



Catechesis for Human Sexuality and Child Protection Education

A Joint Project of the
Archdiocese of Baltimore
Department of Catholic Education Ministries
Division of Evangelization and Catechesis
Division of Catholic Schools
Catholic Charities
Office of Child and Youth Protection



"A Formation of the Heart"

- The Holy Father, Benedict XVI, has called us to bridge the gap between technological progress and morality with education about the human person and the positive message of Catholic values.
 - August 2006



A Holistic Approach to Relationship Catechesis

- The Archdiocese of Baltimore is committed to providing children and their parents with education about child sexual abuse within the context of a holistic **catechesis in human sexuality**.



A Community Task

- Provide catechesis for sexuality.
- Support and encourage parents as they exercise their duty as first educators.
- Provide “additional instructions regarding Catholic teaching and values that complement and complete the formation provided by parents.”
 - *National Directory for Catechesis (6, 178)*



Clearly Teaching the *Good News*

- “Blending moral and values-based formation with clear and factual information is the best approach to sexuality education.”
 - *Catechesis for Human Sexuality*, 1994, 13



Sexuality is more than sex

- "*Sexuality* refers to a fundamental component of personality in and through which we, as male and female, experience our relatedness to self, others, the world, and even God."
 - *Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective*



Role of Parish & School in Human Sexuality Catechesis

- Enhance, not replace, the teaching and learning that takes place in the home.
- Teach what the Roman Catholic Church teaches.
 - Doctrine, Sacred Scriptures, and Tradition which form the basis of the Church's teaching,
 - Imparted in an environment of a loving, responsible community.
- Always with compassion and sensitivity
 - Aware that many of the children in the class may have adults in their lives who for various reasons may be living less than that very ideal.
 - Avoiding judgments of individuals' culpability in given situations.



Role of Catechist for Human Sexuality and Child Protection

- Maximize communication with home.
- Encourage parents and guardians to use the Family Resources written especially for them to be studied and used during their child's course.
- Design assignments that encourage parents and children to talk with each other.
- Not a total answer person
- Not a counselor or therapist
- Provide for and encourage adult opportunities to pray for the students and the success of the catechetical efforts.



Essential Components of Child Protection Education

- Catechesis of children in the Catholic vision of family life, love, and sexuality
 - In age-appropriate ways
 - Using recommended texts and resources
 - Across the lifespan
- Education of parents & educators
- Diligent screening & training of adult volunteers -- STAND



Justification of Need

- Myths
- Incidence
- Prevalence
- Effects of Abuse
 - Individual
 - Family
 - Community



How Trauma Hurts *(Sidran Press, 2000)*

- Feelings
- Judgment
- Beliefs
- Frame of Reference
- Memory and Perception
- Body and Brain



Effects of Abuse on Children

- Depression, anxiety, low self-esteem
- Symptoms of PTSD
- Suicidal behavior
- Internalized aggression
- Sexual behavior problems
- Decreased social competence; interpersonal problems
- Educational problems and cognitive impairments
- Guilt and shame
- Effects on spirituality
- Victims are more likely to be victimized again over the course of their lives
- Increased risk for social problems such as teen pregnancy, substance abuse, homelessness
- As adults, may show problems with thinking/cognition, managing feelings, and relationships



Why don't children tell?

- Some don't understand that they have been abused
- Many have ambivalent feelings towards the offender
- Some feel they are to blame
- Some feel they will not be believed
- Some don't know how to tell, or don't have the words to use
- Some children try to tell, but we don't recognize their cries for help



Effects of Abuse on a Community

Victims:

- Identified victim
- Parents and siblings
- Children who weren't "chosen"
- Children of the other gender
- Staff
- Administration



Prevention

A public health approach:

- Primary prevention
- Secondary prevention
- Tertiary prevention



Primary Prevention

Goal: To end the sexual abuse of children (i.e., sexual offenders no longer exist).



Secondary Prevention

Goal: As long as offenders do exist,
reduce the risk that children will
be abused by them.



Tertiary Prevention

Goal: If sexual abuse does occur, reduce stressors and increase functional coping skills to moderate the power (and eventual outcome) of the experience and reduce the risk of re-victimization.



Primary Prevention= Perpetrator Prevention

- Ensures that children acquire the skills and knowledge to support success and insist that they not be abusive (*Ryan, 2002, 2003*).
- Violence requires both the capacity to be abusive and the absence of affective inhibition (*Finkelhor, 1995*).



Risk Factors for Becoming Abusive

- Traumatic experiences
- Insecure attachment
- Lack of empathic care
- Poor prenatal care
- Parental loss / inconsistent care
- Exposure to domestic violence



Risk factors, continued

- Experiences of maltreatment and/or neglect
- Hyper-masculine attitudes & criminality of family members
- Genetic influences on aggression
- Neurological vulnerabilities
- Brain injury & psychiatric differences



Characteristics of Juvenile Sexual Offenders

- Poor social skills
- Behavior problems
- Learning disabilities
- Depression
- Poor impulse control
- Hx of physical (35-50%) or sexual (10-80%) abuse
- Impaired family functioning
- Alcohol and substance abuse



Characteristics of Juvenile Sexual Offenders

- 63% are likely to have committed nonsexual offenses (*Pratt et al., 2001*)
- Children and adolescents who have been physically abused were 7.6 times more likely to rape or sodomize when compared to adolescents who were sexually abused or neglected (*Widom, C.S., 1995*).



Primary Prevention

Summary

- Proactive, not reactive
- Strategies that nurture empathy, sensitivity, respect, and gender equality in children
- Requires us to examine how our society contributes to the creation of offenders
- Strategies recognize offenders as victims, and provide services to promote healing and recovery



Secondary Prevention

Goal: As long as offenders do exist, reduce the risk that individuals will be abused by them.



Secondary Prevention

- Reduce environmental risk
- Adult education
- Child education



Secondary Prevention

Traditional Approaches:

- Child-focused
- No-Go-Tell, Good touch/bad touch, stranger danger
- Single issue focus: sexual abuse prevention
- Fear-based approach



What offenders tell us:

“Show me a child who knows nothing about sexuality and you’ve just introduced me to my next victim.”

-From a perpetrator



What offenders tell us:

Offenders target:

- Children who are isolated, “loners,” and children with low self-esteem”
- Children who are from single parent families
- Children from families where emotional needs are unmet
- Children who have disabilities
- Children who have problems communicating
- Children who have not been given information about sexual boundaries



Types of Sexual Offenders

- Pedophile (Type I and Type II)
- Indiscriminate child molester (Type III)



How molesters operate

- Access
- Privacy
- Control (Grooming)

Praesidium, Inc. (2001). *Mind of the Molester Trainer's Manual*. Arlington, TX.



Secondary Prevention

Alternatives to traditional approaches:

- Adult responsibility for protection
- Positive, health-focused approach
- Emphasize healthy relationships and boundaries
- Collaborate with families
- Increase protective factors (quality interpersonal relationships, communication skills, social supports, understanding of basic concepts such as boundaries) while also addressing risk



For Children: Healthy sexuality is nurtured when we

- Meet emotions with empathy, acceptance and respect.
- Foster a positive approach towards the body.
- Promote a positive self-image and respect for others.
- Provide age-appropriate information about bodies, sexuality, and boundaries.
- Promote clear and open communication.

-Adapted from PCAV "Care for Kids" facilitator training manual.



Characteristics of Healthy Sexuality

- Privacy
- Understanding and respect for boundaries
- Equality
- Safety
- Empathy
- Nurturing
- Open communication
- Expressed feelings

-Adapted from PCAV "Care for Kids" facilitator training manual.



Characteristics of Problematic Sexual Behavior

- Secrecy
- Preoccupation
- Coercion
- Power imbalance
- Lack of consent
- Hurtful to others
- Isolated/Isolating
- Lack of empathy

-Adapted from PCAV "Care for Kids" facilitator training manual.

For Children:

Positive Messages that Protect

- Their bodies are good and special and deserve respect.
- Girls and boys have some parts that are different, and many that are the same. These parts have names.
- Babies need help with most things, but as children grow they learn to do more things for themselves.
- Private parts are kept special. Adults and older children have no business playing with children's private parts.



Positive Messages that Protect

- Everyone has all kinds of feelings. When you're not sure what you're feeling, we call that "mixed up."
- Always ask for help when you feel mixed up or confused about anything.
- Boys and girls can do many things that are the same and some that are different.
- Sometimes we like touching and sometimes we don't.



Positive Messages that Protect

- It is okay to say “no” to ANY kind of touching.
- We shouldn’t touch people who tell us they don’t want to be touched.
- Touching is never a secret.
- Children should know the names of at least three or four adults they could ask for help.

-Adapted from “Care for Kids” curriculum. Leeds/Granark Health District, Ontario, Canada.



Suggestions for positive affection

- Side/shoulder to shoulder hugs
- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Handshakes or “high-fives”
- Touching hands, shoulders, and arms
- Verbal praise
- Holding hands with smaller children



“Concerning” affection

- Full frontal hugs
- Showing affection in isolated areas of the building
- Touching knees or legs
- Wrestling, piggyback rides, tickling
- Massage
- Compliments related to physique or body development



Red flags

- Discourages other adults from participating or monitoring
- Always wants to be alone with children
- Prefers to spend free time with children, or seems not to have adult friends
- Seems to be “obsessed” with children
- Uses bad language, tells dirty jokes, or shows a child pornography



Red flags

- Treats children as if they were adults
- Gives money or gifts to children for no apparent reason
- Always wants to wrestle or tickle; goes overboard
- Appears to think rules do not apply to them



Reducing Risk of Child Victimization in Parish/School

- Identify secluded areas and lock empty rooms
- Develop policies regarding use of secluded areas
- Do not permit children to enter staff-only areas
- Only meet with children where other adults can pass by
- Make sure enough adults are involved in programs
- Allow parents or other adults to “drop in” unexpectedly
- Carefully screen and monitor volunteers who go off-site with children
- Create policies regarding use of e-mail



Tertiary Prevention

- Programs that serve vulnerable children and adults should take special care to provide education and support around the issue of child sexual abuse, to promote healing as well as to reduce the risk of re-victimization
 - Special education
 - Domestic violence
 - Homelessness
 - Substance abuse treatment programs



What to do for the child...

- Remain calm
- Allow the child to speak
- Be supportive and provide encouragement through words and body language
- Remain neutral in tone; be aware of facial expressions
- Congratulate her/him for sharing



What to do for the child...

- Respect the privacy of the child by not telling any more people about the abuse than those who absolutely need to know.
- **MOST IMPORTANTLY**, tell the child, repeatedly, that the abuse was not his or her fault, and that s/he has the right to feel safe.



What NOT to do:

- Do not confront the offender
- Do not offer empty promises, such as “everything will be okay.”
- Do not offer promises of which you are not certain, such as that the abuser will be sent to jail.
- Do not say anything bad about the abuser, particularly since it is often someone the child knows and/or cares for.



Reporting

- MD law states that any person who has reason to believe a child has been abused or neglected shall make a report to CPS
- Call Child Protective Services as soon as possible
- If an emergency, call the police
- Call the Archdiocese Office of Child and Youth Protection
- Confirm that the child is safe; if the child is in danger, create a safety plan with the help of CPS/police, your pastor or DRE.



Reporting

- Do not confront the offender
- Ask necessary questions, but do not “investigate”
- Respect the confidentiality of the child and his/her family by sharing information regarding the report only with others who absolutely need to know.



Child Abuse is Underreported:

- Two recent studies demonstrated that only between 40-64% of child abuse known to community professionals/mandated reporters was actually reported.



Common reasons for not reporting:

- Belief that there is insufficient evidence to initiate an investigation
- Perceived lack of seriousness of abuse
- Fear of disrupting treatment
- Breach in confidentiality
- Lack of faith in child protective services
- Inconvenience/time away from job
- Risk of lawsuits
- Discomfort in their relationship with alleged offender(s)



Summary

- Religious educators can work together with parents to raise sexually healthy children who are not abused and who do not abuse.
- Religious educators can identify and report abuse, help victims receive support and treatment, and stopping the cycle of abuse



Break

- Pass out folders with Curriculum Update pages for the appropriate grade level. Include pertinent information from the Curriculum Overview booklet.



The Updated Lessons

- Maintain the integrity of the original curriculum.
- Include essential background information about the topic for the educator.
- Include some lessons that build on existing themes/lessons in the curriculum.
- When necessary, include detailed stand-alone lessons covering essential themes that were missing from the existing curriculum.
- Include Family Resource pages providing parents with essential information and ideas regarding how to reinforce lessons learned in class.



Using the Curriculum Update

- Curriculum update pages are provided for each grade level Teacher Edition and Family Resource.
- Copy Update pages from website or CD provided in Training. See Educational Methods
<https://www.archbalt.org/evangelization-catechesis/Catechesis-Human-Sexuality-Education.cfm>
- Insert at appropriate pages of TE and use in lesson planning
- Insert Update pages into appropriate pages of Family Resource booklet before giving to parents to use at home.



Partnering with Parents

- Remember to communicate openly with caregivers throughout the program.
- Use a combination of class and homework assignments.
- Be mindful of children who appear to feel uncomfortable discussing the material with parents/caregivers. In private, offer opportunities for the child to express his/her concerns, or seek advice from the school administrator or counselor.



Catechists Need to Understand

- ✓ Developmental needs/traits of the children in their students' age group
- ✓ How Human Sexuality Catechesis fits into the basic religion program
- ✓ Catholic teaching on sexuality and morality
- ✓ How to select appropriate resources
- ✓ How to keep parents involved in passing on the faith
- ✓ Program resources <https://www.archbalt.org/evangelization-catechesis/Catechesis-Human-Sexuality-Education.cfm>



Called to Guide the Next Generation

- Parish and school leaders, catechists and parents are challenged to guide others to a life that is healthy & holy....
- Moving beyond our personal mistakes, discomfort or confusion.
- **Additional catechist training is available.**



Catechist Training Available

Session 1 - Role of the Catechist, Theology of Human Sexuality

Session 2 - Culture, Family, Development

Session 3 - Sexuality & Moral Living

Session 4 - Teaching Methods, Child Protection Education

Contact Evangelization and Catechesis, 410-547-5403, for Schedule of Courses or visit Workshop Calendar of Evangelization and Catechesis pages on Archdiocesan Website, <http://www.archbalt.org/evangelization-catechesis/calendar/index.cfm>