



# ***Keeping the Promise Alive™***

Participant Workbook



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## A Prayer for Healing Victims of Abuse

God of endless love,  
ever caring, ever strong,  
always present, always just:  
You gave your only Son  
to save us by the blood of his cross.

Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace,  
join to your own suffering  
the pain of all who have been hurt  
in body, mind, and spirit  
by those who betrayed the trust placed in them.

Hear our cries as we agonize  
over the harm done to our brothers and sisters.  
Breathe wisdom into our prayers,  
soothe restless hearts with hope,  
steady shaken spirits with faith:  
Show us the way to justice and wholeness,  
enlightened by truth and enfolded in your mercy.

Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts,  
heal your people's wounds  
and transform our brokenness.  
Grant us courage and wisdom, humility and grace,  
so that we may act with justice  
and find peace in you.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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# A Quick Review Of The Five Steps of Protecting God's Children<sup>®</sup>

## Step One—*Know the Warning Signs*

Knowing the warning signs means that we can recognize the early signs of an inappropriate relationship with a child. If we know the warning signs, then we can identify potential abuse before it happens.

A potential child molester:

- Discourages other adults from participating or monitoring.
- Always wants to be alone with children.
- Is more excited to be with children, often without permission.
- Goes overboard touching.
- Always wants to wrestle or tickle.
- Thinks the rules do not apply to them.
- Uses bad language or tells dirty jokes to children.
- Shows children pornography.

## Step Two—*Control Access*

Controlling access means that we are careful about whom we allow to work with our children. It also sends a message to potential child molesters that we are alert about child sexual abuse.

- Communicate the Church's commitment to keeping children safe.
- Use written, standard applications.
- Require criminal background checks.
- Conduct face-to-face interviews.
- Check references.

## Step Three—*Monitor all Programs*

Child molesters look for ways to spend time alone with children. If they know someone is watching, they have more trouble finding opportunities to abuse without getting caught.

- Identify secluded areas, lock empty rooms.
- Develop policies regarding use of secluded areas.
- Do not permit children to enter staff-only areas.
- Only meet with children in places visible to other adults.
- Supervisors should look in on activities.
- Make sure enough adults are involved in programs.
- Allows parents to drop in on programs.
- Don't start new programs without a review and approval process.
- Monitor young people's computer use.

## Step Four—*Be Aware*

Being aware means that parents and other caring adults should know what is going on in the lives of the children and young people in their care. When we observe and communicate with our children and youth, we are more likely to detect the signs that indicate they are in danger.

Parents and other adults who work or volunteer with children or youth should:

- Talk to them.
- Listen to them.
- Observe them.
- Let them know they can tell you anything.
- Teach about protecting themselves if someone tries to touch them or makes them uncomfortable.

Parents should also teach their children where their private body parts are and the correct anatomical names.

## Step Five—*Communicate Your Concerns*

Communicating concerns means telling someone when you are uncomfortable with a situation or if you suspect abuse. It means paying attention to your own feelings and not waiting until it is too late. Only by communicating our concerns can we use our knowledge to protect children. Even if abuse is not occurring, it is still important to let others know when you have concerns.

- Talk to the person involved, and/or
- Speak to their supervisor, and/or
- Notify a church official, and/or
- Call the police.







## Awareness

### Warning signs of a potential perpetrator are:

- Gives gifts without permission and often tells the children not to tell.
- Takes photographs of other people's children without permission or creates photo albums or journals of interactions with other people's children.
- Always wants to be alone with children. They discourage others from participating and they meet with children in secluded areas where they can't be monitored.
- They think the rules don't apply to them.
- Goes overboard touching children who are not their own.
- Lets children get away with things that their parents would not allow.
- Using sexually explicit jokes and sexual language and showing pornography.

### Action Items:

- Regularly check the Sex Offender Registry in your area.
- Have a healthy suspicion of all the adults who regularly interact with your children.
- Take action to make a difference in your parish, school, or organizational environment.

## Communication

Although we have come a long way in our fight against child sexual abuse, much remains to be done. In the *Keeping the Promise Alive* DVD, you will see many ways that parishes and schools from across the United States have successfully implemented the “Five Steps” from the original *Protecting God’s Children*® program and you will hear their success stories.

The video reminds us again that adults need to communicate any concerns they have about the behavior of another adult.

How do you communicate concerns?

1. Prepare by thinking through what you want to say.
2. Be specific about your concern.
3. Describe what made you uncomfortable.

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_



## Timely Response

What are some methods to effectively ensure a timely response?

1. Install a computerized locking system on the main entrances to church facilities.
2. Establish a review process that includes parishioners and staff.
3. Create a form for use in reviewing all programs before beginning a program.
4. Openly discuss safety issues.
5. At an event, make sure at least two adults wait with the last child during pick-up.

List other ways that you are working to prevent child sexual abuse in your parish, school, and/or home:

1. Place windows in doors to ensure open access.
2. Make sure computers are located in open areas.
3. Ensure that there is sufficient adult supervision in all programs.
4. Monitor Internet activity.
5. In all things, create an environment where observation and communication are the norm.





## Your Personal Commitment to Keeping the Promise Alive

We hope that the Keeping the Promise Alive program has taught you new and better ways to protect the children and youth in your care. Take a few minutes to reflect on what you have learned and then choose one or two changes that **God is calling you to personally commit to as we continue our journey to prevent child sexual abuse.**

Write your commitment(s) below:

I promise to help implement the following change(s) in my parish and/or school or community.

I promise to help implement the following change(s) in my home or neighborhood.

## **Additional Information: Communicating Concerns**

### ***How Can You Effectively Communicate Your Concerns? — Part 1***

Most people who attend a *Protecting God's Children*<sup>®</sup> awareness session understand that communicating concerns about risky behaviors directly to the person involved or the person's supervisor is the *right* thing to do. They understand that talking to anyone else, no matter what the justification or reason, is gossip and may cause irreparable harm. They also know that if *they* were doing something that caused concern, they would want to know so they would have an opportunity to correct their own behavior. Yet, we also know that it's difficult to initiate this type of conversation. With that in mind, here are some helpful suggestions.

Communicating to the individual involved or to that person's supervisor is the best way to handle a situation that causes you some concern about any behaviors that potentially place children in harm's way. When asked why people do not communicate directly to the person involved, among the most frequent answers are that the person does not want to risk being wrong about what they saw or heard, and does not want to risk retaliation for coming forward with suspicions. So, simply *knowing* the correct course of action doesn't make your response an easy one.

How do you communicate concerns effectively without compounding the existing problem or unnecessarily upsetting people? There are two important points to remember before you begin:

- What do you want to communicate? Think through the problem before bringing it up.
- Create a context or framework for the conversation.

#### **Think through what you want to communicate.**

When we see something that causes us concern or makes us feel uneasy, it is sometimes difficult to find the "right words" to use when we report our concerns. If you tell someone that you are concerned about his or her behavior, but you are not able to clearly describe the behavior, you are putting the other person in an uncomfortable position and likely, will make him or her angry. Before having such a conversation, think through what it is you want to say. Make sure you can explain to the person:

- Exactly what you saw;
- The reasons you were concerned; and,
- Why you are bringing this issue to him or her directly, instead of reporting it to his or her supervisor.

Communicating a concern is not an accusation of wrongdoing. Rather, it is an opportunity to allow someone to see a reflection of how he or she appears to others. By thinking through your communication and being sure about what you want to communicate, you can ensure that your message is clear and unambiguous.

## **Create a context or framework for the conversation.**

It is highly probable that someone will become offended and/or upset upon hearing that you are concerned about his or her behavior with children. While it is impossible to guarantee that someone will not get upset or not be offended, it is possible to minimize the risk of that reaction by creating a framework or context for having the conversation.

Any time you are getting ready to have a serious conversation, it is important to begin by talking about *why* the conversation is necessary. When people understand that the reason you bring up an issue is because of your concern for them, they may be able to hear what you say as a *contribution* rather than a *condemnation*.

Creating a context or framework for the conversation might include explaining that after participating in a Protecting God's Children awareness session, you realized how important it is for all of us to monitor our own behavior, as well as the behavior of others around us who interact with children. You might tell the other person that you have made some changes to your own behavior and that you have observed them engaging in certain behaviors that others might interpret as a warning sign... and that's the reason for having the conversation.

Take the time to establish the framework for the conversation. Let the person know that you are not accusing him or her of anything. Assure the person that you believe he or she has only the best of intentions, and that your fear is that he or she is engaging in certain behaviors "without thinking," and that those behaviors could place him or her or the children they care about in harm's way.

**Bottom Line:** Communicating our concerns can be challenging for each of us. No one wants to be the "bearer of bad news" or to be perceived as making accusations. However, if we can remind ourselves that *knowing* is better than not knowing, we can have the tough conversations we need to have with our co-workers and volunteers.

Trust your instincts, identify the nature of the concern, think through the conversation, and create a strong framework for the discussion. By thinking before you speak, chances are you will accomplish your goal to protect both the children and the generous, loving adults who work with them.

## ***How Can You Effectively Communicate Your Concerns? — Part 2***

Raising concerns about another person's behavior with children can be tricky business. And, as important as it is to communicate such a message, we sometimes find it difficult to do. In a recent article, we outlined the steps to take in preparation for having a difficult conversation with someone in your parish or school. In that article, we stressed the importance of thinking through the issue and creating a context or framework for the conversation— before you bring it up. In this article, part 2, we will talk about two more important aspects of communicating concerns:

1. Inviting others to monitor your behavior.
2. Following through on your communication.

### **Invite others to monitor your behavior**

Even before you notice behavior that raises concerns, you can create an environment where observation and communication are the norm—where keeping an eye out for each other supports our collective commitment to be powerful role models for children and to create safe environments for everyone. An effective way to set the stage for creating environments where all of God's children are safe is to ask others to keep an eye on your interactions with children and young people—to monitor your behavior with children.

While we are dedicated to bringing God's message to youngsters in a powerful and effective way, those of us who are committed to children and youth ministry are sometimes oblivious to the way our interactions with the young people in our programs can “look” to other people. If we are doing something in our ministry that gives others concern, we would want to know so we could take immediate corrective action with regard to our own behavior. By asking others to keep an eye on your interactions with children and young people, you are helping to set the stage for having your entire faith community approach abuse prevention more proactively.

When we invite observation and comment, we are assured that others will be paying attention and will notice anything that inadvertently creates concern. Some of the consequences of this action are:

- Others can see that our commitment to creating a safe environment is boundless and includes self-examination.
- Others have the chance to see that communicating concerns is a proactive way to deal with a potentially devastating issue.
- By inviting monitoring from parents, co-workers, and colleagues, we can help dispel the notion that adult observers are on a “witch hunt.”

When we invite others to monitor our behavior, we reaffirm that we are working together to find ways to eliminate all opportunities for a molester to gain access to the children in our community.



## **Follow through on the communication**

Remember, however, that the process doesn't end when we identify behavior that gives rise to a concern and communicate that concern to our supervisor. That's merely the beginning of the safe environment process. Real prevention requires ongoing and follow-up communication. To accomplish the goal of prevention, we must:

- Make sure that the concern was clearly communicated and understood.
- Follow-up with the person.

The easiest way to make sure that the concern was communicated clearly is to ask the person what they heard you say. Make sure that the message you intended to deliver was actually heard by the recipient. Taking this step assures both you and the person to whom you are communicating that any misconception or confusion will be cleared up immediately. This eliminates the possibility of unnecessary confusion and anger.

It is also important to remember that communication is not the end of the process. Communication is merely the beginning of *resolving* the issue. Once you are sure that the message was heard, give the person time to correct the unacceptable behavior and then follow-up with him or her to make sure he or she is, indeed, practicing appropriate behavior.

If you see a change in behavior as a result of the communication, acknowledge the person for taking the conversation in the spirit it was intended. If there is no change in the situation, don't be afraid to bring it up again, and again, and again—with the supervisor and the supervisor's supervisor until the matter is resolved to your satisfaction.

Establishing a commitment to safe environments means looking for the gaps in our programs that a child molester could exploit in order to gain access to children—and then removing those gaps. By monitoring each other's behavior and by effectively communicating our concerns to one another, we take major strides toward the ultimate goal of prevention.

### **Bottom line:**

When you advocate for an environment where each person invites everyone else to monitor his or her behavior, you are helping create a context for conversations—a context where concerns are effectively communicated, promptly discussed and addressed, and where follow-up monitoring and communication helps us to continuously improve the level of safety for all of God's children.

## ***How to Relay Communicated Concerns***

In two recent training bulletins, we discussed ways that you can put together a conversation to communicate concerns about someone's behavior without causing additional angst or creating more problems. In this article, we go one step further to discuss how someone in a supervisory capacity can have an effective conversation to relay the communicated concern.

Some of you may be thinking of skipping this article. After all, you are not "in charge" of anything at the parish. While it may seem to you that you are not in a position of responsibility, the issues

we will address are relevant to situations at work, at community events, in committee activities, or even for someone who is in charge of cleaning the kitchen after a church dinner. At some time or other, most of us have some responsibility for other adults who are working with us. This article is intended to help you be better prepared for those situations.

### **What should I do now?**

Someone has just come to you with a concern about another volunteer who is working with you on a project at the parish. You are certain that the person's concern is sincere and genuine and that the intention is to create a safer environment. However, the person whose behavior created the concern seems rather sensitive and unsure of herself. She is constantly asking for reinforcement about whether she is doing the right thing. You know that you need to communicate the concern to her, but you are stressed—because delivering this message could cause her to quit the volunteer program. What should you do now?