



Child Abuse Prevention Month: Diocese of San Jose

Every April, Catholic parishes and schools across the United States participate in National Child Abuse Prevention Month. We observe Child Abuse Prevention Month to highlight the importance of protecting minors from abuse. In Santa Clara County alone, there are approximately 1,800 verified cases of child abuse per year. In spite of this, it is largely believed that child abuse is underreported and as many as [1 in 4](#) U.S. children experience child maltreatment in their lifetime, and about [1 in 10](#) children will be sexually abused before their 18th birthday. Child

abuse is a core underlying factor to many of the ongoing societal struggles, such as high rates of school dropout, homelessness, incarceration, and chronic health issues.

The Catholic Church understands that it is critical to build safety barriers around children and young people to keep them from harm. These barriers come in the form of codes of conduct, background evaluations, policies and procedures, and safety training programs. In the U.S., the [Catholic Church](#) has provided age appropriate safe environment abuse prevention training to more than 4 million children in Catholic Schools and in parish religious education programs. Over 2.5 million adults have undergone background checks and received safe environment training in the Church.

In the Diocese of San Jose, we are all part of a larger culture of protection and healing within the Church. Each one of us can play an important role in strengthening this culture. For example, we can better prevent abuse by ensuring that the signs of abuse are identified and reported when first noticed. We can also play a role in victim outreach by offering support, compassion, and prayers to those close to us who have been abused. The importance we place on carrying out these acts of charity will go a long way in creating a culture within our Church where children are safe and victims/survivors find healing.

Prevention & Healing - Diocesan Information:

1. Safe Environment Training: Approximately **52,500 adults have been trained to recognize and report child abuse** - with ongoing recertification training renewed every 3 years for clergy, employees, and active volunteers. Training and education help adults recognize grooming techniques that are precursors to abuse. People can be taught to identify grooming behavior which 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. An abuser may develop a relationship with the family to increase his credibility. Offenders can be patient and may groom their victim, his or her family, or community for years. Our training provides the foundation in recognizing suspected signs of potential abuse and the proper reporting guidelines.
2. Approximately **47,800 background checks have been completed for diocesan clergy, lay personnel, and volunteers**. While there is no magic crystal ball to screen out *all* predators, background checks are the most effective way to keep predators away from children both because they scare off some predators and because they uncover past actions which should prohibit an adult from working or volunteering with children. If an adult has had difficulty with societal boundaries, he or she may have difficulties with other boundaries that may jeopardize the well-being of our youth.
3. Diocesan **Victim Assistance Coordinators** were established in 2002 as part of the *Dallas Charter*. The diocese employs full-time Victim Assistance Coordinators on staff. This is not due to increased allegations, but rather out of the Church's call to promote reconciliation and healing with victims/survivors of clergy sex abuse. The Victims Assistance Coordinators are individuals who work most directly with the victims/survivors. These coordinators provide non-judgmental outreach throughout the investigation or review process and focus on the emotional and spiritual well-being and healing of the victims/survivors. The Victim Assistance

Coordinators seek to determine the type of care and counseling a person needs, and find appropriate help for the victims/survivors. The coordinators may also accompany the alleged victim to meetings, to offer assistance throughout the inquiry process.

The Office for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (OPCVA) invites you to explore the following resources to in support of Child Abuse Prevention Month and youth protection year-round:

- **Reminder:** Submit *Annual Audit Reporting Form* after completion of the [VIRTUS® Catholic Safe Environment Curriculum](#) for youth trained in diocesan schools and religious education programs, no later than April 30th, 2019. Audit Forms: [School Form](#) | [Parish Form](#)
- **Reporting Abuse:** If any person, or persons, needs to report a case of Clergy Abuse, we encourage them to first contact the civil authorities (local law enforcement). Once a report is filed with the local authorities, individuals are encouraged to contact the Office for the Protection of Children & Vulnerable Adults (OPCVA) at 408-983-0113. **The diocese now has a secure reporting website and can be accessed online 24/7** at <https://opcva.ethicspoint.com> | Toll-Free Hotline: 844-372-1691
- **Pinwheels for Prevention:** In 2008, Prevent Child Abuse America introduced the pinwheel as the new national symbol for child abuse prevention through Pinwheels for Prevention®. Research and experience shows that people and communities respond to the pinwheel. By its very nature, the pinwheel connotes whimsy and childlike notions. In essence, it has come to serve as the physical embodiment, or reminder, of the great childhoods we want for all children. Show your support for our nation’s children and help get your children involved in the movement by making your own pinwheel display! Download your [Pinwheel Template and Instructions](#) | [Pinwheel Coloring Sheet](#)
- **Wear Blue Day:** On Friday, April 12th, individuals and organizations across the US will band together to make a visible commitment to preventing child abuse and helping make great childhoods happen nationwide by wearing blue.
- **Blue Sunday:** Each year, Blue Sunday Abuse Prevention offers a day of prayer on the last Sunday of April. You can find resources and registration for the Blue Sunday Day of Prayer at bluesunday.org.

Flyers for Bulletin, Handout, or Post in Office:

- Novena for Protection and Healing from Abuse
Download: [ENGLISH](#) | [SPANISH](#)
- Ten Tips for Protecting Children and Offering Outreach to Victims/Survivors
Download: [ENGLISH](#) | [SPANISH](#)
- Five Ways to Protect Your Children from Sexual Abuse
Download: [ENGLISH](#) | [SPANISH](#)
- Warning Signs of Abuse in Minors
Download: [ENGLISH](#) | [SPANISH](#)
- USCCB Youth Protection Norms
Download: [ENGLISH](#) | [SPANISH](#)

Watch for These Warning Signs of Abuse in Minors

- 1. No longer wants to be a particular person they had been close to.
- 2. Declining academic performance.
- 3. This is a sign of technology.
- 4. No longer interested in activities they used to enjoy.
- 5. Changes in personality.
- 6. That is getting worse.
- 7. Demonstrates aggressive behavior or hostility.
- 8. Involvement in physical and emotional boundary violations.
- 9. Withdraws from family or friends.
- 10. Abuse or encouragement to break laws or rules.
- 11. This inappropriate or suggestive conversations with minors.
- 12. Does not believe the rules apply to them, but does not follow them or protest.
- 13. Take photos without approval, or asks minors to send them photos.

... and These Warning Signs of Perpetrators

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

1. **Sexual abuse is about the victim.** Many people are shocked to 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 shame, loss and betrayal can build long after the abuse has ended. Those who have been abused can feel, but if others take time, listen, and 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 the sexual 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 being such a pervasive problem, 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 passed the trust of a victim (survivor and his/ her family).
8. **There are behavioral warning signs of child abusers.** Some abusers seduce a potential victim by giving him or her undue attention or love, others allow young people to participate in activities which their parents or guardians would not approve, such as watching pornography, smoking alcohol, using drugs, and excessive drinking, such as overeating and drinking.
9. **People can be taught to identify grooming behavior.** Grooming behaviors on the internet which abusers take to protect the most vulnerable are food, grooming, caring people, while their intent is to build a trust and an inappropriate relationship. Children can be patient and use proven their eyes, his or her family, or community for years.
10. **Background checks are important.** Background checks to dioceses, schools, and other organizations keep predators away from our children both because they screen out some predators and because they prevent our organizations which are aware of some predators and because they prevent our organizations which are unaware of some predators from working or volunteering with children.