

Dear Parent,

You as a parent have spent years teaching your child by word and example the meaning of love, especially how Jesus loves. As a teen, your child is faced with new challenges to the meaning and experience of love. These challenges include forming healthy, loving relationships and guarding against those choices and people that could harm them, especially by way of sexual abuse. The Diocese of San Diego in response to the USCCB *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* seeks to support you in your role as a parent to provide safeguards to your child in this endeavor.

Know foremost that the vast majority of sexual abuse occurs by an adult whom the victim knows rather than by a stranger. This includes family members, adults from church, school, neighbors, or even close family friends. It is important to tell your teen that you are available to listen to any concerns he or she has in regards to being pressured or manipulated by an adult into acts of sexual abuse. This includes inappropriate touch, language, or pornography shown by an adult to your child.

Parents: Talk to your child about how to establish healthy boundaries for friendships and dating relationships. Emphasize that a healthy relationship:

- Respects the God-created dignity and worth of each person
- Respects personal time and space
- Does not isolate a person from one's family and other friends
- Involves boundaries that establish chaste expressions of touch and verbal communication that are appropriate to the relationship
- Involves trust, patience, respect, acceptance, forgiveness, and support

Know the Warning Signs of Boundary Violations. The sexual abuser or perpetrator:

- tries to isolate the victim from family and other friends
- offers special gifts frequently
- frequently wants to be alone with the victim
- encourages use of drugs, alcohol, pornography
- is persistent in telling the victim what to do

Reinforce these Skills to Help your Child Respond to Sexual Abuse:

- Be assertive "No" means "NO"!
- Accept no responsibility for the other person's behavior
- Get away immediately from the person violating your boundaries
- Recognize and react to vulnerability to "sexual abuse lures" such as drugs, alcohol, pornography, and special gifts/attention.
- Be clear on your boundaries.

Useful Websites for further reading:

1. The National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information: www.nccanch.acf.hhs.gov
2. National Center for Missing and Exploited Children: www.netSMART.org www.missingkids.com
3. Prevent Child Abuse America: www.preventchildabuse.org

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