

**Special points of interest:**

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To Protect

Office of Victim Assistance & Safe Environment

Archdiocese of San Antonio

YOU HAVE THE POWER TO SAVE CHILDREN

That's right, you have the power to save the children around you. One in three girls and one in four boys will be abused by adulthood. Every single person including you and I, together can stop abuse.

Every single time you talk to your siblings, friends, co-workers a fact about what causes abuse, you share with them how to prevent abuse, you tell them how to report abuse, you build knowledge. Knowledge is the most powerful tool we have against this epidemic that is killing our children.

Abuse is a silent killer, but we no longer have to feel powerless. Take a stand and share a fact with your family, friends, and community this holiday season. It truly can be

a gift that saves the lives of children.



OVASE'S NEW OFFICE ASSISTANCE: NORMA ALVARADO

The Office of Victim Assistance and Safe Environment would like to welcome our newest addition to our mission, Mrs. Norma Alvarado. She has many years of customer service experience and knowledge that will be a real asset to our program.

Norma and her husband along with their two beautiful children are current members of St. Paul's Parish. The

Alvarado family are also part of the St. Anthony Catholic School.

Norma has already begun reorganizing the OVASE office and has brought bright new ideas. We are looking forward to her service with our ministry. Please help us welcome Norma to the OVASE family,



Coordinator of the Year!

Ms. Maria Victoria Garcia of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Seguin, Texas has been selected as the Office of Victim assistance & Safe Environment Coordinator of the Quarter. She has been a parishioner at Our Lady of Guadalupe for over ten years. Ms. Garcia is also coordinating the safe environment program for St. Joseph's Mission in Redwood.

She is doing an outstanding job of training the volunteers and children on a consistent basis. Ms. Garcia always completes the OVASE reports on time. She has

planned successful parent session trainings and always does an excellent job of announcing all safe environment events in the church bulletins.

Her commitment to making a safer community for all our children is well recognized by all parish members and through out the Archdiocese. It is outstanding volunteers like Garcia that make OVASE successful in the Archdiocese of San Antonio's mission to prevent child abuse and offer hope and support to all survivors.



On-Line Dangers for Kids

The newest fad for youth today is instant messaging. Many children spend hours chatting online with friends and sometimes with strangers which may even include predators. According to a recent study conducted by Dateline NBC found that 1 in 5 children online is approached by a sexual predator. The intentions of the predator is to build trust with the child and then set up a face-to-face meeting. Many task force groups have set up investigations by posing as teens in chat rooms to catch these predators. Although not everything on the web is bad we must educate our children on how to stay safe while surfing and chatting. Here are a few tips. Always remember talking to your kids consistently and giving them a chance to have conversations about their experiences and thoughts is the best way to reduce their chance of becoming victims. Also remind your children not be afraid to let you know if an adult makes an attempt to lure them online.

Here is an example of how easily children can innocently fall in to a trap.



Chat room Discussion:

Child: I really hate my parents. There always fighting.

Predator: Me too. There always on my back.

Child: They never let me do anything kewl.

Predator: Me too, I hate that!

Child: I've been waiting six months for a new iPod. At this rate I'll be an old man before I can have some real fun.

Predator: Your parents sound a lot like mine. But guess what I have this really kewl uncle who buys me things all the time. He's real rich.

Child: You're sooo lucky. I wish I had a rich kewl uncle.

Predator: Hey! I got an idea! I'll ask my uncle if he'll buy you one too...I told you he's really kewl. I bet he'd say yes.

Child: Really? Thnx!!!

Predator: B.R.B. (Be Right Back)...I'll call him and ask him. Guess what? He said OK. He's gonna buy you one.

Child: Wow, Really? Thnx I can't believe it.

Predator: Where can we meet?

Parent Help Sheet

Children are a gift from God that we must cherish and protect. The Archdiocese of San Antonio is committed to assisting parents develop a safe environment for their children. Here is some helpful information that parents can use to assist them in protecting God's children.

Communication:

Communication is the key for creating a safe environment for your child. As a parent, it is important to **talk** and **listen** to your child. Encourage your child to tell you about his/her day or to talk about their friends. More importantly, allow them to talk to you about the "uncomfortable subjects" ; dating, relationships, drugs, alcohol, and sex. The easiest thing a parent can do when these topics arise, is to just **listen**. Having open communication with your child will help build a better relationship and it will assist in your child's self-esteem.

Recognizing Signs & Symptoms of Abuse:

The best way to determine if something has happened to your child is to notice any behavioral or emotional changes. You know your child better than anyone, so look for times when your child isn't acting like their normal way. This may not mean that your child is being abused, but it does mean that something is happening in his/her life that you may not be aware of.

Internet Safety:

The internet predator takes on many roles, but the goals are the same; to either set-up a meeting or to have the child send inappropriate pictures of him/herself. Here are some basic rules to follow to protect you child:

- Have the computer in an open area, not the child's room.
- Have rules for the computer: safe sites to visit, times of use, etc..
- Be present when your child is on the computer: if you are there, they will not be into anything they are not supposed to be.
- Do not allow your child to have specific personal information on any social networks.

What to Do:

If you believe that your child has been abused in any way, here are some rules to follow:

- Stay calm, do not be judgmental
- Encourage your child to talk to you and remember to listen and believe
- Do not blame your child, do not blame yourself

Men Play A Key Role in Preventing Abuse

There are many things men can do to help prevent sexual violence. For example, there are certain stereotypes and myths in our culture that make sexual assault more acceptable and possible. By speaking out and educating ourselves and others, we can help to decrease the number of sexual assaults. Men should also not be fearful of speaking about their histories of abuse. Many men continue to hold the silence of victimization. Sharing their stories can help break the silence that continues to support society's myth that men can't be victimized. This will also allow other male survivors to understand that they are not alone. Sexual assault is not only a women's issue but a societal issue that males and females

must take a stand and get involved in order to end sexual violence against children.

We can all become more knowledgeable about the issue of child abuse and share our knowledge with others. We can also volunteer for the rape crisis centers, child protective services, CASA, and other agencies who assist in the fight to end child abuse. Most importantly, you can volunteer as your parish or catholic school OVASE coordinator. For more information contact Tracie Enriquez at the Office of Victim Assistance and Safe Environment.



Adult Survivors Have the Power to Report their Past Abuse



Do not withhold your mercy from me,

© Lord; may your love and your truth always protect me.

Psalm 40:11

COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

- OVASE210-734-7786
- Catholic Counseling & Consultation Center210-377-1133
- San Antonio Police Department210-207-2313
- San Antonio Rape Crisis Center..... 210-521-7273

Although the abuse of many adults occurred when they were children we hope that if you are a survivor you will decide to report your assault to the police and seek services from supportive community agencies. While there's no way to change what happened to you, you can seek justice and help stop it from happening to someone else. Many survivors feel that speaking out as an adult can assist in their path to healing.

Reporting to authorities is key to preventing sexual abuse. Every time we convict a sexual offender, we prevent him or her from abusing another child. In the end, though, whether or not to report is your decision to make.

Always remember the abuse was not your fault. Now, the law allows adults who were abused as children to report the crimes regardless of when the incident took place. Also, here are a list of community organizations that provide counseling and other supportive services. You can also call Steve Martinez or Tracie Enriquez at the Office of Victim Assistance and Safe Environment @ (210) 734-7786 or 1-877-700-1888.

Scheduled Training

January 2009

12th Assumption Seminary 9am

OVASE training

15th Focolore Movement 6pm

Volunteer Training

22nd St. Pauls Community Center

9am-4pm Coordinator Training

February 2009

4th St. Mary's Church in Stockdale

6pm Parent Training



THE DIRECTOR'S CUT

As we approach the end of 2008, I would like to thank all of you for doing such a great job of protecting children. We have the difficult task of training over 45 thousand children and over 20 thousand volunteers. I am continuously amazed by everyone's hard work and determination at reaching our goal where every child is protected from harm.

Sadly, within the past few months we said good bye to our long time secretary, Nancy. She has moved on to bigger and better things, so we wish her well and she will be greatly missed. With loss comes opportunity, we are pleased to introduce everyone to our new secretary, Norma Alvarado. She has big shoes to fill, but we know she can do it.

We have been getting tons of calls from volunteers at different parishes and schools that need training. Please let us know when you are scheduling training for adults so we can tell others where training is available. If I am aware of training, I will place it on the internet calendar on our website. This makes it easier for those volunteers that are unable to attend the training at their own site.

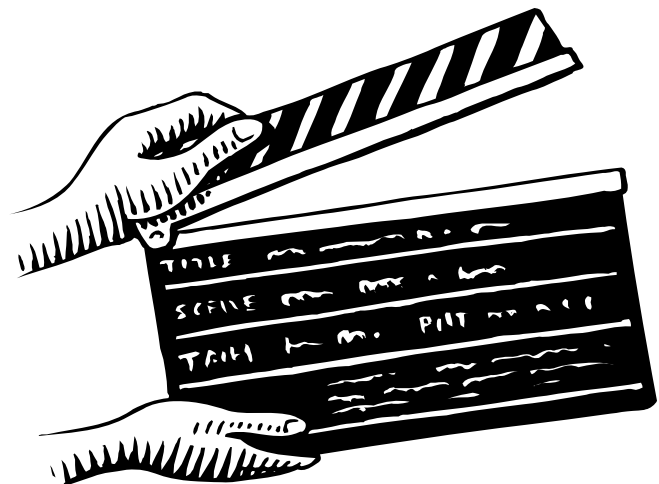
Speaking of our website, we are continuing to upgrade and update our site. Look for changes and for new information. All the resources that are there can be used to update your training to volunteers, staff, and parents. If there is anything that you would

like to see on our website, please let me know.

The Office of Victim Assistance & Safe Environment created the safe environment training method four years ago. Within that time, we have learned the positives and negatives of the way we train. It is time to reevaluate our techniques and develop a better and stronger method. There will be changes to our training method within the next six months.

As always, do not forget to turn in your reports. If you need help, please let us know. Have a great Christmas and a safe New Year.

-Steve Martinez





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