

## Bulletin Announcements from the Office for the Protection of Children/Youth Diocese of Erie ~ 2024

*Please run this announcement in one of your January 2024 bulletins*

**Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments – January is Human Trafficking Prevention Month.** Child Sex Trafficking is a form of child abuse that occurs when any child under age 18 is advertised, solicited, or exploited through a commercial sex act where sex is traded for money, food, shelter, drugs, or anything of value. Traffickers can be anyone including friends, gangs, family members, foster parents, perceived trusted adults or boyfriends. Talk to your child openly about this reality and build resiliency. Address the myths and misconceptions that glamorize the commercial sex industry. Social media and gaming platforms are increasingly becoming the tool traffickers and other predators use to target, groom, and recruit victims. At some point your child will likely be confronted with inappropriate messages or see things online that they know are wrong. Teach your child how to handle these situations. You can report suspected child sex trafficking or make a tip at 1-800-843-5678 or CyberTipline.org. For additional resources visit [www.eriescd.org/childprotection/](http://www.eriescd.org/childprotection/)

*Please run this in one of your February 2024 bulletins*

**Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments- Beware of Grooming Behavior.** Children and young people can be groomed online or in the real world, by a stranger or by someone they know. This could be a family member, a friend or someone who has targeted them – like a teacher, faith leader or sports coach. Grooming is when someone builds a relationship, trust and emotional connection with a child or young person so they can manipulate, exploit, or abuse them. Grooming can take place over a short or long period of time. Some common tactics are pretending to be younger, giving advice or showing understanding, buying gifts, giving attention, taking them on trips, outings, or holidays. To prevent your child from grooming behavior, teach them about healthy relationships, how to stay safe online, and who are the trusted adults they can go to for help. For additional resources visit [www.eriescd.org/childprotection/](http://www.eriescd.org/childprotection/)

*Please run this in one of your March 2024 bulletins*

**Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments- Pledge to Heal:** The Diocese of Erie remains committed to helping survivors of clergy sexual abuse heal and recover. The diocese will provide counseling assistance for those who have been abused by a member of the clergy. For more information, please contact Dr. Gerard Tobin, our Victim Assistance Coordinator, at 814-451-1521. *The diocese encourages anyone who has experienced abuse or misconduct by a member of the clergy or any employee or volunteer of the church to contact their local law enforcement. To report abuse to the independent investigators retained by the diocese, email [ErieRCD@KLGates.com](mailto:ErieRCD@KLGates.com). To report abuse directly to the diocese call 814-451-1543.*

*Please run this in your April 7, 2024 bulletin*

**Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments**

**Child Abuse Prevention Month- Reporting Child Abuse:** It is every adult's moral responsibility to report known or suspected abuse or neglect of a minor to the responsible authorities. Physical and sexual abuse of minors are pervasive societal problems, and only concerted and sustained efforts by all adults in every segment of society can help to protect children and youth. In the 2022 Pennsylvania statewide report there were 4,992 substantiated reports of child abuse and 440 more cases in the court system. 2,056 or 38.2% of the substantiated reports were for sexual abuse, 1,501 were physical abuse. 62.2% of the victims were female. Parents remain the persons most responsible for abuse of their children. *To report child abuse, call Childline at 1-800-932-0323 (anytime 24/7). For particular questions on reporting abuse in the Diocese of Erie, you may call the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth at 814-824-1195.*

*Please run this in your April 14, 2024 bulletin*

### **Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments**

**Child Abuse Prevention Month:** Throughout the Gospel, Christ calls upon His followers to care for the most vulnerable among us, especially children. **Mandated Reporters** in the Diocese of Erie are people who hold positions of trust in our schools, parishes, agencies, and institutions and are mandated by Pennsylvania law and the diocesan Policy for the Protection of Children to report child abuse. All clergy, employees and volunteers working/serving for the Diocese of Erie, in our parishes, schools or agencies are mandated both legally and morally to report any reasonably suspected or known child abuse to ChildLine, the local police, or other appropriate agency. Visit [www.eriecd.org/childprotection/](http://www.eriecd.org/childprotection/) to learn the specific reporting procedures required by the diocese.

*Please run this in your April 21, 2024 bulletin*

### **Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments**

**Child Abuse Prevention Month: National CyberTipline:** The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's CyberTipline is the nation's centralized reporting system for the online exploitation of children. Anyone can make reports of suspected online enticement of children for sexual acts, molestation, child pornography, child sex tourism, child sex trafficking (includes prostitution), child sextortion and unsolicited obscene materials sent to a child. Misleading domain names, misleading words or digital images on the internet can also be reported to the CyberTipline. All tips are reviewed to find a potential location for the reported incident. It is then made available to the appropriate law-enforcement agency for possible investigation. NCMEC provides resources/help in removing an online image. Reports can be made 24/7 online at [www.cybertipline.org](http://www.cybertipline.org) or by calling (800) 843-5678.

*Please run this in your April 28, 2024 bulletin*

### **Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments**

**Child Abuse Prevention Month:** Recent statistics tell us one out of every ten children will be abused before they turn 18. 91% of sexual abuse is perpetrated by someone the child or the child's family knows. This means that on every Sunday in our congregation there are people who have been abused and may continue to experience the pain of that abuse. Reaching out to those who have suffered from abuse is critical in bringing hope and the love of Christ to them. Assistance is available for victims/survivors of clergy sexual abuse by contacting the Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator, Dr. Gerard Tobin at 814-451-1521.

*Please run this in one of your May 2024 Bulletins*

**Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments- Digital Safety and Your Child:** If your child gives out personal information while online, it is easy to track and tough to completely remove. Teach your child to never share personal information such as full name, address, phone number, email, school, or birthday on any social media site. Teach them to never give anyone their passwords. Help your child set up strong passwords and do a yearly checkup on them. Adjust privacy settings for online games, apps, social media sites and your child's electronic devices. Don't forget to check the GPS settings ability to unintentionally share your child's location. Avoid using public wi-fi when sharing personal information. For additional resources visit [www.eriecd.org/childprotection/](http://www.eriecd.org/childprotection/)

*Please run this in one of your June 2024 bulletins*

### **Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments- Stay Safe While Gaming Online**

Online gaming can be lots of fun and pretty cool to compete against people from every corner of the world. Gaming can also expose your child to dangers such as cyber bullying, online harassment, and online predators. Here are some helpful tips to teach your children to ensure they are being safe while gaming. 1. Never give your identity. When creating an account, use a nickname. When creating an avatar, don't use your real picture. 2. Do not give out any personal information including phone numbers, addresses, where you go to school, and especially your age. Predators pretend to be teenagers and will talk to your child until your child feels they are safe to talk to about personal stuff. 3. Have your child mute conversations. People say mean

things to one another and it's best to prevent the risk of bullying or trash talking online. 4. Block anyone who makes you feel uncomfortable. 5. Set appropriate parental controls and use parental controls to facilitate online safety and time management. For additional resources visit [www.eriecd.org/childprotection/](http://www.eriecd.org/childprotection/)

*No announcement for July 2024*

*Please run this in one of your August 2024 bulletins*

**Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments- Diocesan Requirements for working with children:** Working alongside the Bishop, the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth reinforces the ongoing implementation of policies and procedures that protect children. All clergy, employees, and volunteers in the Diocese of Erie who work with children must undergo criminal record checks. The diocesan Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth screening guidelines and abuse prevention training programs emphasize the importance of knowing the employees and volunteers who have access to children in our schools and parishes. Parents should remain vigilant in insisting that those with access to their children have gone through an application process and obtained the required clearances and trainings before being granted access to their children. Visit [www.eriecd.org/childprotection/](http://www.eriecd.org/childprotection/) to see what is required for those who work with children and youth in our parishes/schools/agencies.

*Please run this in one of your September 2024 bulletins*

**\*\*Note: Please mail/email the September Parish Bulletin containing the September announcement to the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth.**

**Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments- Diocesan Child Protection Policies:** The Diocese of Erie, is committed to protecting minors who are entrusted to our care. The Diocese has policies and procedures in place to address the national problem of child abuse, to aid in the prevention of abuse and to develop and maintain safe environments. All those who minister to minors are screened, trained, and agree to a Code of Conduct. To read the Policy that includes the Code of Conduct, go to: <https://www.eriecd.org/childprotection/policies-1.html> For more information, contact the diocesan Office for the Protection of Children and Youth at 814-824-1195.

*Please run this in one of your October 2024 bulletins*

**Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments – Is Your Child Street Smart?**

Being street smart means knowing how to keep yourself safe from strangers when you're alone or with other kids. When your street smart you know your way around, you know how to handle yourself in tough situations and you can "read" people. Teach your child who are strangers - (- anyone they do not know or kind of know- and to never approach a strangers vehicle. Teach to your child to always tell you where they are. Teach your child to always go with a friend or two whether walking to school, bike riding or going to the store. Pick out safe spots where your child can go and get help. Places like police stations, stores, restaurants. Teach them how to spot safe places on their route and to avoid places that aren't safe. Finally, teach your child to trust their instincts and to make a lot of noise if they are scared. For more information visit [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org). For additional resources visit [www.eriecd.org/childprotection](http://www.eriecd.org/childprotection)

*Please run this in one of your November 2024 bulletins*

**Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments- Bullying** is defined as any unwanted aggressive behavior by another youth or group of youths that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated. 20% of youth ages 12-18 experience bullying. When adults respond quickly to bullying behavior, they send the message that bullying is not acceptable. There are ways parents can make a positive difference. Parents can educate themselves on the signs that a child is being bullied or is a bully. Parents should keep the lines of communication open with their child and model for their child how to treat others. Encourage your child to be inclusive by welcoming others to join their activities and groups. For more information on how to prevent bullying in your community visit [www.stopbullying.org](http://www.stopbullying.org). For additional resources visit [www.eriecd.org/childprotection](http://www.eriecd.org/childprotection)

*Please run this in one of your December 2024 bulletins*

**Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments- Be Vigilant:** It is vitally important that we are constantly vigilant concerning the behaviors of those who interact with children and communicating our concerns to the appropriate parties. Each one of us can play an important role in strengthening this culture of prevention. 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 prevent abuse in the future. When we witness inappropriate behavior or something that just doesn't seem quite right, we must report our concerns through the appropriate channels. For particular questions in the Diocese of Erie, you may call the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth at 814-824-1195.