

# APRIL Is Child Abuse Prevention Month

Every April, Catholic parishes and schools across the United States participate in National Child Abuse Prevention Month.



## The Effects of ABUSE

When a child is abused, the effects are grave and can last a lifetime. Some of the most common effects of abuse include:

- Loss of faith and trust in God.
- Post-traumatic stress disorder, psychological distress, and other indirect signs of trauma, such as anxiety, trouble sleeping, chronic stomach pain, and headaches.
- A greater risk of developing behavioral problems, substance abuse, and suicide.

The sense of violation goes deep into a person's psyche and feelings of anger, shame, hurt, and betrayal can build long after the abuse has taken place.

## Steps to Prevent ABUSE

### *Communicate with Your Children*

It is extremely important to communicate openly with your children. Let them know that they can talk to you about anything that bothers them. This will help you identify warning signs and grooming behaviors perpetrated by offenders before they escalate to abuse.

### *Educate Yourself and Your Children on Abuse*

Learning how to identify, prevent, and report abuse is key. Parents and guardians should empower their children to protect themselves from harm and to report abuse. Ask your diocesan safe environment coordinator or parish delegate about opportunities for safe environment training.

### *Identify and Report Warning Signs of Child Abusers*

Grooming behaviors are the actions abusers take to project the image that they are kind, generous, caring people, while their intent is to lure a minor into an inappropriate relationship. Offenders can be patient and may groom their victim, his or her family, or community for years.

Some abusers isolate a potential victim by giving him or her undue attention or lavish gifts, while others allow young people to participate in activities which their parents or guardians would not approve, such as watching pornography, drinking alcohol, using drugs, and excessive touching, such as wrestling and tickling. Abusers also often try to isolate their victims from family or friends and encourage their victims to keep secrets from their parents or other caring adults.

## Holding Offenders ACCOUNTABLE

To help hold offenders accountable, report all suspected abuse to local public authorities. You can also contact your local diocesan victim assistance coordinator to make a report and seek outreach for the abused.

In accordance with diocesan policy, when a single act of sexual abuse is admitted or established, the offender is to be removed permanently from ministry.



"The abuse itself causes a deep wound that may last a lifetime, but often the scandal in the Church is because the door was closed and the victims were not welcomed and accompanied by authentic pastors."

—Pope Leo XIV, Jan. 10, 2026