



Honor Thy Children

Archdiocese of Louisville continuing education for the awareness and prevention of child abuse

SAFE ENVIRONMENT TRAINING: A REMINDER WHY

Archdiocese of
Louisville

August
2026

Recent media reports here in Kentucky offer an important reminder of why Safe Environment training matters — and why knowing the signs of child sexual abuse is so important.

It's important to note, cases remain allegations, and all are innocent until proven guilty

Stories like these aren't the reason we do Safe Environment training. They are a reminder of why we do it.

One of the most important lessons we can learn is that people who harm children do not always fit the image we might have in our minds. They can be people who are trusted by children, families, and communities — teachers, coaches, volunteers, mentors, family members, or others who appear to be caring adults.

That is why Safe Environment training is about more than simply telling us that abuse

happens. It helps us understand what abuse can look like, how children may respond, what warning signs to recognize, and what we should do when something doesn't seem right.

The Catholic Church's commitment to this education grew significantly from the reforms of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People adopted in 2002. The Charter called for dioceses across the United States to provide education and training concerning child sexual abuse. That commitment continues because protecting children requires more than policies — it requires informed and empowered adults. And this responsibility extends far beyond the

Church. Children can be harmed in homes, schools, sports programs, neighborhoods, and other places where



adults are entrusted with their care. In fact, most children who experience sexual abuse know their abuser. That reality makes it especially important that we don't allow familiarity, reputation, position or trust to prevent us from recognizing concerning behavior. Our Safe Environment training allows adults to learn what to watch for and, just as importantly,

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If you need support or someone to talk to:

- ☺ Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky or Indiana:
800.CHILDREN/
800.422.4453
www.pcaky.org
www.pcainc.org
- ☺ Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline
800.4.A.CHILD
800.422.4453
www.childhelp.org

Are You Safe Environment Compliant?

Are you working regularly with children?

If so you must have attended an Archdiocese of Louisville Safe Environment Training.

Has it been 5 years since your initial in person training? You must complete your 5 year refresher training

You must also have a satisfactory background check not older than 5 years.

See your Safe Environment Coordinator today to verify your compliance!

FOR A FULL LIST OF SCHEDULED SAFE ENVIRONMENT TRAININGS

www.archlou.org/safe

SIGNS OF ABUSE

Suspect Abuse? There are signs to look for...

When children are experiencing stressors such as divorce or death of a loved one, expect a change in their behavior. Children exhibit similar behavioral changes when they are being sexually abused.

No one behavioral change by itself indicates a child is being sexually abused; however, a combination of these symptoms should alert adults to the possibility of sexual abuse:

- ◆ Nightmares, trouble sleeping, fear of the dark, or other sleeping problems.
- ◆ Extreme fear of "monsters."
- ◆ "Spacing out" at odd times.
- ◆ Loss of appetite, or trouble eating or swallowing.
- ◆ Sudden mood swings: rage, fear, anger, or withdrawal.
- ◆ Fear of certain people or places (e.g., a child may not want to be left alone with a babysitter, a friend, a relative, or some other child or adult).
- ◆ Stomach illness with no identifiable reason.
- ◆ An older child behaving like a younger child, such as bed-wetting or thumb sucking.
- ◆ Sexual activities with toys or other children, such as simulating sex with dolls or asking other children/siblings to behave sexually.
- ◆ New words for private body parts.
- ◆ Refusing to talk about a "secret" he/she has with an adult or older child.
- ◆ Talking about a new older friend.
- ◆ Suddenly having money.
- ◆ As an adolescent, cutting or burning herself or himself.

IMPORTANT

**Kentucky is a mandatory reporting state.
If you suspect abuse, you are required by law to report it**

1.877.KYSAFE-1

WHY (cont...)

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what to do when they're concerned. In Kentucky, adults have a responsibility to report suspected child abuse. Knowing that responsibility — and how to fulfill it — can make the difference between a concern going unnoticed and a child getting help. Since the Archdiocese began offering live Safe Environment training in 2003, more than 72,000 people have participated. Many have told us

afterward that the training helped them recognize something they had experienced themselves or observed in a child. Some have found the courage to report abuse. Others have simply left, better prepared to recognize a child who may need help.

That is the purpose of Safe Environment training: education, awareness and empowerment.

We cannot assume that someone who has earned our trust could never harm a child. And we cannot

assume that a child who is being harmed will always know how to tell us.

But we can make sure that the adults surrounding our children are prepared to recognize the signs, listen when something doesn't seem right, and take action to protect a child. That is why we train. That is why we remain vigilant. And that is how we help create safer environments for every child.

HELP IS AVAILABLE

Center for Women and Families (844) 237-2331 Toll-Free Crisis Line.

Provides services to victims of sexual abuse and violence in the Kentucky counties of Bullitt, Henry, Jefferson, Oldham, Shelby, Spencer, and Trimble.

www.TheCenterOnline.org

The Couch Immediate Health Center (502) 414-4557

Complete mental health services by appointment, offering counseling and/or medication when appropriate.

www.thecouchimmediatementalhealthcare.com

Family & Children's Place (502) 893-3900

Broad-based family counseling program serving child and adult victims of violence and families in which a child has been sexually abused by an adult family member or adolescent. www.FamilyAndChildrensPlace.org

Silverleaf Sexual Trauma Recovery Services (270) 234-9236

Provides services to victims of sexual abuse and rape, as well as to non-offending caregivers and families. Serving Breckinridge, Grayson, Hardin, Larue, Marion, Meade, Nelson, and Washington counties.

www.silverleafky.org

NAMI – The National Alliance on Mental Illness (502) 588-2008

Offers support to individuals suffering from mental illness and their families. This may include abuse, PTSD, anxiety, and depression. Services include support groups for the community as well as education.

www.namilouisville.org

Upcoming Trainings

Check www.archlou.org/safe for the most up-to-date schedule.

All trainings begin at 630 p.m. unless otherwise noted

8.31.26
St. Patrick

9.15.26
St. Aloysius-
Pewee Valley

9.28.26
St. Margaret Mary

10.6.26
St. Gabriel

10.10.26
(SPANISH SPEAKING ONLY)
St. Rita
(9:30 a.m.)

10.14.26
(4:30 PM START)
Catholic Enrichment
Center

10.20.26
St. Aloysius-PV

10.26.26
St. Joseph (Bardstown)

11.10.26
St. Bernard (Louisville)

11.17.26
St. Athanasius

12.10.26
Flaget

Trainings are scheduled to cancellation/ postponement due to inclement weather, etc.

It's best not to wait until the last minute to attend, especially in the heavy weather months.

Archdiocese of Louisville
Office of Safe Environment

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No child or adult should ever experience abuse by anyone, especially a church minister. We all have the right to be treated with dignity and to expect our church to reflect the goodness of God in all of its dealings.

We hope that this information is helpful to all in our communities who are working to prevent and respond to childhood sexual abuse. Please let us know if you need further assistance or information by calling or emailing our victim assistance coordinator, Ms. Martine Siegel, at 502/636-1044; victimassistance@archlou.org

We must heed God's call to care for the most vulnerable among us and to continue our efforts toward wholeness and health in dealing with sexual abuse.

PREVENTING ABUSE

Listen to and honor children by giving them a voice. Teach them personal boundaries and respect for their bodies. Discuss with children what is appropriate and inappropriate touch. Explain to them that other people do not have the right to touch them in ways that make them uncomfortable. Help younger children identify "private parts," "bathing suit zones" with appropriate terminology for all parts of their body. Communicate to children that there is nothing wrong with understanding their bodies and talking about their bodies. All bodies are beautiful, sacred, and holy.

Adults often give mixed messages to children about their rights to have a say in who touches them and how they are touched. It is not uncommon, for example, for adults to pressure children into kissing or hugging aunts or uncles whom they may be hesitant to approach. Give children the right to decide who touches them, including family members.

As an adult, listen to and trust your own intuition and instincts. If you sense something is not right or seems odd, it may well be. Do not leave children in the care of someone you do not have a good feeling about.

Create an environment of responsiveness and comfort so that children feel free to disclose. Create an environment that makes it clearly known that children will be listened to and believed. As youth workers (counselors, teachers, principals, catechists, priests, youth ministers, coaches), communicate the idea that children will be heard. Display posters, books, and pamphlets that indicate a level of sensitivity to child abuse. Intentionally raise the issues of "uncomfortable and confusing touches" with children. Invite them to tell you anything that may be bothering or troubling them.

Most of all, be in tune with children that are in your care.

