

Home

Archdiocese of Los Angeles - Our Lady of the Angels Region

[Message Center](#)

Protecting God's Children for Adults



Vol. 7 No. 5

An embarrassment of riches: Establishing a framework for giftgiving to kids

By [Erika Tyner Allen, J.D., Ph.D.](#)

In the *Protecting God's Children*[®] (PGC) program, we suggest that parents and other caring adults should be wary of other adults giving gifts to children—especially without permission. Moreover, we propose that caring adults should refrain from certain gift giving to help kids learn when to spot bad intentions. All this is fine and good in theory, but assumes that kids will not have... grandparents!

My seven and nine year-old boys have some of the greatest grandparents around. They do most everything right: spend tons of time with the boys, often on the floor, playing the boys' favorite games. They go to great lengths to attend plays, games, parties, and awards ceremonies. But my parents also learned early-on what all modern grandparents know: the surest way to a child's heart is, well, often through a trip to Target's toy department.

They're not doing anything wrong, of course (except spoiling my kids), but how can I take seriously the PGC advice to be thoughtful about gift-giving with grandparents in the picture? Consider how you might respond to grandparents, other members of extended family, or friends who naturally—and with good intentions—tend to “spoil” the kids in your life?

Set ground rules about who gives presents and when. Kids should understand that there are only certain people from whom gifts are appropriate and certain circumstances when gifts are appropriate. As you know, you should talk to children about good and bad touches, under what circumstances and with whom even safe touches are appropriate—when being examined by a doctor, for example. Similarly, you should talk to kids about whom they can accept gifts from and under what circumstances. At our house, for instance, the kids know

Quick Search

[Search Now](#)

[View All Bulletins](#)

Training Bulletin Report

You have not completed **10** training bulletins.

[Click here to see your complete report](#)

Most Recent Training Bulletins

[Artificial Intelligence - Deepfakes and Child Abusers](#)

[Ministerial Boundaries, Power and Authority](#)

[When People Take Photos and Videos of Minors Without Permission](#)

[Being Trauma Informed](#)

[What We Culturally Prioritize Can Influence a Child's Vulnerability](#)

Erika Tyner Allen, J.D., Ph.D.

Erika Allen, J.D., Ph.D., is an independent training consultant, working with large corporations, agencies and non-profit organizations around the country. She provides comprehensive training services in both public communications and in legal compliance. She specializes in communicating about legal issues to non-legal audiences, both inside and outside of organizations (e.g., media coverage of legal events, internal employee communications). Erika has taught law, communication, and management courses at five major universities. At the University of Texas, both faculty members and students recognized her for outstanding academic teaching. Erika's scholarly research focuses on how lawyers can most strategically speak to the media. Her Ph.D. research demonstrated that communication training works and, moreover, identified exactly what a spokesperson must say to

they cannot accept gifts from friends and others outside the family except on certain well-established holidays. Not only do I hope this will keep them a bit safer from adults with bad intentions, but it also solves the dilemma of friends who want to “gift” toys on play-dates.

Gifts should never be a secret. Kids need to learn that presents are never secret, that they must always tell you when they get something from someone. Enforce this rule by keeping your eyes open for items for which you cannot locate the source. Of course, all this gets more difficult as children move into adolescence and some gifts take on a romantic nature originating from dating relationships—but, you’ll want to know about those, as well, won’t you?

Teach kids about proper “thank you’s.” Children need to learn gracious, earnest appreciation for presents—within reason. They need explicit instruction about what family standards are. For example, at our house, the kids must always write a thank you note that includes one specific reason that the gift made them happy. But kids also need to understand that gifts do not require reciprocation beyond that (or whatever your family practice). After all, legitimate gift-givers do not demand their presents back if not shown appreciation, affection, or any other allegiance. Kids need to learn this for their own protection as well as to develop their own reasoned limits of the role of material kindness in healthy relationships.

Talk to family members. If there comes a time that you think an adult’s gift-giving has an improper ulterior motive, address it directly. Ulterior motives may be many other things than sexual abuse—buying forgiveness, soothing absences, or to make up for a perceived lack of attention. It is usually okay to give presents to make a child happy; it is never okay to give presents to make a child like you. Caring adults—including good grandparents—understand well that often subtle distinction.

receive better media coverage. Erika received her law degree from the University of Virginia and her Ph.D. from the University of Texas. Prior to returning to education, Erika practiced law for a large corporate law firm. She resides in Dallas, Texas with her husband Eric and their two excellent children.

1) Melissa and her family have new neighbors, the Smiths, who seem like very nice people, although a little lonely. They have no children of their own and seem to be growing quite fond of Melissa's son, Michael. In fact, they have begun to give him gifts of candy and small toys on a fairly regular basis. Melissa finds this behavior to be inappropriate. What would be the best course of action to take?

- A) Melissa probably shouldn't say anything, the Smiths are just very generous people and it might hurt their feelings if she were to mention the gift-giving as potentially inappropriate.
- B) Melissa should demand that her son return all of the gifts and should then sever all contact between him and his friend's family—it wouldn't be responsible of her to continue to allow her son to socialize with a family that is so different from their own.
- C) Melissa should talk with her son and remind him that there are only certain people (who have been previously identified and discussed) who are allowed to give him special gifts—and then, only on special occasions.
- D) Melissa should talk with the Smiths and advise them of her family's plan to maintain a safe environment for children... She should explain that gift-giving outside of the family setting (especially without permission) is not appropriate and could create scenarios that could cause her son confusion, thus potentially putting him at risk.
- E) Both C and D

Submit my answer

Add this bulletin to my favorites

[Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

8755893

N21

LV={ts '2024-10-14 12:29:54'}

LO=/virtus/index.cfm