

Protecting Our Children

Special Programs To Keep Kids Safe

(NAPSA)—Many parents may be pleased to learn of the extensive measures some of the best and the brightest among America's religious leaders have instituted to help keep children safe.

Churches, schools and youth organizations are required by law in most places to ensure that children who participate in activities the group sponsors can do so in a safe and secure setting.

To reach that goal, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) created "Safe Environment" programs. Designed to be implemented in cooperation with parents, civil authorities, educators, and community organizations, the program includes a "code of conduct" for all adults who work with youth on a regular basis. It also requires parents, ministers, educators, church personnel, volunteers and others regularly involved with minors to get training in the issue of child abuse.

These training programs include learning:

- What constitutes child abuse?
- What actions, procedures and policies are used to prevent child abuse?
- How does an adult identify instances of abuse of a child?
- What actions should an adult take when he or she believes child abuse may be occurring?
- What are the laws and policies regarding the reporting of abuse of children?



America's Catholic Bishops have come up with a plan to protect children that could be inspirational for many organizations.

Training programs for children include age appropriate materials pertaining to personal safety such as information about improper touching and relationships. Children need to know when they should seek assistance from a trusted adult.

The program also requires background investigations of everyone who has regular contact with minors, conducted by a reputable professional agency, law enforcement or social service agency, if available.

Anyone with questions regarding "safe environment programs" can get answers from the USCCB's Office of Child and Youth Protection. The phone number is (202) 541-5413 and the web address is www.usccb.org.