Information for Lesson Leaders: Educators, Parents and Safe Adults

As caring adults, we have the great responsibility of ensuring the safety of children and youth. 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 children and youth the tools they need to help us keep them safe by educating them regarding boundaries, safe and unsafe behaviors and healthy relationships. Research shows that child sexual abuse prevention is most effective when there is a partnership between parents and Lesson Leaders, when material is reiterated in a school setting, and when the training is interactive and activity-based. Research based and evidence informed, the *Empowering God's Children®* is an age-appropriate comprehensive program through which Lesson Leaders (teachers, catechists, youth ministers, etc.) and parents partner to give children and youth the tools they need to protect themselves and know what to do if someone tries to violate their boundaries. All materials are available in English and Spanish.

Each year, the program provides a theme 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. Within each lesson plan is the ability to tailor the activities and messaging to meet the diverse needs of the children and youth at all levels.

WHAT'S INCLUDED:

- *The Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide*
  - An extensive resource booklet specifically for parents to guide meaningful and effective conversations regarding child sexual abuse. The booklet also helps adults learn how to educate the children and youth in their care, and how to evaluate the safety of adults who interact with children and youth. Lesson Leaders should also be aware of this content that is discussed with parents to better inform lesson planning.

- *Children's Programs Lesson Leader Orientation and Certification Training* module
  - A training module specifically for Lesson Leaders (educators) and parents to provide foundational knowledge of how to teach children and youth about their boundaries and safety. This training module also includes information to prepare adults for handling disclosures of abuse or other harm appropriately. Please inquire with your local or diocesan coordinator for access to this important module.

- Age-appropriate lesson plans for four specific age groups (with optional Pre-K and Teen Peer Leader Lessons):

  Grades K-2 Grades 3-5 Grades 6-8 Grades 9-12

The materials provided feature everything needed to prepare for and present each lesson—including additional information to help Lesson Leaders better understand the context of the materials they are about to present. For example, Lesson Leaders have access to a glossary of terms and guiding notes throughout each lesson. They also have handouts and other reference materials—such as an introductory video, information on how to respond to disclosures, how to report suspected abuse, and other supplemental materials.



The lessons can be presented in either a three-year, or six-year, cycle. Throughout the lessons, each child or youth receives the full range of information from the *Teaching Boundaries and Safety Guide* in small, "digestible" bites.

Even though the topic of each lesson plan is different, every lesson includes core safety messaging to provide children and youth the basic safety information they need to frequently hear.

Breakdown of Lesson Plan Topics:

Each year, children and youth will receive one or two of the following lesson plans (depending on whether a diocese utilizes a 3-year or 6-year cycle):

Lesson 1 **Physical Boundaries: Safe and Unsafe Touching Rules.** Students learn simple rules about what to do and how to react when someone's touch is confusing, scary, or makes the child or young person feel uncomfortable. Young people start to deal with the real risks they face when they are out in the world and on their own, and they begin to learn where to draw boundary lines in relationships.

Lesson 2 **Safe Adults, Safe Touches and Special Safe Adults.** Children, young people, and their parents establish basic guidelines for working together to make certain *which* friends and other adults in their environment can be trusted to act safely and in the best interest of each child or young person.

Lesson 3 **Boundaries: You Have Rights!** Children must understand they have a right to be safe, and they are allowed to create boundaries to protect themselves in situations where they feel uncomfortable, or where they could be harmed.

Lesson 4 **Secrets, Surprises and Promises.** Children must learn how to respect their own health and safety, and that of others, by understanding the safety rules about secrets. They have a right to be safe, and they are allowed to create boundaries to protect themselves in situations that cause discomfort or violate the safety rules.

Lesson 5 **Being a Safe Friend.** Children must know that being a friend means that we "do the right thing" when it comes to healthy friendships with their peers: meaning we recognize unsafe situations, intervene (when possible) and get the information to a safe adult.



Lesson 6 **Boundaries: Feelings and Facts.** Through this lesson, the adult Lesson Leader teaches students specifically about boundaries, what unsafe situations could potentially feel like, and what to do in response if they feel uncomfortable or are in an unsafe situation.

Each lesson for each age group includes the following:

- Instructions to help the Lesson Leader—the teacher, catechist, or youth minister prepare to deliver the lesson.
- Helpful teaching support from the Catechism to give the teacher or catechist a framework for keeping the lesson within the context of Church tradition and theology.
- A learning goal, including expected learning outcomes for students.
- An overview for creating a successful learning experience for the specific age group.
- Key vocabulary words and definitions that apply to the lesson. These words empower children and young people with the distinctions they need to help recognize inappropriate behavior by those with whom they interact.
- A short introductory video for three specific age groups, K–5, 6–8 and 9–12, designed to provide a simple overview of safe and unsafe behaviors and people.
- Multiple activity options with instructions (and appropriate handouts for students as needed to take home and further discuss with parents).
- A closing group prayer that reflects the key message of the lesson.

The lessons focus on an age-appropriate discussion of safety, relative to the specific roles that different people play in a child's life. All lessons stress the importance of the child's right to be safe, keeping private body parts "private," and of telling a trusted adult about anyone's behavior that causes a child to feel uncomfortable or threatened.