

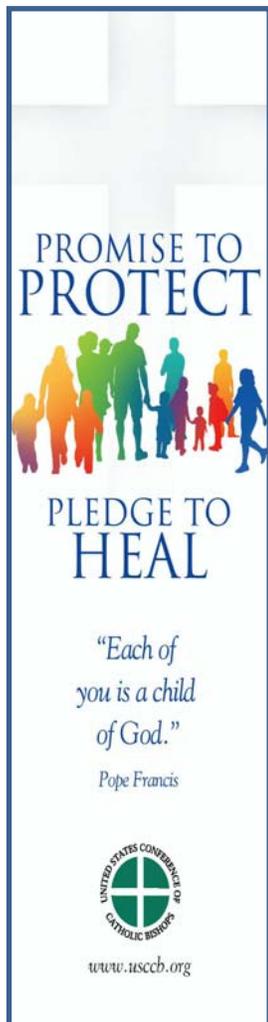
April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

TAKE A SAFETY BREAK

Child safety training is not a once or twice exercise. Bringing up the subject regularly lets children know that the information is important. You may be surprised that, despite your best efforts, children may not have understood previous safety lessons adequately, and the information needs to be reinforced. Opportunities to include safety conversations present themselves often. These can be on a variety of topics such as fire safety, sports safety, summer vacation safety, as well as physical and sexual abuse.

- Use everyday experiences like going to the mall or grocery store as teachable moments. Discuss *what if* questions such as, “What if you saw a lost child? What would you tell them to do?” or, “What if someone you don’t know calls you by your name, what would you do?” Affirm correct responses and discuss why an answer is incorrect or incomplete.
- Explain that not everyone has their best interests in mind. Some people are selfish and only look out for what they want. Some people act mean and want to hurt others. Chances are they have encountered a mean adult or peer or know of a cartoon character who fits this description. Discuss ways that they can identify these situations, how they may empower themselves by paying attention to their instincts, and ways that they can respond effectively.
- Having children act out safety scenarios helps tactile learners to understand more clearly. One example is what to do if a car pulls up to them while they’re playing outside. Actually having them take three giant steps backwards and running in the opposite direction that the car is traveling brings the words to life.
- Teach kids about boundaries by acting out an example of someone who gets too close physically or imposes a hug when they don’t want one. Talk about ways they could handle this situation. Children need to know they have a right to their personal space and the best way to communicate that to others.
- Ask if they’ve ever noticed when someone else is doing something unsafe. What was the circumstance and what might have been a better way of doing it? If one of their friends makes an unsafe decision, how might they communicate a better choice to them?
- Reinforce that children should always tell a trusted adult if they encounter a situation or person who makes them feel uncomfortable, or witness a friend in such a circumstance. Knowing that someone will help them if they are afraid builds a sense of confidence and diminishes insecurity.

An informed adult makes all the difference in a child’s life. Encourage adults to discuss these topics with their own friends and share what’s been successful and what has been ineffective. We’re all in this together!



Diocese of
Colorado Springs

What are the most important things a parent should know when talking to a child about this issue?

1. Don't forget your older children. Children aged 11 to 17 are equally at risk for victimization. At the same time you are giving your older children more freedom, make sure they understand important safety rules as well.
2. When you speak to your children, do so in a calm, nonthreatening manner. Children do not need to be frightened to get the point across. Fear can actually work at cross-purposes to the safety message, because fear can be paralyzing to a child.
3. Speak openly about safety issues. Children will be less likely to come to you if the issue is shrouded in secrecy. If they feel that you are comfortable discussing the subject matter, they may be more forthcoming with you.
4. Do not confuse children with the concept of "strangers." Children do not have the same understanding as an adult might of who a stranger is. The "stranger-danger" message is not effective, as danger to children is much greater from someone you or they know than from a "stranger."
5. Teach your children that it is more important to get out of a threatening situation than it is to be polite. They also need to know that it is okay to tell you what happened, and they won't be tattletales.

From: *Talking to Kids and Teens About Safety and Abduction* - <http://www.parents.com/kids/safety/stranger-safety/talking-to-kids--teens-about-safety--abduction/>



Report concerns about a child's safety and wellbeing to the Colorado Child Abuse Reporting Hotline:

1-844-CO-4-KIDS (1-844-264-5437)

All calls are confidential and will be routed to the county where a child resides.

Every known or reasonably suspected instance of child abuse or neglect involving clergy or a parish / school employee or volunteer must be reported to the Diocese of Colorado Springs at:

719-866-6505

-or-

Office of Child and Youth Protection

228 North Cascade Avenue

Colorado Springs, CO 80903

719-636-2345

It is the policy of the Diocese of Colorado Springs to respond promptly and with compassion to all reports of misconduct.