

In light of the increased volume of reports of child abuse and false accusations of abuse in recent years, the need to ensure practical and legal protection has increased. The following policies reflect our commitment to provide protective care of all children and students who participate in church sponsored activities.

Furthermore, these policies reflect a desire to protect workers from false allegations of impropriety. The goal of this policy is to prevent instances of physical and sexual abuse before they happen and to properly handle situations of physical and sexual abuse should they arise.

■ Neglect

Neglect commonly results from a lack of supervision. To avoid neglect, we need to:

1. Notify another qualified adult or supervisor when taking a child to the bathroom, making sure that the class is not left unsupervised.
2. Make sure that children are always within view of the children's worker.
3. Not allow "wandering off" of small groups of children to secluded areas.
4. Stop dangerous play by children immediately.

■ Discipline Procedure

The recommended discipline procedure should be as follows:

1. Discuss the problem and appropriate behavior with the child.
2. Remind child of the problem and appropriate behavior assuming they just forgot.
3. Separate the child from the group and reinforce why they are being separated and the appropriate behavior which is expected.
4. Discuss the problem with the teacher/program leader and work out a satisfactory solution.
5. Notify the parents of the problem behavior.
6. Escort the child to his/her parents and explain why the child cannot participate in the class or activity.
7. Exclude the child from activities for a determined period of time if inappropriate behavior persists.

■ Symptoms/Indicators of Abuse

Church workers should be alert to the physical signs of abuse and molestation, as well as to behavioral and verbal signs that a victim may exhibit. Some of the more common signs are summarized below. (NOTE: these symptoms/indicators can be indicative of a variety of issues, not just abuse.)

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Physical signs may include:

1. Lacerations and bruises.
2. Irritation, pain, or injury to the genital area.
3. Discomfort when sitting.
4. Torn or bloody underclothing.
5. Nightmares.
6. Difficulty with urination.
7. Venereal disease.

Behavioral signs may include:

1. Anxiety when approaching church or the nursery area.
2. Nervous or hostile behavior toward adults.
3. Sexual self-consciousness.
4. "Acting out" of sexual behavior.

Verbal signs may include statements like:

1. I don't like _____.
2. _____ does things to me when we're alone.
3. I don't like to be alone with _____.

■ Avoiding sexual misunderstandings:

1. Hand-holding is acceptable with grade-school children (and younger) but is best when done in the presence of another adult.
2. Contact between adults and children should always take place in open places, or in a room with a window, or with the door open.
3. Observe the "two adult rule" at all times. That is to say that there must always be two adults in an area with children. This ratio may be fulfilled by a rover who moves from class to class on a Sunday morning. This rule does not apply in groups of more than two students, 13 years of age and older.
4. One-on-one activities should be avoided unless they are in public, within the clear view of several other adults.
5. In a retreat setting, there will be a clear delineation between the women's quarters and those of the men. Both leaders and children will be expected to avoid going into the areas occupied by members of the opposite sex.
6. If interaction with youth or children workers appears to be sexually inappropriate according to age and situation (this includes any homosexual activity), appropriate boundaries should be identified immediately and the Sunday School Superintendent, program leader, or an elder should be notified immediately of any such behaviors and the action taken in response.

- **In the case that an incident occurs, you shall do the following:**
 1. Document the incident **immediately**, providing as much detail as possible, including but not limited to, the following:
 - a. ALL witnesses to the incident.
 - b. The date, time, place of the incident or other relevant information.
 - c. The child's name, age, address, phone number or other relevant information.
 - d. The alleged offender's name, age, address or other relevant information.
 - e. The relationship between the child and the alleged offender.
 2. Immediately notify one of the elders, the child's parents, and the people in charge of the ministry (Sunday School Superintendent, Ministry Team Chairman, etc.)
 3. If the elder determines that it is necessary, he shall be responsible for contacting the Arapahoe County Department of Social Services at 303-795-4850 and the Littleton Police Department at 303-794-1551 as soon as possible.
 4. Delays of even hours can impede the investigation. A report should be made within one hour from the time it is known or suspected that abuse has occurred.
 5. If confronted by the media, the elder involved will be the only spokesman. The press will be informed only that there has been a suspected case of child abuse, the suspected offender has been removed from their position, the authorities have been contacted as well as the child's parents, and the names have been withheld to protect the child and the suspected adult. Do not engage in denial, minimization, or blame.