held:** In each parish or school at least two weeks prior to the first presentation to children/youth.
- Conducted by:** Director of Religious Education; Safe Environment Trainer or Other Appropriate Presenter
- Advertised By:** Sample Parent Letter attached
- Goals:** To allow parents the opportunity to understand: (1) the purpose of the parish or school effort to provide information for parents and children on the issue of prevention of child sexual abuse; (2) what the Diocese of Boise and the Catholic Church nationally is doing to protect children involved in their programs and accessing the Church's services.

Resource Materials:

(1) Video: There are two options for a video for parent meetings. Parishes and schools can choose to use one video or the other, depending upon context, or can choose to use both videos.

A. What Do I Say Now? (30 minutes)

This Video is Appropriate for Use with Parents of Younger Children, but could also be used with all parents if the need is for a practical, hands-on guide for parents to learn about sexual abuse and how they can educate their children on personal safety.

This video presents the issue of abuse from a secular view, and gives parents very practical tips on what to do to talk with their children about personal safety, how to spot signs of abuse, and what to do when a child discloses abuse.

Prior to showing this video, the presenter will want to review it, and introduce the video with the appropriate cautions. For example, the video shows discussions between parents and children. In some of the discussions, the parents may give answers that are different from the answers that parents in our program might give. Caution parents that they should think about how they would answer the children's questions from their own faith perspective, and based on their own personal beliefs. For example, in one portion of the video, a child asks a mother about sex. The mother answers that sex is where two grownups "who love each other" "put their private parts together." Some parents may want to respond to the child's question

by saying that sex “is when two adults who are married” do the same. The important thing for parents to remember is that they can receive good information about how to talk to their children, they are then free to use answers that will reflect their faith and personal beliefs. The important thing is to talk with children to teach them personal safety techniques.

(Available in English and Spanish: Reserve the Video for check out from the Diocesan Resource Library, or order (\$65) a parish or school copy of the video using the information provided to the parish or school leader)

B. Hear Their Cries (48 minutes)

This Video is Appropriate for Use with Parents of Older Children

This video presents the issue of child abuse from a religious view, and incorporates issues of faith into the discussion. It also includes information about responding to abuse. It contains fewer examples of practical ways that parents can talk with children.

(Available in English only: Reserve the Video for check out from the Diocesan Resource Library, or order (\$95) a parish or school copy of the video using the information provided to the parish or school leader)

- (2) (Optional) Handout material to be copied and provided to attendees, including:
 - (a) Responding to a Disclosure;
 - (b) Suggested Book List;
 - (c) Website information list;
 - (d) Care Enough to Call brochures;
- (3) Prayer Service;
- (4) Summary of Sexual Misconduct Policies of the Diocese of Boise;
- (5) Youth Code of Conduct.

Length of Presentation: One and a half to two hours (The session is designed for 75 minutes viewing the 30 minute video; it will be longer if you use the 48 minute video, and the time taken for parents to review the curriculum is not included)

Session Format/Guidance:

Introduction: A possible introduction to this program could be:

Welcome! We are here tonight to discuss an issue that is very important to our parish/school, to our children, and to our society. We are here to learn about the issue of child sexual abuse, how we as parents can act to protect our children from abuse, and how we can educate our children to protect themselves. Experts say that the best way to protect our children from abuse of any kind is to educate them in an age appropriate way. Our Bishop has said that he would like us to do everything we can to assure that in our parishes and schools we create the safest possible environment for our children and young people. In the design of the

Diocesan Safe Environment program, the Bishop has also taken a positive, proactive and preventive approach, designed not only to make sure children are safe in our programs, but also to educate parishioners, parents and children on the issue of abuse, and thus assist society as a whole in efforts to eliminate this problem.

Information about the Presenter: This session should be conducted by the DRE, school counselor, school nurse, parish/school Safe Environment Trainer, or an individual who is knowledgeable about, and comfortable with, the issue of child sexual abuse. If you are uncertain about who should present this session, and what kind of criteria might be appropriate, contact the Diocesan Coordinator, Child Youth and Adult Protection, Bobbi Dominick, at (208)342-1311x138 or bdominick@rcdb.org.

Outline of Session:

1. Opening prayer (3 minutes)

A suggested prayer service is provided, or create your own with an appropriate personal safety theme.

2. Review the purpose of the meeting (2 minutes)

Suggested comments: Child abuse is contrary to the Gospel values of care and concern that Jesus commands us to have for one another. Child sexual abuse is a longstanding problem of society which is now better recognized and understood, discussed more openly, and dealt with more effectively. This serious problem cannot be ignored without compromising the integrity of the church's mission and causing grave damage to the whole Body of Christ. There is an urgent need to acknowledge and address openly the possibility of child sexual abuse. When we openly discuss the issue, and educate our faithful, we as a Church can take a proactive stand against child sexual abuse and be a leader in our community in stopping this evil. The Diocese of Boise is determined to provide a safe environment for the children and young people involved in its ministries, and to assist parents in protecting their children. In acting to prevent those acting on behalf of the Church from harming children, we can also dedicate ourselves to protecting, to the extent possible, all children no matter where they are, by educating both children and parents on the creation of a safe environment. In fulfilling this commitment of combating this societal issue, the US Bishops and the Diocese of Boise are requiring that all parishes and schools provide an educational opportunity for parents and children within their program.

3. Remind parents that the parish or school provided written information over the summer that addressed a lot of these issues (1 minute)

You might also have a few sets of that material available, in case parents did not receive it, or have misplaced it.

4. Overview of the evening's program (2 minutes)

Possible comments: “Tonight we want to present some information that will help you to identify possible signs of concern in your children’s lives, and to give you ideas on how to talk with your children about their personal safety. We also want to give you an opportunity, as parents, to learn about the presentations that will be made to children in our [parish our school program]. The presentation will be given in your child’s [classroom or program] on [date]. [Explain how the process of reviewing materials will work, either different viewing stations, or different individuals summarizing each set of materials.]

5. Show the video (30 or 48 minutes—see description above)

6. Large group discussion (15 minutes)

Answer any questions that arose from watching the video. Correct any misperceptions of the nature of child sexual abuse, the appropriate responses to children who disclose abuse and the signs and symptoms of abuse. Explain any additional information or handouts that you will provide to parents. Suggested answers to the questions are provided, and may be handed out to attendees at this point.

7. Review the Diocesan Safe Environment program as detailed in the attached handout. (5 minutes)

8. Responding to a Disclosure (5 minutes)

Review the material provided as a handout, or review the information learned from the video of how to respond to a child’s disclosure.

9. Review your plan for presentations with the children (5 minutes)

Review with parents that the purpose of the presentations to children is NOT to discuss sexuality, or sexual abuse itself, but instead to teach children about their own personal safety, and their rights to say no to inappropriate touches and behavior. The presentations will be age appropriate, and conducted by a person within the program who is knowledgeable about the issue, and children’s common reactions to the issue of personal safety. The purpose of the programs with children is also to teach basic safety rules, such as “Say No; Get Away; Tell Someone” and to allow children to learn who they can tell if something happens to them. These presentations are not meant to frighten children, and in fact most of the videos and materials for children in younger grades are intended to be entertaining, to hold children’s attention, and to teach basic rules.

10. Give parents an opportunity to review the materials you will be using with the children (Time depending upon set up)

You can do this by setting up stations by age or grade level for a review of each set of materials, or by providing an overview of each set of materials and inviting parents to ask questions, or view the videos their child will watch after the meeting is concluded. You may have to provide multiple opportunities for viewing for parents who have children of different ages.

11. Thank the parents for joining you and making the community a safer place for children. Be sure to give the parents instructions for how to contact you if they have questions after the presentation. (1 minute)

12. Distribute an evaluation form. (1 minute)

13. Closing prayer. (5 minutes)

14. After the meeting

It is possible that people attending the meeting will have an emotional reaction to the session. Many people's lives have been impacted adversely by child sexual abuse. Because of the statistics, there is a substantial likelihood that people in the audience will have been victims, or someone close to them has been victimized. The presenter should be prepared to react calmly and professionally if an emotional reaction occurs. The presenter's role, if approached after the meeting, would be to listen, and respond with compassion. The presenter's role would not be to become a professional counselor, or to try to help the individual deal with the trauma. The presenter should be prepared with a referral list of possible mental health professionals in the area who deal with the trauma of child sexual abuse.