



St. Joseph Parish
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Dear Parents and Guardians,

Pursuant to Article 12 of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, we are offering safe environment education and training for children and youth enrolled in our religious education program.

We will be using the Praesidium **Called to Protect™ for Youth** program for students in grades 6 through 8. Praesidium experts carefully developed the content and conducted extensive nationwide field testing to ensure that each part is informative, well-received, and effective. **Called to Protect™ for Youth** teaches middle- and high-school students about boundaries, how to respond if someone tries to violate their boundaries, and how to tell their parents if they or their friend have been abused.

The scheduled lessons are being offered during our normal scheduled class time. As a parent or guardian, you have the right to choose whether your student participates. Please read the description of the program enclosed so you will be aware of the nature of the **Called to Protect™ for Youth** program.

If you have any questions, please call Don Dalglish at 734-426-2674. If you decide you do not want your child to participate, please let Don or your child's catechist know.

Description of the **Called to Protect™ for Youth** Program

As Catholics, we believe that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God. Each of us is sacred and our lives – body, mind, and soul – should be treated with respect. **Called to Protect™ for Youth** Program gives our young people practical tools, in language and medium they can understand, to realize this fundamental teaching of our faith.

The statistics are staggering. Before the age of 18, one in four girls and one in eight boys will be sexually abused. And starting at about the fifth grade, kids can be especially vulnerable. That's when they begin spending more time away from their parents, their curiosity about sexual development increases, and they start testing limits and taking risks.

Called to Protect™ for Youth is the first comprehensive program specifically designed to teach middle- and high-school youth self-protection skills. The program uses a three-part DVD series and guided group discussion to teach kids how to recognize their personal boundaries, how to respond if someone tries to violate their boundaries, and what to do if someone is sexually abusing them or someone they know.

Meet Katie and Szucceed

Research shows that child molesters use the same methods time after time, so the more youths know about how molesters operate, the safer they are. That's where Katie and Szucceed come in. These two young adults host the series with a manner that puts kids at ease. Katie and Szucceed present just what kids need to know in a non-threatening and educationally sound way.

Part One (presented to 6th graders):

In Part One, Katie and Szucceed describe the three types of boundaries – physical, emotional, and behavioral. They show interviews with child molesters who describe the methods they used to violate kids' boundaries, and interviews with kids who talk about how their own boundaries were violated.

Part Two (presented to 7th graders):

After learning how to recognize their boundaries, kids need to know what to do if someone tries to violate them. In Part Two of **Called to Protect™ for Youth**, four young actors join Katie and Szucceed to demonstrate a variety of ways kids can respond. Each of the actors portrays a different personality type – shy, funny, spunky, and wholesome – so all kids watching the program learn methods that will work for them!

Part Three (presented to 8th graders):

For some kids, sexual abuse has already happened – or maybe it is still happening. And they haven't told anyone. They're living with the secret, trying to pretend that it doesn't bother them. Katie and Szucceed show interviews with kids who have been molested, explaining why it was so difficult for them to tell someone, and interviews with child molesters describing the methods they used to keep kids from telling. Then, Katie and Szucceed bring back their young friends to demonstrate ways kids can tell their parents or another trusted adult if someone is abusing them or someone they know.

What can Parents do to Reinforce the Messages?

First, talk to your kids about their physical, emotional, and behavioral boundaries. Find out what they learned in the program.

Physical boundaries are defined by:

- Who can touch you
- How much they can touch you
- Where they can touch you

Emotional boundaries are defined by:

- How close you feel to a person
- How much time you spend with a person
- What information you share with a person

Behavioral boundaries are defined by:

- What you will do
- What you won't do

Second, pay attention to someone who crosses a child's physical, emotional, or behavioral boundaries.

Physical boundary violations mean touching too much or not touching in ways most adults would not touch a child. Some examples are:

- Roughhousing or wrestling
- Tickling
- Accidentally touching inappropriately
- Too many hugs or hugs with too much body contact

Emotional boundary violations mean treating the relationship with a child as if it were a romantic or intimate adult relationship. Some examples:

- Spending too much time with a minor
- Calling too much
- E-mailing too much
- Getting involved in too many of the child's activities
- Acting too possessively

Behavioral boundary violations mean involving a child in activities that his or her parents would not allow the child to do. Some examples are:

- Ridiculing the beliefs of a minor's parents
- Allowing a minor to do things against the wishes of parents
- Offering a minor cigarettes, alcohol, or drugs
- Allowing a minor to look at pornography
- Allowing a minor to visit inappropriate websites
- Giving a minor gifts without the parents' permission
- Asking a minor to keep secrets from his or her parents

Third, be aware that fears about being trouble or disappointing parents can keep kids from telling. Let your children know they can tell you anything and you will always love them.

What should I do if I learn of abuse or potential abuse?

The most important things you can do if a child discloses abuse to you is to listen carefully and reassure the child that he or she did the right things in coming forward. Let the child know that you will do whatever you can to keep him or her safe.

If a volunteer, clergy, or staff person in a parish or school perpetrates abuse or violates a minor's boundaries, a Notice of Concern should be made with the diocese. For the Diocese of Lansing, the Victim Assistance Coordinator is Cheryl Williams-Hecksel, LMSW. Her phone number is 1-888-308-6252 or you can email her at cwilliamshecksel@dioceseoflansing.org