

**Office for Child Protection
Catholic Social Services
2011 - 2012
Bulletin Points**

Please note: For your convenience, the bulletin points have been arranged by topic this year. Please contact the Office for Child Protection (508) 674-4681 if you have other suggestions for making this list more useful to you. Thank you!

General Information

1. The Office for Child Protection is responsible for overseeing sexual abuse response and reporting, counseling, pastoral care, prevention training and education and compliance. If you would like to learn more about how the Diocese of Fall River is working to keep your children safe, please call Debora Jones at (508) 674-4681. Also, if you or anyone you know has been a victim of sexual abuse by a Diocesan employee, please contact Arlene McNamee, Victim Coordinator, at (508) 674-4681.
2. The Office for Child Protection (OCP) has made a number of changes to its website in the past year. Please see the Catholic Social Services website at www.cssdioc.org. It has links to many resources for parents and professionals as well as Diocesan information. Debora welcomes your feedback and ideas for the website. Please contact her at (508) 674-4681.
3. Before any parent or caretaker can participate in field trips, class supervision, or any type of volunteer activities with minors other than the adult's own child, that adult MUST complete a training session and have a current, clear CORI. Please check with your DRE to make sure you are ready to go. Some parents have had to miss field trips because they could not get CORIs back in time. Don't miss your child's events because you have an out of date CORI!
4. Please remember that in addition to having a current CORI, you must have completed the Fall River Diocese's abuse prevention training before you can work with children in a volunteer or employment setting. You can attend one of the weekly trainings offered at Catholic Social Services (see www.cssdioc.org for information or call Debora at 508-674-4681), or you can attend a training at conducted by your DRE. No one who has not been trained may work with children, and training times at CSS are not flexible, so plan early and call to register.
5. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops created the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. The Charter directs the creation of Safe Environment programs for children, as well as healing for victims/survivors of sexual abuse. If you would like more information about the Charter, please visit www.fallriverdiocese.org or call Debora Jones at (508) 674-4681.
6. If you would like more information about how the Diocese is responding to the crisis of sexual abuse, please visit our website at www.fallriverdiocese.org. Here, you will find information on how to report an incident of abuse, on Diocesan policies and procedures,

and the Code of Conduct for all employees, clergy and volunteers. You can also see the website for Catholic Social Services of Fall River at www.cssdioc.org, where you will find links for this information and more under the “Protecting God’s Children” portion of the agency’s website. There are articles written by national leaders on the efforts that continue to ensure the safety of your children.

Victim Assistance/Safe Environment

7. The Diocese of Fall River is committed to the process of help and healing for victims and survivors of sexual abuse by any Diocesan employee. The victim assistance coordinator is available to help victims/survivors make a formal complaint of abuse to the diocese, arrange a personal meeting with the Bishop, and to obtain resources and support for the needs of the individuals and families. If you or anyone you know has been a victim of sexual abuse by a clergy member, please contact, Arlene McNamee, Victim Assistance Coordinator at (508) 674-4681.
8. The Diocese of Fall River continues to offer Safe Environment programs to ensure the safety and security of all children as they participate in church and religious activities. Safe Environment programs require background checks, training, and codes of conduct for employees and volunteers who work with young people. It also includes outreach and education for parents. If you would like more information about Safe Environment programs, please call Debora Jones at (508) 674-4681.

Boundaries

9. The Office for Child Protection would like to remind those in ministry with our children to maintain appropriate boundaries at all times, including physical, emotional, and social boundaries. If you would like more information about what types of interactions are appropriate, or how to deal with the discovery of inappropriate interactions, please call Debora Jones at (508) 674-4681
10. Please remember to maintain appropriate boundaries at all times with our youth. Grooming is one of the things that has been on the rise in recent years. Grooming is the process of gradually creating a close, trusting relationship with a minor (and sometimes the minor’s parents) for the adult’s own purposes and gratification. If you would like more information about how to identify or report this type of behavior, please call Debora Jones at (508) 674-4681.

Abuse/Sexual Abuse

11. When a child discloses abuse in particular, there are very specific ways in which to respond, and any other responses can cause a child to shut down, perhaps never to try again to report abuse. If you are interested in learning more about what to do if/when a child discloses abuse to you, please contact the Office for Child Protection (506) 674-4681 or read the resource article at www.cssdioc.org in the Child Protection Resources section.
12. Abuse of children takes many forms, including physical, emotional and sexual. Knowing the signs of abuse and neglect can give you the information you need to help a child live a

life free of abuse or neglect. For more information on the physical and emotional signs of abuse and neglect, please visit the Catholic Social Services website at www.cssdioc.org (Child Protection Resources section) or call Debora Jones at (508) 674-4681.

13. Did you know that there are many forms of sexual abuse? Sexual abuse occurs when an adult caretaker has *any* sexual contact with a child. Sexual exploitation and molestation are also considered abuse. If you know of any child being sexually abused, please call DCF. If you would like to learn more about what constitutes sexual abuse, please call Debora Jones at (508) 674-4681.
14. Did you know that there is no “typical” sexual abuse offender? They come from all walks of life, all professions, all races/ethnicities, all levels of income and all geographic areas. There is no easy way to spot an abuser, so parents must be aware of their children’s activities and friends and be vigilant about personal safety. To learn more about how to keep your child safe, please call Debora Jones at (508) 674-4681.
15. Did you know that the majority of sexual abusers of children are not strangers at all? Most of those who abuse young children (75%) are known to the children, making the abuse even more confusing and traumatic for the child and the family. If you would like more information about how to protect your child, please call Debora Jones at (508) 674-4681.
16. Some diocesan communities have recently dealt with issues of registered sex offenders in the community or even living near the schools. There are sources of information about any registered sex offenders your neighborhood, as well information about what to do if you learn that a registered sex offender is nearby. For more information, please visit the Catholic Social Services website at www.cssdioc.org or please call Debora Jones at (508) 674-4681.
17. There are many types of information available to parents and caretakers about sexual abuse as well as abuse in general. Some of this information is not suitable for young children, and is therefore kept in a secure location in the parish office. If you would like copies of any safety or prevention materials, please contact the parish office or the DRE.

Internet Safety

18. Did you know that sexual exploitation, abuse and other forms of child endangerment can start or be conducted via the Internet? Adults who seek contact with children over the Internet for sexual satisfaction may pretend to be the same age as the child and may even try to initiate an in-person meeting with your child. Your child could be innocently posting photos on social networking sites that give predators clues to finding your address and accessing your child! For information on how to keep your child safe, please call Debora Jones at (508) 674-4681 or email at djones@cssdioc.org.
19. Children can benefit greatly from being online for learning and fun, but they can also be targets of exploitation in this, as in any other environment. Predators may use email, chat rooms, and social networking sites as a way to contact children and send them sexual solicitations or to share sexual materials. If you would like to learn about ways of keeping your child safe from Internet abuse, please call Debora Jones at (508) 674-4681.

20. Child pornography is widely available now and is even found on the computers of children in the lower grades. If you find child pornography on any computer, DO NOT forward it to anyone. Doing so constitutes a federal offense that could cause you problems. If you do find anything questionable on a flash drive, disk or other technology, contact the proper authorities, who will help you address the problem in a safe way. Good resources are your local police or the Office for Child Protection at (508) 674-4681.
21. Online sexual exploitation is a serious problem. Approximately 1 in 5 children is sexually solicited online. Please visit the Catholic Social Services website: www.cssdioc.org and go to the “Protecting God’s Children” main page. There, you will find many resources for Internet safety and other topics. Or, if you have questions, please call Debora Jones at (508) 674-4681.
22. There is a NEW danger with regard to SmartPhones. If you take a photo on your phone while the GPS function is enabled, then post the photo online, anyone who can see the photo can potentially find out the address and even floor plan of the location where the photo was taken. This creates a huge opportunity for offenders who want to stalk and kidnap a child. Please check your phone settings and disable GPS before taking photos that are posted online. For more information, call Debora Jones at (508) 674-4681.

Parenting

23. Good communication and trust between parents and children is one of the strongest tools available to keep children safe from all kinds of abuse. Know where your child is at all times; know your child’s friends and the friends’ parents, and the homes your child may visit. Most importantly, give your child the freedom and support to talk to you about any topic. When you have this kind of trust with your child, you are much more likely to be in a position to prevent possible abuse or suicide. If you would like more information on this topic, please call Debora Jones at (508) 674-4681.
24. Listen to your children! If a child feels uncomfortable around a relative or friend whom you trust, do not dismiss the concern. Spend time talking with your child about the reasons for the discomfort and no matter what you think about the adult, be willing to “hear” your child. This is one key way in which you can create the trust that allows for other important conversations, such as avoiding drugs and alcohol. And you just might find out that there was good reason for your child’s concern. Better to be safe than sorry! If you would like more information on how to handle such situations, please visit the Catholic Social Services website at www.cssdioc.org or call Debora Jones at (508) 674-4681.
25. In today’s busy world, supervising children can be a challenge and it can be too easy to think that older children are fine when left to their own devices. Supervision, particularly of Internet activity, is crucial to ensure your child’s safety. Keep your family computer in an open area, where you can monitor your child’s activities. Never let a child use a computer in a bedroom if at all possible—there are simply too many dangerous possibilities when children are online in an unsupervised situation. For more information, please contact the Office for Child Protection at (508) 674-4681.

26. Good parenting also means taking time for yourself, whether it's a date night, a weekend getaway, or carving enough out of your budget for something that is for you and not the kids. Treating yourself brings balance to your life and helps to refresh you for the demands of daily parenting. So, while taking great care of your children, don't forget to take care of yourself as well. You'll be a happier, healthier and better parent for it! For more ideas on how to balance your needs with those of your entire family, contact the Office for Child Protection at (508) 674-4681 or see the resources at www.cssdioc.org. . God bless you in the important work of parenting!

Children's Health Issues

27. Bullying is a common occurrence among children today and can have a serious impact on your child's physical and emotional health. The best protection that parents and caregivers can provide is education and intervention. Bullying is a form of violence and not a rite of passage! Online bullying also occurs, so parents and caretakers should monitor Internet usage as well as behaviors. If your child is the victim or the perpetrator of bullying, the consequences can be dire. To learn more about how to prevent and/or address bullying, please call Debora Jones at (508) 674-4681.
28. Please remember that bullying is a learned behavior and is NOT about conflict between the victim and the bully. It's about the bully's utter contempt for another human being, so getting them to "make nice" will not work. If you have a child who is either the bully or the victim, or you would like to know more about bullying, please contact Debora Jones at (508) 674-4681.
29. If you fear that your child may be a victim of bullying via texting or cell phone messages, a good way to find out is to keep the child's cell phone in your bedroom for a night or two and recharge it there. You may be surprised at the texts or calls that come in during the wee hours of the morning. If so, you will certainly want to get help for your child to stop the bullying.
30. Schools in MA now have policies about bullying, including documentation and reporting of such incidents, as well as requirements for dealing with the situation. If you are unaware of the existing policies, please contact your child's school and be aware and prepared. You never know when you might need this information and it is also an excellent tool for talking with your child about bullying.
31. Did you know that children as young as age 9 are now committing suicide because of bullying? Please monitor changes in your child and check in frequently with your child, especially if you see a reluctance to go to school or other activities, changes in sleep, appetite, affect, etc. Having an adult who cares is the best way to keep children from choosing suicide. For more information, please contact the Office for Child Protection at (508) 674-4681.
32. Substance abuse is a genuine problem for children these days and can start as early as grade school. Warning signs can be sudden changes in behavior or moods, significant changes in eating or sleeping habits, and increased secrecy and hostility. If you believe that your child may be involved with drugs or alcohol, contact the school's social worker

and/or your child's physician. Early detection and treatment are crucial to long-term physical and emotional health. For more information about how to recognize the warning signs or what to do if you see them, please contact Debora Jones of the Office for Child Protection at (508) 674-4681.

33. Teen suicide has become a hot button issue this year in our area and across the country. There are warning signs that can alert parents, caretakers, and professionals to the potential for suicide in any teen. If you would like more information on this topic, please check the Catholic Social Services website at www.cssdioc.org. Go to the Child Protection Resources page and find the archived article.
34. Our children are subject to numerous pressures from our society, such as being popular, being thin, giving in to drugs or alcohol, etc. If your child is struggling with any of these issues, contact the Office for Child Protection for more information about how to help your child. Anorexia, bulimia, substance abuse, and bullying are all things that can rob your child of precious childhood years or even life itself. Don't let your child be a victim—find out what you can to do help! Please contact Debora at (508) 674-4681 and see the resources available at www.cssdioc.org/OCP.