



CATHOLIC DIOCESE
of FORT WORTH



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The Diocese of Fort Worth has a new children/youth safe environment awareness program that goes into effect this Fall:

Empowering God's Children®

Ensuring children's safety is a challenging undertaking and requires more than adult awareness, education, and training. We must give our children the tools they need to overcome the advances of someone who intends to do them harm or who makes them feel uncomfortable. To assist in the essential task of protecting children and youth, the Diocese is implementing a new program increasing our partnership with parents, beginning with their permission, to ensure that all children are protected, and that children and youth have the tools they need to protect themselves.

Empowering God's Children® (EGC) is a program to effectively communicate safety guidelines and principles to all children in grades K through 12th grade. It assists parents, teachers, catechists, and youth ministers in giving children and young people the increased awareness, empowerment and knowledge they need to protect themselves from those who might harm them.

Empowering God's Children® lessons provide a different theme each year that introduces and builds on the basic concepts of the Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide. The material is developmentally appropriate for each age group and includes content and activities that reinforce the message. The materials for "Lesson Leaders" (those teaching the EGC program) include everything needed to prepare for and present each lesson—including supplemental information to help them better understand the context of the materials they are about to present. Lesson Leaders are provided access to a glossary of terms for all the lessons, plus handouts and other reference materials, such as how to respond to disclosures or how to report suspected abuse.

All of the lessons are founded on the principles of appropriate relationship boundaries in the broader context of Christian values and virtues by safeguarding the dignity of their bodies and respecting the dignity of others; and are age-appropriate to help children and young people develop the vocabulary and boundary distinctions necessary to enable them to begin to recognize inappropriate behavior of others, while practicing appropriate relationship boundaries in their own lives. Each lesson is designed to take approximately 45 minutes to an hour to complete and begins with an eight to eleven-minute age appropriate introductory video.

Although the ***Empowering God's Children®*** lessons include activities that are simple and fun, it is not easy for some adults to initiate a preliminary discussion about sexual abuse. Even those who feel comfortable talking with their own children about these issues may find it challenging to talk about this subject in a classroom full of children or teenagers. The ***Empowering God's Children®*** introduction videos are intended to assist Lesson Leaders in "breaking the ice" on this sensitive subject matter. The video presenter speaks directly to the children or young people about the purpose of the program and the goals of the lesson; and introduces the session by covering some basic principles to allow the "live" Lesson Leader to engage children and young people in meaningful discussions about recognizing and

avoiding unsafe behaviors by using the activities and supplemental materials. While the video lays the groundwork, the Lesson Leader uses the activities to help students apply the message from the lessons to the students' daily lives.

Thank you for all you do to create a culture of safety and protecting our children and youth.

Yours in Christ,

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