



Safe Environment Principles

Being safe in the time of Covid 19

With our schools and religious education programs rising to the challenge of providing education remotely, questions about safe environment have surfaced. Our safe environment guidelines can be used in any situation by remembering the principles. Caring adults can prevent child sexual abuse by keeping their eyes and ears open to suspicious activity and they know how to report suspicious activity.

Our **Plan to Protect** program implements safety mechanisms that send a message to all abusers and potential abusers: Child abuse is not tolerated. Children are vigilantly protected. Victims are listened to, heard, and shielded from further abuse. Offenders are identified and punished. That plan counts on adults to:

1. Know the warning signs: Both parents and teachers can be aware of online grooming behaviors. They differ than face to face but are similar in that they deceive the subject into believing they can be trusted. Watch for an abundance of compliments and emotional manipulation. Report such conversations.

For more information, check these sites:

<https://protect.archchicago.org/children-matter-network/resources>

<https://www.missingkids.org/blog/2020/child-online-safety>

2. Control access: Every teacher and employee has an archchicago.org email address. With no exception, the only email used to communicate with a student is to be a school or arch address. Parents can reinforce this by deleting all emails from nonprofessional email addresses.

3. Monitor activity: All communications are to be professional. That does not change if it is done through modern technology (i.e.) FaceTime, Zoom, Canvas, Teams, etc. Parents must be aware of all sessions and approve the sessions. Under no circumstances is it appropriate for a teacher and student to have a one-on-one conversation without the knowledge of a parent. By modeling appropriate, professional behavior teachers/catechists can help parents and students see the difference between appropriate conversation between a teacher and student and that which is inappropriate.

4. Be aware of children/youth behavior: No matter how much students may say they hate school, it provided a consistent pattern. Some have counted on that pattern for 12 years; other for less than 1 year. As teachers are working to maintain that consistency, be aware of changes in personality, behaviors, etc. Report any concerns.

5. Communicate your concerns: It means precisely that. If you know or suspect a child is abused or in danger, contact DCFS at 800-25-Abuse or 911 if the danger is immediate. Even if the behavior doesn't raise to the level of notifying civil authorities but it concerns you, communicate it directly to the person or to someone who can do something about it, such as a supervisor. If you are hesitant, *put the child in the center of the room and make the best decision for that child.*

Well informed, caring adults can make a difference.

See something. Say something.