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A Child Safety Information Series † Diocese of Colorado Springs

When Kids Volunteer

We have learned that *as many as 40% of children who are sexually abused are abused by older, or more powerful children. The number of youth coming to the attention of police for sex offenses increases sharply at age 12 and plateaus after age 14. Early adolescence is the peak age for youth offenses against younger children.* (Crimes Against Children Research Center, 2012)

This means that if we don't include minors themselves in these overall efforts we're not doing all that we can to keep our young people safe.

When minors are recognized as Peer Leaders or volunteer in school or parish activities, we have a perfect opportunity to begin to broaden their understanding of, and to introduce the concept of *responsibility for, creating and maintaining a safe environment for themselves and others.*

Some things we can do to broaden minors' understanding and responsibility when they become Peer Leaders or volunteers include:

- Train them to always be alert and aware of the interpersonal interactions between adults and minors, as well as between minor volunteers and those with whom they work.
- Review some key points from the *Keeping Kids Safe* program like reporting if an adult or other minor volunteer makes them uncomfortable by what he is saying or doing.
- Explain the Interactions and Behaviors Summary, and teach them when and to whom to report if they witness things like inappropriate language, bullying, or a volunteer being alone with minors.
- Discuss elements of the Guidelines for Those Working with Minors, especially that children do not always verbalize discomfort with others' behavior so we must be alert to nonverbal clues that reflect their discomfort. Teach them some examples of these behavioral clues.
- Introduce and explain some elements of the Sexual Misconduct Policy, as their comprehension allows, especially the point that people need to feel and be safe while participating in parish or school activities.
- Explain what the standard of supervision is and why it is so important. Ask, "Why do you think it's a good idea to have at least two adults in charge of any class or activity?"
- Ask some "what if" questions, such as, "What would you do if you saw a student making fun of another student, or heard an adult telling off-color jokes or using profanity around children?"

Broadening their perspective will also enhance the training they've received from the *Keeping Kids Safe* Program, and lets them know how seriously our parishes and schools take the safety of our young people!



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