MISSION STATEMENT
In light of Church documents, Catholic schools in the Diocese of Reno, in partnership with parents, are committed to fostering gospel values, academic excellence and life-long service in a faith-centered community.

Video: https://www.usccb.org/resources/april-national-child-abuse-prevention-month
To learn more about Protecting God’s Children-Safe Environment in the Diocese of Reno, please visit our website:
https://renodiocese.org/safe-environment/ or contact:

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PROMISE TO PROTECT
PLEDGE TO HEAL
“Words cannot fully express my sorrow for the abuse you suffered.”
—Pope Francis
APRIL Is Child Abuse Prevention Month

Every April, Catholic parishes and schools across the United States participate in National Child Abuse Prevention Month.

The Effects of ABUSE

When a child is abused, the effects are grave and can last a lifetime. Some of the most common effects of abuse include:

- Loss of faith and trust in God.
- Post-traumatic stress disorder, psychological distress, and other indirect signs of trauma, such as anxiety, trouble sleeping, chronic stomach pain, and headaches.
- A greater risk of developing behavioral problems, substance abuse, and suicide.

The sense of violation goes deep into a person’s psyche and feelings of anger, shame, hurt, and betrayal can build long after the abuse has taken place.

Steps to Prevent ABUSE

Communicate with Your Children

It is extremely important to communicate openly with your children. Let them know that they can talk to you about anything that bothers them. This will help you identify warning signs and grooming behaviors perpetrated by offenders before they escalate to abuse.

Educate Yourself and Your Children on Abuse

Learning how to identify, prevent, and report abuse is key. Parents and guardians should empower their children to protect themselves from harm and to report abuse. Ask your diocesan safe environment coordinator or parish delegate about opportunities for safe environment training.

Identify and Report Warning Signs of Child Abusers

Grooming behaviors are the actions abusers take to project the image that they are kind, generous, caring people, while their intent is to lure a minor into an inappropriate relationship. Offenders can be patient and may groom their victim, his or her family, or community for years.

Some abusers isolate a potential victim by giving him or her undue attention or lavish gifts, while others allow young people to participate in activities which their parents or guardians would not approve, such as watching pornography, drinking alcohol, using drugs, and excessive touching, such as wrestling and tickling. Abusers also often try to isolate their victims from family or friends and encourage their victims to keep secrets from their parents or other caring adults.

Holding Offenders ACCOUNTABLE

To help hold offenders accountable, report all suspected abuse to local public authorities. You can also contact your local diocesan victim assistance coordinator to make a report and seek outreach for the abused.

In accordance with diocesan policy, when a single act of sexual abuse is admitted or established, the offender is to be removed permanently from ministry.

"Let it be clear that before these abominations the Church will spare no effort to do all that is necessary to bring to justice whosoever has committed such crimes . . . . To those who abuse minors I would say this: convert and hand yourself over to human justice, and prepare for divine justice."

—Pope Francis, Dec. 21, 2018
Every child deserves a safe environment.

Ministry to children and young people is a privilege, not a right.

The sexual abuse of minors is a crime and a grave sin.

In accordance with diocesan policy, when a single act of sexual abuse is admitted or established, the offender is to be removed permanently from ministry.

To help hold offenders accountable, report all abuse to local public authorities. You can also contact your local diocesan victim assistance coordinator to make a report and seek outreach for the abused.
5 FIVE WAYS to protect your children from sexual abuse

1. Keep it practical. Teach your children the differences between safe touches and unsafe touches.

2. Tell your children that saying “no” is okay. Empower your children to say “no” if anyone makes them feel uncomfortable or touches them inappropriately.

3. Give your children a way to alert you. Tell your children they can use an excuse or share a special “code-word” with you to alert you about an unsafe person or situation.

4. Tell your children to report an unsafe touch. Let your children know they should tell you if they feel uncomfortable or unsafe around any adult or peer. You can also identify other adults they can tell about unsafe touches.

5. Tell your children you trust them. If your child makes a report to you, believe him or her. Tell them it is not their fault and that you love them. Immediately bring the allegation to the attention of public authorities.

Promise to Protect Pledge to Heal

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Ten Tips for Protecting Children and Offering Outreach to Victims/Survivors

1. **Sexual abuse is about the victim.**
   Many people are affected by abuse but the individual most impacted is the victim who has suffered a violation of trust that can affect his or her entire life.

2. **The residual effects of having been abused can last a lifetime.**
   The sense of violation goes deep into a person’s psyche and feelings of anger, shame, hurt and betrayal can build long after the abuse has taken place. Those who have been abused can heal, but if often takes time, therapy, and the support of loved ones.

3. **No one has the right to have access to children.**
   No one, no matter who they are, has an automatic right to be around children or young people who are in the care of the Church without proper screening and without following the rules.

4. **Common sense is not all that common.**
   Dioceses, schools, parishes, and especially families, must educate themselves and others on how to protect children.

5. **Child sexual abuse can be prevented.**
   It is critical to build safety barriers around children and young people to keep them from harm—such as protective guardians, codes of conduct, background evaluations, policies and procedures, and safety training programs.

6. **Feeling heard leads toward healing.**
   Relief from hurt and anger often comes when one feels heard, when one’s pain and concerns are taken seriously, and a victim/survivor’s suffering, pain, and anger are acknowledged.

7. **You cannot always predict who will be an abuser.**
   Experience shows that most abuse is committed by someone who has gained the trust of a victim/survivor and his/her family.

8. **There are behavioral warning signs of child abusers.**
   Some abusers isolate a potential victim by giving him or her undue attention or lavish gifts, others allow young people to participate in activities which their parents or guardians would not approve, such as watching pornography, drinking alcohol, using drugs, and excessive touching, such as wrestling and tickling.

9. **People can be taught to identify grooming behavior.**
   Grooming behaviors are the actions which abusers take to project the image that they are kind, generous, caring people, while their intent is to lure a minor into an inappropriate relationship. Offenders can be patient and may groom their victim, his or her family, or community for years.

10. **Background checks are important.**
    Background checks in churches, schools and other organizations keep predators away from children both because they scare off some predators and because they uncover past actions which should ban an adult from working or volunteering with children.
Watch for These Warning Signs of Abuse in Minors

- No longer wants to see a particular person they had been close to
- Declining academic performance
- Tries to hide use of technology
- No longer interested in activities they used to enjoy
- Changes in personality
- Demonstrates aggressive behavior or constantly angry
- Tries to get minors alone
- Withdraws from family or friends
- Committed physical and emotional boundary violations
- Allows or encourages minors to break laws or rules
- Keeps secrets with minors
- Gives lavish gifts to minors
- Is overly interested in spending time with minors
- Has inappropriate or suggestive conversations with minors
- Does not believe the rules apply to them (or, does not follow rules or protocols)
- Takes photos without approval, or asks minors to send them photos

... and These Warning Signs of Perpetrators
Students, parents and faculty throughout Nevada now have access to SafeVoice, an anonymous reporting system used to report threats to the safety or well-being of students. SafeVoice was established by the Nevada Department of Education under SB 212 in 2017 to protect student wellness, prevent violence and save lives.

In partnership with the Nevada Department of Public Safety, the SafeVoice program provides students a safe place to submit tips concerning their own safety or that of others. A fully trained professional team of experts responds in an appropriate manner 24/7/365. Tips always stay anonymous.