



A HAPPY CHILDHOOD
LASTS A LIFETIME



CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH AWARENESS TOOLKIT

- April 2024 -

Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection
Office for the Protection of Children & Vulnerable Adults



DIOCESE OF
SAN JOSE

Please Read...

Every April, the Diocese of San José joins the country in observance of Child Abuse Prevention Month as we continue to help create safer childhoods locally and nationwide. Though we work tirelessly year-round to create safe environments for our children, let us put a special emphasis this April to promote child abuse prevention in our parishes and schools. To assist you in this effort, we have created a Child Abuse Prevention Month Toolkit with information and resources.

In particular, we encourage you to promote and participate in the following:

April 28th - Blue Sunday National Day of Prayer: Churches of all faiths are asked to join together on this day of prayer to demonstrate support for children and families who have been affected by child abuse. If you would like to participate, we recommend praying the USCCB Prayer for Healing Victims of Abuse ([link](#)).

April 6th & 7th - Faith Community Wear Blue Weekend: We are encouraged to wear blue to show solidarity and support while raising awareness.

Please read through the toolkit for more ideas on how to participate, including sample petitions, homily helps, activities, and bulletin blurbs.

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April is designated National Child Abuse Protection Month. We are called through scripture and teaching to protect the life and dignity of the human person. Throughout the year, but especially in the month of April, all are asked to increase awareness, to educate ourselves and the community, and to seek healing for those who have been so tragically impacted by this evil.

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The Office for the Protection of Child & Vulnerable Adults, in partnership with the USCCB's Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection, created this resource booklet in the hope that all will find opportunity to promote this mission and protect those who are most vulnerable.

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Novena for Healing & Protection

This is a beautiful opportunity to bring your community together, for nine days, and pray that our most vulnerable are protected from abuse, and that survivors of abuse may be accompanied on their paths to healing.

**Download the Novena guide in
English ([LINK](#)) & Spanish ([LINK](#))**



Rosary for Healing & Protection

This rosary will help to lift up the needs of abused children in prayer, offering them to God through Mary who offers her loving protection to all her children.

**Download the Rosary guide in
English ([LINK](#)) & Spanish ([LINK](#))**

Sample Prayer Service for Healing

Available in [English \(LINK\)](#) & [Spanish \(LINK\)](#)

This includes resources for a prayer service including a sample prayer, songs, homily helps, intercessions, a litany, and a blessing and dismissal.

Sample Petitions

For all victims of abuse around the world, within the church and beyond, that the healing Spirit of God move among them and within them. And that the Church – the People of God – be filled with the same healing spirit we pray to the Lord...

For any child who may be suffering from abuse, that they may find the courage to tell a trusted adult so the abuse can be stopped, and so they can begin the journey toward healing, we pray to the Lord...

For those who have suffered abuse, that they may experience God's profound love for them and God's healing powers, we pray to the Lord...

For parents, mentors, teachers, coaches and all who work with children and young people, that they may look after them with the watchful eye of the shepherd, we pray to the Lord...

For civic leaders entrusted with upholding the common good and justice for all that they may act in ways that show their commitment to the protection of all, especially children and young people, we pray to the Lord...

For families who are the first to show God's love, that they may have the necessary support to provide safe and nurturing environments for children and young people, we pray to the Lord...

For those who provide help for the abused: counselors, therapists, and advocates that they may act with wisdom and compassion in their healing ministry, we pray to the Lord...

For those affected by abuse in anyway, that they may have the courage to tell their story, to reach for healing, we pray to the Lord...

For the children who are wounded and tearful, that they may find comfort and healing, we pray to the Lord...

For those who are living in fear, that they may find safety, we pray to the Lord...

For those who have had their innocence stolen, may they overcome the darkness and through the light of your heavenly kingdom, we pray to the Lord...

For those affected by abuse, in all of it's forms, that they may find the courage and strength and continue to grow and trust in the love of our Lord, we pray to the Lord...

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Homily Helps

...concepts to incorporate into homilies

- **Blue Sunday** (the last Sunday in April) we are united with the world in praying for the victim survivors of child abuse. Pray they will be rescued. Pray they are placed with caring people. Pray their minds and bodies can heal. Pray they find hope. Pray for those who rescue them. Pray for the witnesses to find courage. Pray for the community to be educated and find ways to support the efforts that will put an end to childhood trauma.
- During Child Abuse Prevention Month (April), we are reminded of the call to be instruments of justice, working for the common good of all, which includes the protection of children. As Jesus entrusts to Peter the care of the flock, we are reminded that this responsibility belongs to everyone as a matter of dignity and justice.
- Child abuse impacts not just the child, but the family, the community, and society at large. While the impact of abuse not only morally devastates our community, it is also a core underlying factor to many of the ongoing struggles of this community, such as high rates of school dropout, homelessness, incarceration, and chronic health issues. Child Abuse Prevention Month leads us to heightened awareness of these issues, reaffirming the need to be vigilant about providing a safe environment for all children within the Church and our communities.
- We are all part of a larger culture of protection and healing within the Church. As members of this culture, we value the prevention of abuse and the support of those who have been abused. 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. Noticing these warning signs, taking them seriously, and reporting them could help stop abuse and prevent abuse in the future. Even when we witness inappropriate behavior or something that just doesn't seem quite right, we must report our concerns through the appropriate channels.
- Child sexual abuse is a persistent problem within Santa Clara County, the greater Bay Area and across the country. Although it is a hidden social ill, its impact is significant. Statistics tell us one out of every four girls, and one out of every six boys, are sexually abused before they turn 18. If those statistics are correct, every Sunday in our congregation are people who have been abused in this way and may continue to experience the pain of that abuse. Reaching out to all victim/ survivors of child sexual abuse is critical in bringing hope and the love of Christ to them.
- 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 victim/survivors find healing.

Blue Sunday National Day of Prayer

A light blue rectangular graphic with a dark blue border. On the left side, there is a vertical dotted line. To the left of the line is the logo for Blue Sunday, which includes the text "Blue Sunday" in a large, blue, serif font, with "Child Abuse Prevention Initiative" in a smaller, blue, sans-serif font below it. To the right of the dotted line, the word "Pray" is written in a large, black, cursive font. Below "Pray" is a paragraph of text in a black, sans-serif font: "Join millions for the 30th Annual Blue Sunday Day of Prayer on April 28th when churches nationwide unite in prayer for child abuse victims and their rescuers. Pray they are rescued, healed, and loved. Register at Bluesunday.org for free resources. Who better to pray than your church?"

Blue Sunday
Child Abuse Prevention Initiative

Pray

Join millions for the 30th Annual Blue Sunday Day of Prayer on April 28th when churches nationwide unite in prayer for child abuse victims and their rescuers. Pray they are rescued, healed, and loved. Register at Bluesunday.org for free resources. Who better to pray than your church?

A PRAYER FOR HEALING VICTIMS OF ABUSE

As we remember the millions of children who are victims of abuse and neglect this April, **Blue Sunday National Day of Prayer** is a special day when faith communities join in unity to lift up all of those affected by this abuse in prayer.

On April 28, 2024, Blue Sunday National Day of Prayer, Churches of all faiths are asked to join together on this day of prayer to demonstrate support for children and families who have been affected by child abuse. The Diocese of San Jose is united in this effort and recommends that the USCCB's [Prayer for Healing Victims of Abuse](#) be offered this day at parishes throughout the Diocese as a symbol of God's Love and our support for all of those who have been harmed by the trauma of child abuse. May the Lord shed his Mercy on these vulnerable souls.

Together, we can help ensure that all are safe from the scourge of child abuse and provide assistance and support to survivors who are on the path to healing. You can help in these efforts by offering your prayers for healing and protection.

Bilingual PDF Prayer Card

[**Prayer for Healing Victims of Abuse \(LINK\)**](#)

[**Prayer for Healing & Reconciliation \(LINK\)**](#)

Every year, Blue Sunday is offered as a National Day of Prayer on the last Sunday of April. You can find resources and registrar your parish for the Blue Sunday Day of Prayer at

www.bluesunday.org.

Blue Pinwheels & Activities

Blue Pinwheels are the universal sign of innocence, and therefore child abuse prevention. Support Child Abuse Prevention Month this April by hosting your own Pinwheel Event!

The Pinwheel is the national symbol of child abuse prevention efforts. It represents the innocence, joy and fun which should be the experience of all children. Planting Pinwheels on the grounds of the church or school leaves behind a dramatic, visual, public display of support for protecting all of God's children from any kind of harm.

A Pinwheel Event can be anything to bring a solemn reminder of child abuse prevention efforts, such as planting a "Pinwheel Garden", creating "Pinwheel Bouquets", or decorating a Pinwheel Coloring Sheet to post around your parish or school. You can do this virtually too! Families can make the pinwheel at home and schedule a time to plant it, post it and share it with your parish or school.

Remember to share your virtual or in-person pinwheel gardens on social media! Don't forget to tag @DioceseSanJose and use the hashtags *#ThrivingFamilies* *#HappyChildhoodsLastALifetime* *#GrowingBetterTogether* *#ChildAbusePreventionMonth!*

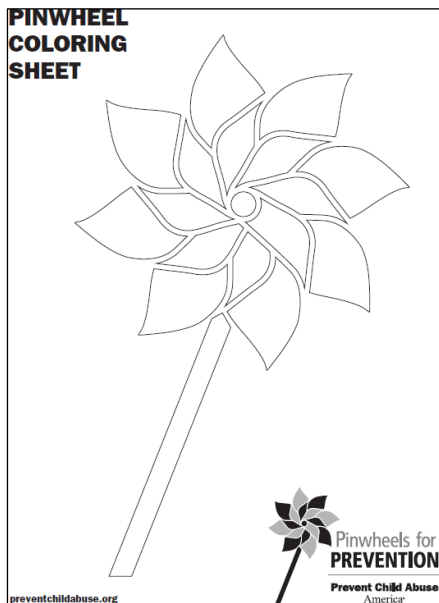


Create Pinwheel Gardens & Bouquets

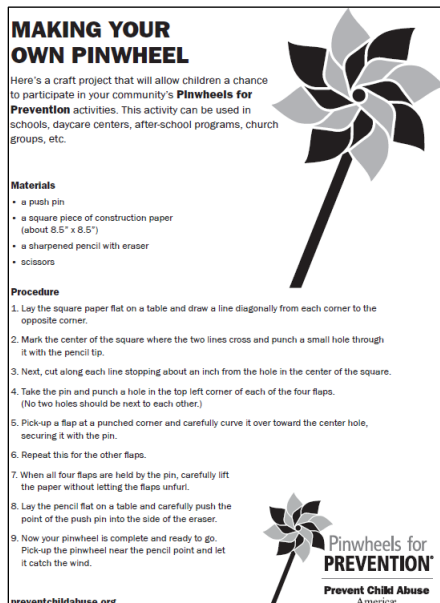


Pinwheel Resources

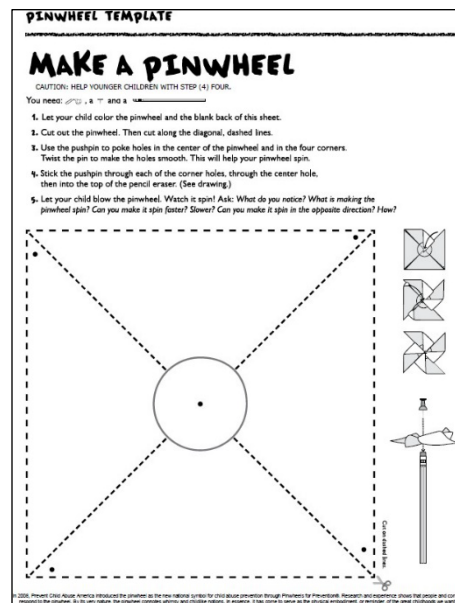
IMPORTANT: Always remember to supervise and help younger children when making pinwheels or planting them.



[Download Template](#)



[Download Template](#)



[Download Template](#)

Blue Ribbon Activity



Create a “Blue Ribbon Tree” at your parish or school, encouraging children and adults to tie a blue ribbon around a specific tree (the trunk and the branches) in honor of child abuse prevention. You could also have each person say a [prayer \(LINK\)](#) for those who have been abused as they tie on their ribbon. This is a great family activity for parents and children to do at home too! [Click here](#) to learn more about the History of the Blue Ribbon.

1. PARENTAL RESILIENCE	2. SOCIAL CONNECTIONS	3. CONCRETE SUPPORT IN TIMES OF NEED.

5 PROTECTIVE FACTORS
FOR PREVENTING RISK OF CHILD ABUSE.
SOURCE: Prevent Child Abuse America

		LEARN MORE ABOUT THESE 5 FACTORS: preventchildabuse.org/resource/mentor/
4. KNOWLEDGE OF PARENTING & CHILD DEVELOPMENT.	5. SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE OF CHILDREN.	

Diocese of San José Awareness Resources ([LINK](#))

What is Child Abuse Prevention Month? ([LINK](#))

Blue Sunday Family Resources ([LINK](#))

Help & Guidance ([LINK](#))



[Click here](#) for Safety Tips from the USCCB to share in your bulletins or on social media! En Español Tambien!

APRIL Is Child Abuse Prevention Month

Every April, Catholic parishes and schools across the United States participate in National Child Abuse Prevention Month.



The Effects of ABUSE

When a child is abused, the effects are grave and can last a lifetime. Some of the most common effects of abuse include:

- Loss of faith and trust in God.
- Post-traumatic stress disorder, psychological distress, and other indirect signs of trauma, such as anxiety, trouble sleeping, chronic stomach pain, and headaches.
- A greater risk of developing behavioral problems, substance abuse, and suicide.

The sense of violation goes deep into a person's psyche and feelings of anger, shame, hurt, and betrayal can build long after the abuse has taken place.

Steps to Prevent ABUSE

Communicate with Your Children

It is extremely important to communicate openly with your children. Let them know that they can talk to you about anything that bothers them. This will help you identify warning signs and grooming behaviors perpetrated by offenders before they escalate to abuse.

Educate Yourself and Your Children on Abuse

Learning how to identify, prevent, and report abuse is key. Parents and guardians should empower their children to protect themselves from harm and to report abuse. Ask your diocesan safe environment coordinator or parish delegate about opportunities for safe environment training.

Identify and Report Warning Signs of Child Abusers

Grooming behaviors are the actions 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. Offenders can be patient and may groom their victim, his or her family, or community for years.

Some abusers isolate a potential victim by giving him or her undue attention or lavish gifts, while others allow young people to participate in activities which their parents or guardians would not approve, such as watching pornography, drinking alcohol, using drugs, and excessive touching, such as wrestling and tickling. Abusers also often try to isolate their victims from family or friends and encourage their victims to keep secrets from their parents or other caring adults.

Holding Offenders ACCOUNTABLE

To help hold offenders accountable, report all suspected abuse to local public authorities. You can also contact your local diocesan victim assistance coordinator to make a report and seek outreach for the abused.

In accordance with diocesan policy, when a single act of sexual abuse is admitted or established, the offender is to be removed permanently from ministry.

"Let it be clear that before these abominations the Church will spare no effort to do all that is necessary to bring to justice whosoever has committed such crimes . . . To those who abuse minors I would say this: convert and hand yourself over to human justice, and prepare for divine justice."
—Pope Francis, Dec. 21, 2018



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

- Sexual abuse is about the victim.** Many people are affected by abuse but the individual most impacted is the victim who has suffered a violation of trust that can affect his or her entire life.
- 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 anger, shame, hurt and betrayal can build long after the abuse has taken place. Those who have been abused can heal, but it often takes time, therapy, and the support of loved ones.
- No one has the right to have access to children.** No one, no matter who they are, has an automatic right to be around children or young people who are in the care of the Church without proper screening and without following the rules.
- Common sense is not all that common.** Dioceses, schools, parishes, and especially families, must educate themselves and others on how to protect children.
- Child sexual abuse can be prevented.** It is critical to build safety barriers around children and young people to keep them from harm—such as protective guardians, codes of conduct, background evaluations, policies and procedures, and safety training programs.
- 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.
- You cannot always predict who will be an abuser.** Experience shows that most abuse is committed by someone who has gained the trust of a victim/survivor and his/her family.
- There are behavioral warning signs of child abusers.** Some abusers isolate a potential victim by giving him or her undue attention or lavish gifts, others allow young people to participate in activities which their parents or guardians would not approve, such as watching pornography, drinking alcohol, using drugs, and excessive touching, such as wrestling and tickling.
- People can be taught to identify grooming behavior.** Grooming behaviors 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. Offenders can be patient and may groom their victim, his or her family, or community for years.
- Background checks are important.** Background checks in churches, schools and other organizations keep predators away from children both because they scare off some predators and because they uncover past actions which should ban an adult from working or volunteering with children.



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5 FIVE WAYS to protect your children from sexual abuse



Parents play the primary role in educating their children about sexual abuse. Here are 5 tips for teaching safety to the little ones God has entrusted to you.

- Keep it practical.** Teach your children the differences between safe touches and unsafe touches.
- Tell your children that saying "no" is okay.** Empower your children to say "no" if anyone makes them feel uncomfortable or touches them inappropriately.
- Give your children a way to alert you.** Tell your children they can use an excuse or share a special "code-word" with you to alert you about an unsafe person or situation.
- Tell your children to report an unsafe touch.** Let your children know they should tell you if they feel uncomfortable or unsafe around any adult or peer. You can also identify other adults they can tell about unsafe touches.
- Tell your children you trust them.** If your child makes a report to you, believe him or her. Tell them it is not their fault and that you love them. Immediately bring the allegation to the attention of public authorities.

Promise to Protect Pledge to Heal




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Watch for These Warning Signs of Abuse in Minors

- No longer wants to see a **particular person** they had been close to
- Declining **academic performance**
- Tries to hide use of **technology**
- No longer interested in **activities they used to enjoy**
- Changes in **personality**
- Tries to get **minors alone**
- Demonstrates **aggressive behavior** or constantly angry
- Commits physical and emotional **boundary violations**
- Withdraws** from family or friends
- Allows or encourages minors to **break laws** or rules
- Keeps **secrets** with minors
- Gives lavish **gifts** to minors
- Is overly interested in **spending time** with minors
- Has **inappropriate** or suggestive conversations with minors
- Does not believe the **rules** apply to them (or, does not follow rules or protocols)
- Takes **photos** without approval, or asks minors to send them photos

... and These Warning Signs of Perpetrators



Sample Bulletin Blurbs & Social Media Posts

Did You Know... In 1983, President Ronald Reagan proclaimed the month of April as the first National Child Abuse Prevention Month, and that tradition continues today. This April, take a moment to learn what you can do to help victim/survivors and prevent abuse, [click here](#).

Did you know... Child abuse comes in many forms. Most people identify child abuse as physically hitting a child. Neglect is also a form of abuse. Failing to provide a child with proper nutrition, housing and supervision can cause irreparable harm. Expectations that a child be an active participant in the care of home and family, or even age-appropriate jobs is a part of healthy development. But excessive demands can cross into a form of servitude that is beyond the societal norms. Child pornography is a form of sexual abuse, with real victims in every image. The viewing of these images is an offence against the human dignity.

Did you know... Child abuse can occur in every culture and every socio-economic demographic. Peer reviewed research, especially that of the past 30 years, repeatedly shows this to be true. This same research indicates that the vast majority of child abuse occurs at the hands of someone known to the victim. Those who seek to do harm to children will pursue opportunities that provide access to children and may even ingratiate themselves into the home. You can protect children by respecting the safe environment protocols established at youth serving organizations. More importantly, you can implement many of these protocols in your home and be ever observant and vigilant in all public and private settings.

Did you know... Hope is rising. Throughout scripture there is evidence that we are called to be ambassadors of hope and healing. Did you know children of abuse long to hear this message of hope. Victims of crime, their family and loved ones need to know that their voices are heard. Organizations throughout the nation are striving to share the message that He has risen and there is hope. Each of us has a unique ability to support individuals who are hurting, to promote healthy relationships, and to build communities that are safe from those who may want to do harm. How has He called you to be an ambassador of hope and healing?

Did you know... Children suffering from abuse often show physical and behavioral signs. Learning the facts is the first step to preventing child sexual abuse. Take safe environment [training to learn how to identify and prevent abuse! For more information visit: https://www.dsj.org/protecting-gods-children/family-safety-resources/](https://www.dsj.org/protecting-gods-children/family-safety-resources/)

Statistics

A report of child abuse is made every ten seconds. Learn more at: <https://www.childhelp.org/child-abuse-statistics/>

About one in 10 children will be sexually abused before their 18th birthday. Learn more at: <https://www.d2l.org/child-sexual-abuse/statistics/>

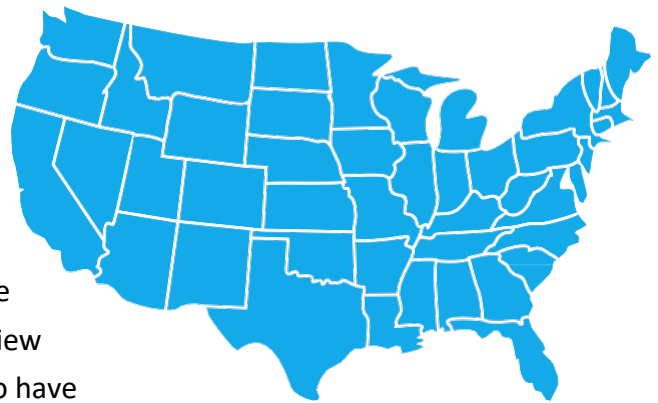


What's happening in our diocese to protect the most vulnerable?

- We report all allegations to the civil authorities in accordance with mandated reporter laws, regardless of if the priest is a diocesan priest or religious order priest and cooperate with civil authorities on all investigations. Our diocese has a designated Victim Assistance Coordinator whose primary role is to accompany survivors and provide resources for their healing journey. We also have an Independent Review Board, consisting primarily of lay members. The role of the Independent Review Board is to review allegations and make a recommendation to the bishop regarding the suitability for ministry.
- We train adults on how to maintain a safe environment, recognize abuse, and how to report concerns.
- We train minors in parish religious education programs and in Catholic schools to identify warning signs of abuse and inappropriate behavior, as well as how to report abuse.
- By following all of our diocesan policies and procedures to create safe environments, we can maintain a culture of protection and healing.

What's happening nationally to protect the most vulnerable?

- The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has two bodies committed to the influence of policies regarding child and youth protection: The Committee on the Protection of Children and Young People where all members are bishops, and the National Review Board in which all members are lay people who have elements of expertise in the field of child and youth protection.
- There is a Victim Assistance Coordinator and Safe Environment Coordinator in every diocese.
- The Annual Audit, conducted by an independent firm, evaluates the success of child and youth protection procedures, and trainings throughout the audit year.
- Independent Diocesan Review Boards are in place in every diocese to review allegations of abuse and advise the bishop.
- Adult volunteers, clergy, and staff must receive safe environment training and background checks.
- All children must receive safe environment training.



Reporting Abuse

Reporting Abuse to the Diocese

If you suffered abuse, it was not your fault. If you are a victim of sexual abuse by a priest, deacon, or individual representing the Catholic Church, there are several things you can do:

1. Always contact your local law enforcement agency, which can help determine options for making a criminal complaint.
2. If an adult victim/survivor is looking to report a case of Clergy Abuse, we encourage you to take the following steps. 1) First, contact the local civil authorities. 2) Once a report is filed with the local civil authorities, individuals are encouraged to contact the diocese's toll-free 24-hour reporting hotline at 1-844-372-1691. All reports are confidential to protect the rights of the victim.
3. Reports to the diocese are accepted by either [online submission at opcva.ethicspoint.com](https://opcva.ethicspoint.com) or by phone. Contact our diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator, Griselda Cervantez, who is available to help victims/survivors make a formal complaint of abuse to the diocese. Our Victim Assistance Coordinator is also available to arrange a personal meeting with the bishop or his representative and to obtain support for the needs of the individual and families. Call 408-983-0225 for assistance.
4. If you believe someone is in imminent danger or there is a situation of current abuse involving a minor, **please call 911**.
5. To report an allegation of abuse or mishandling of allegations of sexual abuse by a bishop please visit the [Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service](https://www.catholicbishops.org/abuse-reporting-service) website.

Reporting Child Abuse & Neglect to Civil Authorities

The Child Abuse & Neglect Center receives and responds to reports of abuse or neglect connected to children and youth. **In case of a life-threatening emergency call 911**. When the situation is not a problem needing police action, reports should be made to the toll-free **Child Abuse and Neglect Center (CANC) reporting line at 1-833-722-5437**

Learn more about how to report child abuse from the San Jose Police Department:

<https://www.sjpd.org/reporting-crime/child-abuse>