

Bulletin Announcements from the Office for the Protection of Children/Youth Diocese of Erie ~ 2025

Please run this in one of your January 2025 bulletins

Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments – 3 Ways for Teens to Reboot

Sending and receiving messages late at night can make it hard to fall asleep or interrupt sleep. Teens want to stay connected to friends, but the lack of sleep or interrupted sleep can affect everything from their mood to their sports performance. Here are 5 tips to follow at night that will help boost energy and focus in the morning. 1.) Log off your messaging apps, social media and email at bedtime. 2.) Turn off your phone when it's time for bed don't just set it to vibrate. 3.) Get in the habit of powering off your devices – especially if they are in your room. Turn off all electronics, like laptops, tablets, TVs, and video game consoles. Blinking lights and glowing screens can make it harder to fall and stay asleep. Sticking to a cut-off curfew each night for your devices will give your brain some much needed tech-free downtime. For additional resources visit www.eriercd.org/childprotection/

Please run this in one of your February 2025 bulletins

Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments- Digital Dating Abuse can be defined as “a pattern of behaviors that control, pressure, or threaten a dating partner using a cell phone or the internet.” One quarter of youth (12-17) who have been in a romantic relationship during the previous year report that they'd been the victim of digital dating abuse. So, what are some of the best ways for a parent to open up communication with their child about a delicate topic like online dating? First and foremost, ask your child what they are doing online and then really **listen** to why they like or don't like what's going on there. Parents must be diligent about staying on top of the latest trends. Great online dating tips can be found at www.cyberwise.org. *To see what the diocese is doing to help maintain safe environments for children and youth visit www.eriercd.org/childprotection/*

Please run this in one of your March 2025 bulletins

Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments- Pledge to Heal: The Diocese of Erie remains committed to helping survivors of clergy sexual abuse heal and recover. The diocese will provide counseling assistance for those who have been abused by a member of the clergy. For more information, please contact Dr. Gerard Tobin, our Victim Assistance Coordinator, at 814-451-1521. *The diocese encourages anyone who has experienced abuse or misconduct by a member of the clergy or any employee or volunteer of the church to contact their local law enforcement. To report abuse to the independent investigators retained by the diocese, email ErieRCD@KLGates.com. Victims/survivors or concerned individuals can report abuse directly to the diocese by calling 814-451-1543.*

Please run this in your April 6, 2025 bulletin

Child Abuse Prevention Month- Reporting Child Abuse: It is every adult's moral responsibility to report known or suspected abuse or neglect of a minor to the responsible authorities. Physical and sexual abuse of minors are pervasive societal problems, and only concerted and sustained efforts by all adults in every segment of society can help to protect children and youth. In the 2023 Pennsylvania statewide report there were 5,129 substantiated reports of child abuse. 1,749 or 34.1% of the substantiated reports were for sexual abuse, 1,350 were physical abuse. Parents remain the persons most responsible for abuse of their children. *To report child abuse, call **Childline at 1-800-932-0313 (anytime 24/7)**. For particular questions on reporting abuse in the Diocese of Erie, you may call the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth at 814-824-1195.*

Please run this in your April 13, 2025 bulletin

Child Abuse Prevention Month: Recent statistics tell us one in ten children are sexually abused before they turn 18. 91% of sexual abuse is perpetrated by someone the child or the child's family knows. This means that on every Sunday in our congregation there are people who have been abused and may continue to experience the pain of that abuse. Reaching out to those who have suffered from abuse is critical in bringing hope and the love of Christ to them. Assistance is available for victims/survivors of clergy sexual abuse by contacting the Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator, Dr. Gerard Tobin at 814-451-1521.

Please run this in your April 20, 2025 bulletin

Child Abuse Prevention Month: Be Vigilant: It is vitally important that we are constantly vigilant concerning the behaviors of those who interact with children and communicating our concerns to the appropriate parties. Each one of us can play an important role in strengthening this culture of prevention. For example, we can better prevent abuse by ensuring that the signs of abuse are identified and reported. Noticing these warning signs, taking them seriously, and reporting them could prevent abuse in the future. When we witness inappropriate behavior or something that just doesn't seem quite right, we must report our concerns through the appropriate channels. In the Diocese of Erie for particular questions, you may call the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth at 814-824-1195.

Please run this in your April 27, 2025 bulletin

Child Abuse Prevention Month: Throughout the Gospel, Christ calls upon His followers to care for the most vulnerable among us, especially children. **Mandated Reporters** in the Diocese of Erie are people who hold positions of trust in our schools, parishes, agencies, and institutions and are mandated by Pennsylvania law and the diocesan Policy for the Protection of Children to report suspected abuse of a minor. All employees and volunteers working/serving for the Diocese of Erie, in our parishes, schools or agencies are mandated reporters both legally and morally obligated to report any reasonable suspected or known child abuse to ChildLine, the local police, or other appropriate agency. Visit www.erieecd.org/childprotection/ to learn the specific reporting procedures required by the diocese

Please run this in one of your May 2025 Bulletins

Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments- Digital Safety and Your Child: If your child gives out personal information while online, it is easy to track and tough to completely remove. Teach your child to never share personal information such as full name, address, phone number, email, school, or birthday on any social media site. Teach them to never give anyone their passwords. Help your child set up strong passwords and do a yearly checkup on them. Adjust privacy settings for online games, apps, social media sites and your child's electronic devices. Don't forget to check the GPS settings ability to unintentionally share your child's location. Avoid using public wi-fi when sharing personal information. For additional resources visit www.erieecd.org/childprotection/

Please run this in one of your June 2025 bulletins

Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments- Listen: This summer, when children are out of school, meeting new people and going to new places, make sure that you talk to them often about their experiences and the people they've met. Listen carefully to your children. If possible, observe and get to know the other children and adults who are part of your children's summertime fun. Above all, communicate your safety concerns to your children. Make sure your children know

they can come to you with any concerns they may have about the people they interact with. And if you hear of or observe behaviors that may be inappropriate, make sure to communicate your feelings to people who are in a position to intervene. Communication is key in creating and maintaining a safe environment all year round. For additional resources visit: www.eriecd.org/childprotection/

No announcement for July 2025

Please run this in one of your August 2025 bulletins

Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments- Diocesan Requirements for working with children: Working alongside the Bishop, the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth reinforces the ongoing implementation of policies and procedures that protect children. All clergy, employees, and volunteers in the Diocese of Erie who work with children must undergo criminal record checks. The diocesan Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth screening guidelines and abuse prevention training programs emphasize the importance of knowing the employees and volunteers who have access to children in our schools and parishes. Parents should remain vigilant in insisting that those with access to their children have gone through an application process and obtained the required clearances and trainings before being granted access to their children. Visit www.eriecd.org/childprotection/ to see what is required for those who work with children and youth in our parishes/schools/agencies.

Please run this in one of your September 2025 bulletins

****Note: Please mail/email the September Parish Bulletin containing the September announcement to the Office for the Protection of Children and Youth.**

Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments- Diocesan Child Protection Policies: The Diocese of Erie, is committed to protecting minors who are entrusted to our care. The Diocese has policies and procedures in place to address the national problem of child abuse, to aid in the prevention of abuse and to develop and maintain safe environments. All those who minister to minors are screened, trained, and agree to a Code of Conduct. To read the Policy that includes the Code of Conduct, go to: <https://www.eriecd.org/childprotection/policies-1.html> For more information, contact the diocesan Office for the Protection of Children and Youth at 814-824-1195.

Please run this in one of your October 2025 bulletins

Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments – October is Respect Life Month: Our faith calls for us to uphold the value of human life and the dignity of the human person. The protection of children and vulnerable adults is the responsibility of the entire Church, including the faithful. The protection of children, youth and vulnerable adults from abuse and other harm is a respect life issue, and we must all do our part to uphold this ideal. Anyone who suspects or knows of abuse should report it immediately. For information on reporting child abuse visit <https://www.eriecd.org/childprotection/>

Please run this in one of your November 2025 bulletins

Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments- Know the Warning Signs of a Predator: Perpetrators are not waiting on the street to snatch kids; only 10% of sexually abused children are abused by strangers. 90% are abused by someone known and trusted by the child/child's family. Perpetrators integrate themselves into everyone's life, not just the child. They build relationships so that they are trusted to be alone with the child. One of the most important ways to ensure the safety of children in our environments is to know the warning signs of adults who

present a risk of harm to children. Among these signs are when the person (1) always wants to be alone with a child in areas where no one can monitor the interactions, (2) allows a child to do things their parents would not permit, (3) is always more excited to be with children than with adults, and (4) discourages others from participating in activities involving kids. Visit www.eriecd.org/childprotection/ for more information and resources.

Please run this in one of your December 2025 bulletins

Child Protection and Creating Safe Environments- Bullying is defined as any unwanted aggressive behavior by another youth or group of youths that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated. 20% of youth ages 12-18 experience bullying. When adults respond quickly to bullying behavior, they send the message that bullying is not acceptable. There are ways parents can make a positive difference. Parents can educate themselves on the signs that a child is being bullied or is a bully. Parents should keep the lines of communication open with their child and model for their child how to treat others. Encourage your child to be inclusive by welcoming others to join their activities and groups. For more information on how to prevent bullying in your community visit www.stopbullying.org. For additional resources visit www.eriecd.org/childprotection