

**Background for
Parent/Guardian Regarding the
Safe Environment Education
Program for the Diocese of St.
Petersburg**

Dear Parents,

This presentation is part of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' annually required program of Safe Environment Education for children and parents. In addition to the requirements that have been in place since 2005 for fingerprinting and safe environment training for clergy, employees and all Church volunteers who have responsibility for the care and supervision of minors and vulnerable adults is a student-parent education program. This is an essential layer of protection for children as their knowledge of inappropriate behaviors that can be perpetrated on them and ways to not only stay safe, but to avoid the violation of their person, physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually is their first line of defense from harm. The materials that follow include refusal and reporting skills that go a long way toward keeping our children safe from all harm. During these alternative programming times due to Covid-19, your role is more important than ever in helping your child to be safe, happy and healthy. Thank you for your time and attention to this program.

Please review these documents and conduct an open and honest conversation with your child. At the end of the conversation, you and your child should complete the assessment that was sent along with these presentation materials. When completed, please return the assessment page to your parish Faith Formation Director for the auditor records that they are required to keep. They can provide the best way to return the assessment pages to their attention. Mail, email (scanned document attached) or Faxed copies are all acceptable means of demonstrating completion and compliance. Also attached to this program, the end of viewing assessment is a set of handouts that you may wish to save or print for your reference as your child ages and boundaries expand, there is helpful information that you may wish to review from time to time. Thank you. We are honored to partner with you for the formation of your children in the faith and in ways that help keep them safe, happy and healthy!



- Parents explain that you are going to spend some time with your child reviewing ways for them to stay safe when they are away from your immediate care.
- Help them to feel comfortable and unafraid about anything that you are going to talk about. Emphasize that this is important information but not anything to be afraid of.
- Ask your child if he/she knows what a Safe Place is? Have they ever seen or been taught about this sign that is located on places that are safe for a child who is lost or afraid to find help, like fire stations, hospitals, police stations and schools?
- Discuss with your child what it means to be safe. Include physical safety but also consider speaking with your child about how others can make them feel unsafe by what they say or show them. Assure them that the rest of these slides will help them to be safe in many ways.

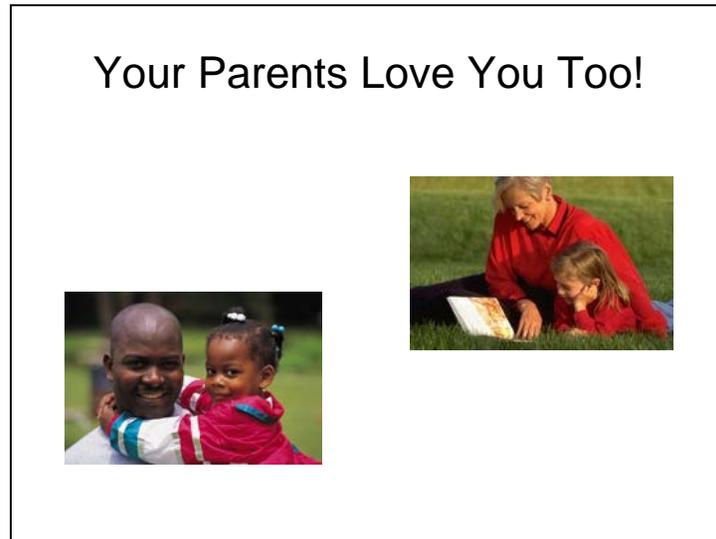
Be Safe-Be Happy-Be Healthy

A young child with blonde hair, wearing a blue denim shirt and white sneakers, is sitting on a wooden deck. The child is holding a clear plastic bottle of juice with a yellow label. The child is smiling and looking towards the camera.

God loves you, and wants you to be happy, healthy, and safe.

Discuss the picture with your child. Does this child seem happy and safe?

- Read the words to/with your child. Make sure he/she knows what the words mean.
- Discuss how they can know that God loves them.
- Discuss what it means to be happy—healthy—and safe.



- Assure your child that you love him/her and that no matter what he/she does or happens to her/him that you will never stop loving your child
- Ask your child to tell how they know that you love him/her. Possible answers might include that you take care of me, you feed me and give me good things, you keep me safe etc. This will be important to affirm in later slides when there are examples of things that others might do that can seem like they are showing their love, but, they are actually not loving at all.

Your Friends Love You!



- Talk about the pictures.
- Have your child tell about loving friends and how they act and treat one another.

Teachers and Other Adults Love
and Take Care of You!



- Ask your child about the pictures.
- Ask if he/she can tell who else in the community helps to take care of him/her.

You Can Help Stay Safe

- No one should touch you in places covered by your bathing suit except your parents and your doctor.



- Discuss with your child his/her right to be safe, to be cared for and his/her right and responsibility to help themselves stay safe.
- Talk with him/her about keeping their bodies safe, not only from harm (accidents etc.) but also from people touching or treating him/her in a way that can make them feel sad, bad, unhappy, angry etc.
- Emphasize that touching in good ways, like hugging you, grandparents, siblings and friends is a good thing (except currently due to Covid-19) but everyone should have parts of their body that are covered and protected.
- Emphasize the caption and understanding of this concept with your child.

You Can Say No!

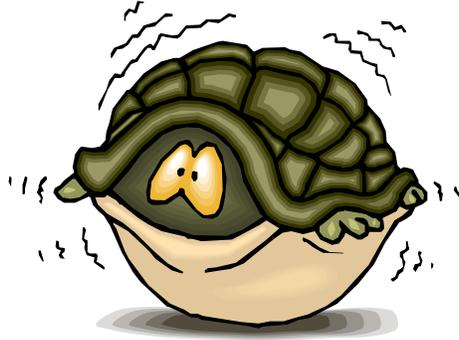
- Say no if someone is hurting you or makes you feel uncomfortable!



NO!

•Talk with your child about using the word no. Emphasize the difference between saying no when a parent or teacher or other adult in authority asks them to do something, behave in a particular way or cooperate in a proper manner. Emphasize however, a firm **no** when someone is hurting him/her, making him/her uncomfortable or embarrassed is OK and within his/her rights to protect themselves.

Don't Agree to Keep Secrets That
Make You Feel Ashamed.



- Read the caption above and assure that your child knows what the word “ashamed” means.
- Talk about fun secrets (like a surprise party) and differentiate them from secrets that cannot be kept if the information is about harm that can come to oneself or others.
- Talk about it being wrong for someone to ask your child to keep a secret about something that was done to them that hurt or made them feel ashamed or afraid.

You Can Tell Someone You Trust!
They Can Help You!



- Help your child to understand that telling someone secrets about someone who hurt or embarrassed them is OK and necessary.
- Assure them that they will never be in trouble for anything that anyone does to them that makes them afraid, embarrassed or ashamed.
- Emphasize that when someone does something to hurt or touch them in a way that makes them uncomfortable or ashamed, that they (your child) have done nothing wrong and nothing to deserve anyone to treat them in that way.
- A trusted adult can help your child feel better about what happened to them. You can always help your child to feel better, no matter what happens to them.



- Discuss with your child the fact that in addition to telling a trusted adult and getting help, God is always available to hear their prayers and can help them feel better and give them comfort.



Parent(s)/Guardian: Thank you for taking time to speak with your child about this important information. In the United States Bishop's Promise to Protect and Pledge to Heal programs, parents and their children along with all clergy, religious, employees and volunteers are an important part of the Catholic Church's effort to keep children safe in our Church or Catholic school environments and everywhere else that your child may be. In fact, the first line of protection for your child is knowledge and skills to identify harmful behaviors and to learn refusal and reporting skills.