

What the Safe Environment Program is not:

The Safe Environment Program is not sex education. Sex education teaches children how to live as adults in loving , chaste sexual relationships with their marriage partner.

The Safe Environment Program teaches children to recognize safe and unsafe touches and safe and unsafe adults. They learn to recognize boundaries when someone is violating their boundaries. It teaches them to report those who violate their boundaries.

What is my role as parent?

It is important to re-enforce the principles of the Safe Environment Program with your children. Remember that your children must know:

How to identify safe friends and safe adults.

The difference between safe and unsafe touches.

The names of the few special safe adults in their lives.

What to do if a child, adolescent or adult touches them in an unsafe manner.

Not to keep secrets about unsafe touches.

**A Parent's Guide to
Safe Environment Training
For
Children and Youth**



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Frequently Asked Questions



Q. Why is the Church doing this?

A. The Charter for the Protection of Children and Youth requires the Church to train both adults and children in ways to prevent child sexual abuse. Protecting children is not something new to us as Church. The way we are doing it is new. We are now taking a more active role to create safe environments in our parishes and schools.

Q. What is the best way to teach children how to be safe?

A. Current prevention research tells us good programs put child sexual abuse prevention in the framework of safety. It is more effective when it is taught by someone familiar to the children. The safety lessons should be taught at least once a year. Children should be taught to be assertive and to ask trusted adults for help in difficult or dangerous situations.

Q. Will teachers teach children the name of private body parts?

A. No. Teaching the proper names of body parts is the job of the parent. The reinforcing lessons the schools and religious education classes use cover the topics of safe adults, safe touches, and setting boundaries.

Q. My children are too young to hear this. Aren't you destroying the "innocent period" of their lives?

A. All lessons are age appropriate. Talking to children about boundaries and safe touches is not sexual. We are not talking about sex education; we are talking about personal safety. Keeping children unaware of the dangers around them does not keep them safe. Predators count on children not knowing what to do.

Q. I believe morality should be taught in the home, not in school. Can I opt out of this program?

A. You are right; morality is best taught in the home. But this is personal safety training, not morality class, not sex education. Catholic moral theology compels us to keep children safe. Parents who do not want their children to participate will be asked to sign an Opt-out form and return it to the school or parish. They may still be sent materials to assist in training their children on this important subject.

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN SAFE ENVIRONMENT TRAINING?

Safe Environment Training is a program that teaches our children and youth how to recognize unsafe touches and people, how to resist them, and most importantly how to report them.



Our children are exposed to a variety of safety programs. Some we teach in our homes, but for others we get help from outside sources. Safety programs teach children and others how to protect themselves from some danger. Some common safety programs are fire prevention, bike safety, using seat belts, pool safety, crossing the street, D.A.R.E., even driver's education.

The Safe Environment Program helps children learn appropriate relationship boundaries and how to protect themselves from violators. It is about helping our children respond in the best way when those boundaries are violated.