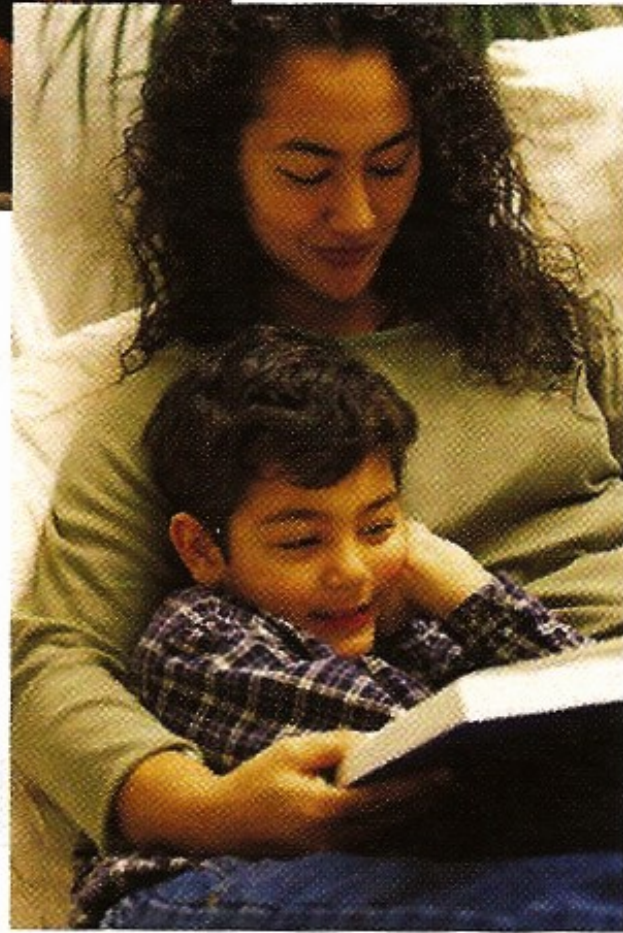
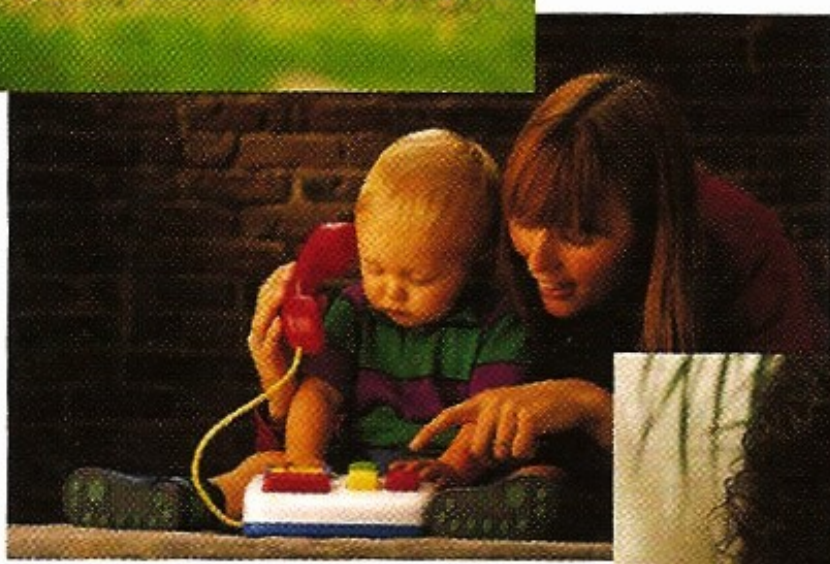
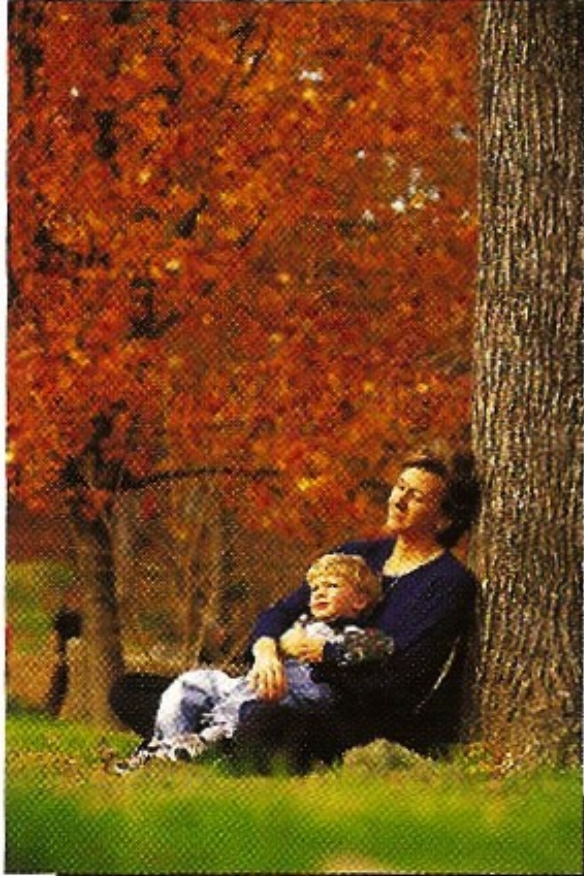


# Keeping Kids Safe

*A parent-led child safety program*



## Best Practices for Parents

- Know where your children are at all times, and be familiar with their friends and activities.
- Acquaint yourselves with the family composition of the homes where your children play. Is there adult supervision? Are there older brothers and/or teenage male friends around? Does the single mom have a boyfriend present?
- Screen babysitters carefully; check references before entrusting your children to anyone.
- Teach your children to trust their feelings and give them permission to say no to what they think is wrong.
- Be alert to a teenager or adult who is paying an unusual amount of attention to your child.
- Understand that abusers often become friendly with families in order to gain trust and enable them to have access to the children.
- Teach your children that no one should touch them in a way that makes them uncomfortable, and if someone does, they should tell you.
- Listen carefully to all of your children's fears and be supportive in all your discussions with them.
- Monitor your children's computer use.
- Never force children to touch, hug, or kiss someone that they do not want to. If they are forced to do this, it signals to them that adults can

impose themselves on children and make them do things they don't want to do.

- Be sensitive to changes in your children's behavior; these signal a need to sit down and talk with them about these changes.

- Ask your children if anyone makes them uncomfortable, or has touched them where they shouldn't.



## Dear Parents

The Diocese of Colorado Springs is committed to providing a safe environment for all who worship, work, or attend education and formation opportunities at our parishes. We are particularly concerned that our children are kept safe both on and off church property.

Statistics show that the vast majority of children who are abused (93%) know their abusers and the vast majority of abusers (95-91%) are male. For this reason, one of the best protections we have to ensure the safety of our children is to develop and maintain an environment of trust in the home, where children are confident that they can talk to their parents about any topic, any fear, and any experience they are having.

Potential abusers will shy away from children who have such an open relationship with their parents, since abusers depend upon secrecy to perpetrate their deviancy. If an abuser knows that children will tell their parents everything, even as he tries to persuade them to keep his actions secret, then the abuser will not try to take advantage of those children. Studies show that abusers target children who are most vulnerable to their methods, such as those who are starved for attention, for instance, and these methods depend upon his establishing a relationship of trust with children at the expense of the children's relationship with their parents.

The best thing that parents can do to protect their children, in addition to maintaining an environment of trust, is to be alert to adults or older children who take a particular interest in their child, especially to the exclusion of healthy relationships with their own peers.

See brochure for what to discuss with your children.