



Catholic Safe Environment: Family Safety Session

The *Family Safety Session* is designed as a comprehensive safety guide for families that have opted-out or missed the live presentation of the **VIRTUS**[®] Catholic Safe Environment Program at their parish or Catholic school, and can be used as a review tool for all families. This guide covers grades K-12th grades.

Doctrinal Connection: The Catholic Church has many documents that support the beliefs of our faith. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* is one document that we use as a guide. If you have a personal copy, you can look up the referenced entries or you can also access them online to see how our Catholic faith supports the safety of ourselves and others. Although there are thousands of entries, several have been selected for this program and include *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: 336, 1185, 1520, 1804, 1881, 1887, 1917, 2172, 2492, and 2496.

Safe Rules: There are 3 basic rules for staying safe:

1. Say "No!"
2. Then "Go" to a safe place.
3. Then "Tell" a safe adult or call 9-1-1 for an emergency assistance.

Note: As a family, discuss some emergency that would warrant calling 9-1-1 for help.

Safety Rules Scenarios: Talk as a family using the statements below as conversation starters to give examples and discuss your family's response for each scenario:

- I yelled "STOP!" when...
- I said "no" when...
- I told someone when...
- I walked away when...
- I asked for help from...
- When I needed help I went to...

This is a good time to review your family rules and values that govern those rules. Take this opportunity to discuss all aspects of family activities and individual activities as relates to safety and relative to the specific roles that different people play in your child's life.

Safe Space: Personal space is simply the distance between people. Personal space varies from person to person and is commonly referred to as the “personal bubble” or a comfort zone. Have a brief discussion as a family about personal space. These discussion ideas might help:

- How do you feel when someone you know “pops” your personal space bubble? How about if a stranger gets too close?
- How do you feel when someone touches you in a harmful way?
- How do you feel when you see someone else being touched in a harmful way?
- What can you say and do? (follow the safety rules: Say NO, GO away, TELL a safe adult.)

Safe Places: There are safe places in our neighborhood, schools, and community areas. Safe places are NOT hiding places. Safe places are open areas where children can find or call for help. Safe places have safe adults who can help you. Use **The 5 Always** to remind your family about staying in safe spaces, safe places, and following safe rules

The 5 ALWAYS!

1. Always be around other people you know in public.
Example: Use the Buddy System by taking a friend or trusted adult with you with.
Purpose: Helps keep you and your buddy safer (plus it can be more fun too!).
2. Always be aware of where your parents or the adult in charge is.
Example: Keep within eyesight of your parents or check-in before going off to activities.
Purpose: Allows for children to find help or assistance if/when they need it.
3. Always tell your parents or a trusted adult when you need help.
Example: If someone has hurt or touched you physically or verbally.
Purpose: Allows for the child to get the assistance/help to be safe.
4. Always tell your parents when you leave and where you will be.
Example: Children should “check-in” regularly when out with friends.
Purpose: Helps parents to be able to find and help a child if/when they need it).
5. Always ask your parents’ permission to go with someone.
Example: Children should get approval and introduce friends to parents.
Purpose: Helps protected children and strengthens open communication.

Youth Code of Conduct: The Diocese of San Jose has created the *Youth Code of Conduct* for the Diocese of San Jose to promote appropriate relationships among youth peers and those who are in positions of youth leadership. As a family, review the *Youth Code of Conduct*. Talk about what each one might mean to your family:

1. Every youth is expected to act in a Christ-like manner
2. Every youth is expected to be respectful.
3. Every youth is expected to cooperate with classmates, teachers, peers, and adults.
4. Every youth is expected to communicate in an appropriate manner.
5. Every youth is expected to respect the personal boundaries and property of others.

6. Every youth is expected to report and inform adults in charge of any kind of abuse or harassment in real life or on line.
7. Every youth is expected to promote and support a safe, fun, healthy environment.
8. Youth will NOT tolerate any abuse of any kind from anyone!

Reminder: Anytime a youth is on the grounds of a Diocesan Institution and/or representing the Diocese of San Jose in public (wearing a Catholic school uniform, Confirmation t-shirt, posting on line with logo wear or checking in) the *Youth Code of Conduct* applies.

Internet Safety: Social Media (Instagram, Facebook , etc.), exploring websites, and gaming is a common factor that is prevalent in most children’s lives. Apps, games, videos, shopping, education and socializing are all done on various devices. Talk with your family about the devices you own (cell phones, iPods, tablets, game stations, smart TV, etc).

Children should always follow the family’s internet/computer rules established by parents. It is important to remember that there are NO boundaries on the Internet. Online strangers can be as dangerous as befriending a stranger in real life. People that are online can pose as another person, sometimes as a child, to gain children’s trust. In general, online strangers need to be avoided. Do not “friend” strangers on social media sites, apps, games or otherwise. Only interact with people online who you know in real life, and always follow the rules of the websites you are using. Children should never answer emails from strangers, and should ALWAYS tell a parent if someone is acting “creepy,” making the child uncomfortable or asking for personal information online. Additionally, it is also important for children to ASK permission BEFORE buying or download anything online.

Parents should regularly communicate with children about their online habits and activities. In doing so, parents can ask children if any of the following has ever happened to them or a friend:

- Ever been sent a request by someone they do not know in real life?
- Ever had a pop up of “one of those” pictures that are not for kids?
- Ever been asked to go to a private chat room?
- Ever clicked on a video that they thought was OK, but turned out NOT to be OK?
- Have you ever been sent messages from people you do not know in real life?
- Have you ever been hacked?

NOTE: Be open to listening to your children’s point-of-view and what they are sharing with you without getting overly upset. The goal is to encourage open lines of communication between parents and children to facilitate meaningful conversations.

The Diocese of San Jose thanks you for making our Diocese Safe and Sacred!