

PROMISE TO  
PROTECT



PLEDGE TO  
HEAL

# CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH RESOURCE BOOKLET

*April 2021*

*Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection*



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## VIRTUAL OR IN-PERSON ACTIVITY SUGGESTIONS

### ADVERTISE

- Advertise your Victim Assistance Coordinator in local parish bulletins. Download our poster: [English](#), [Spanish](#)

### SHARE

- Post social media messages every day or every week throughout April to raise awareness about abuse prevention.
- Share the [USCCB Resources](#) on abuse prevention throughout the month.
- Share child abuse prevention [resources](#) from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

### PRAY

- Schedule time throughout the month to say a [Rosary](#) for victims/survivors of abuse.
- Celebrate a [Holy Hour for Healing](#) for victims/survivors of abuse and reconciliation for the Church.
- Take time before or after Mass to recognize those who have both trained others in safe environment programs and those who have been trained.



# BLUE PINWHEELS

Blue Pinwheels are the universal sign of innocence, and therefore child abuse prevention.

Mark April by hosting your own pinwheel event!



The Pinwheel is the national symbol of child abuse prevention efforts. It represents the innocence, joy and fun which should be the experience of all children. Planting Pinwheels on the grounds of the church or school leaves behind a dramatic, visual, public display of support for protecting all of God's children from any kind of harm.

- A Pinwheel Event can be anything to bring a solemn reminder of child abuse prevention efforts, such as a prayer service, or the planting of a "Pinwheel Garden." You can do this virtually too!
- Remember to share your virtual or in-person pinwheel gardens on social media!

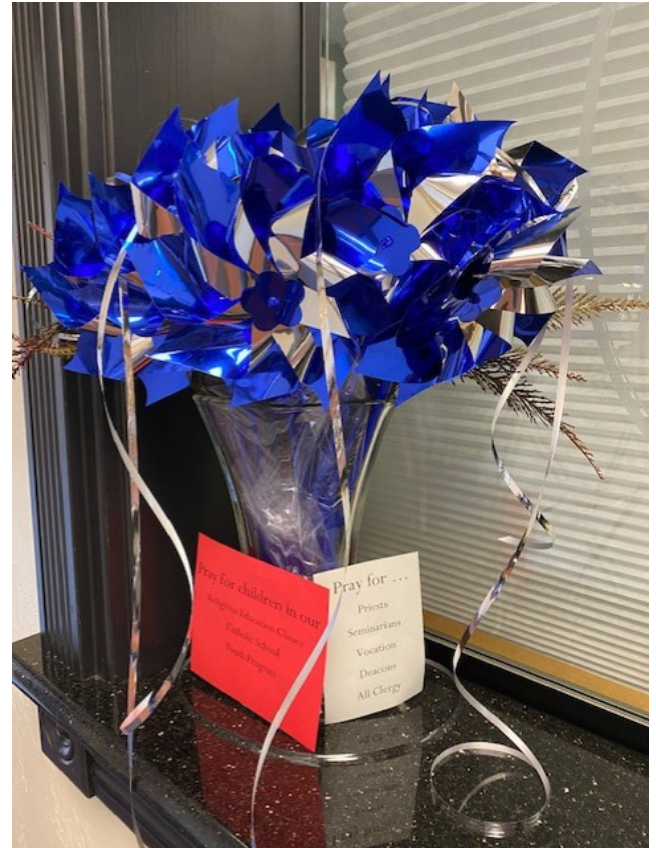
## Create Pinwheel Gardens



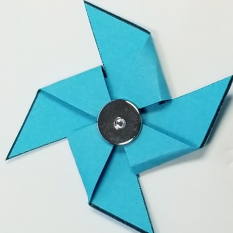


# BLUE PINWHEELS

## Create Pinwheel Bouquets



## Create Pinwheel Lapel Pins




April is  
**Child Abuse  
Prevention Month**

We invite you to  
**wear this pin**  
on "Blue Friday"  
**April 3, 2020**

*The pinwheel symbolizes the whimsical childhood that all children deserve.*

We **all** play a role in the **healthy** formation of children.

**Thank you** for your commitment to protect God's precious gift!



Download this template with:



# VIRTUAL EVENTS



## Advice for hosting your pinwheel event virtually

- Host a prayer service via video conferencing to raise awareness virtually.
- A Pinwheel Event can be anything to bring a solemn reminder of child abuse prevention efforts, such as a prayer service, or the planting of a “Pinwheel Garden.” You can do this virtually too!

## No Hit Zone Event

Encourage your diocesan pastoral center, parishes and schools to become a “No Hit Zone.”

A No Hit Zone sets a precedent within the community and establishes a commitment to the promotion of effective parenting techniques by instilling:

- No adult shall hit a child
- No child shall hit another child
- No adult shall hit another adult
- No child shall hit an adult

Feel free to use the full version of the sign to the right, accessible by *clicking on the sign*.

- Additional resources to help give tools other than hitting or spanking can be found at [StopSpanking.org](http://StopSpanking.org)



no adult shall hit a child  
no child shall hit an adult  
no child shall hit another child  
no adult shall hit another adult

[StopSpanking.org](http://StopSpanking.org)





# VIRTUAL EVENTS



## Livestream Mass with your Bishop or Pastor

- Organize a Mass for survivors/victims of clergy child sexual abuse via your diocesan social media channels
- We have included sample hymns for Mass further on in the booklet

## Livestream a Rosary or Adoration with your Bishop or Pastor

- Livestream a rosary led by your bishop or pastor with special intentions for victims/survivors of clergy child sexual abuse.
- You can use [this rosary template](#). Also available in Spanish on our [website](#).
- Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is one of the most beautiful ways to pray. We encourage you to organize a livestream of adoration celebrated by your bishop or pastor, to commemorate child abuse prevention efforts.

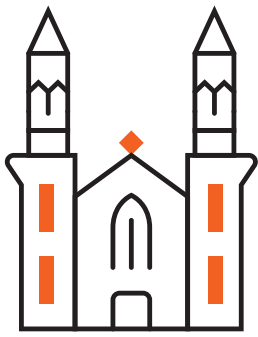




# H O M I L Y   H E L P S

## Talking Points

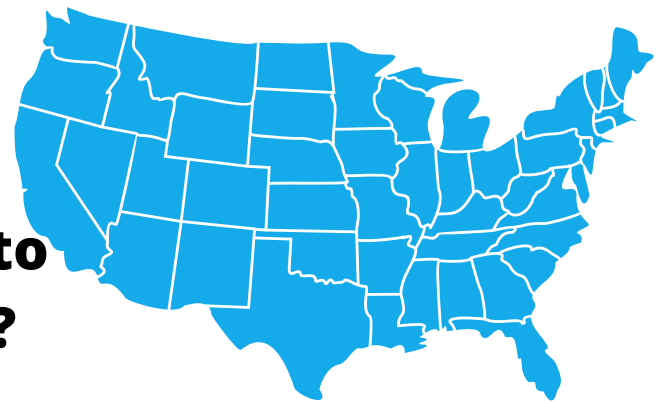
- Throughout the Gospel, Christ calls upon His followers to care for the most vulnerable among us, especially children.
- Our faith also calls for us to uphold the value of human life and the dignity of the human person. The protection of children is the responsibility of the entire Church, including the faithful. The protection of children and youth from abuse and other harm is a respect life issue, and we must all do our part to uphold this ideal.
- During Child Abuse Prevention Month, we are reminded of the call to be instruments of justice, working for the common good of all, which includes the protection of children. As Jesus entrusts to Peter the care of the flock, we are reminded that this responsibility belongs to everyone as a matter of charity and justice.
- Child Abuse Prevention Month should lead to heightened awareness of the need to be vigilant about providing a safe environment for all within the Church and for our communities.
- Recent statistics tell us one out of every four girls, and one out of every six boys, are sexually abused before they turn 18. If those statistics are correct, on every Sunday in our congregation are people who have been abused and may continue to experience the pain of that abuse. Reaching out to all victims/survivors of abuse is critical in bringing hope and the love of Christ to them. Our diocese is here to provide anyone suffering from abuse with steps towards healing.
- We are all part of a larger culture of protection and healing within the Church. As members of this culture, we value the prevention of abuse and the support of those who have been abused. Each one of us can play an important role in strengthening this culture. 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. Even when we witness inappropriate behavior or something that just doesn't seem quite right, we must report our concerns through the appropriate channels.
- We can also play a role in victim outreach by offering support, compassion, and prayers to those close to us who have been abused. The importance we place on carrying out these acts of charity will go a long way in creating a culture within our Church where children are safe, and victim/survivors find healing.



## **What's happening in your diocese to protect the most vulnerable?**

- We report all allegations of abuse directly to law enforcement and cooperate with civil authorities on all investigations.
- Our diocese has a designated Victim Assistance Coordinator whose primary role is to accompany survivors and provide resources for their healing journey.
- We also have an independent review board, consisting primarily of lay members. The role of the review board is to review allegations and make a recommendation to the bishop regarding the suitability for ministry.
- We train adults on how to maintain a safe environment and how to report concerns.
- We train minors in parish religious education programs and in Catholic schools to identify warning signs of abuse and inappropriate behavior, as well as how to report abuse.
- By following all of our diocesan policies and procedures to create safe environments, we can maintain a culture of protection and healing.

## **What's happening nationally to protect the most vulnerable?**

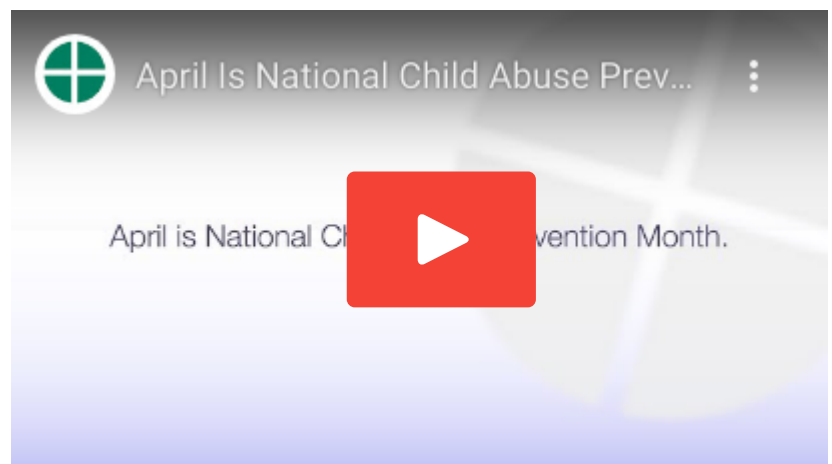


- The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has two bodies committed to the influence of policies regarding child and youth protection: the Committee on the Protection of Children and Young People where all members are bishops, and the National Review Board in which all members are lay people who have elements of expertise in the field of child and youth protection.
- There is a Victim Assistance Coordinator and Safe Environment Coordinator in every diocese.
- The Annual Audit, currently conducted by StoneBridge Business Partners, evaluates the success of child and youth protection procedures, and trainings throughout the audit year.
- Diocesan Review Boards are in place in every diocese to review allegations of abuse and advise the bishop.
- All adult volunteers, clergy, and staff must receive safe environment training.
- All children must receive safe environment training.

# SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS



Share the Secretariat's podcast series on your social media platforms. You can find podcasts on our website and via **Soundcloud** and **Apple Podcasts**.



Share the video above, or the Secretariat's **general videos** with information on VACs, the *Charter*, and the U.S. Church's child and youth protection structure.



# SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

## Captions

- In 1982, President Reagan proclaimed April to be the first National Child Abuse Prevention Month, and that tradition continues today. This April, take a moment to learn what you can do to prevent abuse [here](#).
- If you suffered abuse, it was not your fault. If you are a victim of sexual abuse by a priest, deacon, or individual representing the Catholic Church, there are several things you can do:
  - Contact the appropriate law enforcement agency, which can help determine options for making a criminal complaint.
  - Contact a local child protection agency, a private attorney, a support group, an abuse hotline, or a mental health professional.
  - Contact a diocesan or eparchial **victim assistance coordinator** who is available to help victims/survivors make a formal complaint of abuse to the diocese or eparchy. The Victim Assistance Coordinator is also available to arrange a personal meeting with the bishop or his representative and to obtain support for the needs of the individual and families.
  - If you believe someone is in imminent danger or there is a situation of current abuse involving a minor please call 911.
  - To report an allegation of abuse or mishandling of allegations of sexual abuse by a bishop please visit the **Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting Service website**.
- Research estimates 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys will be sexually abused before they turn 18. Take safe environment training to learn how to identify and prevent abuse!
- A report of child abuse is made every ten seconds:  
<https://www.childhelp.org/child-abuse-statistics/>



# SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Share these resources from the USCCB on your social media platforms and in your bulletins!

## Ten Tips for Protecting Children and Offering Outreach to Victims/Survivors

- Sexual abuse is about the victim.** Many people are affected by abuse but the individual most impacted is the victim who has suffered a violation of trust that can affect his or her entire life.
- The residual effects of having been abused can last a lifetime.** The sense of violation goes deep into a person's psyche and feelings of anger, shame, hurt and betrayal can build long after the abuse has taken place. Those who have been abused can heal, but it often takes time, therapy, and the support of loved ones.
- No one has the right to have access to children.** No one, no matter who they are, has an automatic right to be around children or young people who are in the care of the Church without proper screening and without following the rules.
- Common sense is not all that common.** Dioceses, schools, parishes, and especially families, must educate themselves and others on how to protect children.
- Child sexual abuse can be prevented.** It is critical to build safety barriers around children and young people to keep them from harm—such as protective guardians, codes of conduct, background evaluations, policies and procedures, and safety training programs.
- Feeling heard leads toward healing.** Relief from hurt and anger often comes when one feels heard, when one's pain and concerns are taken seriously, and a victim/survivor's suffering, pain, and anger are acknowledged.
- You cannot always predict who will be an abuser.** Experience shows that most abuse is committed by someone who has gained the trust of a victim/survivor and his/her family.
- There are behavioral warning signs of child abusers.** Some abusers isolate a potential victim by giving him or her undue attention or lavish gifts, others allow young people to participate in activities which their parents or guardians would not approve, such as watching pornography, drinking alcohol, using drugs, and excessive touching, such as wrestling and tickling.
- People can be taught to identify grooming behavior.** Grooming behaviors are the actions which abusers take to project the image that they are kind, generous, caring people, while their intent is to lure a minor into an inappropriate relationship. Offenders can be patient and may groom their victim, his or her family, or community for years.
- Background checks are important.** Background checks in churches, schools and other organizations keep predators away from children both because they scare off some predators and because they uncover past actions which should ban an adult from working or volunteering with children.

## Watch for These Warning Signs of Abuse in Minors

- No longer wants to see a **particular person** they had been close to
- Declining **academic** performance
- Tries to hide use of **technology**
- No longer interested in **activities** they used to enjoy
- Changes in **personality**
- Tries to get minors **alone**
- Demonstrates **aggressive behavior** or constantly angry
- Commits physical and emotional **boundary violations**
- Keeps **secrets** with minors
- Gives lavish **gifts** to minors
- Withdraws from family or friends
- Allows or encourages minors to **break laws** or rules
- Has **inappropriate** or suggestive conversations with minors
- Is overly interested in **spending time** with minors
- Takes **photos** without approval, or asks minors to send them photos
- Does not believe the **rules** apply to them (or, does not follow rules or protocols)

## ... and These Warning Signs of Perpetrators

## 5 FIVE WAYS to protect your children from sexual abuse

Parents play the primary role in educating their children about sexual abuse. Here are 5 tips for teaching safety to the little ones God has entrusted to you.

- Keep it practical.** Teach your children the differences between safe touches and unsafe touches.
- Tell your children that saying "no" is okay.** Empower your children to say "no" if anyone makes them feel uncomfortable or touches them inappropriately.
- Give your children a way to alert you.** Tell your children they can use an excuse or share a special "code-word" with you to alert you about an unsafe person or situation.
- Tell your children to report an unsafe touch.** Let your children know they should tell you if they feel uncomfortable or unsafe around any adult or peer. You can also identify other adults they can tell about unsafe touches.
- Tell your children you trust them.** If your child makes a report to you, believe him or her. Tell them it is not their fault and that you love them. Immediately bring the allegation to the attention of public authorities.

Promise to Protect Pledge to Heal



# SAMPLE PETITIONS

- We pray for all victims of abuse around the world, within the church and beyond, that the healing Spirit of God move among them and within them. And that the Church – the People of God – be filled with the same healing spirit, we pray to the Lord...
- For the global Church, as we all strive to implement the teachings of the Holy Father in Vos Estis Lux Mundi to protect the most vulnerable among us from harm, we pray to the Lord...
- We the church pray for its leaders, that they would practice new leadership by recognizing and repenting of sin and its consequences within the church, especially those sins which cause innocent children, families, the vulnerable and communities to suffer unjustly, we pray to the Lord...
- For civic leaders entrusted with upholding the common good and justice for all that they may act in ways that show their commitment to the protection of all, especially children and young people, we pray to the Lord...
- For parents, mentors, teachers, coaches and all who work with children and young people, that they may look after them with the watchful eye of the shepherd, we pray to the Lord...
- For families who are the first to show God's love, that they may have the necessary support to provide safe and nurturing environments for children and young people, we pray to the Lord...
- For those who have suffered abuse, that they may experience God's profound love for them and God's healing powers, we pray to the Lord...
- For those who provide help for the abused: counselors, therapists, and advocates that they may act with wisdom and compassion in their healing ministry, we pray to the Lord...
- For those affected by abuse in anyway, that they may have the courage to tell their story, to reach for healing, we pray to the Lord...
- For any child who may be suffering from abuse, that they may find the courage to tell a trusted adult so the abuse can be stopped, and so they can begin the journey toward healing, we pray to the Lord...



# SAMPLE PRAYER SERVICE FOR HEALING



Click to download  
this template in  
Spanish

- Opening Song: Here I am, Lord

- Opening Prayer:

May the grace and peace of Christ be with you.

**R. And with your spirit.**

No one is far from you, O God. We come together in joy - mindful of the burdens we carry, the hurts and sorrows we have. We come together in gladness - never forgetting God's love. We come together with praise - for each other and those who assist us on this journey.

No one is far from you O God and we call upon your power in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Responsorial Psalm:

Psalm 142

**R: You, O Lord are my refuge**

With full voice I cry to the LORD; with full voice I beseech the LORD.

Before God I pour out my complaint, lay bare my distress. My spirit is faint within me, but you know my path.

**R: You, O Lord are my refuge**

Along the way I walk they have hidden a trap for me.

I look to my right hand, but no friend is there.

There is no escape for me; no one cares for me.

**R: You, O Lord are my refuge**

I cry out to you, LORD, I say, You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living. Listen to my cry for help, for I am brought very low. Rescue me from my pursuers, for they are too strong for me.

**R: You, O Lord are my refuge**

Lead me out of my prison, that I may give thanks to your name.

Then the just shall gather around me because you have been good to me.

**R: You, O Lord are my refuge**

# SAMPLE PRAYER SERVICE FOR HEALING

- **The Gospel:**

Matthew:10:28-33 - Do Not Fear

And do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge. Even all the hairs of your head are counted. So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father. But whoever denies me before others, I will deny before my heavenly Father.

- Other suggested reading:

Matthew 5:1-10 - The beatitudes.

Matthew 5:43-48 -Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you.

Luke10:25-37 - The good Samaritan

- **Intercessions:**

**R:Christ graciously hear us.**

- For community and political leaders to model justice and right living; Christ hear us.

**R. Christ graciously hear us.**

- For priests to truly mirror Christ's goodness and love; Christ hear us.

**R. Christ graciously hear us.**

- For families to nourish and foster their children; Christ hear us.

**R. Christ graciously hear us.**

- For teachers to respect and call forth the goodness and wholeness in children; Christ hear us.

**R. Christ graciously hear us.**

- For all adults to enrich the lives of children; Christ hear us.

**R. Christ graciously hear us.**

- For all who support and contribute to our ministry; Christ hear us.

**R. Christ graciously hear us.**

- For all the needs of the world; Christ hear us.

**R. Christ graciously hear us.**

# SAMPLE PRAYER SERVICE FOR HEALING

- **Litany for Healing: (During the Litany candles can be lit)**  
**Our response will be 'Save, heal and protect them, O Lord!'**
- For children wounded and tearful; **save, heal and protect them, O Lord!**
- For children confused or alone; **save, heal and protect them, O Lord!**
- For children beaten; **save, heal and protect them, O Lord!**
- For children who sleep in fear; **save, heal and protect them, O Lord!**
- For children afraid to go home; **save, heal and protect them, O Lord!**
- For children afraid of their abusers; **save, heal and protect them, O Lord!**
- For children assaulted and for children who assault; **save, heal and protect them, O Lord!**
- For children whose innocence has been stolen; **save, heal and protect them, O Lord!**
- For those who cannot trust; **save, heal and protect them, O Lord!**
- For those who cannot love; **save, heal and protect them, O Lord!**
- For those whose hearts are filled with fear; **save, heal and protect them, O Lord!**
- After the intercessions and litany, the minister, in the following or similar words, invites all present to sing or say the Lord's Prayer.

**The Lord heals our wounds and strengthens us in our weakness; let us pray as Christ has taught us:**

**All: Our Father...**

- **Blessing and Dismissal:**

Lord God, Your own Son was delivered into the hands of the wicked, yet He prayed for His persecutors and overcame hatred with His Blood on the cross. Relieve the suffering of those present today (or name); grant them (him/her) peace of mind and a renewed faith in Your protection and care. Protect us all from the violence of others, keep us safe from the weapons of hate, and restore to us tranquility and peace. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

May God bless us with His mercy, strengthen us with His love, and enable us to walk in charity and peace.

**R. Amen.**

- **Closing Song: Be Not Afraid, or Prayer of St. Francis (Make Me A Channel of Your Peace)**