

Did You Know?

The Prevalence of Abuse in Society

In surveys of adults, one out of five women and one out of ten men reported that they were sexually molested before they were 18 years old. This means that an estimated 40 million adult survivors of child sexual abuse are living in the United States today. An estimated 9.6% of all school children will be molested by an educator or an employee of a school between kindergarten and 12th grade. Between 13 and 34% of all females will be victims of sexual assault before the age of 18, and 7 to 16% of all males will also be victimized before they are 18.

For particular help you may call **Marti Zeitz, Victim Assistance Minister at (866) 407-4505.**

Source: D. Finkelhor, "Current Information on the Scope and Nature of Child Sexual Abuse," *The Future of Children* 2 (1994): 31-53.

Did You Know?

Five Steps to Safer Environments

The Diocese of St. Petersburg mandates that all people who work with children and youth in our parishes and schools must undergo child abuse prevention training through our diocesan Safe Environment Program. The training details five steps to prevent child sexual abuse:

1. Know the warning signs of an inappropriate relationship with a child.
2. Control access to children by carefully selecting the adults who work with children and youth.
3. Monitor all programs for the safety of children and youth.
4. Be aware of and sensitive to what is going on in the lives of children.
5. Communicate concerns to the appropriate person in authority.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Did You Know?

Child Abuse Prevention Month

April is national Child Abuse Prevention Month. It is most appropriate that Child Abuse Prevention Month is held during the Easter season. There is no better season than Easter to celebrate the protection of our most valuable gift from God—our children. For information on how you can become more informed and involved in keeping our children safe, please call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Source: www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/preventionmonth

Did You Know?

How Old Does a Child Need to Be in Order to Stay Alone?

Don't assume that when your child understands what you're saying, he's ready to walk out the door by himself. Besides the fact that many states have laws against leaving children of certain ages alone (for example, younger than 12), experts say children shouldn't be left by themselves until they're capable of fighting off an abductor or handling a crisis situation. Experts also say children do not have the mental maturity to cross busy streets by themselves until they're about 10 or 12 years old. (Did you know that pedestrian injuries rank third in child fatalities, behind traffic accidents and drowning?) Finally, parents who are certain their young children would never walk away with a stranger will be shocked to learn that studies show they probably will. Stay alert and vigilant, even if you believe your child is aware of possible dangers from others. For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Source: "Know the Rules . . . After-School Safety Tips for Children Who Are Home Alone," www.missingkids.com.

Did You Know?

Learn to "Stop" Inappropriate Activity Before It Happens

Child safety tip: Teach your child to respect the word "stop!" Teach your preschooler that "stop" means "stop," and that your child has the right to stop people from touching his or her body. Obviously, exceptions will have to be made for doctors and parents, but even parents must listen when a child doesn't want to be tickled or hugged anymore. Reinforcing this excellent lesson gives your child the power to recognize—and to stop—"bad touching" by others if it should happen.

For particular help, you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Source: "Know the Rules . . . After-School Safety Tips for Children Who Are Home Alone," www.kidsafe.com.

Did You Know?

Recognizing Signs of Child Sexual Abuse

Changes in behavior, extreme mood swings, withdrawal, fearlessness, excessive crying, bed-wetting, nightmares, fear of going to bed, sleep disorders, and a fear of certain places, people, or activities can be signs that a child has been traumatized by sexual abuse.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Source: Philip J. Lazarus, "Trauma and Children: A Parent Handout for Helping Children Heal," VIRTUS, May 12, 2003.

Did You Know?

Teach Kids to Protect Themselves at Home

We consider our homes to be safe places for our children. But being home alone can pose risks for children. Here are a few tips to teach kids that will help keep them safe when you are not with them at home: Never answer the door if alone. Do not invite anyone in the house without the permission of a parent or babysitter. Don't tell anyone on the phone that your parents are not home. Instead tell them that your parents can't come to the phone, and take a message. For more tips, please visit www.kidsafe.com.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Source: "Know the Rules . . . After-School Safety Tips for Children Who Are Home Alone," www.kidsafe.com.

Did You Know?

Help Reduce Abuse Statistics

Nationally, more than 2 million reports of abuse or neglect of minors are made each year. Only a small percentage of child abuse is ever reported. Learn how to spot suspected abuse or neglect, and how to report it to the proper authorities. For more information, please contact those in your parish who are in charge of programs to safeguard children.

For particular help, you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Source: www.missingkids.com

Did You Know?

Know Your Kids' School

Parents and guardians have the primary responsibility for protecting their children from all potential harm. When choosing a nursery, daycare center, or school, parents should inspect the building and grounds to make sure there are no areas where children play or work that are "off limits" to parents. Such facilities should have a policy that welcomes parents to visit the center or school without prior appointment.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Source: Philip J. Lazarus, "Characteristics of Safe and Responsive Schools," VIRTUS, January 14, 2002.

Did You Know?

An Appropriate Way to Report Inappropriate Behavior

How should you communicate your concerns to someone who may be behaving inappropriately with children? The “I” message is a simple way to reframe what you want to say so that the listener hears you speak of your feelings and concerns rather than hearing a complaint against him- or herself. The “I” message, simply diagrammed, says, “I feel [feeling] when [situation] because [reason].” For example, you can say, “I feel anxious when you drive a child home alone after religious education classes, because that could put you or the child in a potentially risky situation.” It is a much more constructive approach than saying, “You shouldn’t be driving children home alone because it is against the rules and puts them in danger.”

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Source: Paul J. Ashton, “CAREfronting vs. Confronting Those Who Behave Inappropriately,” featured August 9, 2004, at www.virtusonline.org/virtus.

Did You Know?

Internet Safety for Kids

The Internet has become the new schoolyard for child molesters seeking girls or boys to victimize. Internet “chat rooms” provide a teenager with an opportunity to engage in a “live” conversation with friends from school or church, or with other teenagers from around the world. Law enforcement has found that child molesters use chat rooms to gain easy and safe access to teens. Because of the seemingly caring and seductive talent of child molesters, teenagers should be warned that when they are in a chat room, they should never provide anyone with private information, personal information, and especially their specific physical location.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Source: Bob Farley, “Exposing the Dangers of Chat Rooms,” featured March 14, 2005, at www.virtusonline.org/virtus.

Did You Know?

Educational Materials on the Danger of Abuse

The overwhelming majority of our clergy and lay leaders are hardworking individuals who are dedicated to serving the People of God in our parishes and schools. All of us together are responsible for making sure that all of our ministries are as safe as possible for our children and young people. That means each of us has a responsibility to educate ourselves about the real danger of sexual abuse.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Did You Know?

Where Do Your Kids Spend Their Time?

You can help keep your children safe by knowing where they spend their time. Get to know the adults who show up at the various locations in the community where children gather and where they play together. Be wary of any adult who seems more interested in creating a relationship with a child than with other adults. Pay attention when an adult seems to single out a particular child for a relationship or for special attention. Warning signs include treats, gifts, vacations, or other special favors offered only to one specific child.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Source: "Know the Rules . . . After-School Safety Tips for Children Who Are Home Alone," www.missingkids.com.

Did You Know?

Get Involved in Parish Safety Programs

Parents and guardians play a key role in the success of parish programs for young people. Parents and guardians who are involved in parish programs and events will be in the best position to protect their own children as well as all the children in the parish community. Involvement and communication are important factors in helping to ensure safe environments for all of our children. Contact the parish office for more information on how you can become actively involved in the safe environment training programs in our parish.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Did You Know?

From the Diocesan Safe Environment Office: Listen to Your Children

Summer is just around the corner! When your children are out of school and on different schedules, meeting new people and going to new places, make sure that you talk to them often about their experiences and the people they've met. Listen carefully to your children. If possible, observe and get to know the other children and adults who are part of your children's summertime fun. Above all, communicate your safety concerns to your children. Make sure they know that they can come to you with any concerns they may have about the people they interact with. And if you hear of or observe behaviors that may be inappropriate, make sure to communicate your feelings to people who are in a position to intervene. Communication is key to creating and maintaining a safe environment all year round.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Source: www.kidsafe.com

Did You Know?

Summertime, Safe Time

All teachers, staff, and volunteers in the Diocese of St. Petersburg who work with children must undergo fingerprinting and criminal background checks. (Arch)diocesan guidelines and abuse prevention training programs currently in use emphasize the importance of parents' knowing who has access to their children at school and other Church-sponsored activities.

Summertime is here, and parents should remain vigilant regarding who is granted access to their children. Make sure camp counselors have undergone criminal background checks. And make sure you know the camp's daily routine. In particular, make sure that no camp activity results in a child being left alone with one adult.

All activities should be supervised by more than one adult, and the camp should be open to unannounced drop-in visits from parents.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Source: Sharon Womack Doty, "Summer Safety—Monitor All Programs!", VIRTUS, July 17, 2006.

Did You Know?

Tips for Summer Camp Safety

Summer is almost here. School is almost out, and a whole host of new opportunities for recreation and relaxation await. Maybe you are sending your children to a music or sports camp. Or maybe they have been invited by their friends to go camping in the mountains or at the beach. Whatever the situation, it is important to remember that parents still have the responsibility of controlling access that new people will have to their children. If your children are attending a summer camp, insist that every counselor or anyone else who might have access to your children has undergone an application process that includes a criminal background check and reference checks.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Source: Sharon Womack Doty, "Summer Safety—Monitor All Programs!", VIRTUS, July 17, 2006.

Did You Know?

Preventing Child Abuse Is Everyone's Responsibility

It is every adult's moral responsibility to protect possible victims by reporting the suspected abuse or neglect to the responsible authorities. Sexual abuse of minors is a pervasive societal problem, and only concerted and sustained efforts by all adults in every segment of society can help to protect children and youth.

To report suspected or actual child abuse, call 911 for a Law Enforcement official, or contact the Florida Abuse Registry Hotline (Department of Children and Families) at (800) 962-2873.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Did You Know?

What Happens When Abuse Is Reported?

All people who hold positions of trust in Catholic institutions are mandated by law to report child abuse. Teachers, teacher's aides, and counselors in our schools; clergy, directors of faith formation and youth ministers in our parishes; therapists and social workers in our counseling agencies; nurses and doctors in hospitals all have the obligation to report the reasonable suspicion of child abuse to the local police (911) or to the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) (800-962-2873).

This is true for those ministering in facilities owned and operated by the Diocese of St. Petersburg, as well as Catholic schools and other entities owned and operated privately by religious communities.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Did You Know?

CyberTipline Fights Internet Crimes Against Children

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and other government agencies all work together to fight Internet crimes against children.

These agencies have established a "CyberTipline," a reporting mechanism for cases of child sexual exploitation including child pornography, online enticement of children for sex acts, molestation of children outside the family, sex tourism of children, child victims of prostitution, and unsolicited obscene material sent to a child. Reports may be made—24 hours per day, seven days per week—online at www.cybertipline.com or by calling (800) 843-5678.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Did You Know?

IOW, Knowing Internet Lingo Can Help Parents Safeguard Kids

Online chat rooms, instant messaging systems, and even cell phones equipped to send text messages are environments rich in abbreviations, acronyms, and other shorthand that help increase the speed of communication. Parents need to become aware of some of the common lingo that is used in these environments. Some of these terms may be found to be vulgar, degrading, or otherwise offensive. However, parents and educators need to have a level of understanding of the dangers that face our children.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Source: Bob Farley, "Exposing the Dangers of Chat Rooms," featured March 14, 2005, at www.virtusonline.org/virtus.

Did You Know?

Ensuring Your Child's School Is Safe

Every teacher, coach, and volunteer who works with children in the parishes and schools of the Diocese of St. Petersburg must have a background check before he or she is permitted to work in any school- or parish-related job or activity that involves contact with children. But what about the children who attend non-Catholic private or public schools?

Talk with school administrators and find out what steps they take to protect children from harm. Suggest that they review other abuse prevention programs to ensure that their policies and practices are up to date. And demand that all employees and volunteers who work in the school be properly screened, including background checks, before they are allowed to be near your children.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Did You Know?

Always Keep an Up-to-Date Photo of Your Child

Picture this: A good photo could save a child's life. One of the most important tools for law enforcement in the case of a missing child is an up-to-date (take a new one every six months), good-quality photograph. The photograph should be a recent head-and-shoulders color photograph of the child in which the face is clearly seen. It should be of school-portrait quality, and the background should be plain or solid so it does not distract from the subject. When possible, the photograph should be in a digitized form and available on a compact disk (CD), as opposed to just a hard copy. This minimizes the time necessary to scan, resize, and make color corrections before disseminating it to law enforcement. The photograph should have space for accurate, narrative description useful to identify the child, such as name, nickname, height, weight, sex, age, eye color, identifying marks, glasses, and braces.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Source: "The Importance of Photos," www.missingkids.com.

Did You Know?

How to Report Inappropriate or Illegal Content on the Internet

One of the main reasons that children do not report the inappropriate content they find online is fear of punishment from parents. If you let them know that it is not their fault if they come across an inappropriate site, they will be more willing to come to you when it happens. If your children ever show you a site that contains illegal behavior, such as pornographic images of children, contact your Internet service provider and the CyberTipline at www.cybertipline.com.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Did You Know?

Internet Filter Software Is No Substitute for Parental Monitoring

There is a lot of material on the Internet that is inappropriate for children. Parents can use filtering software to protect children from that material, but filters do not guarantee that children will not be exposed; a filter will never be a substitute for parents' presence. Monitor your child's online behavior. Keep your family computer in a highly visible, common area, like the family room or the kitchen. Ask your children to show you what sites they go to, and be open and willing to discuss the inappropriate material they might come across.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Source: www.netSMART.org

Did You Know?

Keeping Your Child's Personal Information Personal

If your children give out personal information over the Internet, not only is it easy to track, it's tough to completely remove. Emphasize to them how important it is that they keep personal information private. Make sure that they have a strong (ideally, alphanumeric) username and password that don't reveal anything personal. Encourage them not to give out their e-mail address, if they have one. If your children tell you that they have given out personal information online, contact your Internet service provider or the site where the information is posted to see what you can do to have it removed. For more information, visit www.netSMART.org.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Did You Know?

What Do Molesters Look Like?

Child molesters belong to every profession, gender, and ethnic group, and they live in rural, urban, and suburban areas. There is no “look” about them that indicates that they are a danger to the physical and emotional health of our children. It is imperative that we look beyond demographic characteristics and focus on the behaviors of adults when they are around children. We must regularly refresh the basic knowledge and actions required to keep children safe. For tips on recognizing and reporting inappropriate behavior, please visit www.virtus.org.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Source: www.virtusonline.org/virtus

Did You Know?

Be Vigilant

It is vitally important that we are constantly vigilant—that we always observe the behaviors of those who interact with children. And we must always communicate our concerns to the appropriate parties. Sometimes this means communicating our safety concerns to our children. And sometimes this means communicating our concerns about seemingly inappropriate behavior to those who are in a position to intervene. Parents must also listen carefully to their children and observe both their children’s activities and the behavior of older children and adults who interact with them. When children exhibit dramatic behavioral changes, adults must find out what caused the changes. Being aware of what’s happening with our children means talking to, listening to, and observing them—at every opportunity.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Source: www.virtusonline.org/virtus

Did You Know?

“Grooming” Behaviors

Most child abuse occurs after the perpetrator has gained the trust of the child and of his or her parents/guardians through a process called “grooming.” The grooming process has three basic elements, which are both separate and interrelated: physical grooming, psychological grooming, and community grooming. Physical grooming can begin with a simple pat on the back, but over time it becomes more intimate. Psychological grooming takes many forms, all of which are designed to drive a wedge between the child and the parent or guardian and to pull the child under the control of the perpetrator. Psychological techniques include a wide variety of activities, from telling a child that sexual contact is “an act of love sanctioned by God” to threatening harm to someone the child loves if he or she tells anyone about the abuse. Community grooming usually happens at the same time that physical and psychological grooming is progressing with the child. It targets the parents, guardians, and the rest of the community. The purpose is to convince us that this is someone who really cares about kids and is committed to their well-being, so that we will not notice or will disregard the warning signs because we can’t believe the perpetrator would commit such a crime. The process can take as little as a few days or as long as a few months, but the perpetrator is willing to be patient to gain the trust of everyone involved. This is how child molesters avoid being caught. For more information on child protection efforts and programs, call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Source: VIRTUS® *“Protecting God’s Children” Facilitator Training Manual*, 36-38.

Did You Know?

Prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is a great deal more prevalent than many imagine. In fact, studies tell us that one in ten adult men and one in five adult women say that they were molested before the age of 18. That means that, directly or indirectly, child sexual abuse will touch most of us during our lifetime. And although we would like to believe that most accusations are false, the facts tell us that children rarely lie about being molested. In fact, they rarely tell anyone at all. An adult study about the prevalence of sexual abuse found that 42% of the men and 33% of the women who were victimized as children had never told anyone.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Source: Sharon Womack Doty, “Refresher from the Protecting God’s Children® Program,” featured January 7, 2008, at www.virtusonline.org/virtus.

Did You Know?

Safety Rules Bear Repeating

Research reminds us that teaching children how to resist the overtures of a potential molester requires repetition and reinforcement. Children and young people need to know the rules, and they need to hear them over and over and over again so that the rules become part of a thought process. This is done in the same way we teach the rules about looking both ways before crossing the street and the danger of getting too close to an open flame. Empowering children to speak up and resist the overtures of potential molesters can stop a child molester in his or her tracks. Molesters who fear being caught—and being labeled a molester—may decide it is not worth the risk and back off. For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Did You Know?

Children Do Not Lie About Abuse

Most children are not lying when they say that they were abused. Less than 5% of all allegations are intentionally false. It is more likely that children will refuse to tell about abuse than to lie about abuse. Several studies estimate that only about 6% of all children report sexual abuse by an adult to someone who can do something about it. The other 94% do not tell anyone or talk only to a friend. (And they swear their friend to secrecy.) To find out more about how to create an environment where children are confident in disclosing information that may indicate that they were abused, please contact **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Did You Know?

What Is “Relational Bullying”?

Relational bullying is unwarranted, persistent, unwelcome behavior in the form of criticism, isolation, or fabricated allegations that can damage relationships. Examples include social exclusion (“You can’t be with us”), spreading rumors (“Did you hear . . . ?”), and withholding friendship (“I won’t be your friend if you . . .”). Though relational bullying can often seem ambiguous to outside observers and often garners less attention than physical bullying or verbal bullying, it should not be discounted simply as normal, adolescent behavior. In fact, several recent studies suggest relational bullying is more strongly related to emotional distress and teen depression than any other form of bullying. Make sure your child’s school does not tolerate such behavior among its students.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Source: Donna M. Albertone, “Relational Bullying,” featured June 15, 2006, at www.virtusonline.org/virtus.

Did You Know?

Know the Warning Signs of Abuse

Child molesters look like everyone else. They don't look like scary people that anyone should know to avoid. Rather, they live with their families in our neighborhoods. One of the most important ways to ensure the safety of children in our environments is to know the warning signs of adults who present a risk of harm to children. Among these signs are when the person (1) always wants to be alone with children in areas where no one can monitor the interaction, (2) allows children to do things their parents would not permit, (3) is always more excited to be with children than with adults, and (4) discourages others from participating in activities involving kids.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Source: Paul Ashton, "Know the Warning Signs, Part 2," featured November 19, 2007, at www.virtusonline.org/virtus.

Did You Know?

Assistance Ministry Helps Abuse Victims

Did you know that outreach to victims of sexual abuse is one of the ministries offered by the Diocese of St. Petersburg? The diocesan Victim Assistance Minister provides assistance towards healing by means of therapy, spiritual direction, and mutual support groups.

If now, or at any time in the past, a priest, deacon, or other person representing the Church has sexually abused you, you are urged to contact **Marti Zeitz, Victim Assistance Minister at (866) 407-4505.**

For particular help you may also call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Did You Know?

How Many Children Are Sexually Approached and/or Solicited Online?

According to highlights of the Youth Internet Safety Survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice, "one in five children (10 to 17 years old) receives unwanted sexual solicitations online." In 1998, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), in cooperation with the FBI and other government agencies, established the CyberTipline as a means whereby people may report incidents of online child sexual exploitation. For more information, please visit www.cybertipline.com or call toll-free: (800) 843-5678.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Did You Know?

Teach Children to Say, “Stop It”

Child safety tip: Teach children to say, “Stop it,” to instructions that might encourage them to do things they really do not want to do. Reinforce the rule that children should say, “Stop it,” to requests or demands that make them uncomfortable, even if they think they should obey. A discussion of these rules can teach a child that there are some times when it is okay to say, “Stop it,” and other times when it is okay to go along with the instructions.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Did You Know?

@TEOTD Are Your Kids AATK?

Do you understand the sentence above? Chances are your kids do. The Internet is a great resource for information and fun; but like nearly everything else these days, cyberspace brings with it its own set of challenges for parents. Parents should monitor their children’s Internet use and become familiar with the multitude of abbreviations, acronyms, and other shorthand that their children may be receiving via Internet chat rooms, instant messaging systems, and text message devices. For a searchable database of this Internet lingo, please visit www.virtus.org/virtus.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Source: www.virtusonline.org/virtus

Did You Know?

Screening and Training of Personnel Who Work with Children

Did you know that all Catholic school personnel in the Diocese of St. Petersburg are screened for their ability to work safely with children, are provided information and training to help them recognize and deal with issues of child sexual abuse, and are offered guidance and instruction on appropriate professional conduct with students?

Likewise, all seminarians and candidates for the diaconate go through extensive evaluation and psychological assessment before entering formation. After ordination, priests and deacons receive ongoing training on maintaining the integrity of the ministerial relationship.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Did you know?

Healing Those Harmed by Clergy Sexual Abuse

The Diocese of St. Petersburg has committed significant resources to help those who were harmed by clergy sexual abuse to recover from their horrible experiences. We hope our efforts will help, but we realize that only the grace of God can provide the complete healing the victims need.

In the midst of this sorrowful story, lessons have been learned and taken deeply to heart. Ineffective policies of the past have been rejected. Understandings that did not measure up to human realities have changed. New insights and policies can now offer protection to all our people.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Did You Know?

Dangers of Cell Phone Cameras

Cell phones with photographic capability are a mixed blessing. Forget your camera? Whip out the cell phone, and your toddler's first step, friend's goofy mishap, or fenderbender is captured for posterity.

But cell phones are also being used in a sinister way—to silently take pictures of unsuspecting children, adolescents, and adults in compromising positions and without their consent. Plus, unlike conventional photographs, digital photos can be placed on the Internet very quickly—within minutes of taking the photo—and distributed around the world. In fact, some Web sites have been created for the sole purpose of posting photos taken surreptitiously with camera phones.

Develop a healthy suspicion of anyone using a cell phone in an awkward way, such as not holding it up to his or her ear or facing his or her mouth in a walkie-talkie style. Be especially cognizant of any suspicious cell phone use in areas where people could be in various states of undress or where children are gathered. If you see someone using a cell phone in a way that appears suspicious, don't be afraid to ask what he or she is doing or to alert someone in a position of authority about your concerns.

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Source: Donna Albertone, "Taking a Closer Look at Cell Phone Video Voyeurism," featured March 7, 2005, at www.virtusonline.org/virtus.

Did You Know?

A Back-to-School Message About Child Protection

Fall means back to school for children and back to work for those who have been on vacation. Amidst the hustle and bustle of this season, let us all keep sight of the importance of keeping our children and young people safe from danger. Procedures to safeguard children have been established in parishes throughout the Diocese of St. Petersburg. These procedures help ensure that all children and youth experience safe environments in all parish activities and events. For more information, call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Did You Know?

Diocesan Audit Results

Did you know that an independent audit conducted in September 2011 determined that the Diocese of St. Petersburg is once again in full compliance with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*.

The audit found that the diocese “has not transferred any priest or deacon who has had a credible allegation of sexual abuse made against him to another ministerial assignment.”

For particular help you may call: **Michael Craig, Safe Environment Program Manager at (727) 344-1611, ext. 5377.**

Source: http://home.catholicweb.com/DOSP_SE/