

# THE SHEPHERD



## HAPPY FALL!

"I am the good shepherd,  
and I know mine and  
mine know me,  
just as the  
Father knows me  
and I know the Father;  
and I will lay down my life  
for the sheep"  
~John 10: 14-15

As we begin this month of October, I ask each Safety Coordinator to take time to reflect on the start of the new school year. You may be the safety coordinator or principal of a school, or possibly the safety coordinator and catechist at your local parish. In your town, students may be going to school for in-person classes. In another town, students may be at home engaged in some type of remote learning. Whatever it may be today, it will likely change tomorrow.

You secured your volunteers for religious education classes, and they are current in their safe environment training and background checks. You are familiar with the new driving guidelines for parent drivers at our Catholic Schools. You have chosen what safe environment curriculum you will use with your students. You have visited with parents on the roll they will have in educating students this year, in some cases, parents will be teaching their children at home. You have turned in your certification status forms to the Safe Environment Office. You know precautions to take when using the Zoom platform to ensure that on-line ministry is both safe and holy.

You have purchased thermometers, masks, hand sanitizer, and Clorox wipes. You have asked the advice of everyone possible (and yes, everyone's answer was different). The road has been bumpy, but you press on.

Praise yourself for all the hard work you have done to get this far ensuring that the return to school and parish activities are safe, efficient and seamless for our children.

But, as staff and students return to school, **child abuse disclosures and reports will likely increase**. According to the US Department of Health and Human Services' 4th National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect, **teachers** identify and **report** more child abuse cases to child protection authorities than any other professionals—including doctors, hospital personnel, police and social service agencies.

As you continue the daily trials, being aware of these challenges and many others, along with the need to be flexible, and understanding, know that you are truly making a difference in the lives of your students. Your students need you and depend on you to provide an environment that is safe and healthy, (sometimes home is not a safe and supportive environment) not only during this unprecedented time, but every single day.

Thank you for the work you do, as we continue our mission; promise to protect pledge to heal.



**Reflection: God of love, we recognize Your presence in our journey together  
as we gather here for the start of this year in Your name.  
Open our minds to know Your voice. Open our hands to do Your work.  
And open our hearts to hold Your spirit. Amen**

All parishes and schools are reminded to place this announcement in their parish bulletins or school newsletters/websites quarterly, then provide the Safe Environment Office a copy for diocesan files.



Any allegation of the abuse of a minor,  
may be reported to the  
Kansas Protection Report Center  
800.922.5330  
KBI Crime Hotline  
800.572.7463  
or  
ClergyAbuse@kbi.ks.gov  
The Diocese of Salina fully  
participates in all criminal  
investigations related to  
abuse perpetrated by a member  
of the clergy or other church official.

For the safety of children and healing of  
those who have suffered abuse, the Diocese  
of Salina provides  
Hotline: 866.752.8855 #1067  
Website: [www.reportandprotect.com](http://www.reportandprotect.com)  
Email: [reportabuse@salinadiocese.org](mailto:reportabuse@salinadiocese.org)  
Reports will be responded  
to promptly by the  
Victim Assistance Coordinator.

*"Rescue me, Lord, from my foes,  
for I seek refuge in you."  
- Psalm 143:9*



Safe Environment Office  
Diocese of Salina

To report an incident of sexual abuse  
and related misconduct by a Bishop or  
Religious Superior currently  
or in the past,  
the Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting  
Services provides  
Hotline: 800.276.1562  
Website: [reportbishopabuse.org](http://reportbishopabuse.org)

All reports are confidential with the  
exception of those involving the abuse of  
minors which will be immediately reported  
by the Diocese to the proper authorities, as  
required by Kansas State Law and  
Diocesan Policy.

## NEWS AND NOTES from the Safe Environment Office



**A reminder to all Safety Coordinators of Schools:** A new process has been implemented (in addition to diocesan guidelines) for drivers who transport minors in their own private vehicles. These guidelines were sent to all principals through email. If you have any questions regarding this new process, please contact Geoff Andrews.

**As part of our efforts to protect minors,** the Diocese of Salina requires Safe Environment compliance on a *five-year cycle* for clergy, employees, and all volunteers working with minors. Safety Coordinators please be sure you are monitoring the CMGConnect data base *weekly* to ensure that all those ministering are in compliance, and if they are expired that they renew promptly.

**I have received a few questions on how** to proceed with the requirement of signing the "Acknowledgment Form/Appendix E". If you need suggestions on how to complete this new standard at your parish or school, please let me know.

**The updated** Safe Environment Program was distributed to parishes and school in July. If your parish or school did not receive a copy, please let me know. In the program, there is a section called *Frequently Asked Questions* that you may find helpful as you remain committed to ensure the safety of children and young people, who have been entrusted in our care in our parishes, schools, religious education classes, and other programs in our communities.

**An on-line survey was emailed** to *PARISH* Safety Coordinators at the beginning of September. If you have not filled it out yet, please do this by October 15th. I am trying to gather information from Safety Coordinators in terms of when and how (in-person, on-line, at home) they are starting Religious Education classes and how it relates to the Safe Environment Program. A big shout out to those who have already filled it out. Your feedback is very important as we continue to muddle our way through this pandemic and continue our mission; promise to protect, pledge to heal.

**The Diocese of Salina** will be launching a new website in October. I saw a sneak peek and I am sure you will find it visually appealing, user-friendly, and informative. The actual process should be seamless, but, please feel free to contact me once it has been launched if you can't find a particular "*safe environment document*", or you have any questions.

**Finally,** You have spent the last few months preparing to start school and begin religious education programs. You have implemented COVID safety measures to keep children safe and healthy and implemented the guidelines in the recent updated Safe Environment Policy regarding strategies and prevention of child abuse. This pandemic has turned our own personal lives upside down, everyday is a new challenge, you are overwhelmed, stressed, and exhausted. Try to take a break from the stress (turn off the news or take a break from social media) and engage in a healthy, soothing distraction. Pursue things that give you joy and hope. While this pandemic continues, draw on some personal strengths that have helped you in the past. Stick to your routine and seek support if you need to.

*Let us not grow tired of doing good, for in due time we shall reap our harvest, if we do not give up.*

*Galatians 6:9*

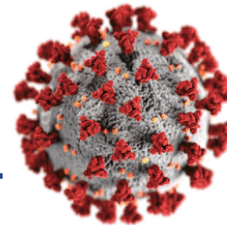
<p><b>PROMISE</b> To <b>Protect</b></p> <p>Wendy Backes Safe Environment Program Coordinator 785.827.8746 #24 wendy.backes@salinadiocese.org</p>	<p><b>Pledge</b> To <b>HEAL</b></p> <p>Maria Cheney Victim Assistance Coordinator 866.752.8855 #1067 reportabuse@salinadiocese.org</p>	<p>Kim Hoelting Human Resources Director 785.827.8746 #28 kim.hoelting@salinadiocese.org</p>
--	--	--



CATHOLIC DIOCESE  
of **SALINA**

# IMPACT OF COVID-19 on CHILD ABUSE

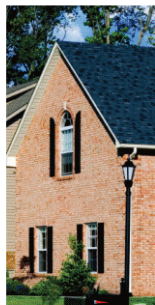
## Considerations for 2020-2021 School Year



### For Some Students:

- home is not a safe and supportive environment.
- may have faced neglect or abuse as a result of being in close proximity to caregivers for extended periods of time (without physical interaction with their service providers or schools.)
- the economic strain of the pandemic and mental/emotional strain can lead to an increase in violence in the home, including domestic violence and child sexual abuse
- they had different caregivers.
  - Grandmom is high risk for infection, so teen neighbor has been watching them.
  - Mom and/or Dad may be essential workers, so Uncle Bill has been coming over to the apartment.
- May lack access to food, shelter, friends, or support.

Source: Responding During the COVID19 Pandemic - State of Vermont



### RETURNING TO SCHOOL

While delayed disclosures are common among children, disclosures could increase upon return to school, BUT forensic interviewers say that disclosures could be delayed by an additional 6-9 months.

### Student Concerns May Be:

1. Should I be talking about this with all these new rules?  
Washing hands, masks, temperature taking, social distancing
2. Need to focus on learning.  
Missed so much school. Should focus only be on learning?
3. New year, new teacher?  
Is new teacher a Trusted Adult?
4. With social distancing restrictions, can I get close enough to tell the teacher I need to speak to someone privately?
5. Availability of one-on-one access?  
Existing Policies & Procedures/New Social Distancing guidelines
6. Who do I talk to?  
New school year/new grade level/maybe new school?

### Suggestions for Teachers:

Quick Refresher for teachers on mandated reporting.  
Warn teachers that trauma from abuse may increase due to:

- Isolation of Staying Home
- Fear of threats not to tell
- The act of abuse
- Home discourse/stress



### Related Issues

1.5 Billion Students worldwide have been home from school since March 2020; many will continue to be.

- More children active online and on social media as a result of isolation.
- Much time online unsupervised
- Global reports of suspected abuse to NCMEC's Cybertipline up 106% compared to March, 2019.
- 89% fewer child abuse images removed from Internet
- Knowing this, distributors using mainstream platforms, grooming & exploiting kids, 90% new images are GIRLS.

NCMEC = Nat'l Center for Missing & Exploited Children

### Insight from Child Advocacy Center\*

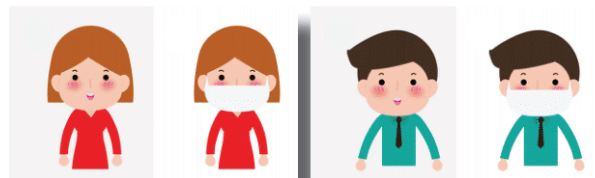
Majority of child abuse reports come from schools.

- Covid-19 school closures impacted reports:
  - April, 2020 – down 75%
  - May, 2020 – down 50%
  - Summer – typically low because kids are not connected to teachers/school support
- Most forensic interviews happening right now are delayed disclosure from past abuse (months or yrs)
- Increased forensic interviews of teens sneaking out to meet older guys in their 20's and experiencing sexual assault.

\*Holly's House CAC, Evansville, IN

### Recommendations for Helping Students

- Announce availability of help for any student.
- Specifically mention neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, food & housing insecurity.
- Introduce the person to whom students can talk;
  - If wearing masks, may want to introduce the person (counselor, nurse) behind glass window without mask on, or have the adult hold up a photo of themselves w/o a mask on.
  - Much friendlier face without the mask on – and the child can make the connection to the "friendlier face".



- Conversely, teens seem to take comfort in the semi-anonymity of mask wearing during disclosure/forensic interview.
- Let students know school staff is there for them – right now and at any time in the future.
- If something did happen to a student during COVID-19 Stay Home/Stay Safe, let them know:
  - they are not the only one and it was not their fault.
  - caring adults are available to help them feel safe again and begin to heal.

Created in collaboration with Molly A. Rivers, MHA, DCFI, Associate Director/Forensic Interviewer, Holly's House in Evansville, IN.

By Jennifer Mitchell and Rosemary Webb, Co-Presidents and National Personal Safety Experts

Child Lures Prevention/Teen Lures Prevention | 5166 Shelburne Road | Shelburne, VT 05482 | 1-800-552-2197