

Policies & Procedures For the Prevention of Child Abuse

SAMPLE POLICY

This information is meant only as a guide. It has been gathered from actual church policies and from material found in Church Law and Tax Report's *"Reducing the Risk."* Any organization preparing a sexual misconduct program or policy should have all aspects of the program and policy reviewed by an attorney.

PURPOSE

It is the purpose of the members and staff of _____ Church to provide a safe and secure environment for preschoolers, children, youth and mentally handicapped persons entrusted to our care. We do this to encourage those preschoolers, children, and youth and their families to grow in their relationship with God and one another.

A safe and secure environment includes a formal, written policy to help prevent the occurrence of child abuse. The following policy and procedures are for the protection of our preschoolers, children, youth, employees, volunteers and our entire church family at _____ Church.

SCOPE

This policy shall apply to all current and future workers, compensated and/or volunteer, who will have the responsibility of supervising the activities of preschoolers, children, youth, and mentally handicapped persons.

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this policy the following definitions shall apply:

1. "Preschooler," "child," "children," "youth," and "minor" shall be defined as any individual *under* the age of eighteen (18) (or whose mental capacity is that of a minor).
2. "Adult" shall be defined as any individual at least eighteen (18) years of age.
3. "Worker" shall be defined as any adult who serves as a volunteer and/or paid person given the responsibility of working with or caring for minors.
4. "Teenage Worker" shall be defined as any worker at least fourteen (14) years old or older, but under the age of eighteen (18) enlisted to assist with the care of minors.
5. "Child Abuse" shall be defined as verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse of a preschooler, child, youth, or minor.
6. "Criminal Background Check" (CBC) is the procedure used by the United Way Volunteer Center, DPS, or other qualified agency to check the background of adult volunteers for criminal activity.

WHAT IS CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE?

“Any sexual activity with a child – whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day care situation, a foster/residential setting, or in any other setting, including on the street by a person unknown to the child. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child, provided the child is four years older than the victim.”

Child sexual abuse may be violent or non-violent. All child sexual abuse is an exploitation of a child’s vulnerability and powerlessness in which the abuser is fully responsible for the action.

Child sexual abuse is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behaviors for which they are not personally, socially, and developmentally ready.

Child sexual abuse includes behaviors that involve touching and non-touching aspects.

WORKER ENLISTMENT

1. All paid employees of _____ Church will be required to complete an Employment Application.
2. Whether a paid employee or a volunteer, each worker desiring to work with minors, will also be required to complete a Worker with Minors Application which is specifically designed for workers who will be working with minors.
3. After an application is received, prior employment and volunteer service and personal references will be checked. It is suggested that, at a minimum, personal references be telephoned and a written memorandum be made of the contents of those telephone conversations, and that prior employment and church service references be contacted in writing.
4. Any prospective worker that has prior incidents of sexual misconduct or child abuse should not be allowed to serve in any capacity where they would have contact with minors.
5. Criminal background checks will be performed on each applicant after the applicant has signed the authorization/waiver/indemnity for, and prior to being enlisted as a worker. Annual criminal background checks will be performed on workers, randomly or as deemed necessary. (Only qualified representatives of _____ Church will have access to the criminal background check report. Recommendations will be given by this individual(s) to the Nominating Committee as to the qualification of applicants.)
6. Standard interview questions will be developed and used in personal interviews with volunteer employee applicants, after reviewing the applications of the applicant, checking all references, and receiving a criminal background check report. These interview sheets will be filled out with the results of the interview and kept in the employee personnel file, as well as the reference checks and the applications. (Criminal background check reports are not allowed to be kept more than thirty (30) days after receipt.) A separate file will be maintained permanently on each worker, whether paid or a volunteer.
7. No volunteer will be allowed to work with minors until they have been a member of the church for a minimum of six (6) months, or a regular attendee for a minimum of one (1) year.

8. When an employee or volunteer is engaged to work with minors, they will be photographed and the picture(s) will be kept in the person's file. Photographs will be updated every 2 years or as deemed necessary.
9. At the applicant's request, _____ Church shall allow the applicant to review his/her criminal history record transcript at the church, but in no event shall the church allow the applicant to retain and/or copy his/her transcript.
10. The church shall immediately notify the Volunteer Center or other qualified agency if an internal grievance (applicant disputes) is filed by an applicant because of incorrect information or other reasons related to criminal histories provided by the agency. The church shall submit in a reasonable time period the "Criminal History Record Resolution Request" or similar document to the agency.

WORKER TRAINING

Each new worker will be given the legal definition of child abuse in writing, as well as the policy of the church on reporting of child abuse. New workers will also be required to view child abuse prevention video(s) and read the written materials available on this subject to help them gain an appreciation for the reality of the concern. This will help workers identify child abuse in the future if they see signs of it.

VOLUNTEER INFORMATION FORM

Employees, teachers of minors, and volunteers of activities or programs for minors of _____ Church will be required to complete a Volunteer Information Form providing personal and confidential information necessary to perform security background checks and reference checks on each individual worker. While this process understandably trespasses into the privacy of our lives, the security of our children outweighs the personal invasion inherent with such investigation and disclosures. All personal information voluntarily disclosed, the results of all security background and reference checks or the refusal of any person to participate in a program or activity in lieu of such disclosure requirements will be maintained in the strictest of confidence.

Whether disclosed voluntarily or by result of the security background check, the following items will automatically disqualify a volunteer from participating in the leadership, sponsorship or supervising of any activities or programs with minors:

Any conviction for:

- Criminal homicide;
- Aggravated assault;
- Crimes related to the possession, use or sale of drugs or controlled substances;
- Sexual abuse;
- Sexual assault (rape);
- Aggravated sexual assault;
- Injury to a child;
- Incest;

- Indecency with a child;
- Inducing sexual conduct or sexual performance of a child;
- Possession or promotion of child pornography;
- The sale, distribution, or display of harmful material to a minor;
- Employment harmful to children;
- Abandonment or endangerment of a child;
- Kidnapping or unlawful restraint;
- Public lewdness or indecent exposure;
- Enticing a child.

All charges for these crimes or charges or convictions for any other crimes not listed above will be reviewed by those trained by the Volunteer Center for interpretation of the criminal history record transcript and approved by the church for reviewing applicant transcripts. Only qualified persons (as stated above) may view information obtained on the criminal history record transcript.

SPECIFIC ACTS AND OMISSIONS IN VIOLATION OF THE POLICY

The following acts of omissions are violations of this Policy and will not be tolerated or accepted during any activity or program and are to be immediately reported to the designated program staff after the safety of the child, children, youth, or minor involved has been assured.

- ❖ Any direct observations or evidence of sexual activity in the presence of or in association with a minor.
- ❖ Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of abusive conduct towards a minor.
- ❖ Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any person and a minor.
- ❖ Infliction or physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to a minor.
- ❖ Physical neglect of a minor, including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to the activities of _____ Church.
- ❖ Mental or emotional injury to a minor.
- ❖ The presence or possession of obscene or pornographic materials at any function of _____ Church.
- ❖ The presence, possession, or being under the influence of any illegal or illicit drugs.
- ❖ The consumption of or being under the influence of illegal or illicit drugs or alcohol while leading or participating in a function for minors at _____ Church.

WORKER SUPERVISION

1. The church will adopt the “two adult” rule, which means no adult shall be left alone with a child, and requires a reasonable ratio of adult workers to be maintained in each situation involving the supervision of children.

2. Church staff and volunteer directors will supervise on an ongoing basis and make unannounced visits into classes or other program sites from time to time. Supervisors shall complete a log to show which rooms, activities, time and date the classes or activity was visited.
3. An identification system shall be adopted so that the adults who drop off a child are the same adults who pick up the child. Permission slips will be available for adults to sign, authorizing the release of the child(ren) to other adults.
4. In counseling sessions with minors, parental permission shall be obtained prior to a minister meeting privately with a minor, or the two adult rule shall be used in that instance. Prior permission may be granted by parents to cover a particular time period (i.e., a school year) for their child to receive counseling from a particular minister.
5. Lists of workers that meet church approval, as workers with minors shall be posted near each classroom or area where minors are cared.

OCCASIONAL VOLUNTEER WORKERS

1. For those who only volunteer occasionally must go through the entire volunteer screening process. There are to be no exceptions for anyone to go through the complete process.
2. Teenagers under eighteen (18) wanting to serve as teen workers in any capacity with activities, studies, or programs for preschoolers or children will need to fill in a Teen Volunteer Information Form and go through the training. The only step in the process they are exempt from is the criminal background check.

SUPERVISION OF VOLUNTEERS

1. Parental permission shall be obtained in advance for involvement in church sponsored programs, activities or whenever an adult might be spending time alone with a child in an unsupervised situation.
2. A door without windows shall remain open at all times.
3. Use a “check-in/check-out” procedure for all kindergarten aged children and younger.
4. A list of possible violations and proper reporting procedures will be posted in each room where activities or programs for minors are conducted.
5. Educate all volunteers and paid workers with minors as to the church’s policies and procedures concerning this matter.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION REPORTING

Any person having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect shall report the person's belief in accordance with this procedure. Non-accusatory reports (reports that identify the victim of abuse or neglect whether or not the person responsible for the abuse or neglect is known) shall be made to the local or state law enforcement agency by calling 911 or _____ (appropriate phone #).

- 1) Fully comply with the child abuse reporting statute.
- 2) The church should also immediately contact the insurance company to report the occurrence, and should contact its attorney.
- 3) In instances where child abuse is confirmed and a member of the ministerial staff is the perpetrator, the immediate supervisor should be contacted and advised.
- 4) This procedure is not only required as a condition of your job or volunteer position, but is also required by law.
- 5) Upon the first suspicion of an instance of child abuse, the following steps should be taken immediately:
 - a) Do not treat the suspicion as frivolous.
 - b) Commence the investigation immediately, and conclude it as soon as possible.
 - i) If a sponsor or volunteer of minors suspects a case of child abuse, he or she is required by law to report his/her suspicions within 24 hours to _____ (agency name). It is the policy of _____ Church that it also be reported immediately to one of the paid staff ministers of the church.
 - ii) The minister receiving the initial report will be responsible for confirming the facts reported and the condition of the child, on the same day on which the first report was made. Use the "Reducing the Risk Application Checklist" to complete the church/staff responsibilities involved with the occurrence.
 - iii) Data concerning the child, name, address and other pertinent information will be obtained through discussions with the initial reporter and other staff members. The name and address of the person responsible for the care of the child, if available, will be obtained.
 - iv) After the information is secured, the minister will contact _____ (agency name).

- c) Maintain confidentiality of the investigation as much as possible. Emphasize confidentiality of the victim and any accused.
 - i) On the same day that the case is first reported verbally to _____ (local reporting agency), the report will be documented on a Child Abuse Report Form. A copy of this form must be sent within five (5) days to _____ (state agency if applicable).
 - d) Cooperate fully with law enforcement officials.
 - e) Suspend any accused from the performance of duties involving children until the investigation has been completed.
 - f) Inform the victim and the victim's family of the steps that are being taken, and continue to keep them advised of the status of the investigations. If child abuse is confirmed, ask the victim and the victim's family what action they would like to take in the matter, and fully cooperate to address their request with the bounds of a legal and prudent response (church legal counsel should assist in this determination).
 - g) In instances where child abuse is confirmed, the church should immediately dismiss the worker from that position. Consideration of member termination should be considered, as appropriate in the circumstances.
 - h) In instances where the evidence is inconclusive, the church must take action depending on the strength of the evidence available and after consideration of the victim's family's request.
 - i) Keep the congregation informed of the investigation with respect to matters which are not confidential, so that the congregation will hear about the investigation from within the church rather than from the news media.
- 6) Promptly take steps to plan for a response to the media and attempt to speak to the media only through one contact person so that the church can emphasize through the media to the public the church's position on child abuse, its concern for the victim, and the extensive steps the church is taking to address the present occurrence and to reduce the risk and provide a safe environment for other children.

Every allegation of sexual offense or molestation should be investigated promptly and thoroughly by officials and reported to the church insurance company immediately. If such allegation is factual, the relationship with the worker should be terminated. It is unlikely the problem will ever be handled by relying on promises of the employee or volunteer to reform. Failure to take remedial action will make a claim difficult to defend.

INSURANCE

The church shall obtain a sufficient level of liability insurance coverage that would cover child abuse and sexual misconduct claims. If available, the church should have the levels of coverage which are required for limited immunity.

CONCLUSION

Churches need to be prepared! This is the legal reason for creating safety policies, but there's a deeper, more significant reason – to protect the children. Policies are only printed expressions of the value placed on children. If the only reason for safety policies is to protect the organization, the church has missed God's love for children.

Some people may think that our church is too small or that our church “knows” everyone to worry about these safety problems. Remember it's much easier to make plans and develop safety policies as a means of prevention, rather than wait until they are needed as a reaction to an abuse case.

Some churches tend to take the biblical concept of trusting God to an extreme. They think nothing bad can happen to Christians. We must not be unwise regarding children's safety. There is no automatic protection from evil for the faithful. We're to watch and be ready. Accidents will always happen. There will always be unforeseen circumstances that need to be handled. But the church should build into its organization sturdy safety-policy fire blocks into the walls of its ministry to protect children.

_____ Church desires to be “a church that cares” through the implementation of the above policy. Adoption of these provisions will enable _____ Church to provide a more safe and secure environment for each individual of our church family and its guests.

REDUCING THE RISK APPLICATION CHECKLIST TO BE COMPLETED BY CLERGY/PROFESSIONAL STAFF PERSONS

In the case of an allegation of child/youth sexual abuse, the volunteer or clergy staff person who observes or to whom the information is given is required by _____ Church and by the state law to complete the tasks listed below. Date and initial as each step is completed.

Date: _____	Initial: _____	1. For clergy and paid professional staff: remove the accused from the situation and suspend the accused from duties involving children/youth.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	For volunteers: Remove the accused from the situation and immediately notify the closest available clergy/professional staff person who will suspend the accused. If the clergy/professional staff person to whom the allegation is reported is not the department director, the person reporting will inform the director as soon as possible.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	2. Make written documentation of everything done and said. If the person reporting the allegation is a volunteer, both the volunteer and the clergy/professional staff to whom the volunteer has reported will document the procedures taken.

The procedures after this point will be administered by ministerial staff persons only.

Date: _____	Initial: _____	3. Immediately notify the parents/guardians of the alleged victim and respond to their questions and concerns.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	4. Immediately notify state authorities. Failure to report any suspected, alleged or witnessed abuse is a crime.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	5. Immediately notify the minister in charge.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	6. Make written documentation of persons contacted and action taken to this point.

Date: _____	Initial: _____	7. The clergy/professional staff person will immediately notify a member of _____ response team to begin the internal and pastoral care process. This includes _____ Church.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	a. notify the insurance carrier of the incident immediately and comply with its investigation, if any;
Date: _____	Initial: _____	b. cooperate with legal and state authorities in their investigations, if any;
Date: _____	Initial: _____	c. prepare a written statement and designate a spokesperson to respond to media inquiries;
Date: _____	Initial: _____	d. provide assistance to the alleged victim and his/her family in obtaining counseling or referral to a mental health professional, if needed;
Date: _____	Initial: _____	e. respond to the needs of the families of the alleged victim and the accused to seek a redemptive solution for all involved;
Date: _____	Initial: _____	f. inform the affected volunteer(s) and paid staff members of the need for confidentiality, and;
Date: _____	Initial: _____	g. consider and respond to the concerns of other parents.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	8. The director of the affected ministerial area will respond to the pastoral care concerns of persons within the department.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	9. Within five (5) days of the alleged abuse, the clergy/professional staff person who made the original report will prepare a written report and send one copy to the state agency and will give one copy to the senior pastor.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	10. Make written documentation of persons contacted and action taken.

INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Reason for report _____

Date of incident _____ Class _____

Title _____

Name(s) and Age(s) of Minor(s) _____

Quote the child's first words verbatim: _____

Briefly describe what happened: _____

What action did you take? _____

Has the incident been resolved? yes no Explain: _____

Were there any witnesses? yes no Names: _____

Signatures of witnesses (if possible): _____

Report submitted to: _____

PAID AND VOLUNTEER CHILD WORKER ENLISTMENT CHECKLIST

TASK TO COMPLETE	COMPLETED BY – INITIALS
<input type="checkbox"/> Copy of Policy and Procedures Manual	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Employee Application	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer Worker Application	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Receive Copy of Policy & Procedure Manual	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Worker's Statement	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Criminal Records Check Authorization	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Criminal Records Check Information Form	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Driver Information Form (as needed)	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> References Checked	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Church Membership Status	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Criminal Background Check Performed	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> CBC Reviewed by Approved Staff	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Interview After Checks Are Made	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Review Background Transcripts with Applicant	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Photograph	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor/Volunteer Acknowledgement	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor/Volunteer Code of Ethics and Rules	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Worker Training	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Definition of Child Abuse	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Procedure on Reporting Abuse	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> View Video(s)	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Written Material(s)	_____

WORKER'S STATEMENT

The information contained in this screening form is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references to give you any information, including opinions, which they may have regarding my character and fitness for work with minors or the mentally handicapped. Each reference will be asked to submit the name of one person to be used as a reference. In consideration of the receipt and evaluation of this application by _____, I hereby release any individual, church, youth organization, charity, employer, reference, or any other person or organization, including record custodians, both collectively and individually, from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind or nature which may at any time result to me, my heirs, or family, on account of compliance or any attempts to comply with this authorization. I waive any right that I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any person or organization identified by me or my references in this screening form.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the Bylaws and Policies of _____ and to refrain from unscriptural conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of _____.

I further state that I have carefully read the foregoing release and know the contents thereof; and sign this release as my own free act. This is a legally binding agreement which I have read and understand.

Print Name _____ Date _____

Applicant's Signature _____

Print Witness Name _____ Date _____

Witnesses' Signature _____

SPONSOR/VOLUNTEER CODE OF ETHICS AND RULES

While acting in our capacity as a Youth/Children/Preschool/Handicapped sponsor or volunteer of _____, the following rules shall apply.

- 1) Smoking or using tobacco products in the presence of minors is prohibited.
- 2) Using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal, or illicit drugs will not be tolerated.
- 3) Sponsors and volunteers of minors shall not abuse such minors, including:
 - Any direct observations or evidence of sexual activity in the presence of or in association with a minor;
 - Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of abusive conduct towards a minor;
 - Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any person and a minor;
 - Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind to a minor(s);
 - Infliction or physically abuse behavior or bodily injury to a minor;
 - Physical neglect of a minor, including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to the activities of _____ Church.
 - Mental or emotional injury to a minor;
 - The presence or possession of obscene or pornographic materials at any function of _____ Church.
 - The presence, possession, or being under the influence of any illegal, illicit drugs;
 - The consumption of or being under the influence or alcohol while leading or participating in a function for minors of _____ Church.
- 4) Limit access to the locked records to the Administrator.
- 5) Periodically update Volunteer Information Forms.
- 6) Sponsors and volunteers must treat all people of all races, religions, and cultures with respect and consideration.
- 7) Sponsors and volunteers shall not use or tolerate the use of profanity in the presence of minors.

- 8) Sponsors and volunteers must be free of physical and psychological conditions that might adversely affect any minor's health, including, but not limited to, contagious disease.
- 9) Sponsors and volunteers will portray a positive role model for minors by maintaining an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience, courtesy, and maturity.
- 10) Sponsors and volunteers will be expected to act and react with Christian love and understanding in all situations.
- 11) Sponsors and volunteers will do everything in their power to avoid being put in a situation where they are alone with a minor other than their own.
- 12) I understand that as a sponsor or volunteer with minors for _____ Church I will be subject to a background check, including criminal history.
- 13) I understand that any violation of this code may be grounds for removal as a sponsor or volunteer with minors.

Print Name _____ Date _____

Applicant's Signature _____

PROFILE ON A CHILD ABUSER

SEXUAL ABUSE

Men 18 and up

- Low self-esteem
- Need for power and control
- Poor family relationships, though the relationships often look okay from the outside
- Difficulty in interpersonal relationships . . . relates to others immaturely both socially and emotionally . . . may not be involved with peers or engage in adult group recreational activities.
- Difficulty with impulse control
- History of past physical/sexual victimization . . . 80-95% of child molesters were themselves molested as children
- Primary interests are in children
- May be involved in youth activities such as group leaders or coaches
- May be single or married . . . if married, they are often experiencing marital difficulties . . . they have difficulty in developing satisfying, supportive, intimate relationships with adults
- May have a specific age of children they prefer to work with
- May be of any sexual orientation or preference
- May have been insecure in childhood with frequent moves, early physical illnesses and marital difficulties between parents
- Many are less of a team player
- Difficult time asking for help with his problems
- Don't admit to stress or recognize a need to have a plan to deal with it
- Use children to fulfill their needs or validate their sense of competence and well-being
- Highly skilled at gaining the trust and confidence of children
- Sensitive to children's needs and have a way of putting children at ease
- Move frequently and unexpectedly
- Seeks opportunities to be alone with children
- Has an idealistic perspective of children . . . may refer to them as objects
- Often good at convincing others about their competence and caring

Adolescent

- Lack of contact with peers
- Few or no extracurricular activities
- Generally feels powerless and inadequate
- May feel more comfortable with children younger than themselves
- Males, in particular, may be frequently chosen to baby-sit because they make themselves available and relate well to young children
- May come from a family where there has been physical or sexual abuse
- May seem socially immature for their age
- May lack a close relationship with a father figure

Women

- May have married young
- Reared in a very strict home
- Her family was/is very religious
- Her husband is gone frequently and is not very supportive
- Is sexually naïve and immature
- Is very dependent of the father figure
- Frequently the victim of physical abuse
- Has low self-esteem
- The husband exaggerates his masculinity in dress, work, and with peers and usually has drug or alcohol problems that affect his sexual performance
- Is lonely
- Does not have much tenderness in her life

PHYSICAL ABUSE

- Negative attitude about life and people
- Labeled as having a “hot” temper
- Blames others: “he made me,” “it was her fault”
- History of child abuse as a child
- Uses harsh, age inappropriate discipline
- Offers illogical or unconvincing excuses for what occurred
- Exhibits out of control behavior

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

- Blames and belittles children
- Cold and rejecting
- Withholds love

CAUTION: A profile list such as this can be misleading because many of the characteristics here can describe men/women who do not molest. Having more than one or even all of these items does not necessarily increase the odds of that person being a molester. Although this profile has some value in pointing out particular needs of people and risks associated with them, great caution should be used when assigning this profile to any one individual. Few molesters ever report the characteristics listed here. Neither are interviewers trained to properly elicit this information. Individuals with abusive personalities are often more subtle and skillfully manipulative in their approach to their employers, as well as their approach to children. This makes it essential for those responsible for hiring or enlisting volunteers to gain information from collateral resources such as past employers, friends, families, and criminal background checks.

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POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF ABUSE

NEGLECT

Behavioral Indicators

1. Is truant or tardy often or arrives early and stays late.
2. Begg or steals food.
3. Attempts suicide.
4. Uses or abuses alcohol and/or other drugs.
5. Is extremely dependent or detached.
6. Engages in delinquent behavior, such as prostitution or stealing.
7. Appears to be exhausted.
8. States frequent or continual absence of parent or guardian.

Physical Indicators

1. Frequently is dirty, unwashed, hungry, or inappropriately dressed.
2. Engages in dangerous activities (possibly because he/she generally is unsupervised).
3. Is tired and listless.
4. Has unattended physical problems.
5. May appear to be overworked and/or exploited.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Behavioral Indicators

1. Is reluctant to change clothes in front of others.
2. Is withdrawn.
3. Exhibits unusual sexual behavior and/or knowledge beyond developmental age.
4. Has poor peer relationships.
5. Either avoids or seeks out adults.
6. Is pseudo-mature.
7. Is manipulative.
8. Is self-conscious.
9. Has problems with authority and rules.
10. Exhibits eating disorders.
11. Is self-mutilating.
12. Is obsessively clean.
13. Uses or abuses alcohol and/or other drugs.
14. Exhibits delinquent behavior such as running away from home.
15. Exhibits extreme compliance or defiance.
16. Is fearful or anxious.
17. Exhibits suicidal gestures and/or attempts suicide.
18. Is promiscuous.
19. Engages in fantasy or infantile behavior.
20. Is unwilling to participate in sports activities.
21. Has school difficulties.

Physical Indicators

1. Has pain and/or itching in the genital area.
2. Has bruises or bleeding in the genital area.
3. Has venereal disease.
4. Has swollen private parts.
5. Has difficulty walking or sitting.
6. Has torn, bloody, and/or stained underclothing.
7. Experiences pain when urinating.
8. Is pregnant.
9. Has vaginal or penile discharge.
10. Wets the bed.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Behavioral Indicators

1. Is overly eager to please.
2. Seeks out adult contact.
3. Views abuse as being warranted.
4. Exhibits changes in behavior.
5. Is excessively anxious.
6. Is depressed.
7. Is unwilling to discuss problems.
8. Exhibits aggressive or bizarre behavior.
9. Is withdrawn.
10. Is apathetic.
11. Is passive.
12. Has unprovoked fits of yelling or screaming.
13. Exhibits inconsistent behaviors.
14. Feels responsible for the abuser.
15. Runs away from home.
16. Attempts suicide.
17. Has low self-esteem.
18. Exhibits a gradual impairment of health and/or personality.
19. Has difficulty sustaining relationships.
20. Has unrealistic goal setting.
21. Is impatient.
22. Is unable to communicate or express his/her feelings, needs, or desires.
23. Sabotages his/her chances of success.
24. Lacks self-confidence.
25. Is self-deprecating and has a negative self-image.

Physical Indicator

1. Has a sleep disorder (nightmares or restlessness).
2. Wets the bed.
3. Exhibits developmental lags (stunting of his/her physical, emotional, and/or mental growth).
4. Is hyperactive.
5. Exhibits eating disorders.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Behavioral Indicators

1. Is wary of adults.
2. Is either extremely aggressive or withdrawn.
3. Is dependent and indiscriminate in his/her attachments.
4. Is uncomfortable when other children cry.
5. Generally controls his/her own crying.
6. Exhibits a drastic behavior change when not with parents or caregiver.
7. Is manipulative.
8. Has poor self-concept.
9. Exhibits delinquent behavior, such as running away from home.
10. Uses or abuses alcohol and/or other drugs.
11. Is self-mutilating.
12. Is frightened of parents or going home.
13. Is overprotective of or responsible for parents.
14. Exhibits suicidal gestures and/or attempts suicide.
15. Has behavioral problems at school.

Physical Indicators

1. Has unexplained* bruises or welts, often clustered or in a pattern.
2. Has unexplained* and/or unusual burns (cigarettes, doughnut-shaped, immersion-lines, object-patterned).
3. Has unexplained* bite marks.
4. Has unexplained* fractures or dislocations.
5. Has unexplained* abrasions or lacerations.
6. Wets the bed.
(* Or explanation is inconsistent or improbable).

Adapted from: Johnson, Becca, Cowan. 1992. For Their Sake: Recognizing, Responding to, and Reporting Child Abuse. Martinsville, IN: American Camping Association. Reprinted here by permission of the publisher. For permission beyond limited use in creating church policy, please contact the publisher at 317-342-8456.

OTHER TYPES OF HARM

Most of us think that liability arise only out of tangible harm, such as bodily injury or property damage. Unfortunately, increasing numbers of lawsuits involve situations where physical injury is not involved. These exposures may arise out of:

1. Libel and slander – untrue statements about members of the congregation or other faiths. Emotional distress may be caused because of statements made or actions taken, even if they are well founded in truth.
2. Public demonstrations against individuals, groups, or organizations if improperly conducted.
3. Discharge of students or expulsion of members of congregations.
4. Invasion of privacy – investigations into the private lives of church members may cause liability, as may acts such as searching lockers, desks, or personal property of employees or students.
5. Publications – accuracy of facts should be carefully determined. Accusations should not be published. Groups or classes of individuals should not be charged with guilt by association.
6. Counseling by insufficiently trained or unskilled counselors.

IMPROPER OR INADEQUATE SUPERVISION

You can't over-supervise. Most states or local governments have specific requirements on the minimum ratio of supervisors to participants. Probably more litigation results from "failure to properly supervise" than any other cause. If negligence cannot be found for any other reasons, attempts are made to find inadequate supervision.

Instances where improper or inadequate supervision will likely be alleged are:

1. Accidents on the playground
2. In Sunday School
3. Church outings
4. Sporting events
5. Field trips
6. Swimming
7. In the classroom

Proper location of supervisors on playgrounds or at swimming pools is as important as the number of supervisors. Governmental authorities should be contacted prior to events on public property to determine any safety requirements and to place authorities on notice of the type of activity planned. Parents should be informed in writing of the exact nature of the planned event, describing the supervision to be given church or school. Parental consent should be obtained in writing of any special event.

Qualifications required for supervisory personnel should be determined for each event. You need people of mature judgement who are experienced supervising groups of children or young people. The supervisor should not have a history of problems with assigned groups.

A thorough check should be made on an individual's background, especially where supervisors are employees of the church or school. All states have standards for hiring employees in charge of children. Church officials should be informed of state and local requirements. This would include "certification of teachers".

HAZARDOUS ACTIVITIES

We enjoy activities that foster good fellowship. However, in some activities the dangers outweigh the enjoyment. These are classified as hazardous and extra hazardous. Hazardous activities should be stringently supervised with strict limitations. Extra hazardous activities should not be sponsored by the church or school.

Hazardous

Water slides
Water-skiing
Snow skiing
Rafting
Unsupervised swimming
Canoeing
Paddle boating
Horseback riding
Rope jumping
Basketball
Volleyball
Softball
Sack races
Touch football
Roller skating
Ice skating

Extra Hazardous

Hayrides
Mud Olympics
Dune buggies
Snow tubing
Obstacle courses
Haunted houses
Tackle football
Snowmobiles
Rodeos
Rope swings
Monkey bar equipment
Fireworks displays & stands
Motorbikes
Rock climbing
Trampolines