

Church of God of Prophecy

CHILD, YOUTH, AND WORKER PROTECTION POLICY

The ministries of the Church of God of Prophecy desire to be a safe place for all children and adults who attend any activity or ministry. It is an unfortunate reality that each year pre-pubescent and post-pubescent children are victimized by adults, who in some cases are individuals they know and trust. There are also reports that in some cases children are victimized by other children. The church is not immune to the potential for such abuse or neglect of children, either by its members or by those in leadership positions. Such abuses are not limited to a particular ethnic, religious or cultural group, in fact, incidents of child abuse seem to cross every people group. This *Child, Youth, and Worker Protection Policy* reflects the Church of God of Prophecy's commitment to protect children from harm. The policy applies to all volunteer and compensated workers of the Church of God of Prophecy.

The policy is intended to clearly state that the Church of God of Prophecy will not tolerate child abuse or neglect. Your cooperation in this policy not only reflects your concern about children's safety, but also your willingness to take steps toward halting child abuse and its detrimental effects.

For the safety and protection of our children and workers, all people who participate in church-sponsored activities with children will be required to comply with this policy.

APPROPRIATE TOUCH

“Good touch” is important to each of us. Children do not grow and thrive without the good touch of others. Touch was important to Jesus as he healed people and comforted them. Our Christian tradition shares love with each other through hugs, placing an arm around another's shoulder or squeezing a hand to say, “You are loved.”

It is imperative that the Christian community not lose the importance of “good touch.” We need to continue to express Christian love in appropriate ways with children. To a child who is upset, a warm hug and kind word can be most comforting. In the midst of our caution, let us not forget that good touch is just that – *good!*

DEFINITIONS

In this policy the following definitions will apply:

1. **Child:** Any person under the age of 18.
2. **Special Needs Person:** Any adult or child requiring direct adult supervision as a result of mental or physical limitations.
3. **Adult:** Any person age 18 and over.

4. **Child abuse and neglect:** Physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, or neglect of a child by an adult or adolescent caregiver responsible for the child's welfare.
5. **Physical abuse:** Maltreatment which results in physical injury, including but not limited to bruises, cuts, welts, fractures, and internal injuries.
6. **Emotional abuse:** Maltreatment which results in impaired psychological growth and development, including, but not limited to, belittling, rejection, constant unequal treatment, verbal assaults, excessive demands on child's performance, and isolation from normal social activities.
7. **Sexual abuse:** Maltreatment which consists of sexual contact or interactions with a child, including, but not limited to, physical contact (fondling, genital/oral stimulation, sexual intercourse) and non-physical contact (exhibitionism, child prostitution, pornography, and voyeurism).
8. **Neglect:** Failure or inattention on the part of the caregiver to provide for a child's basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care, and supervision.
9. **Compensated workers:** Hourly, salaried, part-time, or full-time employees who work with children at any church-sponsored activity.
10. **Volunteer workers:** Any non-compensated individual who works with children at any church-sponsored activity.
11. **Caregiver:** Any compensated or volunteer worker, seventh grade or older.
12. **Mandated reporter:** Any person with responsibility for the care of children is a mandated reporter. If a caregiver has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been or may be subjected to abuse or neglect, or observes a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances which would reasonably result in abuse or neglect, that person shall immediately report or cause a report to be made to the Department of Children and Family Services or other comparable agency of the civil authorities. Because of the International Scope of the ministries of the Church of God of Prophecy, this policy must be implemented through the appropriate General Presbyter, who will work in consultation with the State/National Overseer. This will call for investigation of the controlling legal authority, and the laws of the particular state or nation. A good source for this information in the United States would be the Attorney General's Office of the particular State/or the equivalent authority in nations. Special note: Some states have passed legislation that has been signed into law REQUIRING the reporting to proper authorities. In most cases, there are specific legal guidelines for the prosecution of those who fail to report, which will often mandate certain fines, and incarceration. In addition, there exists a substantial risk of exposure to civil litigation.

SCREENING FOR VOLUNTEER AND COMPENSATED WORKERS

The following procedures reflect our commitment to provide protective care for all children and caregivers who participate in church-sponsored activities.

1. Volunteer workers must be regular attendees of the Church of God of Prophecy for at least six months.
2. All volunteer and compensated workers must complete the following procedures before participating in any church-sponsored children's activities.
 - A. All volunteer and compensated workers must complete a Church of God of Prophecy *Children and Youth Worker Application* form. References will be checked.
 - B. An interview will be conducted by the Pastors and Directors of Children and Youth Discipleship Ministries. We also recommend that the coordinator for the specific ministry be involved in the interview.
 - C. All persons working with children must attend orientation/training activities appropriate to the level of the volunteer or compensated worker.
3. Applicants must sign a written acknowledgement stating they have received and reviewed a copy of the *Church of God of Prophecy Child, Youth, and Worker Protection Policy*.
4. All volunteer and compensated workers shall be screened by a background check for the purpose of obtaining information regarding criminal history or abuse findings. This check must include the state sex offender's registry.
5. Any adult member of the congregation, volunteer, or compensated worker who has been convicted of a crime against a child or a violent crime against another adult, shall not provide service in any church-sponsored activity or program for children or special needs persons.

Those who have been convicted of either sexual or physical abuse can be forgiven for, and cleansed of their sin. However, sin does have consequences and while such persons may serve in certain other areas of ministry, they will be prohibited from serving in the children's and special needs ministries in the Church of God of Prophecy.

6. This application and the results of any screening shall be kept confidential by authorized church staff.

GENERAL POLICIES FOR SUPERVISION OF CAREGIVERS

Children's Ministries (Birth – Sixth Grade)

1. Caregivers shall not engage in any form of physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect.
2. Every effort will be made to have a minimum of two adults working together with children. In a Bible Study or similar teaching environment, it is acceptable to have individual classes/groups with only one adult caregiver provided there are other adults present in the general area. This protects the children and the adults, as well as providing a safer situation in the event of an accident or emergency.
3. The windows of classroom doors shall remain uncovered to allow a clear view of classroom activities.
4. When possible, children are to be encouraged to take care of their own bathroom needs. Should assistance be required, another adult or caregiver should be present.
5. Children must be released to the parent or caregiver. Persons other than the child's parents or guardians must be authorized to pick up the child.
6. A positive approach to discipline shall be practiced. Clear, consistent, age-appropriate limits will be established to help the children function appropriately.
7. The Pastor and Children's Ministries Directors must approve any activities that are held off site. Parent or guardian permission shall be obtained and there shall be a minimum of two adult caregivers present.
8. Organized events on or off site of any Church of God of Prophecy shall be staffed with a minimum ratio of 1:10, adult caregiver to child. Overnight events that are attended by children of both genders must be chaperoned by adult caregivers of both genders.

Youth Discipleship Ministries (Seventh Grade – Twelfth Grade)

1. Caregivers shall not engage in any form of physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect.
2. Every effort will be made to have a minimum of two adults working together with children or students. In a Bible Study or similar teaching environment, it is acceptable to have individual classes/groups with only one adult caregiver provided there are other adults present in the general area. This protects the children and the adults, as well as providing a safer situation in the event of an accident or emergency.
3. Organized events on or off site shall be staffed with a minimum ratio of 1:10, adult caregiver to child.

4. The Pastor and Youth Ministries Director must approve any activities held off site.
5. Overnight events that are attended by youth of both genders must be chaperoned by adult caregivers of both genders.
6. A positive approach to discipline shall be practiced. Clear, consistent, age-appropriate limits shall be established.
7. It is recognized that certain counseling and ministerial situations may preclude the presence of two adult caregivers and that the general guidelines for supervision of caregivers should not restrict situations where individual counsel and guidance is necessary. In this case the door must be left open or the window of the door shall remain uncovered.
8. For camps, retreats, or similar activities, two adult caregivers shall work as a team when it is not possible to have two adults in the same sleeping room. The team approach shall be encouraged and coordinated by the supervisory staff person.
9. The supervisory staff person shall be aware of and responsible for such activities.

REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE OR NEGLECT

The Church of God of Prophecy has determined that it is the responsibility of the pastoral staff to report all cases of suspected child abuse or neglect to the proper legal authorities with 24 hours of it being discovered. When it becomes necessary to report suspected child abuse or neglect, the protection of children must be the most important concern. The State/National Overseer must be notified immediately.

As a caregiver, you are a mandated reporter of child abuse or neglect. It is the legal responsibility of a mandated reporter to report all cases of child abuse or neglect they observe, and further, to report visible signs of alleged abuse or neglect. Failure to report could lead to liability on the part of the church, the observer, or both. The confidentiality of the pastor/attendee relationship is very important. Reporting probable cause of child abuse or neglect has the potential for helping individuals receive help for a previous problem and may prevent further harm to self and others.

What is probable cause? Probable cause means that the available facts when viewed in the light of the surrounding circumstances would cause a reasonable person to believe a child was abused or neglected. A report based on probable cause does not require proof that abuse or neglect has actually occurred; rather, it is a request for an assessment of the condition of a child.

Because we believe children are our most important concern, the Church of God of Prophecy has adopted the following guidelines for reporting suspected abuse:

1. Upon observing or suspecting abuse, the caregiver shall immediately do the following:
 - a. Make sure the child's safety and comfort are secured.
 - b. Make sure the suspected abuser is safely away from the children.

2. Report the abuse or neglect promptly to the Pastor or Director of Children's Discipleship Ministries and/or the Director Youth Ministries. To preserve confidentiality, it is important to discuss the incident initially only with any of these four individuals.

RESPONSE OF THE CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY

The primary function of the Church of God of Prophecy in responding to allegations of sexual abuse or neglect are to attempt to provide pastoral care to all who are affected, to attempt to ensure the safety and protection of persons who have been or may be harmed, to seek healing by providing pastoral care and other needed assistance to all who are affected, and, to the extent possible, to respect the privacy and rights of the parties involved and the confidentiality of communications.

If the Church of God of Prophecy receives an allegation of child abuse or neglect, the pastors will respond with the utmost concern to the victim, parent, or other party making such an allegation. The accused will be treated with dignity and support. Without clear and convincing evidence to the contrary, the Church of God of Prophecy will assume that such complaints are made in good faith. Persons making such complaints should have no doubt that the Church of God of Prophecy takes them seriously and will take appropriate action.

If an alleged abuser contacts the church officials about a complaint, Church of God of Prophecy personnel may confirm that they have received such a complaint only if they are certain the alleged abuser already knows this. They should avoid discussing the allegations or making any further comments until the proper authorities have an opportunity to conduct their investigation. They should not identify the alleged victim or complainant during an investigation.

If the media or other parties contact a church official about a pending allegation of child abuse, they should be referred to the Pastor. Only the Pastor or his designee shall make comments about the allegation.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY PASTORAL STAFF

In accordance with the Church's position that child abuse and neglect shall not be tolerated, the pastoral staff shall do the following:

1. Take all allegations of child abuse and/or neglect seriously.
2. Document all efforts at handling the incident.
3. Contact the Department of Children and Family Services or its equivalent agency within 24 hours. In many cases, the governing law enforcement agencies may have investigators specifically designated to investigate such claims. Do not attempt an in-depth investigation. This should be left to professionals who are familiar with these cases.
4. Report the incident immediately to the church insurance company and attorney.
5. Do not try to handle this without professional outside assistance.
6. Notify the parents or guardians.

7. Do not confront the accused until the safety of the child or special needs person is secured.
8. Do not prejudge the situation, but take the allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Showing care and support will help to prevent further hurt. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the first priority.
9. Treat the accused with dignity and support. If the accused is a caregiver, that person should be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is finished.
10. Use the text of a prepared public statement to answer the press and to convey news to the congregation. Be careful to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.

Church of God of Prophecy

Child, Youth, and Worker Protection Policy

Commonly Asked Questions

Is a criminal background check really necessary?

Sadly, the culture in which we live dictates that we must take drastic preventive measures to protect the children and youth whose care we've been entrusted with. Furthermore, there are litigation issues: A church that hasn't performed background checks faces the risk of catastrophic financial penalties in the event that an allegation of abuse within the church leads to a conviction or out-of-court settlement.

Who needs to submit an *Children's and Youth Workers Application* and a *Permission to Obtain a Background Check* form?

Any church employee or volunteer who will have direct contact with any child or youth (less than 18 years of age), either on or off the church sites, during any church-related ministries must complete both of these forms.

Once I complete and sign these forms, to whom do I give them?

Give your completed forms to the Director of Children's Ministries/Director of Youth Ministries, or Pastor.

I'm concerned about confidentiality and privacy issues. Who will see my application and more importantly, who will see the results of my background check?

Only those listed above, along with our church's administrative support staff, will see your application the results of your criminal background check. All information will be kept in a secured filing cabinet in the church office.

I am not presently involved in any church volunteer work that involves young people. Should I submit an application and give permission for a background check?

Because the addition of programs to minister to these young people is ongoing, the demand for volunteers is always on the increase. Even though you may not be currently involved in such a ministry, it's a good idea to go ahead and submit your forms now. In the event that you do volunteer work at some point in the future, we'll already have your forms and background check on file.

What is a "US Criminal Record Indicator" database search?

The US Criminal Record Indicator is the most comprehensive and current search available in the United States. The US Criminal Record Indicator database search examines the Department of Public Safety, Department of Corrections, Administrative Office of the Courts, Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, and/or the Department of Criminal Justice files and records, and other applicable government agencies where available. Currently this search includes information from 39 states plus multiple online county records.

Why do I have to list my Social Security Number (SSN)?

A couple of reasons. The first is that your SSN is the primary key for all databases affiliated with a background check. The second reason is that your SSN is used to verify the following crucial information:

- whether the SSN is validly issued
- to whom SSN belongs
- in which year and state the SSN was issued
- the current and other known or previous addresses to that SSN.

The SSN Verification process can reveal that the number belongs to another individual, has more than one name associated with it (i.e., produces other aliases) including maiden and divorced names, is associated with fraud, is not a validly issued SSN, belongs to a deceased person, produces additional addresses not stated by the application/request form, or if that individual has other SSN's. Anyone can give a false identification by using another person's Social Security number. This search ensures that the individual is who they say they are. The Social Security search is provided in the Basic Search along with the National Criminal Indicator search.

What criteria from the background check will determine whether or not someone is approved for volunteer or paid staff work? Who makes that decision?

The background check will cite felony and misdemeanor convictions listed in the National Criminal Database Search. The most obvious reason that someone is denied the opportunity to do volunteer work in our church is any prior conviction pertaining to an offense against a child. It's quite unlikely, though, that a person with such a conviction would even submit an application. Misdemeanor convictions, and even some felony convictions, would have little or no negative impact in determining a person's worthiness as a church volunteer. To put it another way, the only determining factor in evaluating someone's criminal record is the likelihood of him or her posing a threat to our young people.

In the event a felony conviction turns up on the report, the pastor, with the appropriate State/National Overseer will decide whether the person is allowed to work as a volunteer or paid staff.

Some final thoughts...

Please know that the intent of the background check is to protect the children in our church... period. Its purpose is *not* to cause you personal embarrassment by dredging up past mistakes or wrong choices. Regrettably, it's impossible to implement a viable screening plan without a bit of scrutiny into some personal background information.

Throughout the entire process of developing the *Child, Youth, and Worker Protection Policy* for our church, a tremendous amount of concern and sensitivity has been shown in regard to matters of confidentiality. Much effort has been put into implementing screening procedures that limit the number of people who have visible access to private information. Please know that as the screening process evolves over the next several years, the leadership of the Church of God of Prophecy will remain committed to the task of administering screening procedures with utmost regard to your privacy.

February 18, 2008

Church of God of Prophecy
P.O. Box 2910
Cleveland, TN 37320-2910

Re: New Risk Management Policy

Dear Pastor/Overseer:

We would like to invite you to join us in a new policy that the Church of God of Prophecy is implementing. We have developed our Risk Management Policy to reinforce our vision for our youth and children's ministries efforts, to ensure the safety and well being of our CHILDREN/YOUTH/DISABLED as well as the peace of mind of their parents. We want to provide sound Biblical principles in an enjoyable atmosphere, and do so in a safe environment for those God has entrusted to our care.

Our Risk Management Policy will include a series of new forms that we are asking all current and future volunteers to complete, as well as new procedures for everyone to be aware of. This includes a written application for ministry positions, reference checks, and an interview to ensure this is the best ministry for you. We will also be asking each person—paid or unpaid—to give us written permission to conduct a background check. In return, you will be part of a team that truly cares for you and those in our ministry. You will also be provided a ministry description, training, and encouragement to ensure that you are fully equipped to succeed in this ministry partnership.

We realize that these new procedures may seem extreme, but we can assure you that we have only the best intentions for both our volunteers and CHILDREN/YOUTH/DISABLED. We understand that some might have concerns about the background checks we will be asking your permission to conduct. We have partnered with an organization that completely understands your concerns and our desire for a safe environment. Therefore, the highest security measures have been taken to secure any data that is required. We also want to assure you that our background checks are completely confidential, and are done to uncover criminal/sexual misconduct only. To ensure the accuracy of this report, we will require certain information from you, along with your signature for approval. If you feel that you cannot comply with this request, we will understand and will assist you in finding another ministry where your gifts, passions, and experience can be fully engaged.

As always, our door is open to answer any questions you may have on this new policy. You can reach me at (423) 559-5100 or ([your choice here](#)). Again, our heart is to provide a wonderfully gifted ministry run by equally gifted volunteers.

Committed to excellence,

Keeping Children Safe and Secure

Our desire in the Church of God of Prophecy is to draw people to Jesus. This includes even the youngest children who attend our church. We take our responsibility to care for children very seriously. These guidelines are intended to provide a safe and nurturing environment where children can come to a growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

It's important for volunteers who work with children and youth to see themselves as partners with parents, seeking to provide quality care and instruction in the ministries and programs of our church. Our guidelines are designed to protect and promote faith formation for each child (and each adult volunteer) involved in children's and youth ministries.

Everyone who teaches, helps, or cares for children must agree to follow these guidelines. They represent minimum requirements; leaders of individual programs may develop additional guidelines as appropriate to the ministry setting.

Architectural precautions (birth through 6th grade)

- Doors will be open or windows left uncovered so that the view into a classroom remains unobstructed.
- Children under 3 will be cared for in rooms with gates or Dutch doors to keep them from leaving the nurseries without adult supervision.
- Nursery changing tables should be in view of all nursery workers.

Child Security Policies

Drop-off Policy—Children should never be dropped off in a classroom without the teachers present. This is the responsibility of parents.

Registration Policy—Programs for preschool children through fifth grade will provide a weekly sign-in sheet. Parents are to complete the information as requested.

Pick-Up Policy—Parents of children in nurseries through fifth grade should pick up their children at their classrooms. Children in sixth grade and above will be released on their own unless parents inform teachers otherwise.

Restroom Policy—All workers may take children to the restroom. Workers should take children to the restroom in groups, if possible. Assist children only if they ask. Encourage parents to take their children to the restroom before class begins.

Please note: Never be alone with a child in the stall of a restroom with the door closed.

Classroom Supervision Guidelines

The Director of Christian Education or the Director of Children's Ministries will approve teachers and workers. All willing workers will be interviewed and trained by the children's ministries staff. All must agree to undergo a background check.

If a student or parent makes a complaint regarding a teacher or a worker, the Christian Education Pastor/Director of Children's Ministries will review the incident and discuss it with the worker involved. Parents will be notified of any actions (such as additional training, leave of absence, or termination) that results from the complaint.

If an accusation of abuse is made: Any accusation of abuse will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. The Christian Education Director/Director of Children's Ministries will also involve the Senior Pastor and at least one member of the church's governing board or executive committee. Subsequent meetings with the parties involved will determine further action, and if probable cause (what a reasonable man/woman would consider) exists, then the proper authorities must be notified as outlined in the Church of God of Prophecy Child, Youth, and Worker Protection Policy.

Discipline Policy

The goal of our church's children and youth ministries is to foster a sense of both fun and learning. Often, discipline can be handled by redirecting the child or teenager to a more constructive use of time and energy. Keeping the learning environment active and fun will usually eliminate the need for a lot of discipline.

However, children and teenagers must also understand that sometimes it is necessary to listen to lessons, instructions for an activity, etc. It's important not to disrupt classroom times because that takes away from the fun and learning of fellow students.

When "discipline" is necessary, all interaction will carefully consider a child or teenager's integrity and fragility. All children will be treated with gentleness, respect, and understanding. Physical punishment will never be used.

If the classroom teachers and assistants are unable to control a child or teenager after repeated attempts, the child can be taken to talk with the Director of Christian Education/Director of Children's Ministries. The director will discuss the incident with the child. Parents will be brought into the situation if needed.

If a child uses foul language, injures other children, or does anything to affect another child in a negative way, the incident will be discussed with the child, the parent will be notified and the teacher or Director of Children's Ministries will decide if the child will be allowed back into class or if further action should be taken.

Staffing and Supervision

For the safety of children and for the protection of volunteers, at least two unrelated adults should be present in each classroom, except in the event of an emergency. One trained adult teacher with a teen helper may also be adequate.

Doors should be open whenever possible to allow for easy viewing of the classroom. Under no circumstance should windows of classrooms be covered. Supervisory staff will routinely check on

classrooms. Parents are also welcome to check on their children's classes, but should try to do so in a discrete way so the flow of the class isn't disrupted.

Allegations of Abuse

An accusation of child abuse can occur in any church, no matter how many precautions it takes. We must always be prepared to listen to and hear any allegation of abuse.

While it is impossible to cover every possible, scenario, here are some simple guidelines to give general direction.

Church Response

Generally, the church will be guided by the following when an allegation of abuse occurs:

- All allegations of abuse will be taken seriously.
- Situations will be handled immediately, yet with due respect to people's confidentiality and privacy.
- Full cooperation will be given to law enforcement authorities with the guidance of Attorney at Law.
- Appropriate care will be given to victims.
- The alleged abuser will not be considered "guilty" or treated as such until an investigation can take place

Church Procedures

Precautions the church will take include:

- Completed application forms and records of background checks and screening procedures should be kept for five years after a volunteer completes his time of service.
- If media becomes involved during an investigation of alleged abuse, the church will appoint a spokesperson to respond, and advise all church members to not respond on their own.
- The church will be prepared to show the precautions it takes with every volunteer who ministers in areas where abuse could occur.
- No one should engage in denial, minimization, or blame.
- Church leaders should not accuse the victim or detail the event to those not involved with the incident.
- Those involved in investigating the incident should thoroughly document each step.
- Get proper assistance for the victim and accused.
- Reach out to the victim and accused; if the accused is a volunteer, the church will relieve him or her of duties until the incident is resolved.

Church of God of Prophecy

INCIDENT REPORT

Date: _____ Time: _____

Program/Ministry: _____

Adult(s) present _____

Names of individuals involved _____

Description of problem: _____

Actions taken: _____

Reported to _____ By _____

Discussed with parent: By: _____

Additional Comments: _____

Type of incident (circle one or more):

- Physical abuse of a child
- Verbal abuse of a child
- Physical abuse of an adult
- Verbal abuse of adult
- Property damage
- Theft
- Accident resulting in injury
- Violation of rules

Boy Scouts of America Youth Protection Guidelines Questions and Answers

What is child abuse?

Generally speaking, child abuse is injury of a child by an adult or older child that might not be intentional, but is not accidental. It is usually classified as physical abuse, emotional abuse, or sexual abuse. Harm caused by withholding life's necessities—food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education—is called neglect.

How can I tell if a child has been abused?

Each child reacts to abuse differently. In physical abuse, injuries to the child might be evident, but with any kind of abuse, children often give only behavioral clues. You should be alert to changes in the child's behavior. Any abrupt change in behavior that is maintained for a week or longer indicates that the child may be reacting to stress that could stem from a variety of causes—including child abuse. Childhood stress can result from any upsetting situation in the child's environment such as family disruption, death of a pet, or even a move to a new neighborhood. It can also be a result of child abuse. If a child abruptly changes his behavior for more than a few days in a manner that you feel is inappropriate, you might want to ask the child if something is wrong or if you can help. Do not immediately jump to the conclusion that the child has been abused. Signs of stress may include mood swings, acting out, changes in sleep patterns, or bed-wetting. Some children experience physical effects, including stomachaches and headaches. Others have trouble concentrating or completing schoolwork. Still others become withdrawn or spend a lot of time alone. Younger children may show signs of reacting to stress by picking up new habits like thumb sucking, hair twirling, or nose picking; older children may begin to lie, bully, or defy authority.

Some of the specific signs for each kind of abuse are listed below:

□ *Physical Abuse*—A child who has been physically abused might exhibit suspicious injuries. Accidental injuries normally associated with childhood “wear and tear” are generally on the knees, elbows, shins, and chin. Injuries that may indicate physical abuse include burns, bruises, lacerations and abrasions, and fractures. Burns that might indicate a child has been abused include cigarette or cigar burns on the soles of the feet, the palms of the hands, the back, or the genital areas. Other burns associated with abuse are friction or tether burns on the wrists, ankles, or around the neck caused by ropes used to tie the child. Wet burns on the hands and feet that appear to be *glove-like* or *sock-like* are caused by forcing the child to bathe in water that is too hot. Dry burns leave distinctive marks in the shape of the instrument used to inflict them. Commonly, in child abuse cases, these include electric irons, radiator grates, and stove burners. Bruises of different colors, indicating infliction at different times and in different stages of healing, often indicate abuse. This is particularly true if the bruises are on the abdomen, back, or face. Bruises, like burns, also might have distinctive shapes indicating the weapon used to inflict them. When children have lacerations and abrasions in soft tissue areas, such as on the abdomen, back, backs of arms and legs,

or external genitalia, it is a strong indicator of physical abuse. Human bite marks, especially when they are recurrent and appear to be adult-sized, are also strongly indicative of abuse. Unexplained fractures are cause for concern. A child with multiple fractures is almost certain to be a victim of abuse. Other signs include swollen or tender limbs and spiral fractures caused by jerking of the arms.

□ *Emotional Abuse*—The indicators of emotional abuse are hard to detect. Some visible signs are lagging physical development and habit disorders such as thumb sucking or rocking. Any of the signs associated with childhood stress may be present.

□ *Neglect*—As with emotional abuse, the signs of neglect are usually very subtle and hard to detect. A neglected child might show up at Scout meetings inappropriately dressed, lacking in personal hygiene, and consistently hungry.

□ *Sexual Abuse*—Perhaps the best evidence that a child has been sexually abused is that the abuse is witnessed—if not by yourself, then by another individual. Another excellent indication is that the child says that he has been abused. Again, oftentimes this information may not come from the child himself but from another source. Physical evidence of sexual abuse, if present at all, tends to be temporary. These signs include difficulty in walking; torn, stained, or bloody underwear; pain or itching in the genital area; bruises or bleeding of the external genitalia; and sexually transmitted diseases. The behavioral signs of sexual abuse are likely to be more conspicuous and present longer. Specific behaviors related to child sexual abuse are an age inappropriate understanding of sex; reluctance to be left alone with a particular person; persistent and inappropriate sex play with peers or toys; prostitution; wearing lots of clothing, especially to bed; drawings of genitalia; fear of touch; abuse of animals; masturbation in public; nightmares or night terrors; apprehension when the subject of sexual abuse is brought up; and cross-dressing. The presence of any of these behaviors indicates a possibility that sexual abuse has occurred. They are not, in and of themselves, conclusive evidence that the child has been abused.

What should I do if I notice any of these signs?

First, you should not jump to any conclusions. The signs of child abuse are often ambiguous; they can mean something other than child abuse. Consider stating your observations to the child's parents. For example, you could say, "For the past two weeks, Johnny has been very disruptive at den meeting. He is very aggressive with the other boys and uses foul language. This behavior is very unlike him. I hope that everything is OK." You should not make any accusations to the parents that the child is being abused. Even if you file a report with the Scout executive or the authorities because you suspect child abuse, you should not make accusations or state your suspicions to others who are not responsible for determining if abuse is occurring.

What should I do if I suspect that a child is being abused?

If you suspect or hear that a child in the Scouting program is being abused, you must contact your Scout executive. He has already established contacts with the child protective services and law enforcement agencies in your area. He will be able to tell

you what you should do. In many states you are also required to report your suspicions to Child Protective Services. If you suspect that a child who is not a Scout is being abused, you should contact your local child abuse hotline. Generally the telephone number to report child abuse is listed in the white pages under “child abuse.”

What if I am not sure that the child is being abused?

The law requires only that you have a reasonable suspicion that a child is being abused. Once a report has been made, the appropriate agency will investigate and determine if abuse can be substantiated. Unless you make a report, the child might remain in grave danger.

How can I tell if a person is a child molester?

Child molesters, individuals who sexually abuse children, do not necessarily fit the common stereotypes that we hold—e.g., strangers, dirty old men, mentally disabled, etc. There is no test or other screening mechanism that will identify a child molester prior to them committing an offense. Child molesters come from all walks of life, all social and ethnic groups, and all occupational categories. Child molesters might have positions of prominence in their communities. The vast majority of molesters are known by the children they victimize and might have a position of authority over children, such as a teacher, clergy member, youth group worker, or police officer.

How can we protect our children from child molesters?

Child molesters often try to gain access to children through legitimate means such as becoming involved in youth activities. They use this access to identify children who they perceive to be vulnerable to sexual abuse. They will try to create a situation in which the child and the molester are isolated from observation and supervision of others. To protect our children, we must establish and maintain open lines of communication so that they feel free to report any inappropriate or worrisome contact with adults or older children. We also must educate our children to enable them to understand what abuse is and that they have the right to resist any inappropriate contact.

How does the BSA prevent child abuse in Scouting?

The Boy Scouts of America has adopted a number of policies aimed at eliminating opportunities for abuse within the Scouting program. These policies focus on leadership selection and on placing barriers to abuse within the program.

Leadership—The Boy Scouts of America takes great pride in the quality of our adult leadership. Being a leader in the BSA is a privilege, not a right. The quality of the program and the safety of our youth members call for high-quality adult leaders. We work closely with our chartered organizations to help recruit the best possible leaders for their units. The adult application requests background information that should be checked by the unit committee or the chartered organization before accepting an applicant for unit leadership. No current screening techniques exist that can identify every potential child molester. We can reduce the risk of accepting a child molester by learning all we can about an applicant for a leadership position—his or her experience

with children, why he or she wants to be a Scout leader, and what discipline techniques he or she would use. In addition every new registered leader is subject to a criminal history record check to determine if he or she has been convicted of a crime that could place children at risk.

Barriers to Abuse Within Scouting

The BSA has adopted the following policies to provide additional security for our members. These policies are primarily for the protection of our youth members; however, they also serve to protect our adult leaders from false accusations of abuse.

- Two-deep leadership*—Two registered adult leaders or one registered leader and a parent of a participant, one of whom must be 21 years of age or older, are required on all trips and outings. The chartered organization is responsible for ensuring that sufficient leadership is provided for all activities.
- No one-on-one contact*—One-on-one contact between adults and youth members is not permitted. In situations that require personal conferences, such as a Scoutmaster's conference, the meeting is to be conducted in view of other adults and youths.
- Respect of privacy*—Adult leaders must respect the privacy of youth members in situations such as changing clothes and taking showers at camp, and intrude only to the extent that health and safety require. Adults must protect their own privacy in similar situations.
- Separate accommodations*—When camping, no youth is permitted to sleep in the tent of an adult other than his own parent or guardian. Councils are strongly encouraged to have separate shower and latrine facilities for females. When separate facilities are not available, separate times for male and female use should be scheduled and posted.
- Proper preparation for high-adventure activities*—Activities with elements of risk should never be undertaken without proper preparation, equipment, clothing, supervision, and safety measures.
- No secret organizations*—The Boy Scouts of America does not recognize any secret organizations as part of its program. All aspects of the Scouting program are open to observation by parents and leaders.
- Appropriate attire*—Proper clothing for activities is required. For example, skinny-dipping is not appropriate as part of Scouting.
- Constructive discipline*—Discipline used in Scouting should be constructive and reflect Scouting's values. Corporal punishment is never permitted.
- Hazing prohibited*—Physical hazing and initiations are prohibited and may not be included as part of any Scouting activity.

□ *Junior leader training and supervision*—Adult leaders must monitor and guide the leadership techniques used by junior leaders and ensure that BSA policies are followed.

How can parents help protect their children?

Parents participate in the protection of their children in a variety of ways. We have already mentioned the need for open lines of communication so that children are encouraged to bring any troubles to their parents for advice and counsel. In addition, parents need to be involved in their sons' Scouting activities. All parents receive important information concerning the Scouting program as part of their sons' membership applications. This information is provided so parents can detect any deviations from the BSA's approved program. If any deviations are noted, parents should call these to the attention of the chartered organization or the unit committee. If the problems persist, parents should contact the local council for assistance. Parents also need to review the booklet inserted in every Boy Scout and Cub Scout handbook. The requirements to join a Boy Scout troop or to receive a Bobcat badge include parents and Scouts completing the exercises in the booklet.

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 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.

What should I do if a child tells me he has been sexually abused?

How an adult responds to a child when he tries to disclose abuse can influence the outcome of the child's victimization. By maintaining an apparent calm, the adult can help reassure the child that everything is going to be OK. By not criticizing the child, we counteract any statements the molester made to the victim about the child getting into trouble. Reassure the child that you are concerned about what happened to him and you would like to get him some help. Allegations by a Scout concerning abuse in the program must be reported to the Scout executive. Since these reports are required, the child should be told that you have to tell the proper authorities but that you will not tell anyone else. It is important that you not tell anyone other than the Scout executive or the child protective services agency about allegations of abuse; if the allegations cannot be substantiated, you could be sued for defamation of character.

How do I know what my reporting responsibilities are?

Every state, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories have different reporting requirements. As part of this training, you have received reporting instructions for your area and for your council. People are often concerned about being sued for reporting

child abuse. You are not required to know for certain that a child has been abused. All that the law requires is that you have a reasonable suspicion and are reporting in “good faith.” When these requirements are met, all states provide immunity from liability for child abuse reporters.

What educational materials does the BSA have for youth members?

The BSA produced separate age-appropriate materials for use in Cub Scouting, Boy Scouting, and Venturing. The video for Cub Scouts, *It Happened to Me*, should be used annually by packs or dens, but only for Cub Scouts accompanied by a parent or other adult family member. The video for Boy Scouts, *A Time to Tell*, introduces the “three Rs” of Youth Protection, and should be viewed by troops annually. The video for use in the Venturing program is *Youth Protection: Personal Safety Awareness*. It addresses peer sexual harassment, acquaintance rape, Internet safety, and stalking.

How can Scout leaders who are not social workers teach children about youth protection?

The BSA recognizes that many of our leaders feel unprepared to talk to children about preventing sexual abuse. For this reason, the BSA has meeting guides for all of the videos produced to be viewed by youths. The guides address everything from scheduling the meeting, contacting the police or social services for assistance, and notifying parents (a sample letter is provided) to questions and answers for discussion after the video has been viewed.

What are the “three Rs” of Youth Protection?

The “three Rs” of Youth Protection convey a simple message that the BSA wants its youth members to learn to

- Recognize* situations that place him at risk of being molested, how child molesters operate, and that anyone could be a molester.

- Resist* unwanted and inappropriate attention. Resistance will stop most attempts at molestation.

- Report* attempted or actual molestation to a parent or other trusted adult. This prevents further abuse of himself and helps to protect other children. Let the Scout know he will not be blamed for what occurred.