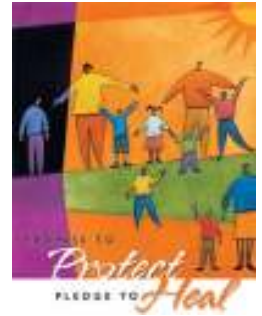


Safe Environment Newsletter



April is Child Abuse Prevention

March 16, 2009

Catholic Church Response to Abuse

Volume 1, Issue 1

The Child and Youth Protection Secretariat of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has made care for minors a key priority and spearheaded nationwide safe environment programs. Through these programs more than five million minors already have been educated on such how to protect themselves from harm and almost two million adults have undergone background screening and training on appropriate relationships with youth in their care.

"There are few things more important than protecting our children from harm," said Bishop Blase Cupich of Rapid City, South Dakota, chair of the bishops' Committee on the Protection of Children and Young People. "Child abuse in our society is rampant and we are called to do what we can to stop it. Children are gifts entrusted to us by God. All responsible adults must protect the life and dignity of those gifts. Child Abuse Prevention Month deserves our attention in both prayer and action."

A hallmark of the Catholic Church is the protection of life and the dignity of the human person.

Through scripture and Catholic teachings we are called to protect the life and dignity of all human persons no matter how young or old.

Working to prevent child abuse is an important response of what we are called to do as Church.

Child Abuse is a National Problem

Child abuse remains a national problem. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services there were 905,000 reported child abuse victims in 2006 alone. Imagine if a disease claimed that many young lives. What would be our national response? Abuse, even if it is not fatal, robs a life and damages a child's spirit. It changes who that person is on a fundamental level.

that will help keep children safe from harm. The site also features an interactive quiz on child safety designed for both adults and children.



To take the quiz, visit the NCMEC Web site and click on "Child Safety": www.missingkids.com.

The Web site of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children offers dozens of well-produced informational brochures covering a broad range of child safety topics.

Parents, guardians, and adults who care for children face constant challenges when trying to help keep children safer in today's fast-paced world. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) offers easy-to-use safety resources to help address these challenges. NCMEC's Web site offers a range of practical information for parents and guardians

Go to www.ncmec.org and click on "Resources for Parents & Guardians" to find these brochures and other helpful information about child safety.

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Facts and Figures

Most children are not lying when they say that they were abused. Less than 5% of all allegations are intentionally false. It is more likely that children will refuse to tell about abuse than to lie about abuse.

Several studies estimate that only about 6% of all children report sexual abuse by an adult to someone who can do something about it. The other 94% do not tell anyone or talk only to a friend. (And they swear their friend to secrecy.)



been background checked and participated in workshops for the training of adults.

Each year the children and youth in our Catholic Schools and Parish Religious Education and Youth Ministry have sessions on staying safe. These include safe touch, knowing and understanding the lures of predators, reporting to a trusted adult any behavior of another that makes them uncomfortable, internet safety and bullying.

Since the diocese began the diocesan program of safe environment in 1998 over 13,000 people have

The diocesan program for safe environments includes all forms of abuse, sexual, emotional, psychological and physical.

Nationally, more than 2 million reports of abuse or neglect of minors are made each year. Only a small percentage of child abuse is ever reported. Learn how to spot suspected abuse or neglect, and how to report it to the proper authorities.

Child molesters belong to every profession, gender, and ethnic group, and they live in rural, urban, and suburban areas. There is no "look" about them that indicates that they are a danger to the physical and emotional health of our children. It is imperative that we look beyond demographic characteristics and focus on the behaviors of adults when they are around children. We must regularly refresh the basic knowledge and actions required to keep children safe.

For more information, please contact those in your parish who are in charge of programs to safeguard children or contact Monsignor Reed or Sister Margaret at 850-435-3500.