

The VIRTUS and Protecting God's Children Programs



What are the VIRTUS programs?

VIRTUS is the brand name that identifies best practices programs designed to help prevent wrongdoing and promote “rightdoing” within religious organizations. The VIRTUS programs empower organizations and people to better control risk and improve the lives of all those who interact with the Church.

All VIRTUS training programs, including the **Protecting God's Children** programs, are comprehensive and multi-dimensional—incorporating proven best practice standards for the prevention of child sexual abuse by clergy, staff, volunteers, and others who interact with children within the church environment. Our training programs incorporate instructor-led training, train-the-facilitator education, awareness videos, and regularly scheduled continuing education and training via state-of-the-art web-based training and education courses.

Who created the VIRTUS programs?

National Catholic Services, LLC (National Catholic) created the programs. Monsignor Kevin McCoy, past board chairman of National Catholic, asked whether child sexual abuse could be prevented and, if so, how? In March of 1998, National Catholic invited prominent national experts—experts in many disciplines—to discuss these questions at a forum in Washington, D.C. From those discussions, the initiative for the VIRTUS programs was created. The National Catholic Board of Directors selected an Ad Hoc Committee to oversee development of the programs. The Ad Hoc Committee was assisted by a steering committee of nationally known experts and program and service providers.

Protecting God's Children Awareness Programs

Protecting God's Children for Adults is training conducted by VIRTUS certified facilitators on the prevention of child sexual abuse. The training makes participants aware of the signs of child sexual abuse, the methods and means by which offenders commit abuse, and five easy steps one can use to prevent child sexual abuse. Two videos are the centerpiece of the training: ***A Time to Protect God's Children*** and ***A Plan to Protect God's Children***. The facilitators incorporate policies and procedures into the training defining child sexual abuse, addressing the reporting of child sexual abuse, the screening and selection of employees and volunteers, and victim advocacy.

Protecting God's Children for Parents is training to provide parents with the information they need to help keep child sexual abuse out of their homes.

Protecting God's Children for Children, Touching Safety™, is a school-based curriculum for teaching children about the need to keep their private body parts private and to develop and maintain appropriate boundaries in all of their relationships.

VIRTUS Online™

VIRTUS Online is the brand name that identifies a state-of-the-art, web-based platform that provides best practice resources 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Our system provides a comprehensive menu of functions for churches, religious organizations, and facilities from one convenient web-based resource. Through these functions we can help church organizations prevent wrongdoing, manage risk and improve service to their communities through education, training, and best practices.

Most training programs (seminars, instructor-led sessions, videos) establish awareness, but few change behavior. With the VIRTUS programs, the potential for successful behavioral change can be increased via our VIRTUS Online system. Every training program, in addition to instructor-led and video awareness sessions, provides ongoing web-based training through online training bulletins and modules.

On-line training bulletins and modules cover many topics within the following broad categories:

- Protecting God's Children Online Awareness
- Safety and Risk Management
- Crisis Management
- Employment Practices
- Human Resources
- Student Exposures



Touching Safety™ Program for Children

The job of ensuring children's safety is a challenging undertaking. The prevention of child sexual abuse requires more than adult awareness, education, and training about the nature and scope of the problem. We must also give our children the tools they need to overcome the advances of someone who intends to do them harm. The **Touching Safety** program guide (*Teaching Touching Safety Guide*) is a tool designed to assist parents and teachers in this important task. The Touching Safety program is a vehicle through which parents, teachers, catechists, and youth ministers (educators) give children and young people the tools they need to protect themselves from those who might harm them.

The award-winning **Power to Protect™** video lays the groundwork for the educator, who uses the activities to help students apply the message from the lessons to their daily lives. The lessons are organized in a three-year cycle so each child experiences a totally different lesson plan each time the materials are presented. Each child receives the full range of information from the *Teaching Touching Safety Guide* in small, "digestible" bites, over a three-year period. Then, as a child advances to the next age group, there are a whole new set of age appropriate lessons that explore the major topics in increasingly greater detail.

Bullying Prevention™ Program

The **Bullying Prevention Program** provides schools, religious education programs, daycare providers, other youth-based organizations, as well as parents, with information, resources, and training to help prevent bullying and other violent behaviors.

The Bullying Prevention Program addresses these key issues:

- Warning Signs that Someone is a Bully
- Warning Signs that Someone is a Target
- Appropriate Responses by Caring Adults

Technology Safety and Security™ Program

The **Technology Safety and Security** program provides schools, religious education programs, other youth-based organizations, as well as parents, with information, resources, and training to help create adult awareness of technology safety and security issues while teaching caring adults how to protect young people in the world of electronic communication.

The Technology Safety and Security Program addresses these important topics:

- Awareness of today's technology exposures
- The warning signs of potential technology-related abuse or misuse
- Proactive strategies for parents and other caring adults to ensure the protection of young people, as well as the organizations that serve them
- How to appropriately respond to suspected technology-related abuse or misuse

For additional information about the VIRTUS Programs, please call Pat Neal at 888-847-8870.

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