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## Why Read the VIRTUS Bulletins?

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The mission of the VIRTUS Programs is to educate and empower organizations and individuals to work together to ensure safe environments. This includes educating caring adults on preventing child sexual abuse and other types of abuse, and protecting vulnerable persons of all ages.

Most individuals who are asked to read the bulletins as part of continued training have attended an initial, live *Protecting God's Children* session. The initial live session raises awareness that child sexual abuse exists and creates harm for the abused individual, family and community. In this face-to-face environment, the facilitator adapts to the participant's needs, and there are elements for every type of learning style to encourage engaged interaction and creative thinking. The hope is that the awareness will begin to change preconceived notions and attitudes about child sexual abuse. The training provides action items to both prevent abuse and teach caring adults how to respond appropriately if aware that it is occurring.

However, sometimes there are limitations to live training in that time constraints prohibit the ability to explore every applicable topic. Additionally, intellectually, the brain is better able to comprehend and integrate material for lasting change when it is provided with bite-sized pieces of information over time. The live training is just the beginning, as the message of protecting children isn't supposed to be a one-time training that is complete after three hours. In addition to the live training, VIRTUS provides an opportunity for continuing online education via bulletins and other means. Being able to learn through reading bulletins provides a wealth of benefits! It allows for a greater retention of information, a convenient and flexible learning environment since you're able to access the bulletins wherever you have the internet (including via phones, tablets and computers) and it's available 24/7.

The VIRTUS bulletins build upon the foundation set by the live *Protecting God's Children* Program, and provide useful information that is applicable to the role of the caring adult. The bulletins do not just relate to the prevention and appropriate responses to child *sexual* abuse, but also other types of abuse. Child-on-child abuse is mentioned, as is elderly/vulnerable adult abuse. Relevant information about current technology trends are addressed, as well as current threats or risks facing young people.

As each person who reads the bulletins within the span of the year is coming from a different perspective (caring adults, parents, grandparents, teacher educators, coaches, catechists, youth ministers, priests, administrators, office staff, college students, ministry leaders, principals, community outreach professionals, etc.), and often a different position (employee vs. volunteer), and even a variety of different ministries (religious education, youth ministry, altar serving ministry, vulnerable adult ministry—the list is extensive), there is a little bit of information over time for each of the ministries who are asked to complete ongoing training as part of upholding a safe environment for all persons.

Thank you for all that you do as a protector of children and the vulnerable, including your pursuit of helpful knowledge and your commitment to reading the bulletins!