Safe Environment Training for Children and Youth

Parent Information Letter

Dear Parents / Guardians of Students:

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. The safety of your child(ren) is always a priority to us. Therefore, Safe Environment education is incorporated into EVERY Catholic school and religious education program EVERY year.

Safe Environment education for children focuses on identifying appropriate physical, emotional, and spiritual boundaries. All children are reminded that they are loved and valued by God and the Church. In addition, it reinforces the important message that children and youth are able to talk to trusted adults if they or anyone they know are being hurt.

This year the Safe Environment lessons for Saint John XXIII students will be integrated into the classes during the months of November and December.

In **Kindergarten through 5th grades,**  the lessons will be 20 minutes of a class period.

**Grades 7 through 12** willutilize lessons that have been incorporated into the Catholic school classes.

In **6th grade,** the **NEW** **TWO-PART** **lesson plan based program, "Created in God's Image for Youth",** will be utilized to teach boundaries. This is a change from the video program that we have used over the past several years. Parents, as the primary educators of the Church, have the option to present this material to your child directly. If you choose to present this material yourself rather than having it provided at school, please inform the school coordinator (Mrs. Hepsen) and the lesson plans will be provided to assist you. Your child may then go to another classroom on the day the program is offered. If your child is absent on the day the Safe Environment program is presented, you will be asked to sign an acknowledgement letter that you received the material.

If you have any questions, contact your child’s homeroom teacher via email or call the Diocesan Safe Environment Training Office at 602-354-2418.

Together, we can work towards the elimination of child sexual abuse.

Sincerely,

*Mary Hepsen, M.Ed., M.S.Ed.*

*Certified School Psychologist*

*Safe Environment Coordinator*

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| **General Overview for Parents** |

Every person is created in the image and likeness of God. Every child is loved by God and must know of the love that they are created in.

**BOUNDARY DEFINITION** Something that marks a limit, like a fence or the lines on a basketball court.

Each person has the right and responsibility to state when a boundary is being violated.

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| **3 TYPES OF BOUNDARIES** | **EXAMPLES OF BOUNDARY VIOLATIONS** |
| **Physical**   * Who can touch you * How much they can touch you * Where they can touch you | **Physical**   * Inappropriate massages and wrestling by adults * Adults touching private areas * Inappropriate kissing |
| **Emotional**   * How close you feel to a person * How much time you spend with   a person   * What information you share with   a person | **Emotional**   * Inappropriate questions about minors sexuality * Asking too personal of questions * Adult approaching minors inappropriately on phones, text, the internet |
| **Behavioral**   * The things you will do * The things you will not do | **Behavioral**   * Giving minors beer, drugs,   pornography   * Asking students to keep secrets from parents |

**REINFORCE through regular conversations**

* When abuse or a boundary violation occurs, it is the adult that is in the wrong; it is never the child's fault.
* If a child is ever uncomfortable with the actions of an adult they need to tell a trusted adult and keep telling until they are heard.
* Who to trust?

❖ Parent, family member, teacher, pastor, catechist, youth minister

* That they understand they will always be loved no matter what they tell you
* What is the difference between keeping secrets and holding a surprise

Diocese of Phoenix Safe Environment Curriculum

Adapted from Praesidium inc. "Called to Protect for YouthTM"