

Safe Sanctuaries

Children & Youth Protection Notes

The following information is being offered to provide general information to protect our children and in case you need to report child abuse from any area of your life, i.e., you note that a child your son/daughter plays with has unexplainable bruises or injuries, you repetitively see a child out begging for food at your local grocery, etc.

Reducing the risk of abuse

Following these policies will reduce the risks for our children and youth. However, they also serve to protect our leaders from false accusations of abuse.

- **Minimum Age:** Volunteers and staff must be 4 years older than the age of the persons that they will be working to serve. The youngest a volunteer may be is 14.
- **Adult/Child ratios** - different number for child care at different ages as well as care in residential/camping experiences.
- **6 Month Rule:** All volunteers must have been a member of a congregation for six months before they will be allowed to serve in the areas of children and youth ministries. Persons not meeting this requirement may serve only as an assistant with another qualified adult.
- **Two-Adult Rule:** Two adults are to be utilized in all close-quarter programming with children and youth. This is a minimum that then falls in compliance with the adult/child ratios. Where it is possible to staff two adults in every room, have an additional adult serve as a floater with visual and physical access to all areas
- **Rooming:** It is preferred that no adult room with any youth or child in a hotel, cabin, tent or other similar situation. If this is necessary because of limited space, an adult may not sleep in the same bed as a youth or child unless they are the parent or guardian of that child.
- **Transportation:** Always have more than one adult or more than one child in a vehicle.
- **Policy instruction:** All volunteers and paid staff must go through policy instruction and educational training once a year.
- All paid staff (including clergy) will fill out the new "Employment Application" and have a criminal convictions and motor vehicle checks done.
- All current and new volunteers will fill out a "Volunteer Form" and have the appropriate checks done according to which age level they work with.

Legal Considerations

Tennessee, Arkansas and Mississippi law requires volunteers who work with children under the age of eighteen to report any type of suspected child abuse to the proper authorities. Any volunteer who makes such a report in "good faith" is protected by law from any form of liability. But failure to make such a report can give rise to criminal and/or civil liability. You may report in "good faith" anonymously.

Reporting Steps

1) If suspected child abuse has occurred, contact the appropriate agency below: (this is as per the "Legal Considerations" stated above)

- Arkansas department of Human Services (in state calls only) -- 800-482-5964
- Kentucky Adult and Child Abuse Reporting Hotline -- 800-752-6200
- Kentucky Prevent Child Abuse -- 800-432-9251
- Kentucky Parent Helpline -- 800-432-9251
- State of Kentucky by county:

Ballard	270-335-5173	Calloway	270-753-5362	Carlisle	270-628-3434
Fulton	270-472-1850	Graves	270-247-4711	Hickman	270-653-4335
Marshall	270-527-1354	McCracken	270-575-7105 or 270-575-7110		

- Mississippi department of Human Services (in state calls only) -- 900-222-8000
 - Tennessee Department of Human Services and/or Children Services by county:
- | | | | | | |
|----------|--------------|-----------|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Benton | 731-584-4712 | Gibson | 731-855-7864 | Lauderdale | 731-635-4142 |
| Carroll | 731-986-9121 | Hardeman | 731-658-5545 | Madison | 731-423-6499 |
| Chester | 731-989-5144 | Hardin | 731-925-9424 | McNairy | 731-645-7994 |
| Crockett | 731-696-2321 | Haywood | 731-423-6499 | Obion | 731-884-2603 |
| Decatur | 731-852-2995 | Henderson | 731-968-5128 | Shelby | 901-543-7120 |
| Dyer | 731-286-8304 | Henry | 731-644-7350 | Tipton | 731-475-2620 |
| Fayette | 901-465-7334 | Lake | 731-253-7716 | Weakley | 731-364-3149 |
- 2) If immediate danger exists to a child, contact, Police, Sheriff or Highway Patrol immediately and wait for their arrival or follow their instructions.
 - 3) Incidents of child abuse or reasonably suspected cases of abuse, whether allegedly perpetrated by individuals associated with the church or outside of the church shall be reported to the director of the pertinent program director.
 - 4) The pertinent program director will then follow the guidelines set forth in the Safe Sanctuaries policy.
 - All facts and circumstances of an incident shall be documented by the program director with the cooperation of the reporting person.
 - All steps taken in the handling of the incident and/or report shall be documented.
 - The program director shall inform the Senior Minister.
 - An additional report shall be made with one of the three organizations listed in #1.
 - The Senior Minister shall file a report to the church legal counsel, who will notify the liability insurer for the church, if the person being suspected as an abuser possibly did so as a staff or volunteer in behalf of the church.
 - The parents/guardians of the suspected victim shall be notified immediately unless the parents are the alleged perpetrators or it is suspected that the parents are involved.
 - In-depth investigation shall be carried out by the civil authorities rather than by church personnel.
 - 5) The Senior Minister shall be the sole spokesperson for the Church insofar as media inquiries are concerned.

Emotional Considerations

- 1) Adults are encouraged to be sensitive to the potential for child abuse. They should not hesitate to caution others that activities they observe are, or may appear to be, inappropriate.
- 2) Children are to be believed. Stay calm and reassure the child that everything is going to be okay. Reassure the child that you are concerned about what happened to him/her and that you would like to get some help. Since reporting is required, the child should be told that you have to tell the proper authorities, but that you will not tell anyone else.
- 3) Persons accused must be treated with dignity and support. Such persons shall be immediately relieved of further responsibilities until the investigation is completed and the allegations are cleared or substantiated.

Confidentially

CONFIDENTIALITY OF ALL PERSONS INVOLVED SHALL BE SAFEGUARDED.

What happens after a report is filed?

Every report of suspected abuse will be investigated by the appropriate agency. In cases of extreme physical and sexual abuse, a review team consisting of a physician, a psychologist or

psychiatrist, a social worker and a state department of human/child services employee will prepare a report for the local Juvenile Court and Prosecuting Attorney's office

Why do most child victims of sexual abuse keep the abuse secret?

A victim of child sexual abuse is under a great deal of pressure to keep the abuse secret. In many cases of child molestation, the molester has threatened to harm the child or a member of the child's family. The molester might have told the child that he would not be believed even if the child did tell. Another common situation is that the molester will tell the child that if the child tells about the abuse, he/she will get into trouble. The clear message is given to the child that if another person finds out, something bad will happen to the child. This pressure to maintain silence can often be successfully overcome by establishing open communication between children and adults through a proper educational program for children.