

VIRTUS “Teaching Touching Safety” Children and Teen’s Program
Archdiocese of Los Angeles
“Permission/Opt Out Form”

TO: Parents

FROM: Our Lady of Refuge Office of Religious Education

SUBJECT: Opportunity to “give permission for your child to participate” or “opt your child out” of the *Touching Safety* program

The Archdiocese of Los Angeles is committed to compliance with the U.S. Bishops’ **CHARTER FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**. Article 12 of the Charter mandates that, “each diocese establish and maintain a Safe Environment Program for children and youth.” In light of this, the ***VIRTUS Teaching Touching Safety Program for Children*** was adopted by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles in September, 2006. This program, which consists of 2 lessons per year, was implemented January 2007 in parish Religious Education/Confirmation programs.

The creators of the *Protecting God’s Children*™ program developed the *Touching Safety* program. This program is provided to us by the Los Angeles Archdiocese, and is a part of our ongoing effort to help create and maintain a safe environment for children and teens and to protect all children and teens from sexual abuse.

Two lessons each year are offered to all children and youth at Our Lady of Refuge. As a parent, you have the right to choose whether your student participates. We encourage you to read the attached “program overview” so you’ll be aware of the nature of the *Touching Safety* program. If you have questions about the program or the lesson, please contact the Office of Religious Education at 562-597-3102. Please return this form with your registration forms to the Office of Religious Education as soon as possible. For more information on the *Touching Safety* program, visit the *VIRTUS Online*™ website at www.virtus.org.

The staff of the Our Lady of Refuge Office of Religious Education will present a sexual abuse prevention program, the *Touching Safety* program, and will notify you when those dates are scheduled.

Permission/Opt-out form for use with the *Touching Safety* program:

The staff of Our Lady of Refuge Office of Religious Education:

- do not** have my permission to present the *Touching Safety* program to my child
- do** have my permission to present the *Touching Safety* program to my child

Child(ren)’s Names

Grade

Child(ren)’s Names	Grade

Parent’s name (printed): _____

Parent’s Signature: _____

Date: _____

Protecting God's Children (Overview of the Touching Safety Program)

The job of ensuring children's safety is a challenging undertaking. 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 our children the tools they need to overcome the advances of someone who intends to do them harm. The *Teaching Touching Safety* program is a vehicle through which parents, teachers, catechists, and youth ministers give children and young people the tools they need to protect themselves from those who might harm them.

The Touching Safety Program Lessons were created for Four Specific Age Groups:

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

Each year, the program provides a theme that introduces and builds on the basic concepts of the *Teaching Touching Safety* Guide. The material is developmentally appropriate for each age group and includes content and activities that reinforce the message. The lessons are organized in a four-year cycle so each child experiences a totally different lesson plan each time the materials are presented and receives the information from the *Teaching Touching Safety* Guide in small, "digestible" bites. As a child advances to the next age group, there are a whole new set of age appropriate lessons that explore the major topics in increasingly greater detail.

The themes covered (in age-appropriate way, of course) in each of the four years are:

Year 1 **Lesson 1: Touching Safety 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.

Lesson 2: Safe Friends, Safe Adults, and Safe Touches – 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.

Year 2 **Lesson 3: Boundaries** – Students learn about personal boundaries and how identifying and honoring those boundaries can give a child or young person the self assurance needed to speak up when someone tries to step over the line.

Lesson 4: Telling Someone You Trust – Children and young people learn who to tell when something makes them feel uncomfortable or confused.

Year 3 **Lesson 5: Grooming** – Students learn about the types of behavior that may indicate that an adult is grooming the child or young person for something more than friendship.

Lesson 6: "No secrets" – Reinforcing and building on the lessons from Year 2, this lesson deals with peer groups and other influences (including grooming by an abuser) that prevent children and young people from reporting inappropriate behavior. It also helps children and young people develop their own decision-making process.

Year 4 **Lesson 7: Internet Safety** – Teaches some "Do's and Don'ts" about dealing with others on the internet and the importance of protecting personal information.

Lesson 8: Creating and Following Family Rules – Children need to follow their parent's and guardian's rules to stay safe. They should participate in creating family rules for everyone to follow that protect the family from harm.

Regardless of a child's grade level at the time the program is implemented, each child should participate in all eight lessons during the four-year cycle.