

Bulletin Announcements from the Office for the Protection of Children/Youth Diocese of Erie ~ 2026

Please run this announcement in one of your January 2026 bulletins

Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments – January is Human Trafficking Prevention Month. In 2024, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children received over 27,800 reports of possible child sex trafficking. The average age of child sex trafficking victims is 15 years old. Child sex trafficking is child abuse. It occurs when a minor is advertised, solicited, or exploited through a commercial sex act where sex is exchanged for money, food, shelter, drugs, or anything of value. Traffickers can be family members (even parents), friends, gangs, foster parents, trusted adults or boyfriends. Talk openly with your child about this reality and build resiliency. Address myths that glamorize the commercial sex industry. Warn about online risks: social media and gaming platforms are used by traffickers to target, groom, and recruit victims. Prepare your child: at some point they will likely encounter inappropriate messages or harmful content online. Teach them how to respond safely. Report suspected child sex trafficking by calling 1-800-843-5678 or visit CyberTipline.org.

For additional resources visit www.eriercd.org/childprotection/

Please run this announcement in one of your February 2026 bulletins

Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments- AI-generated Explicit Images. With the rising use of AI, explicit nonconsensual images can be generated easily and without the victim's knowledge. An offender may not even need an explicit image to work from. When threatened with explicit AI-generated images being published or distributed online, victims often succumb to demands for money, in-person meetings or worse. This can affect anyone, regardless of age or gender – but children are most at risk. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children provides a free service called, "Take It Down," that can help one remove or stop the online sharing of nude, partially nude, or sexually explicit images or videos of minors. For information visit <https://takeitdown.ncmec.org/>. For additional resources visit www.eriercd.org/childprotection/

Please run this announcement in one of your March 2026 bulletins

Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments – Cyberbullying.

The widespread use of mobile devices causes more children to be susceptible to cyberbullying. Cyberbullying can take many forms, including cruel messages via text or social media, the distribution of photoshopped pictures designed to mock an individual, forwarding "private" photos or videos, and pretending to be someone else on a social media site. Victims of cyber bullying often suffer from depression, isolation, and can even become suicidal. Parents can educate themselves on the signs that a child is being cyberbullied or is a bully by visiting: www.StopBullying.gov/cyberbullying/ For more resources visit www.eriercd.org/childprotection/

Please run this announcement in your April 5, 2026 bulletin

Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments- Pledge to Heal: During National Child Abuse Prevention Month, The Diocese of Erie affirms our continued commitment to report allegations of sexual misconduct to law enforcement and to support survivor-victims in their healing journey. The diocese provides counseling assistance for those who have been abused by a member of the clergy. For more information on counseling available to survivor-victims, 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. To report abuse directly to the diocese, call 814-451-1543.*

Please run this announcement in your April 12, 2026 bulletin

Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments

Child Abuse Prevention Month: Who is a Mandated Reporter? A mandated reporter is required by Pennsylvania law and the diocesan Policy for the Protection of Children to report

suspected or disclosed cases of child abuse to ChildLine or law enforcement. Mandated reporters in our diocese are people who hold positions of trust in our schools, parishes, agencies, and institutions. All clergy, employees and volunteers working/serving 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 law enforcement, or other appropriate agency. Visit www.eriercd.org/childprotection/ to learn the specific reporting procedures required by the diocese.

Please run this announcement in your April 19, 2026 bulletin

Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments

Child Abuse Prevention Month- Report 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. According to the latest Pennsylvania statewide report in 2024 there were 5,214 substantiated reports of child abuse. 1,693 or 32.5% of the substantiated reports were for sexual abuse and 1,410 substantiated reports were physical abuse. 61.4% of child abuse victims were female. Mother and Father remain the person most responsible for abuse of their children. *To report child abuse, call Childline at 800-932-0323 (anytime 24/7). For 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 announcement in your April 26, 2026 bulletin

Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments

Child Abuse Prevention Month: Be Vigilant: Keeping kids safe starts with all of us. Pay attention to how people interact with children – and speak up if something feels off. Notice the signs of abuse, take them seriously and report concerns right away. If you see behavior that seems inappropriate or just doesn't feel right, don't ignore it. Reporting could prevent harm. Have questions about warning signs or what's considered inappropriate? Call the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth at 814-824-1195.

Please run this announcement in one of your May 2026 Bulletins

Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments- Digital Safety Tips for Parents

Your child's personal info online is easy to track—and hard to erase. Protect them with these simple steps: Never share personal details like full name, address, phone number, email, school, or birthday on social media. Keep passwords private – never give them to anyone. Check privacy settings on games, apps, social media, and devices. Turn off GPS sharing to prevent location leaks. Avoid public WI-FI when sharing personal info.

For more resources: www.eriercd.org/childprotection

Please run this announcement in one of your June 2026 bulletins

Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments- Teach Children to Protect Themselves

at Home Keeping kids safe starts at home. Talk to your children about simple ways they can protect themselves: Know who's at the door – Never open it for strangers. Keep personal info private – Don't share your name, address, or phone number with anyone you don't know. Emergency contacts – Make sure your child knows how to reach you and call 911 if needed. Safe boundaries – teach them to say "no" to anything that makes them uncomfortable. Online safety – Remind them not to share personal details or passwords online. Open conversations build confidence and help kids make smart choices when you're not around. For more tips and resources, visit, www.eriercd.org/childprotection .

No announcement for July 2026

Please run this announcement in one of your August 2026 bulletins

Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments- Diocesan Requirements for working with children: The Diocese of Erie takes child safety seriously. Working with the Bishop, the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth ensures that policies and procedures are in place

to protect children. All clergy, employees and volunteers who work with children must complete state mandated criminal record checks. They must also follow screening guidelines and complete abuse prevention training. These steps help ensure that everyone who has access to children in our schools and parishes is properly vetted and trained. Parents: stay vigilant! Make sure anyone who interacts with your child has completed the application process and obtained the required clearances and training. For details on what's required for those working with children and youth in our parishes, schools, and agencies, visit: www.eriecd.org/childprotection/.

Please run this announcement in one of your September 2026 bulletins

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

Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments- Diocese of Erie Child Protection Policies: Everyone that works and interacts with children should have clear boundaries in place. This includes rules like staying in public view and avoiding isolated one-on-one situations with children and ensuring that two or more adults are always paired together to work with children, as well as other guidelines found in the Policy for the Protection of Children. All those who minister to minors are screened, trained, and must follow the Policy that includes a Code of Conduct. To read the policy go to: <https://www.eriecd.org/childprotection/policies-1.html>. For additional information, contact the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth at 814-824-1195.

Please run this announcement in one of your October 2026 bulletins

Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments – October is Respect Life Month.

Our faith reminds us that every human life is sacred. Protecting children, youth, and vulnerable adults is not just a responsibility – it's a Respect Life issue that involves all of us. If you suspect or know of abuse, report it immediately. Speaking up can save lives and uphold the dignity of every person. For details on how to report child abuse, visit: www.eriecd.org/childprotection/.

Please run this announcement in one of your November 2026 bulletins

Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments-

November is designated **National Homeless Youth Awareness Month**, a critical time to raise awareness about the challenges facing young people experiencing homelessness. Annually approximately 1.2 million children under age 6 and 4.3 million youth and young adults experience homelessness. Youth without stable housing face a high risk of trauma, violence, substance abuse, sex trafficking and mental health issues. Homeless high school students were nearly twice as likely to consider suicide and over three times as likely to attempt it compared to housed students. You can help by supporting local shelters, outreach programs and advocating for policies that protect vulnerable youth. For more resources visit: www.eriecd.org/childprotection/.

Please run this announcement in one of your December 2026 bulletins

Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments- Online Gaming Safety Tips

Online gaming is fun. It's cool to compete against people from every corner of the world but online gaming can expose kids to risks like cyberbullying, harassment, and predators. Teach your child these safety tips: 1. Protect identity: Use a nickname and avoid real photos for avatars. 2. Keep personal info private: Never share phone numbers, addresses, school details, or age. 3. Mute chats: Prevent bullying and trash talk. 4. Block uncomfortable users: Don't engage with anyone who feels unsafe. 5. Use parental controls: Manage safety and screen time. For more resources visit www.eriecd.org/childprotection/.