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In the end, everything has been entrusted to our protection, and all of us are responsible for it. Be protectors of God's gifts!

Pope Francis

# Sexual Abuse Prevention Program: Resource for Catholic Teachers

This guide is available for use in conjunction with the Sexual Abuse Prevention Program required by the Ministry of Education and Ontario College of Teachers

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**Let us not sound-proof our hearts. Let us not remain barricaded in our certainties. So often our certainties can make us closed. Let us listen to one-another.**

Pope Francis

All Catholic educators who are certified by the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) are required to complete the Sexual Abuse Prevention Program by September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

The content of this program is sensitive.

As Catholics we have the obligation to address injustice and unfortunately, childhood sexual abuse has increased in Canada in the last years, necessitating this training.

All Catholic educators certified by the OCT come to this course with a variety of lived experiences. Some may know little about the topic of sexual abuse. Some may have a loved one who is a survivor. Some may be survivors themselves. We encourage you to take care of yourself as you complete these modules. It is important to recognize that Black, Indigenous, and racialized, 2SLGBTQIA+ identified people and those with exceptional needs have been disproportionately victimized due to systemic inequalities. **As such, this resource is offered as a compliment, not a requirement.**

Catholic organizations have also responded to the issue of sexual abuse. For a detailed review of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishop's work to address sexual abuse, see **“Protecting Minors from Sexual Abuse: A Call to the Catholic Faithful in Canada for Healing, Reconciliation and Transformation. CCCB Publications, Ottawa, 2018.”**

As stated on the **OCT website** upon logging in to the program, consider which of the following might best suit your personal needs:

- Completing the program alone, in groups, or with a trusted person.
- Completing the program in multiple sessions instead of all at once.
- Not listening to the survivor testimonials, which are not required for completion.
- Contacting a crisis centre if you experience distress.

Faith can be a source of healing and strength. This guide is given as an additional support for you as you progress through the modules. You may wish to begin with a prayer and end with a prayer to pause after each section. We offer this as a compliment to those who find it helpful - it is not a requirement.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT		
Module	Catholic Teaching	Prayer
<p><b>1) Introduction</b> The Canadian Centre for Child Protection (Canadian Centre) operates Cybertip.ca, Canada’s tipline for reporting the online sexual exploitation of children. On average, the tipline now receives over 4,000 reports monthly and it’s through these reports Cybertip.ca gleans important information to help protect children from sexual exploitation.</p> <p><b>2) Child Sexual Abuse</b> Child sexual abuse includes a range of behaviours, from obvious contact offences, such as sexual touching, to the less obvious non-contact offences, such as making sexually explicit comments, voyeurism, exposing a child to pornography or inviting a child to touch themselves.</p> <p><b>3) Grooming</b> Offenders often use a process called grooming to gain sexual access to children. The purpose of grooming is to manipulate the perceptions of children and adults around the children to gain their trust and cooperation. Offenders may use a combination of attention, affection, kindness, privileges, recognition, gifts, alcohol, drugs, status and/or money as part of the process to coerce the child to help gradually move the relationship to a sexual level.</p>	<p><b>These Catholic Social Teachings align with modules 1, 2, and 3.</b></p> <p><b>Dignity of the Human Person</b> The foundation of all Catholic Social Teaching is the inherent dignity of the human person, as created in the image and likeness of God. The Church, therefore, calls for Integral Human Development, which concerns the wellbeing of each person in every dimension: economic, political, social, ecological, and spiritual.</p> <p><b>Preferential Option for the Poor</b> The moral test of any society is based on how the most vulnerable are treated. God’s love is universal, so this principle does not intend that we should focus on the poor to the exclusion of others, but rather that we are called to prioritize those who are in most need of our Solidarity.</p> <p><b>Rights and Responsibilities</b> We all have a right to those things which are required by Human Dignity. Rights arise from what we need to live as God intended us to. These are innately linked with our responsibility to ensure the rights of others—that we do not take more than is needed to fulfill our rights at the expense of another’s.<sup>1</sup></p>	<p><b>The following prayer is from <i>Listening as an Act of Love</i> by Chris Koellffer, Sister Immaculate Heart of Mary</b></p> <p><b>Listening as an Act of Love</b> In this century and in any century, our deepest hope, our most tender prayer, is that we learn to listen. May we listen to one another in openness and mercy. May we listen to plants and animals in wonder and respect. May we listen to our own hearts in love and forgiveness. May we listen to God in quietness and awe. And in this listening, which is boundless in its beauty, may we find the wisdom to cooperate with a healing spirit, a divine spirit, who beckons us into peace and community and creativity. We do not ask for a perfect world, but we do ask for a better world. We ask for deep listening.</p>

DEEP LISTENING		
Module	Catholic Teaching	Prayer
<p><b>4) Disclosure</b> Most personal safety programs instruct children to tell a safe adult if someone touches them inappropriately. However, disclosure is not always obvious, and can be missed by adults. It is important to know how to recognize the signs of a child who may be in distress.</p> <p><b>5) Impact</b> There is an emotional, cognitive, physical and social impact on children who experience child sexual abuse. The impact of child sexual abuse on its victims is differential. A child may suppress the abusive experience and cope with the significant emotional disruption in a variety of ways. Some children show few to no symptoms, some show significant impairment (e.g., missing school, inability to focus or self-regulate) and others may cope with adaptive behaviour (e.g., overachieving).</p>	<p><b>The following Catholic teachings align with modules 4 and 5.</b></p> <p><b>Bishop Fabbro, on his experience listening to survivors:</b> “One of the key lessons I learned is that the survivors and their families should be the centre of our attention. Our highest priority needs to be our care for them. If we had listened to them and their cries for justice, many tragic failures of the past could have been avoided.”<sup>2</sup></p> <p><b>Cardinal Sean O’Malley on EU Day Against Child Sexual Abuse, November 18th, 2021.</b> “We cannot repair what we do not recognize. We cannot restore a broken trust if we do not address the heart of the matter. This requires honest investigation, independent inquiry, and informed action... Learning from each other, we can become a Church and a society that puts the protection of children among the highest priorities. This requires investment in creating relationships of trust and cross-institutional support.”</p>	<p><b>The following prayer, by and unknown author, is entitled Deep Listening.</b></p> <p><b>Deep Listening</b> God of silence and God of all sound, help me to listen. Help me to do the deep listening to the sounds of my soul, waiting to hear your soft voice calling me deeper into you. Give me attentive ears that begin to separate the noise from the sounds that are you; you who have been speaking to me and through me my whole life, for so long that you can seem like background noise. Today help me hear you anew.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, “10 Principles of Catholic Social Teaching.” University of St. Michael’s College, University of Toronto, n.d. [stmikes.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/180-Catholic-Teaching-v2.pdf](http://stmikes.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/180-Catholic-Teaching-v2.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. “Protecting Minors from Sexual Abuse: A Call to the Catholic Faithful in Canada for Healing, Reconciliation and Transformation. CCCB Publications, Ottawa, 2018, p. 8-9.

TAKING ACTION

Module	Catholic Teaching	Prayer
<p><b>6) Code of Conduct &amp; Reporting</b> A child protection code of conduct is a set of guidelines that outlines the expectation of adult boundaries between staff personnel and children for all employees/ volunteers in an organization. A key component of a child-safe organization is the code of conduct.</p> <p><b>7) Policies and Procedures</b> Module 7 is optional and is only recommended for individuals who are responsible for creating policies and procedures within their organization.</p> <p><b>8) Closing: Case Studies</b></p>	<p><b>The following Biblical passages relate to justice and our call as educators to serve the children in our care, and compliment the content in modules 6, 7, and 8.</b></p> <p>“Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.” From the Letter of Paul to the Philippians 4: 8-9</p> <p>Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labour is not in vain... Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. 1 Corinthians 15: 58, 16:13</p> <p>As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Colossians 3: 12-17</p>	<p><b>The following prayer, entitled <i>Your Heart Today</i>, is by Fr. Manoling Francisco, SJ.</b></p> <p><b>Your Heart Today</b> Where there is fear I can allay, Where there is pain I can heal, Where there are wounds I can bind, And hunger I can fill: Lord, grant me courage, Lord, grant me strength, Grant me compassion That I may be your heart today. Where there is hate I can confront, Where there are yokes I can release, Where there are captives I can free And anger I can appease: Lord, grant me courage, Lord, grant me strength, Grant me compassion That I may be your heart today. When comes the day I dread To see our broken world, Protect me from myself grown cold That your people I may behold. And when I’ve done all that I could, Yet, there are hearts I cannot move, Lord, give me hope, That I may be your heart today.</p>

Self-Care is extremely important, and might be especially so when you have completed the Sexual Abuse Prevention Program, **School Mental Health Ontario** has a list of suggestions to promote wellness.

Consider reviewing these and doing the ones that work for you.

The **Ontario Teacher's Federation** also provides useful links for wellbeing.

The **Canadian Mental Health Association** offers 'Six ways to practise self-care.'

Additionally, consider the following self-care suggestions:

- Take a break
- Connect with a member of your Support Services Team
- EAP service
- Call 211 in Ontario for Support
- Call Connex Ontario at 1-866-531-2600
- Connect with your local **CMHA**
- Seek out support from a trusted friend, advisor, colleague or guide







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