

APRIL

National

CHILD ABUSE

PREVENTION MONTH



**Diocese of Gary – Safe Environment
Child Abuse Prevention Month Resource
April 2025**



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Introduction

April is designated National Child Abuse Prevention Month. Child Abuse Prevention Month has been observed each April since its first presidential proclamation in 1983. We are called through scripture and teaching to protect the life and dignity of the human person. Throughout the year, but especially in the month of April, all are asked to increase awareness, to educate ourselves and the community, and to seek healing for those who have been so tragically impacted by this horror.

Please see attached some resources that can be incorporated throughout the month of April to observe National Child Abuse Prevention Month.



Click [this link](#) for a video from the USCCB on Child Abuse Prevention Month

Click [this link](#) for the USCCB Child and Youth Protection Facts and Figures Sheet



PRAYERS FOR THE HEALING OF ABUSE VICTIMS



Mindful that Jesus' resurrection transforms all who believe, we as church embrace our shared responsibility to protect our children and youth, and to ensure that they grow up knowing they are safe and loved. In solidarity with those victims who have endured the pain of abuse, we re-dedicate ourselves to their healing by increasing our own awareness and understanding, by contributing to the safe environment and practices of our church, and by extending our efforts out into the world.



Conscientes de que la resurrección de Jesús transforma a todos los que creen, nosotros, como iglesia, aceptamos nuestra responsabilidad compartida de proteger a nuestros niños y jóvenes, y asegurarnos de que crezcan sabiendo que son seguros y amados. En solidaridad con aquellas víctimas que han sufrido el dolor del abuso, nos re-dedicamos a la sanación en creciendo nuestra propia conciencia y comprensión, contribuyendo al ambiente seguro y las prácticas de nuestra iglesia, y extendiendo nuestros esfuerzos hacia el mundo.





A PRAYER FOR HEALING VICTIMS OF ABUSE

Holy Spirit, comforter
of hearts,

heal your people's wounds
and transform brokenness
into wholeness.

Grant us the courage
and wisdom,

humility and grace, to act
with justice.

Breathe wisdom into our
prayers and labors.

Grant that all harmed by
abuse may find peace
in justice.

We ask this through
Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

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UNA ORACIÓN DE SANACIÓN VÍCTIMAS DE ABUSO

Espíritu Santo, consolador de
corazones,

Cura las heridas de tus hijos
e hijas

Y devuelve la integridad a lo
que ha sido quebrantado.

Concédenos el valor y la
sabiduría,

La humildad y la gracia, para
actuar con justicia.

Sopla tu sabiduría en nuestras
oraciones y empeños.

Que todos los que han sido
heridos por el abuso
encuentren paz y justicia.

Te lo pedimos por Cristo,
nuestro Señor.

Amén.

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CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION BLESSING



CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION BLESSING

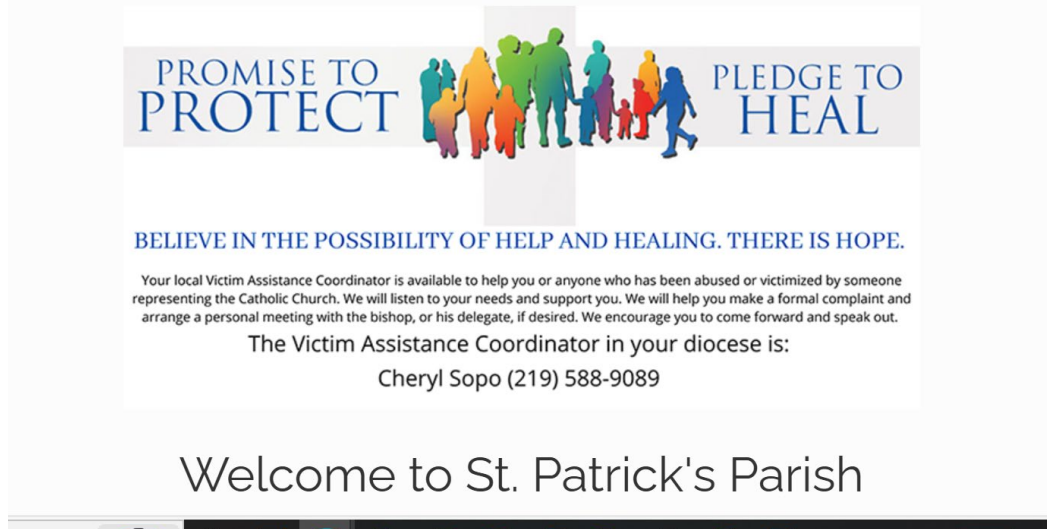
Dear Lord, We ask You to bless us “Your holy people” who have gathered to learn new ways to help stop child sexual abuse. Open our hearts to Your call to be the “eyes, ears and voice of children and young people everywhere.” Give us the vision and grace we need to fulfill the special “commitments” that each of us has made to “Protecting All God’s Children” in our homes, churches, schools and communities. Amen.



In 2008, Prevent Child Abuse America introduced the pinwheel as a new national symbol for child abuse prevention through Pinwheels for Prevention®. The pinwheel by its very nature, connotes whimsy and childhood and has come to serve as the physical embodiment, or reminder, of the great childhoods we want for all children.

A look at how Safe Environment is promoted in our Diocese

From the website of St. Patrick's Parish, Chesterton:



PROMISE TO PROTECT

PLEDGE TO HEAL

BELIEVE IN THE POSSIBILITY OF HELP AND HEALING. THERE IS HOPE.

Your local Victim Assistance Coordinator is available to help you or anyone who has been abused or victimized by someone representing the Catholic Church. We will listen to your needs and support you. We will help you make a formal complaint and arrange a personal meeting with the bishop, or his delegate, if desired. We encourage you to come forward and speak out.

The Victim Assistance Coordinator in your diocese is:
Cheryl Sopo (219) 588-9089

Welcome to St. Patrick's Parish

From the website of Queen of All Saints:

Safe Environment



The Bishops' Charter for the Protection of God's Children and Youth adopted in 2002 is in full effect throughout the Diocese of Gary.

- The diocesan safe environment program, which includes a written code of conduct is found in the [APPENDIX PAGES of the school handbook](#).
- The safe environment program will include mandatory training relating to the prevention, identification and response for **parents, volunteers, and others who have contact with youth**. Background checks **must** be conducted on all adults who have contact with children. **EVERY ADULT WISHING TO WORK IN ANY CAPACITY WITH CHILDREN, ARE REQUIRED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS TRAINING PROGRAM.** Training dates and times will be announced.

The Diocese of Gary uses the "VIRTUS" program as the safe environment program. NO OTHER PROGRAM IS CONSIDERED ACCEPTABLE. The safe environment program also includes training programs for children and young people that include "age appropriate" materials pertaining to personal safety. To learn more about the Virtus program and obtain a list of training dates, please call our VIRTUS Coordinator **Julia Zerbes at juliaz@qas.org**



From the website of St. Stanislaus School, East Chicago:



SAINT
STANISLAUS
SCHOOL

About Us Admissions Academics

Virtus Online

Home > Resources > Virtus Online

Any adult volunteering/working in our school **must** be VIRTUS compliant.

Interested...?...

Want instructions on how to register for our VIRTUS training/class? Simply click [HERE](#).

To view the official website for VIRTUS online click [HERE](#).

COMMITTED TO PROTECTING YOUTH AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

The Human Resource/Safe Environment Office is dedicated to providing service and guidance. If you have a matter to discuss or report regarding the protection of youth and vulnerable adults, please contact:

- Cheryl Sopo – Victim Assistance Coordinator (219) 588-9089
- Kelly Venegas – Chief Human Resources Officer and Bishop McClory's Delegate for Sexual Misconduct Cases (219) 769-9292 ext. 88224 or kvenegas@dcgary.org
- Kathy Lafakis – Safe Environment Coordinator (219) 769-9292 ext. 88280 or klafakis@dcgary.org



Diocese of Gary
dcgary.org

From the website of St. Thomas More School:



St. Thomas More School
MUNSTER, IN

[Home](#) [About Us](#) [Faith](#) [Admissions](#) [Parents](#) [Community Heroes](#) [Staff](#)

Inquir



Make a Difference in the future of your child!

ADMISSIONS

[Request Information & Apply -](#)

[Request Information](#)

[How To Apply](#)

[Tuition & Assistance](#)

- Positive school culture
- Newly upgraded security/ mandatory VIRTUS (Safe Student Environment) training for all volunteers
- Fully accredited by the State of Indiana and Cognia (previously known as AdvancEd)

From the website of St. Michael School:

Safe Environment Programs (SEP)

Churches, schools and youth organizations are required by law in most states to ensure that children and youth who worship, study, or participate in activities sponsored therein can do so in the safest and most secure setting possible. Parents and caretakers must have confidence in these institutions before they will allow their children to become involved with the “Safe Environment Programs” designed to assist institutions in instilling that confidence are encouraged by insurance and risk management companies as well.

The *Charter for the Protecting of Children and Youth* also requires that dioceses/eparchies establish “Safe Environment Programs.” Article 12 of the Charter states:

“Diocese/eparchies will establish “Safe Environment Programs.” They will cooperate with parents, civil authorities, educators, and community organizations to provide education and training for children, youth, parents, ministers, educators, and others about ways to make and maintain a safe environment for children. Diocese/eparchies will make clear to clergy and members of the community the standards of conduct for clergy and other persons in position of trust with regard to sexual abuse.”

In addition, Article 13 states:

“Dioceses/eparchies will evaluate the background of all diocesan/eparchial and parish personnel who have regular contact with minors. Specifically, they will utilize the resources of law enforcement and other community agencies.”

Please save the date for the 35th Annual IUN Forum on Child
Abuse and Neglect

Friday, April 25, 2025

8:30 AM to 4:00 PM

Indiana University Northwest

Thank you!

Thank you for all that you do to ensure compliance. Not only do your efforts help ensure we have safe adults working with our children and teens, it also ensures that those same adults can become properly equipped to spot signs of abuse and respond appropriately.