

# PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN

## — — — A Parent's Guide — — —

The Archdiocese of Washington is dedicated to promoting and ensuring the protection of all children. This flier is one in a series produced by the archdiocese to help parents better understand how to protect their children from victimization, both inside and outside the home. This guide explains how the archdiocese works to protect children in our parishes and schools.

### A long standing commitment to protecting children

The Archdiocese of Washington was one of the first dioceses in the nation to have a written Child Protection Policy, education on child protection and the first to use electronic fingerprinting for background checks. Our policy has become a model for dioceses nationwide and is available online at [www.adw.org](http://www.adw.org).

If you have worked with children in our parishes and schools, you know that any adult who has substantial contact with children must complete an application, be fingerprinted for a criminal background check and attend a child protection education workshop. The program used for these

workshops, *Protecting God's Children for Adults*, is nationally recognized and held across the archdiocese throughout the year in English and Spanish.

Children in archdiocesan schools and religious education programs also receive education on how to recognize abuse and protect themselves. In fall 2008, *Touching Safety*, a safe environment program that has been successfully used in 31 other dioceses, was implemented as the core curriculum for schools and parishes. The program supports the teachings of the Catholic Church, has age-appropriate lessons and connects with the education for adults.



An archdiocesan Child Protection Advisory Board of lay experts (including at least one victim-survivor) monitors the archdiocese's outreach and compliance with the Child Protection Policy. In addition, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops audits all dioceses on their compliance with the U.S. Bishops' Charter for the Protection of

Children and Young People. The auditors conduct interviews and review records and materials relating to education, background checks, compliance monitoring, reporting and healing. The archdiocese has been found in full compliance every year.

Since 1993, the archdiocese has had a Case Review Board to assist the Archbishop in assessing allegations of child sexual abuse against clergy and fitness for ministry.

### Know the signs that a child is being sexually abused

- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities
- Reports nightmares or bedwetting
- Experiences a sudden change in appetite or behavior
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease, particularly if under age 14
- Runs away

Note: Victims of sexual abuse do not necessarily exhibit physical signs of the abuse and some sexually abused children may exhibit no signs of abuse at all.

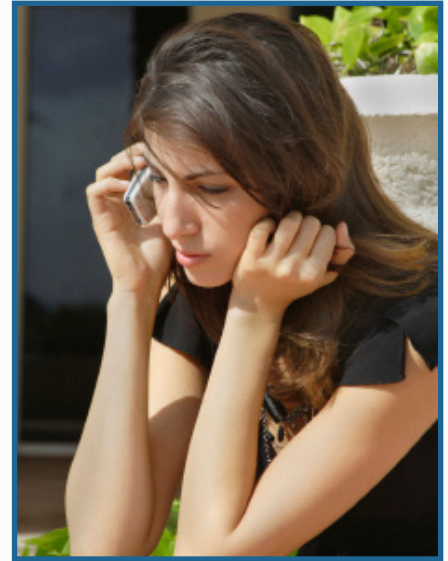
Information from  
U.S. Department of Health  
and Human Services

# Archdiocese of Washington Child and Youth Protection

## HELP, HEALING & SUPPORT

**The Archdiocese of Washington has long been committed to the treatment and healing of those harmed.** These are some of the ways the archdiocese has reached out to victims of abuse by archdiocesan personnel:

- **Apology and statement of remorse** by a bishop and leadership.
- Immediate offer of **paid counseling, therapy and other assistance** (1) of an individual's choice, (2) for as long as needed to heal and (3) for family members, in some situations.
- Assistance regardless of legal claims. The archdiocese has **paid for counseling** even after being sued and even after the suit was thrown out of court on its merits, because we believe **it is the right thing to do**.
- Opportunity to **meet with a bishop**. Our bishops have traveled to meet with victims, provided them with a private phone number and e-mail, and set aside regular office time just for victims who would like to meet.
- **Immediate reporting** of allegations and **support for victims** in pursuing criminal prosecution.
- More than **\$7.1 million in direct assistance** has been provided to victims and millions more spent on prevention efforts. Settlements have been made, if appropriate, in an individual's situation.
- **Licensed clinical social worker** on staff to assist those coming forward and Office of Child Protection Services to assist victims and implement prevention programs.
- **Healing Masses** offered for victims and their families.



### REPORTING ABUSE

- **If you suspect child abuse** (sexual, physical or neglect of anyone under the age of 18) or have been a victim of child abuse, **report it immediately** to the local law enforcement agency or the local department of social services (Department of Child Protective Services in the District of Columbia).
- **If you suspect child abuse** involving any archdiocesan personnel, also **report it immediately to the Office of Child and Youth Protection for the Archdiocese of Washington**, at 301-853-5328.
- The complete Child Protection Policy, which includes a form to report suspected abuse by archdiocesan personnel and details on where to report to civil authorities (Page 52) is available online at [www.adw.org/childprotection](http://www.adw.org/childprotection)

### PROTECTION BY THE NUMBERS

Between July 2014 and June 2015 in the Archdiocese of Washington:

- 92 child protection workshops were held for adults who work with children in the archdiocese
- 3,768 people, including clergy, new employees and volunteers attended those workshops
- 14,120 Catholic school children received safe environment education
- 22,088 children in religious education programs received safe environment education
- 606 employees, volunteers and clergy were fingerprinted
- 3,933 employees, volunteers and clergy were electronically background checked