

Safe Environment Information for Adults 2021-2022

Keeping children safe is an adult responsibility

Prevention begins with adults

As the world continues to deal with the stresses of the pandemic, now more than ever it is important for adults to focus on their strengths and areas of resilience. Resiliencies are qualities, factors and emotional strengths that help adults manage stress effectively and allow adults to continue functioning when faced with challenges, adversities, and trauma. Because parents are the most important people in a child's world it is worthwhile to review easy ways to prevent abuse from happening in our homes.

- **Learn what is age appropriate.** Having realistic expectations of what children can handle will help avoid frustration and anger at normal childhood behavior.
- **Develop new parenting skills.** Learn appropriate discipline techniques and how to set clear boundaries for your children. Parenting classes, books, and seminars offer this information.
- **Take care of yourself.** The worst tends to come out of us, parents or not, when we are overwhelmed, stressed or anxious. Connecting with other people, getting enough sleep, eating well and regular exercise are excellent ways to take care of yourself.
- **Get help when needed.** If you were abused or neglected as a child or find yourself feeling overwhelmed and would like to talk to someone, Catholic Charities Counseling Services (814) 456-2091 would be a good place to start. If you or someone you love is in crisis you can call the Crisis Hotline at (814) 456-2014. The Crisis Hotline is available 24/7.

Facts about child abuse and neglect:

- There is more than one type of child abuse. Child abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional or neglect. Signs of abuse may not always be obvious. Review the next page for the types and signs of abuse and how to report known or suspected abuse.
- Abuse and neglect don't just happen in poor families or "bad" neighborhoods. Child abuse crosses all racial, economic, and cultural lines.
- Most abusers are family members or others close to the family.
- Many abusive parents are victims of abuse themselves and don't know any other way to parent. Others may be struggling with mental health issues or substance abuse problems.



For more resources and information regarding diocesan policies and procedures contact:

Diocese of Erie
Office for the Protection of Children and Youth
814-824-1195

childprotection@eriercd.org
<https://www.eriercd.org/childprotection/>

Warning Signs of Child Abuse and Neglect

Child abuse is not always obvious. The warning signs that a child is being abused or neglected can vary according to the type of abuse. Below are the types of child abuse and some common signs that can be used as a guide to help determine if there is a suspicion of abuse. Anyone can report known or suspected child abuse.

Physical Abuse

Possible indicators of physical abuse of a child:

- Frequent unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones or black eyes
- Fading bruises or marks noticeable after an absence from school
- Reluctant to go home
- Shies away from touch or flinches at sudden movement
- Inappropriate dress for weather (such as: long sleeves in summer)
- Overreacts to accidents such as spilling milk
- Reports injury by parent or caregiver

Possible indicators of physical abuse from parent or caregiver:

- Offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for child's injury, or provides an explanation that is not consistent with injury
- Describes the child as "problem," "evil" or in some other very negative way
- Uses harsh physical discipline with the child
- Abuses pets

Emotional Abuse

Possible indicators of emotional abuse of a child:

- Exhibits extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity or aggression
- Seems inappropriately adult (parenting other children) or inappropriately infantile
- Be delayed in physical or emotional development
- Has attempted suicide
- Appears to have a lack of attachment to the parent or caregiver

Possible indicators of emotional abuse from a parent or caregiver:

- Constantly blames, belittles, or berates the child
- Is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers of help for the child
- Overtly rejects the child

Sexual Abuse

Possible indicators of sexual abuse of a child:

- Pain or itching in genital area, has difficulty walking or sitting
- Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
- Afraid to go to bed or sudden bedwetting
- Demonstrates sophisticated or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease, particularly if under age 14
- Runs away
- Discloses sexual abuse by a parent or other person

Possible indicators of sexual abuse from a parent or caregiver:

- Frequent changes of adults in household
- Is unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child's contact with other children
- Is secretive and isolated
- Is jealous or controlling of the child's relationship with others

Neglect

Possible indicators of neglect of a child:

- Frequently absent from or late to school
- Begs or steals food or money
- Lacks needed medical or dental care
- Persistent hunger, poor hygiene or inappropriate dress
- Lacks supervision, states that there is no one at home to provide care
- Abuse of alcohol or other drugs

Possible indicators of neglect from a parent or caregiver:

- Constantly blames, belittles or berates the child
- Is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers of help
- Overtly rejects the child
- Does not register child for school

**To report known or suspected child abuse call:
Childline at 1-800-932-0313 Calls are answered 24 hours a day/7 days**