

**WHAT PARENTS CAN DO TO
PROTECT THEIR CHILDREN**

1. Find out what your child already knows about sexuality, rape, etc.
2. Use correct words for body parts when teaching your child about human sexuality.
3. Explain to your child that sexual misconduct is when another person touches private parts of the child's body or wants the child to touch his/her private parts.
4. It is also sexual abuse when another person makes you look at or touch private parts of his/her body.
5. Stress to your child that the abuser could be anyone, even someone he/she knows.
6. Encourage your child to talk to you about any questions or problems at any time.
7. Instill healthy self esteem in your child by giving specific and accurate praise. Make sure that corrections and criticisms are directed at the child's behavior, not the child's character.
8. Remember that blind obedience to adults and forced affection by adults teaches a child that adults are more important than children and thus renders him/her vulnerable to sexual abuse.
9. Tell your child that children do not have to keep a secret with anyone who is making them feel confused, scared, or hurt. He/She should tell you or another trusted adult immediately.
10. Teach your child his/her phone number and address. Make sure he/she knows how to access 911 services.
11. Role play with your children situations where he/she may be at risk. Review safety rules with him/her on a regular basis.
12. Be alert to the Internet-pedophile. Caution your child not to give any personal identity information in chat rooms.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

**Diocese Victim Assistance Coordinator:
563-349-5002**

**Department of Human Services
1-800-382-2178**

Reports may be made to the local
County Attorney:

Or to the Scott County Attorney:
563-326-8600

For additional resources, see the Diocese of Davenport Policies Relating to Sexuality and Personal Behavior .

**WALK IN THE LIGHT:
A PASTORAL RESPONSE TO CHILD
SEXUAL ABUSE**

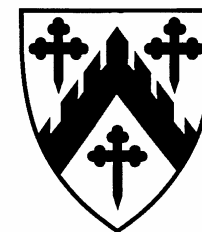
Dear Children,

When Jesus walked on the earth He loved little children. Our Holy Father has said, "How important children are in the eyes of Jesus!" Jesus treated children with kindness and respect. He understood when they were hurt. Like Jesus, we care when you hurt, especially when a grown-up has caused you hurt. We know that you are God's very special gift. God loves you, and we love you. You are our hope for the future.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

**Diocese of Davenport
Children and Adolescents
Protection Program**

Parent Program



Diocese of Davenport

PRINCIPLES FOR CHILD PROTECTION CATECHESIS

Our bodies are sacred and holy because we were fashioned in love by God. Instill your child with a sense of self-worth and dignity at every opportunity.

We are blessed with families and loving communities to help us grow. The task of keeping children safe is shared by families, extended families, teachers, church, their neighborhood and community.

Each person has dignity and must be treated with respect. We show our respect for each other in our language, behavior and interactions with each other.

Touch is an integral part of being human. Safe touch is that kind of touch which is good for the person's body. It makes one feel cared for, loved and important. Unsafe and unwanted touch makes a person feel uncomfortable and unhappy.

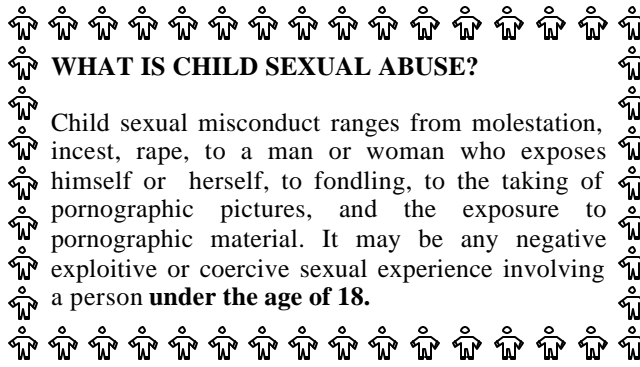
Because of the dignity of each person, our right to respect includes the right to privacy, especially privacy for our bodies. The areas of our bodies covered by a swimsuit are private.

God gives us the Gift of free will. We must learn how to discern the consequences of the choices we make each day.

Some actions or behaviors are wrong or sinful. Behavior or actions that harm self or others physically, psychologically, emotionally or spiritually are wrong. Suffering, which is not willed by God and is not the fault of innocent persons, is the result of those bad choices.

In your parenting, work for open, clear, honest communication. **Secrets can be very harmful to us physically, emotionally and spiritually.** Always question secret play and games and determine how the secret helps or harms others.

Healthy relationships can help us to understand ourselves, God and others. False friends mistreat us or take advantage of our trust and friendship. People who manipulate or misuse our friendship are not friends. Children must be provided with basic information to enable them to be safe and protected by the adults in their lives. Children must identify, with the help of their parents, a number of trusted adults to whom they can go for help if necessary.



WHAT IS CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE?

Child sexual misconduct ranges from molestation, incest, rape, to a man or woman who exposes himself or herself, to fondling, to the taking of pornographic pictures, and the exposure to pornographic material. It may be any negative exploitive or coercive sexual experience involving a person **under the age of 18.**

EFFECTS ON VICTIMS

Approximately 40% of all victims and survivors suffer after-effects serious enough to require therapy in adulthood. Some of the after-effects can include:

- Inability to trust
- Fear of intimacy
- Depression
- Suicidal ideation and other self-destructive behaviors
- Low self-esteem
- Anger
- Isolation
- Alienation from others
- Drug and alcohol dependency
- Eating disorders

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CHILD IS APPROACHED OR VICTIMIZED

- **Believe what your child has told you.**
- Reassure your child that telling you was the right thing to do.
- Let your child know that it was not his/her fault, and that the offender was wrong.
- Try not to let your feelings overwhelm the child.
- Be aware that, if the offender is family or friend, the child may feel both fear and guilt about the offender.
- **Do not confront the offender in front of the child.**
- Let the child talk as much and as often as he/she needs to, and assure the child that you will protect and support him/her.
- Report to DHS or other authorities.

GIVING YOUR CHILD SELF ESTEEM

- **Speak Love:** Say “I love you” and “You’re important and special to me.”
- **A Hug a Day:** Children need to feel your love through positive physical touch.
- **Quality Time is Quality Time:** Love is something you do, so do more with your child.
- **Take Their Place:** Put yourself in your child’s place.
- **Go With Your Gut:** If someone or something makes you feel uncomfortable, go with your gut and trust your child’s instincts.

FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW

- Boys, as well as girls, are victims of sexual assault.
- No child can seduce an adult. A child is not capable of consent, an adult is.
- Almost no child would lie about an incident.
- A child should always be believed.
- Statistics show that one out of every three girls and one out of every five boys will be victims of sexual abuse.
- About 80% of offenders are known to the child.