



United States
Conference of
Catholic Bishops



CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH RESOURCE BOOKLET

April 2025

Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection

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April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month

Dear Safe Environment and Victim Assistance Coordinators,

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month, an opportunity for us to come together to protect our children and ensure every child has a safe and nurturing environment to grow and thrive. It is a time to reflect on the importance of safeguarding our future generation and taking proactive steps to prevent abuse and neglect.

Tragically, nearly 1 in 7 children experience some form of abuse or neglect annually in the United States. In 2022, approximately 1,990 children lost their lives due to abuse. These numbers are a stark reminder of the critical need for community involvement and support to end this epidemic.

At the USCCB, we are dedicated to raising awareness, providing resources to families, and supporting children. This April, we are hosting Masses, novenas, pinwheel ceremonies, and Wear Blue Day activities to engage and inspire action within our community.

We encourage you to take part in this important mission. Here are some ways you can help:

- **Pray to end the evil of abuse:** Attend Mass, pray the rosary and the Chaplet of Divine Mercy.
- **Wear Blue:** Join us on Wear Blue Day on Friday, April 4th to stand in solidarity for child abuse prevention.
- **Attend Events:** Participate in local awareness activities like pinwheel ceremonies or workshops.
- **Volunteer:** Donate your time to organizations working to protect children and strengthen families.
- **Educate Yourself and Others:** Learn to recognize the signs of abuse and share this knowledge within your community.
- **Support Families:** Offer kindness and assistance to parents and caregivers who may need encouragement.

Let's remember that prevention is possible when families, communities, and systems come together. We are inspired by a quote that encapsulates the heart of this mission: "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men." - Frederick Douglass.

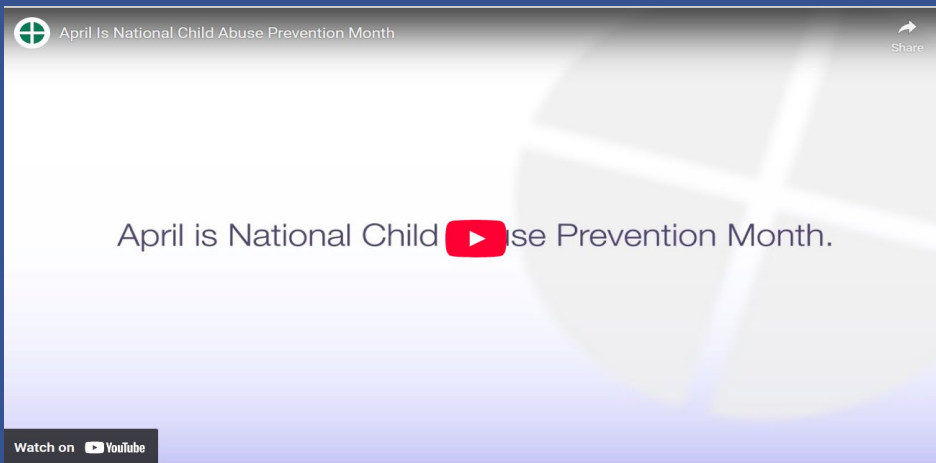
As we move forward, let us also honor the countless individuals, organizations, and policymakers who work tirelessly to protect children and support families. Together, we can break the cycle of abuse and create a brighter, safer future.

Thank you for your time, compassion, and commitment to this vital cause.

With hope and determination,

Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection





Why is Child Abuse Prevention Month important?



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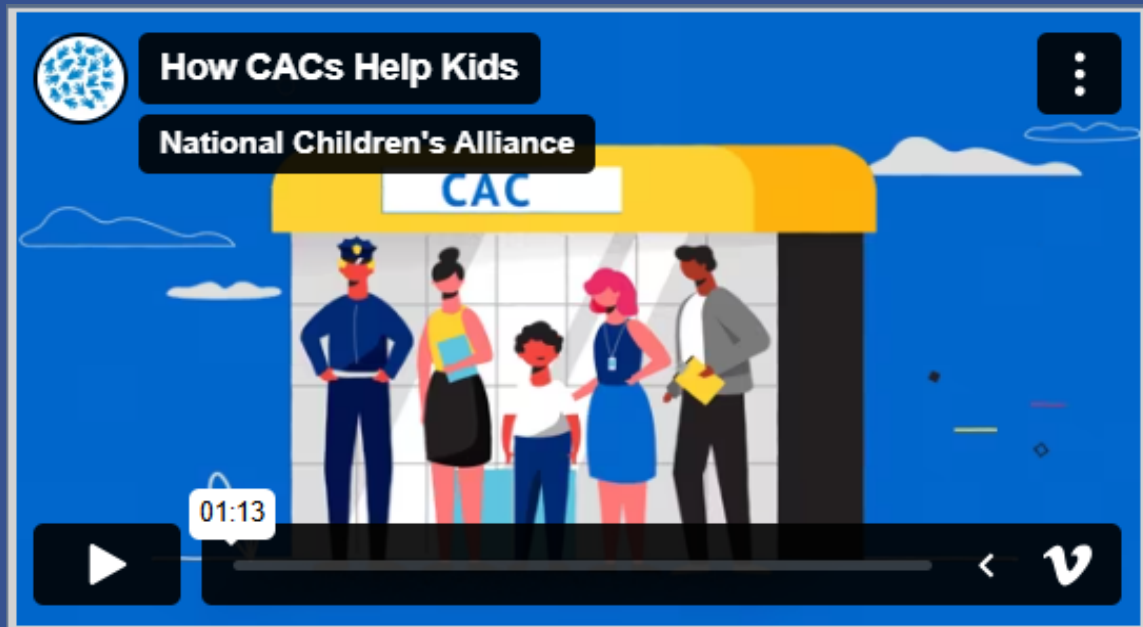


Child Abuse Prevention Month is important because it shines a spotlight on the critical need to protect children from harm and create environments where they can thrive. Here are a few key reasons why this observance matters:

- **Raising Awareness:** Many people may not realize how widespread child abuse is or how to recognize the signs. During the month of April let's work together to educate the public about the different forms of abuse and neglect.
- **Encouraging Prevention:** It highlights the importance of proactive measures, such as supporting parents, strengthening families, and creating safe communities, to prevent abuse before it occurs.
- **Empowering Communities:** Awareness drives action. By engaging individuals, organizations, and policymakers, Child Abuse Prevention Month inspires collective efforts to safeguard children.
- **Advocating for Victims:** It provides a platform to advocate for children who have experienced abuse, ensuring they receive the care, support, and justice they deserve. Children are the foundation of our future, and protecting their safety and well-being is a responsibility shared by everyone. It's a time to reflect, act, and make a difference.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

How big is the problem of child abuse?



Child abuse remains a significant concern in the United States. Here are some key statistics:

- **Prevalence:** In 2022, approximately 558,899 children were victims of abuse and neglect.
- **Forms of Abuse:** The most common form of maltreatment is neglect, followed by physical and sexual abuse.
- **Fatalities:** Tragically, an estimated 1,990 children died due to abuse and neglect in 2022.
- **Demographics:** Rates of abuse are higher among children in families with low socioeconomic status.
- **Impact:** Abuse can lead to long-term physical, emotional, and psychological challenges, including mental health issues, substance abuse, and chronic illnesses.

(Sources from the [National Children's Alliance](#) and the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#))

What are child abuse and neglect?



Child abuse and neglect includes all types of abuse and neglect of a child under the age of 18 by a parent, caregiver, or another person in a custodial role (e.g., a religious leader, a coach, or a teacher) that results in harm, the potential for harm, or threat of harm to a child.

There are four common types of abuse and neglect:

- **Physical abuse** is the intentional use of physical force that can result in physical injury. Examples include hitting, kicking, shaking, or other shows of force against a child.
- **Sexual abuse** refers to any completed or attempted sexual acts or sexual contact with a child by a caregiver. Examples include fondling, penetration, and exposing a child to other sexual activities. Read more information about [child sexual abuse](#).
- **Emotional abuse** refers to behaviors that harm a child's self-worth or emotional well-being. Examples include name-calling, shaming, rejecting, and withholding love.
- **Neglect** is the failure to meet a child's basic physical and emotional needs. These needs include housing, food, clothing, education, access to medical care, and having feelings validated and appropriately responded to.

For more information about child abuse and neglect definitions please see [Child Maltreatment Surveillance: Uniform Definitions for Public Health and Recommended Data Elements \[4.12 MB, 148 Pages, 508\]](#).

Moving Forward



What are some effective prevention strategies for child abuse?

Preventing child abuse requires a comprehensive approach that involves families, communities, and policymakers. Here are some effective strategies:

1. **Strengthen Economic Supports for Families:** Policies like child tax credits, subsidized childcare, and paid family leave can reduce financial stress and improve family stability.
2. **Promote Positive Parenting:** Public education campaigns and parenting programs can teach effective discipline techniques and foster nurturing relationships.
3. **Provide Quality Early Childhood Education:** Access to high-quality childcare and preschool programs can enhance children's development and reduce parental stress.
4. **Enhance Parenting Skills:** Programs that teach parents about child development and effective communication can strengthen family bonds.
5. **Community Support:** Building strong community networks and providing resources like mentoring programs and support groups can help families thrive.
6. **Address Social Norms:** Changing societal attitudes about parenting and discipline through education and advocacy can create safer environments for children.

KNOW2PROTECT - HOMELAND SECURITY



Know2Protect is a Department of Homeland Security national public awareness campaign to educate and empower children, teens, parents, trusted adults and policymakers to:

- Prevent and combat online **child sexual exploitation and abuse**.
- Explain how to report online enticement and victimization.
- Offer resources for victims and survivors and their supporters.

HOW2REPORT:

Online **child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA)** is a serious crime that is never the victim's fault. Stopping exploitation usually requires a victim to come forward to someone they trust — a parent, teacher, caregiver, law enforcement official or another trusted adult. This requires a lot of vulnerability from the victim. It is important to help them gather information to report the crime, choose an option with which they are comfortable and support them through this process.

To submit a report, you can do so through one of the following ways:

- Contact your local, state or tribal law enforcement officials directly. **Call 911 in an emergency.**
- Call the **Know2Protect** Tipline at **833-591-KNOW (5669)**. All information received via the Tipline will be reviewed by appropriate personnel and referred to Homeland Security Investigations field offices for potential investigation.
- Submit a **CyberTipline** report with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

SEXTORTION - FBI



SEXTORTION: The **FBI** has seen a huge increase in the number of cases involving children and teens being threatened and coerced into sending explicit images online—a crime called sextortion.

Sextortion can start on any site, app, messaging platform, or game where people meet and communicate. In some cases, the first contact from the criminal will be a threat. The person may claim to already have a revealing picture or video of a child that will be shared if the victim does not send more pictures.

More often, however, this crime starts when young people believe they are communicating with someone their own age who is interested in a relationship or with someone who is offering something of value.

After the criminals have one or more videos or pictures, they threaten to publish that content, or they threaten violence, to get the victim to produce more images. The shame, fear, and confusion children feel when they are caught in this cycle often prevents them from asking for help or reporting the abuse. Caregivers and young people should understand how the crime occurs and openly discuss online safety.

Financial Sextortion

The FBI also has recently seen **an increase in financial sextortion** cases targeting minor victims in the U.S. Financial sextortion is different from traditional sextortion.

In these cases, the offender receives sexually explicit material from the child and then threatens to release the compromising material unless the victim sends money and/or gift cards. The amount requested varies, and the offender often releases the victim's sexually explicit material regardless of whether or not they receive payment. This increasing threat has resulted in an alarming number of deaths by suicide.

The CyberTipline is the place to report child sexual exploitation

The **CyberTipline** is the place to report child sexual exploitation.

If you believe you are a victim of exploitation, **we are here to help.**
We are here to help, you are not alone.
To make reports concerning other incidents, please contact the following resources.

For Domestic Violence thehotline.org 1-800.799.SAFE (7233) 1.800.787.3224 Text: "Start" to 88788	For child abuse childhelpline.org 1-800-422-4453
For feelings of suicide suicidepreventionlifeline.org 988 (Active Nationwide July 16, 2022) 1-800-273-8255 or T: 1-888-628-9454 (Spanish) TTY: 1-800-273-8255 Online Chat (suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/)	

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children is a global leader in the fight against child victimization. NCMEC provides free prevention resources and helpful information for parents and guardians, concerned community members, and children and teens, including information on how to find an attorney, tips on removing content you don't want online and how to find mental health professionals.

Join your favorite NetSmartz characters on a new adventure!

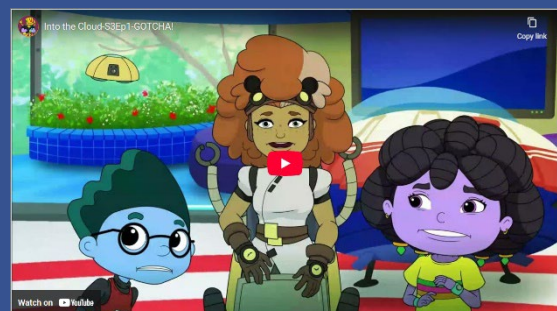
Into the Cloud™ is NCMEC's flagship online safety product for children ages 10 and under. Using data from actual CyberTipline reports, each episode of **Season 1** focuses on a different element of online safety, from strategies for handling cyberbullying to recognizing and reporting unsafe/inappropriate interactions and content.

Season 2 focuses on preventing online exploitation, reporting, and removing inappropriate content online.

Season 3, designed for children ages 10 and 11, focuses on **preventing online exploitation**, such as online enticement, sextortion, and GAI victimization, as well as providing resources to report and access support.

Into the Cloud™ presents important safety information in an age-appropriate and entertaining manner!

Watch the new episode "GOTCHA!"



NCMEC's Team HOPE

Do you have a missing or sexually exploited child?

Were you missing or sexually abused as a child?

NCMEC's Team HOPE is a group of peer support volunteers who offer lived experience with missing and exploited children's issues. They know the pain, fear, frustration and loneliness that comes with being or having a missing or sexually exploited child. They are adult survivors who were missing or sexually abused as children. They are family members of children who were sexually exploited or missing. With this knowledge and experience, they are dedicated to offering compassionate peer support, empathy, understanding, kindness and friendship to people who experienced being or having a missing or sexually exploited child.

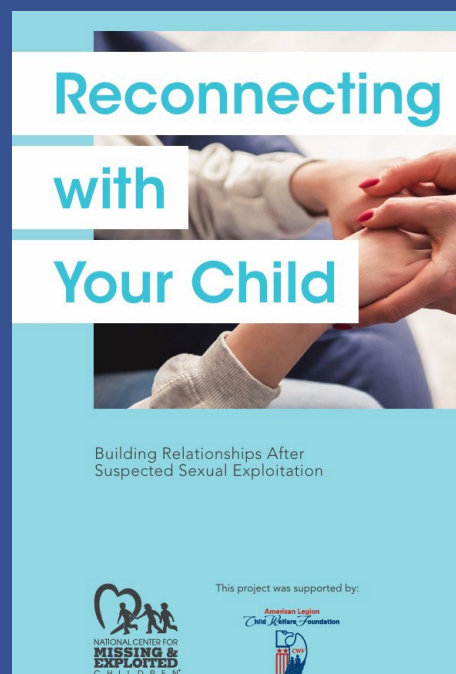
Since its inception in 1998, Team HOPE has trained more than 500 volunteers and reached out to more than 102,000 people to offer our compassionate peer support.

Emotional & Peer Support

When a child is the victim of sexual exploitation it is difficult for the whole family. NCMEC is here to help with the recovery process. Masters-level trained advocates offer crisis intervention to families as well as resources and suggestions to help them rebuild and reconnect.

Additionally, NCMEC's peer support network, Team HOPE, can provide support, empowerment, and resources to families of missing or exploited children from people who have experienced a similar trauma. If you'd like to connect with someone for emotional support, contact gethelp@ncmec.org or 1-877-446-2632 ext. 6117.

All Team HOPE support is phone-based and offered free of charge. Call 866-305-HOPE (4673) to talk to a Team HOPE member.



TAKE IT DOWN!



What is Take It Down?

Take It Down is a free service that can help you remove or stop the online sharing of nude, partially nude, or sexually explicit images or videos taken of you when you were under 18 years old. You can remain anonymous while using the service and you won't have to send your images or videos to anyone. Take It Down will work on public or unencrypted online platforms that have agreed to participate.

It's scary when this happens to you, but it can happen to anyone. You've taken the first step, and we're here to help you with the next steps. Take It Down is a service provided by the **National Center for Missing & Exploited Children**.

Who is Take It Down for?

Take It Down is for people who have images or videos of themselves nude, partially nude, or in sexually explicit situations taken when they were under the age of 18 that they believe have been or will be shared online. For example, maybe you sent a picture to someone, but now they're threatening you or have posted it somewhere. Even if you're unsure whether the image has been shared but want some help to try to remove it from places it may appear online, this service is for you.

If there is an explicit image of you from when you were 18 or older, you can get help at **stopncii.org**.

Safe Online Surfing (SOS) Program

On September 1, the FBI-SOS competition will open in both English and Spanish for the 2024-2025 school year.



The FBI Safe Online Surfing (SOS) Internet Challenge is a free, educational program for children that teaches cyber safety and helps them become better digital citizens in a fun and engaging way.

The program, created for students in third through eighth grades, covers age-appropriate topics like cyberbullying, passwords, malware, social media, and more.

The SOS activities are open to anyone to explore. To participate in the testing and national competition, teachers must register their eligible classes.

The website is currently available in English and Spanish.

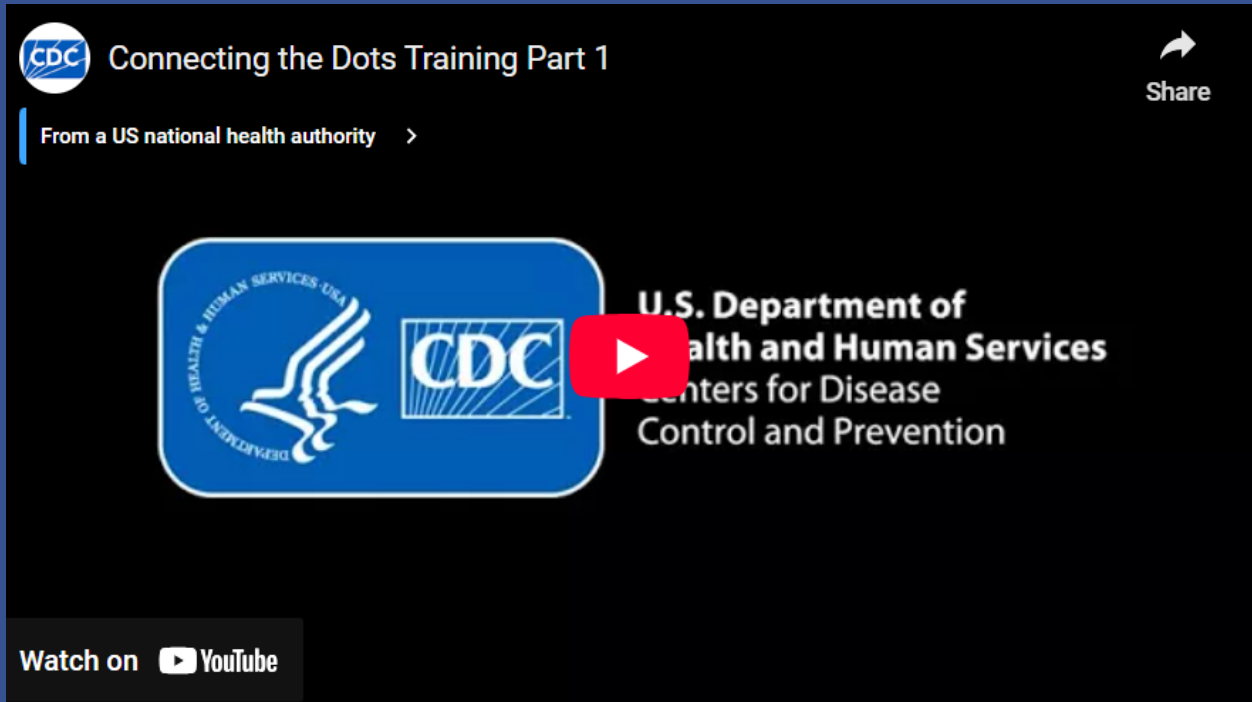
Professional Training



The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® (NCMEC) is committed to providing training, technical assistance and resources to public safety and child-serving professionals. NCMEC hosts in-person classroom training sessions in its Walsh Training Center located in our Alexandria, VA headquarters, as well as facilities located across the country at our regional offices and partner agencies. Online courses are available through NCMEC Connect, designed to provide easy access to training and resources for professionals on the frontlines. Contact NCMEC training staff via email, training@ncmec.org.

CDC – Connecting the Dots Training

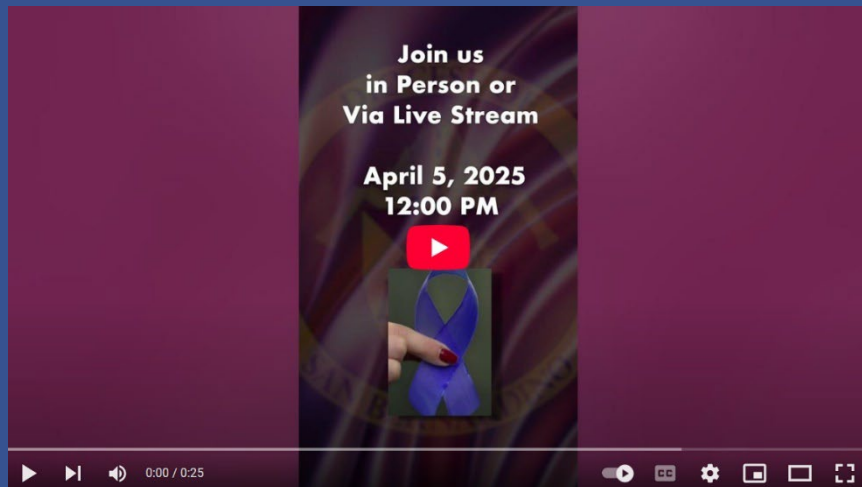
A free, online training that helps users explore shared risk and protective factors across multiple forms of violence. Share this training in your diocese/eparchy.



The image shows a YouTube video player interface. At the top left is the CDC logo. The title of the video is "Connecting the Dots Training Part 1". To the right of the title is a "Share" button with a right-pointing arrow. Below the title, it says "From a US national health authority" with a right-pointing arrow. The main content area features a blue rounded rectangle containing the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services logo (an eagle) and the CDC logo. To the right of this graphic is a red play button icon. Further to the right, the text reads "U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention". At the bottom left, there is a "Watch on YouTube" button with the YouTube logo.

DIOCESAN AND EPARCHIAL RESOURCES

Diocese of San Bernardino invites you to the Child Abuse Awareness and Victim's Healing Mass on April 5th at 12:00 p.m. (PDT), in-person or livestream.



Richmond Diocese Livestream Page – Rosary for the Protection of Children and Families Worship Aid on Tuesday, April 8th at 9:00 am (ET)



A reflection by the Very Rev. Kevin Segerblom and reciting the Divine Mercy Chaplet by Rev. Anthony T. Ferguson, and the students at the Roanoke Catholic School.



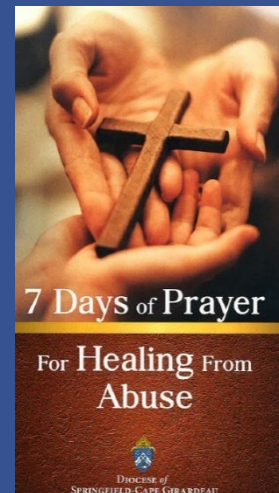
7 Days of Prayer for Healing from Abuse



This prayer model is generously and respectfully submitted by **Fr. Matt Rehrauer** of the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau.

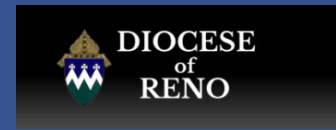
Every form of Abuse is a violation of the innocence of another. Above all, it is a violation of the Soul of the one harmed. Human hands and human skills can do some things to bring about healing of those wounds, but it is Christ alone who is Healer of Souls.

This prayer form is given as a way for those who have been abused, sexually, physically, emotionally, or psychologically, to receive the healing that comes from Christ through his gift of his death and Resurrection that he has shared with us through Baptism.



April 27, Blue Sunday: The National Day of Prayer for Children and Families affected by abuse

On April 27, 2025, marks the 31st Blue Sunday. Places of worship for all faiths are asked to join together in a day of prayer to demonstrate their appreciation to those who help abused or neglected children, and to support children and families who have been touched by abuse. National Blue Sunday Day of prayer for abused children began in 1994 with 20 churches. It's grown to include more than 7.4 million participants on five continents.



Diocese of Reno Initiatives

Celebration Activities:

1. **Stickers:** We will be distributing stickers to parishes, with the hope that pastors will provide them to their teams for distribution to parishioners.
2. **Postcards:** We will be sending out postcards to active and compliant users of Virtus, expressing our gratitude for their efforts. Additionally, asking them to wear blue to show support for victim survivors and promote abuse prevention.
3. **Wear Blue:** Parishioners are encouraged to wear blue on Blue Sunday, and parishes are encouraged to promote this in April bulletins.
4. **Prayers of Intention:** Include specific prayers in April masses for those affected by abuse. For Example: *“For parents, teachers, catechists, youth ministers, and coaches, that they may be vigilant to the signs of trauma or abuse in all under their care, we pray to the Lord.”*
5. **Blue Pinwheels:** People are encouraged to decorate their yards and parish offices with blue pinwheels.
6. **Novena:** We will be hosting a pre-recorded Novena for Child Abuse Prevention which will be available on the High Desert Catholic website.



The Diocese of Grand Island invites you to read two stories of Heling and Hope: [Read Becca's story](#) and [John's story](#).

Diocese of Richmond

Pray along the **Chaplet of Divine Mercy** recited by students at Portsmouth Catholic Regional School.



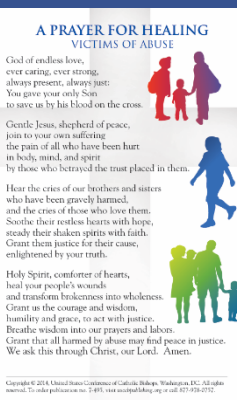
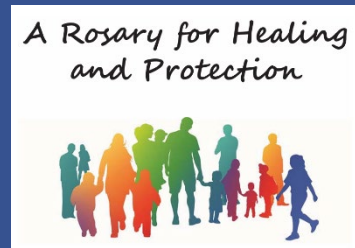
Way of the Cross Through the Voices of Victims, St. Cecilia Church Regina



This Lent, supporting victims of clergy sexual abuse, we invite you to pray the Stations of the Cross with your friends and family. Watch the video and meditate on Jesus' suffering as he is led to his crucifixion. At each station, hear the suffering of victims of sexual abuse and pray for healing.

April 27, Blue Sunday: The National Day of Prayer for Children and Families affected by abuse.

- Attend Mass on April 27th.
- Raise awareness, invite family and friends and pray a Rosary for Healing and Protection.
- Order for the Blessing of a Victim of Crime or Oppression:
[430] The personal experience of a crime, political oppression, or social oppression can be traumatic and not easily forgotten. A victim often needs the assistance of others, and no less that of God, in dealing with this experience.

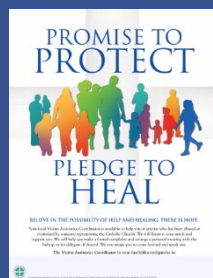
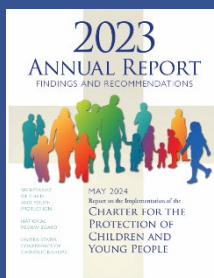


“Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

Maintain a constant, persistent attitude of prayer and communication with God. Rely on God, never give up on prayer or your relationship with Him.

SCYP Prayer cards, posters, bookmarks, the Charter, etc.

The *Charter*, prayer cards, posters, bookmarks, etc. are available for use by diocesan entities and can be found on the Resource webpage for the USCCB Secretariat for Child and Youth Protection. Bulk purchases are available through the SCYP Store.



CHURCH DOCUMENTS



POPE TO PROTECTION COMMISSION: BE SENTINELS WHO KEEP WATCH

ROME – In an inspiring message delivered from Rome’s Gemelli Hospital, Pope Francis urged the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors to persevere in their crucial mission with “unwavering dedication and renewed hope.” He characterized the Commission’s efforts as vital “oxygen” for the Church worldwide. The Pope’s heartfelt communication was addressed to attendees of the Commission’s Spring Plenary Assembly, which is being held in Rome from March 24 to 28.



Bishop Knestout Welcomes Report on Safeguarding from Vatican’s Commission for the Protection of Minors

Bishop Barry C. Knestout of Richmond, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) Committee on the Protection of Children and Young People issued a statement welcoming the information highlighted in the report.

“The painful experiences and the betrayal of trust suffered by survivors of abuse continuously calls us to fight the grave sin of sexual abuse and create and enforce effective policies to keep young people and vulnerable adults safe in the life and activity of the Church. Here in the United States, the Catholic Church has had a comprehensive set of child protection standards that dioceses and eparchies have committed to follow since 2002. But we are keenly aware that even one instance of sexual abuse is too many, and the Church’s commitment to transparency and accountability as emphasized in the report is central in our commitment to accompany survivors of abuse in their healing journey.

“May the survivors of clergy abuse, their families, and all those who accompany them in the path towards healing experience Christ’s profound love and healing grace.”

Charter/Norms and Annual Reports (USCCB):

[Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and Essential Norms](#)

[Annual Report](#)

Vatican Documents:

[Vatican](#) website with links to these and additional safeguarding documents in multiple languages

[Vos estis lux mundi](#) (2019 motu proprio, updated in 2023)

[Vademecum](#) on certain points of procedure in treating cases of sexual abuse of minors by clerics (2020, updated 2022)

[Instruction on the Confidentiality of Legal Proceedings](#) (2019)

[Sacramentorum Sanctitatis Tutela](#) (2002 motu proprio)

[Tutela Minorum](#) (Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors)

[Universal Guidelines Framework](#) (2024)

[Book VI of the Code of Canon Law](#) (updated penal code concerning abuse)