
CHILDREN & YOUTH MINISTRIES

RISK MANAGEMENT

POLICY AND

PROCEDURES



FOR DISTRICT

SUPERVISED CHURCHES



***The Rocky Mountain District Council
of the Assemblies of God***

FOREWORD

Reports of sexual molestation of children and youth are on the rise and news of lawsuits stemming from these reports are broadcast by the media daily.

The church, once considered a safe haven for children and youth are increasingly in the middle of these lawsuits. Many insurance companies are refusing to cover claims of sexual misconduct or molestation by church employees or volunteers due to the ever increasing costs of litigation and the considerable losses experienced in these lawsuits. According to Richard R. Hammar, legal counsel for the General Council of the Assemblies of God, "Most of the lawsuits filed against churches for acts of child molestation have alleged that the church was legally accountable either on the basis of negligent hiring or negligent supervision...[churches] are not absolutely liable for every injury that occurs on their premises or in the course of their activities. Generally, they are responsible only for those injuries that result from their negligence."¹

District Supervised Churches are required to carry Liability Insurance which will cover the church and the District in the event of such a lawsuit. As well, **a Risk Management Policy must be set in place and is being adhered to by the church leadership.**

Risk management involves two areas: prevention (risk reduction) and response. These will be covered separately in this manual.

Included in this manual is a basic policy for your implementation, as well as forms for you to copy and use as a basis for your risk management program.

Refusal to develop and adhere to a risk management program could result in non-coverage of liability should such a suit be brought against the church, child or youth worker, or church board. As well, any District Supervised Church Pastor that refuses to cooperate with the District in this matter will be brought before the District Presbytery which may result in his/her removal as pastor. **It is imperative that such a program be put in place.**

Assistance is available for the development and expansion of this policy, but the implementation is up to you.

On the pages following will be suggested policy, sample forms and instructions for their use. You may photocopy forms from the publication for use in your church, or you may modify forms to meet your situation, however, if you modify the forms, they will need to be reviewed by the Risk Management Committee prior to use.

Please note that all items are available for you to photocopy for your use.

¹ Hammar, Richard R., et. El., Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church (1993)

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SECTION I: PREVENTION

As you no doubt are aware, prevention is the best medicine. Many things which were once taken for granted now must be carefully planned for to avoid the incidence of sexual molestation or misconduct in the church. The entire church, staff and board must back the program in order for it to work effectively. Education, therefore, is key to prevention.

Each church should set a basic policy with regard to children and youth workers (compensated and non-compensated) prior to allowing them access to their children or youth. For churches which already have children and youth workers in place, the education and screening which will form your basic policy should be completed, on a modified basis, for them as well.

The basic prevention policy should include the elements listed below.

BASIC PREVENTION POLICY

All children and youth workers must be screened prior to their working in any children's or youth program. These reviews **MUST** be kept in absolute confidence. The pastor and/or advisory board should interview each of the potential workers/volunteers. The pastor must be trained to screen workers. Training tools can be obtained through the District Risk Management Committee.

Prior screening by the pastor and/or advisory board, all candidates for children's/youth worker positions should be informed that they will be screened by a Review Board. A written policy statement regarding risk management and the purpose for screening should be given to the candidate along with their application. The candidate should know in advance that his/her references will be checked, that he/she will need to answer some personal questions, and that all information will be used to identify his/her suitability for a position as a youth or children's worker but will otherwise remain confidential. **ANY APPLICANT WHO HAS BEEN CONVICTED OF CHARGES INVOLVING MOLESTATION, MISCONDUCT, ABUSE OR ENDANGERMENT OF A MINOR SHOULD BE STEERED INTO OTHER AREAS OF SERVICE IN THE CHURCH RATHER THAN MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN.**

Purpose of the Pastor and Advisory Board in The Process

To meet and interview all potential Children and Youth Ministry worker in order to establish a foundation of relationship and accountability and screen and redirect candidates not meeting the basic eligibility criteria for Children/Youth Ministry worker.

Ministry Worker(s)

Any adult or minor who is helping during a church sponsored class or activity -- whose involvement would exceed the terms of a "parent/relative worker" role.

Parent/Relative Worker

A family member who assists the ministry worker in his/her own child's class/program. Approval for a family member to assist must come from the pastor or director of children's or youth ministries and is limited to occasional assistance (4 times a year or less) without the complete application and screening process.

BASIC ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR CHILDREN'S MINISTRY WORKER

The potential member is

- A professing Christian
- An attendee of this church for the past six months. Exceptions must be cleared through the pastor.
- Involved in an ongoing personal, spiritual growth program, i.e., daily devotional Bible reading, Christian tapes (music/teaching), and fellowship with other Christians.

Procedure

- Candidate reads and signs an Adult/Minor Worker Policy, reviews the Tenets of Faith, and completes an application for Children's/Youth Ministry Worker.
- Board chairperson or pastor reviews the application and schedules interview. (15 minutes in length)
- Interview questions (see attached) are asked by pastor and/or advisory board members. All applicants are asked the same questions and responses should be noted by each board member on the form provided. These forms become part of the applicants' file.
- References are checked. In the event of prior criminal convictions regarding a minor, Department of Justice records will be checked for details of the case.
- Board evaluates together after completing "notes" form. (All paperwork becomes part of the permanent Children's/Youth Ministry Worker file.)

Recommendations: There are three options

- **Pass** - approved, ready for placement.
- **Hold** - don't place yet, but, given time could be a positive addition to a workers. (An individual who is put on "hold" can be reconsidered in a designated time, i.e. 3, 6, or 12 months). Attention will be given to the focused concern of the previous "hold" recommendation.
- **Do Not Pass** - indicators* lead the board to deny this individual's involvement with the children in a Ministry worker capacity.

The Review Board is a recommending agent which functions within these stated policies. It provides input for, but not an inflexible mandate, who is vested with the responsibility for and authority to exercise final decisions regarding Children's/Youth Ministries personnel.

Review Board Membership: Ideally, this board should include the pastor, a member of the pastoral staff, one or more members of the advisory board and the Sunday School Superintendent, director of children's or youth ministries, or other lay leader. Also, the board should include members of both genders who are not related to each other.

* "indicators" must be concrete and demonstrable. They may not be a "discerned concern" but something which could be proven factually.

APPLICATION FOR CHILDREN/YOUTH WORK

CONFIDENTIAL

Full Name: _____ Date: _____

This application is to be completed by all applicants for any position (volunteer or compensated) involving the supervision or custody of minors. It is being used to help the church provide a safe and secure environment for those children and youth who participate in our programs and use our facilities. This information is confidential and to be used only by authorized staff, and kept in a locked file.

PERSONAL:

Present address: _____

Phone: Home () _____

Office () _____

Have you ever been convicted of a traffic offense (moving violation)? Yes No

If yes, please describe all convictions for the past 5 years

What type of children/youth work do you prefer or are applying for? _____

What date would you be available? _____

Minimum length of commitment? _____

Are you willing to commit to orientation, training and supervision? Yes No

Do you use tobacco? Yes No

Do you drink Alcoholic beverages? Yes No

Do you use non-prescription drugs? Yes No

Have you any physical disabilities or conditions preventing you from performing certain types of activities relating to youth and children's work? Yes No

If yes, please explain: _____

Have you ever been the victim of, or had personal dealings with child sexual molestation or abuse? Yes No

If yes, would it be an area which would be difficult to deal with?

Yes No If yes, please explain:

EMPLOYEE ONLY:

Are you over the age of 18? Yes No

VOLUNTEER ONLY: Applicants for a compensated position should not answer this question.

Age _____ Marital Status: Married Single

Separated Divorced Widowed Engaged

Do you have a driver's license? Yes No

If yes, please list your driver's license number and the state of issue: _____

Are you applying to drive a church vehicle? Yes No

If yes, you must be interviewed and trained by a church staff member and provide a DMV report prior to operating a vehicle.

Do you have any special license or endorsement? (Class B, C, etc.)

Have you ever been convicted of child abuse or a crime involving actual or attempted sexual molestation of a minor?

Yes No

If yes, please explain: _____

Are you currently released on bail or on your own recognizance pending trial for any such defense?

Yes No

If yes, please explain: _____

Have you read the adult/minor worker policy for our church and our Tenets of Faith? Yes No

If no, why? _____

Are you in agreement with our Tenets of Faith?

Yes No

If no, why? _____

CHURCH ACTIVITY

Are you a Christian? Yes No

When saved? _____

Baptized in the Holy Spirit according to Acts 2:4? _____

Name of church you attend: _____

How long have you attended this church? _____

Are you a voting member of the above church?

Yes No

List other churches you have attended regularly during the past five years (name and address and phone number): _____

Person to contact at former church: _____

List all previous involvement with church youth groups, children's programs, or other youth organizations. Identify church/organization, and type of work: _____

List any gifts, callings, training, education, or other factors that have prepared you for children/youth work: _____

Attendance Pattern

(circle one in each category or n/a if not applicable)

Sunday A.M. Worship

25% 25-50% 50-75% 75%+ n/a

Sunday School

25% 25-50% 50-75% 75%+ n/a

Sunday P.M. Worship

25% 25-50% 50-75% 75%+ n/a

Midweek Bible Study or activity

25% 25-50% 50-75% 75%+ n/a

Cell groups (fellowship/prayer)

25% 25-50% 50-75% 75%+ n/a

Personal References

(not former employers or relatives):

Name _____
Address _____
Telephone _____

Name _____
Address _____
Telephone _____

Staff, deacons or elders of the church who know you:

Name _____
Address _____
Telephone _____

Name _____
Address _____
Telephone _____

I agree to my references being contacted. Yes No

If no, why? _____

APPLICANT'S STATEMENT

I certify that the information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize _____ (pastor, church, review board) to investigate any matters contained in this application. I hereby authorize any reference or church listed in this application to release any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my character and fitness for children/youth work, and release all such references from liability for any damage that may result from furnishing such evaluations to you. I waive any right that I may have to inspect references provided on my behalf.

Applicant's Signature _____ Date _____

Witness _____ Date _____

Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the bylaws and policies of this church, and refrain from unscriptural conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of this church.

Applicant's Signature _____ Date _____

TENETS OF FAITH

STATEMENT OF FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS

The Bible is our all-sufficient rule for faith and practice. This Statement of Fundamental Truths is intended simply as a basis of fellowship among us (i.e., that we all speak the same thing, I Corinthians 1:10; Acts 2:42). The phraseology employed in this statement is not inspired or contended for, but the truth set forth is held to be essential to a full-gospel ministry. No claim is made that it contains all Biblical truth, only that it covers our need as to these fundamental doctrines.

1. The Scriptures Inspired

The Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, are verbally inspired of God and are the revelation of God to man, the infallible, authoritative rule of faith and conduct (II Timothy 3:15-17; I Thessalonians 2:13; II Peter 1:21)

2. The One True God

The one true God has revealed himself as the eternally self-existent "I AM," the Creator of heaven and earth and the Redeemer of mankind. He has further revealed Himself as embodying the principles of relationship and association as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 43:10,11; Matthew 28:19; Luke 3:22)

3. The Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ

The Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. The Scriptures declare:

His virgin birth (Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:31,35)
His sinless life (Hebrews 7:26; I Peter 2:22)
His miracles (Acts 2:22; 10:38)
His substitutionary work on the cross (I Corinthians 15:3; II Corinthians 5:21)
His bodily resurrection from the dead (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:39; I Corinthians 15:4)
His exaltation to the right hand of God (Acts 1:9,11; 2:33; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 1:3).

4. The Fall of Man

Man was created good and upright; for God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." However, man by voluntary transgression fell and thereby incurred not only physical death but also spiritual death, which is separation from God (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:17; 3:6; Romans 5:12-19)

5. The Salvation of Man

Man's only hope of redemption is through the shed blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

Conditions to Salvation

Salvation is received through repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. By the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, being justified by grace through faith, man becomes an heir of God according to the hope of eternal life (Ephesians 4:24; Titus 2:12).

6. The Ordinances of the Church

Baptism in Water

The ordinance of baptism by immersion is commanded in the Scriptures. All who repent and believe on Christ as Savior and Lord are to be baptized. Thus they declare to the world that they have died with Christ and that they also have been raised with Him to walk in newness of life (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 10:47,48; Romans 6:4)

Holy Communion

The Lord's Supper, consisting of the elements (bread and the fruit of the vine) is the symbol expressing our sharing the divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ (II Peter 1:4); a memorial of His suffering and death (I Corinthians 11:26); and a prophecy of His second coming (I Corinthians 11:26); and is enjoined on all believers "until He come!"

7. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit

All believers are entitled to and should ardently expect and earnestly seek the promise of the Father, the baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire, according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. This was the normal experience of all in the early Christian church. With it comes the endowment of power for life and service, the bestowment of the gifts of their uses in the work of the ministry (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,8; I Corinthians 12:1-31). This experience is distinct from and subsequent to the experience of the new birth (Acts 8:12-17; 10:44-46; 11:14-16; 15:7-9). With the baptism in the Holy Spirit comes such experiences as an overflowing fullness of the Spirit (John 7:37-39; Acts 4:8), a deepening reverence for God (Acts 2:42; Hebrews 12:28), and intensified consecration to

God and dedication to His work (Acts 2:42,3), and a more active love for Christ, for His Word, and for the lost (Mark 16:20).

8. The Initial Physical Evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

The baptism of believers in the Holy Spirit is witnessed by the initial physical sign of speaking in other tongues as the Spirit of God gives them utterance (Acts 2:4). The speaking in tongues in this instance is the same in essence as the gift of tongues (I Corinthians 12:4-10,18), but different in purpose and use.

9. Sanctification

Sanctification is an act of separation from that which is evil, and of dedication unto God (Romans 12:1,2; I Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 13:12). Scriptures teach a life of "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). By the power of the Holy Spirit we are able to obey the command: "Be ye holy, for I am holy" (I Peter 1:15,16).

Sanctification is realized in the believer by recognizing his identification with Christ in His death and resurrection, and by faith reckoning daily upon the fact of that union, and by offering every faculty continually to the dominion of the Holy Spirit (Romans 6:1-11,13; 8:1,2,13; Galatians 2:20; Philippians 2:12,13; I Peter 1:5).

10. The Church and Its Mission

The Church is the body of Christ, the habitation of God through the Spirit, with divine appointments for the fulfillment of her great commission. Every believer, born of the Spirit, is an integral part of the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven (Ephesians 1:22,23; 2:22; Hebrews 12:23).

11. The Ministry

A divinely called and scripturally ordained ministry has been provided by our Lord for the threefold purpose of leading the church in: (1) evangelization of the world (Mark 16:15-20), (2) worship of God (John 4:23,24), and (3) building a body of saints being perfected in the image of His Son (Ephesians 4:11,16).

12. Divine Healing

Divine healing is an integral part of the gospel. Deliverance from sickness is provided for in the Atonement, and is the privilege of all believers (Isaiah 53:4,5; Matthew 8:16,17; James 5:14-16).

13. The Blessed Hope

The resurrection of those who have fallen asleep in Christ and their translation together with those who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord is the imminent and blessed hope of the Church (I Thessalonians 4:16,17; Romans 8:23; Titus 2:13; I Corinthians 15:51,52).

14. The Millennial Reign of Christ

The second coming of Christ includes the rapture of the saints, which is our blessed hope, followed by the visible return of Christ with His saints to reign on the earth for one thousand years (Zechariah 14:5; Matthew 24:27,30; Revelation 1:7; 19:11-14; 20:1-6). This millennial reign will bring the salvation of national Israel (Ezekiel 37:21,22; Zephaniah 3:19,20; Romans 11:26,27) and the establishment of universal peace (Isaiah 11:6-9; Psalms 72:3-8; Micah 4:3,4).

15. The Final Judgment

There will be final judgment in which the wicked dead will be raised and judged according to their works. Whosoever is not found written in the Book of Life, together with the devil and his angels, the beast and the false prophet, will be consigned to everlasting punishment in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death (Matthew 25:46; Mark 9:43-48; Revelation 19:20; 20:11-15; 21:8).

16. The New Heavens and the New Earth

"We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Peter 3:13; Revelation 21,22).

ADULT/MINOR WORKER POLICY

Requirements:

Each person working in any child/youth program or activity must have a completed Application for Children/Youth Work on file with the ministerial staff, and must have completed the interview process with the Review Board.

Each leader/worker must be familiar with our adult/minor policy.

I. General Policy Involving Church Adult/Minor Child

- Each adult/minor involvement must include three persons in any of the following combinations: one-adult/two minors; two adults/one minor. Ideally, when using two adults, they will be from different families.
- Use a "buddy system" for children at all times. Pair up children at the beginning of each program or activity for trips to the restroom, etc.
- Teach minor child to notify adult leader as to whereabouts if separated from group/class. Child must acknowledge his return to same adult.
- Adult/child involvement. There should be no spanking, or any physical contact with private parts of any child or adult. Discipline MUST follow the disciplinary guidelines set forth in this policy.
- Parents should be notified as soon as possible of any accident, illness, physical distress or emotional trauma of their minor child.
- Any reported parental complaints about suspected or alleged mistreatment/abuse of their child should be reported to the pastoral staff and review board. Use the reporting mechanism set forth in the policy.
- There should be no administration of any medication or remedies without current (within three months) written parental authorization on file.
- There should be no photograph or audio taping of any minor without pastoral authorization.

II. On Premises Policy

- Child is to use restroom in immediate area of class/group.
- Buddy system for restroom needs.
- Do not set a child outside room by himself for disciplinary action, or otherwise leave a child alone and without supervision

III. Off Premises Activities

- All activities must be approved by the pastoral staff and an activity request form on file.
- Parent permission slips must be signed for each participant and kept with the leader.
- Transportation other than our church vehicles requires written permission, and evidence of insurance on the vehicle.
- Each vehicle must contain at least three persons.

IV. Child Abuse Policy

- It is our intent to follow State regulations in the reporting of child abuse. If you suspect that a child is being physically abused, sexually abused, or harmfully neglected, please report your concern to the pastoral staff. Pastoral staff will be responsible for complying with State regulations. In addition, if our State requires volunteers or employees to report incidents personally, we will assist you in contacting the appropriate agency.
- In case where reporting is deemed necessary, our pastoral staff will work closely with the family and any of the helping agencies involved. Our desire is to provide protection for the children, and support for the family.
- Any suspected or alleged child abuse (physical, sexual, or neglect) by staff or volunteers can result in temporary removal from work/ministry pending the outcome of an investigation.

V. Discipline

- We believe that our staff and volunteers must "train up a child in the way he should go" with love and caring concern. It is not our position to mete out punishment. Discipline is the parent's domain. Our domain is to set boundaries and offer options by training, teaching and demonstrating acceptable behavior.
- We never use corporal punishment (i.e. spanking, slapping, etc.) and we never discipline by humiliation (placing the child before the class as a "dunce" or other public reference to his/her misbehavior).
- All children shall be disciplined in the same manner.
- Incidents requiring discipline shall be responded to by offering the child a second chance.
- If the child continues to disrupt the class, respond by giving the child a "time-out" away from the activity in progress. Please note, however, that the child should never be placed in a room alone, or with only one other adult. If there are not two adults available to oversee the time-out in another area, the child should remain in the classroom.
- If it is not feasible to have the child in time-out (i.e. additional adults not available, child is too disruptive, etc.) the child's parents should be contacted and asked to come and get their child.
- Additional guidelines may be found in the Basic Behavior Boundaries for Children and for Youth.

VI. Accountability of Worker for Work Activity with Children/Youth

- Worker must have prior approval from the pastoral staff and review board.
- Worker must register each time they are involved in a classroom or outing activity
- Preschool department: Staff worker must adhere to policy of parents/guardians leaving minors under church responsibility. A sign-in sheet is required. No child may be picked up without parent/guardian signature. This pertains to activities on or off premises.

I have read each provision stated in the Adult/Minor Worker Policy concerning adult/child involvement and I understand and agree with each provision.

Signature _____ Date _____
(One copy to be signed and returned, the other kept for your information)

INSTRUCTIONS

REVIEW BOARD QUESTIONS

Each applicant must be asked the same questions (even if you think you know the answer) so that the review is as objective as possible. Please realize that this is for the protection of both the applicant and members of the review board. Each member of the review board will make notes on the Review Board Response form. These forms will become part of the applicant's file.

1. Describe briefly how you came to give your life to Jesus. Whom do you say Jesus is? Who is Jesus to you?
2. Have you received the baptism in the Holy Spirit and have spoken in tongues as an evidence of that baptism?
3. Could you share with us why you want to work and minister to our children/youth?
4. What are your strong points, gifts, and/or what do you love to do? What do you have to offer our children/youth?
5. What is your spiritual "growing edge"? What is God teaching you right now in your life? How do you feel about your prayer life, Bible reading, church attendance and using your gifts?
6. What would you desire the children to glean from you?
7. Describe any fear or concerns you have about teaching children or youth.
8. James 3:1 says, "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly." We would be interested in knowing how you feel about having an accountability that is as high as that of pastor.
9. As you know, each classroom can be monitored at anytime. How would you feel about having someone drop into the classroom without warning? How would you feel about the classroom being monitored by video camera?
10. What else would you like to us to know about you?
11. How do you feel about this interview process?

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REVIEW BOARD RESPONSE

CONFIDENTIAL

Name of Applicant: _____ Date: _____

Position desired: _____

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

INSTRUCTIONS

CONFIDENTIAL REFERENCE RECORD

This is a record of contact made with a reference, church or organization identified by an applicant for youth or children's work. All information is to be kept confidential and is to be used for determination of suitability for children's/youth work only. It is extremely important that the date, time and person spoken to be noted. Also, the person taking the reference should be clearly indicated.

Name of Applicant _____

Reference or church contacted _____
(If a church or youth organization, identify both the organization and minister/staff person contacted):

Date _____ Time _____

Method of contact _____
(e.g. telephone, letter, personal conversation)

- Summary of conversation (summarize the references or minister's remarks concerning the applicant's fitness and suitability for youth or children's work. _____

Suggested questions to ask reference. In each case where the question "why" is asked, look for FACTS, not opinions, which could be justified and demonstrable:

- Do you consider him/her to be a Christian believer?
 yes no How do you know? _____

- Does he/she verbalize and demonstrate in life a commitment to the Lord? yes no
Examples? _____

- What strengths have you observed in this person that would cause you to believe that he/she would be an effective minister to children? _____

- Have you observed any weaknesses which would indicate that this person would be unsuitable as a minister to children? _____

- Is there any reason why you wouldn't have him/her as a volunteer in ministry or a staff position in your organization? yes no If no, why? _____

- Have you ever known him/her to work or have ministry with children? yes no In what capacity? For how long? How did he/she perform? _____

- Does he/she respond to training?
 yes no not sure

- What areas of training would you recommend for him/her? _____

- Are you aware of any conduct on the part of the applicant that would indicate that the applicant would be unsuitable for ministry to children? yes no
If yes, explain: _____

- Have you ever reported this person for child abuse or sexual misconduct with a minor? yes no
Please explain. Were there any witnesses? _____

What was the outcome? _____

- Have you any knowledge he/she has been reported for child abuse or sexual misconduct with a minor?
 yes no

Summary of other comments:

Name of Review Board Member making reference contact:

Signature _____

Date _____

SECTION II RESPONSE

- No prevention policy will be totally effective, however, when a prevention policy is in place and is being adhered to, the church can respond to allegations of sexual misconduct or molestation with a proactive, confident stance. Bear in mind the following:
- Whenever there is an allegation of sexual misconduct or abuse, the allegation must be taken seriously.
- Each situation must be handled straightforwardly and with respect for privacy and confidentiality.
- IMMEDIATELY contact the District Office, and the insurance carrier for District Supervised Churches. Follow the advice given by your insurance carrier.
- Give total cooperation to civil authorities under guidance of your attorney (or the District Office's attorney).
- Direct care and loving concern toward the victim and his/her family.
- Direct care and loving concern toward the accused and his/her family.
- Do not make any statements which would indicate that you hold the victim responsible in any way.

PLAN YOUR RESPONSE IN ADVANCE DON'T BE CAUGHT BY SURPRISE

If you have been adhering to your prevention policy, you should have adequate records, applications, references and screening forms. These should be up-to-date and within easy reach.

Begin by having a reporting procedure in place for all of your children's and youth programs. A standard form should be used, and each worker/leader should clearly know to whom they should report.

Then, select a **spokesperson** for your church. The spokesperson should be the only one from the church to speak to the media and should be the one who reports information to the congregation tactfully and diplomatically. This person should not express bias toward either the alleged victim or the accused. All requests for information should be directed to the spokesperson. The rationale for this is that any unprepared pastor, staff member or board member may inadvertently give out conflicting and contradictory statements which may do more damage than good.

Have a working knowledge of the state and county requirements for reporting. Your local Department of Youth and Family Services, district attorney's office, or local law enforcement agencies will be a good resource for you.

Prepare a written position statement of your church regarding sexual misconduct/abuse with minors (see the sample in this manual). This statement should be available at all times and in the event of allegations, should be released to the public. According to Richard Hammar, releasing a position statement is "far superior to making no comment. This is your opportunity to influence public opinion positively by emphasizing your awareness of the problem of child abuse, your concern for the victims, and the extensive steps your church has taken to reduce the risk and provide a safe environment for children....Describe all the precautions you have taken, and the policies you have implemented. This is not time for silence or 'no comment'. Do not surrender the bully pulpit to those who will criticize and condemn you."²

DO NOT respond to allegations by denying that the incident occurred (that is a court decision); minimizing the incident (every incident of sexual misconduct or abuse is serious and should be acknowledged as such); nor place any blame on the victim or the victim's family. Responses like these are inappropriate, unhelpful and to be avoided.

Use an **attorney**. If your church does not have an attorney, contact your district office or insurance carrier for appropriate referrals. Always have your attorney present when being questioned by law enforcement or social service agencies.

Accuse neither the alleged victim, his/her family, nor the accused in any public interview. The church must respond with love and concern.

² *ibid.* p.58

Until the investigation is complete, charges made and a conviction or acquittal delivered, both the alleged victim and the accused deserve and should receive the prayers and concern of the body of believers.

Always work closely with the District Office and your Insurance Carrier.

Now that you have everything in place and know how to respond, follow these guidelines in case an actual incident occurs. Follow these instructions in the order given so that you have the benefit of the District Office's support and your attorney's advice prior to responding publicly. Consider such an allegation and your response to be an emergency -- the longer you wait to respond correctly, the more likely the damage to your church. **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD YOU CONFRONT THE ACCUSED UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED STEPS 1 - 4.**

1. Document everything from the moment you are informed of a report of sexual molestation or misconduct. Keep record of all phone calls. Record to whom you spoke, when you spoke to them and what they said. Keep all copies of correspondence regarding the report together with all other documents.
2. Contact the District Office immediately. If the report is on a weekend, contact a district official, your sectional presbyter, or your regional executive presbyter at home. Contact your insurance carrier. Contact your attorney. Do not proceed without outside professional assistance from your attorney, the district office or your insurance carrier. Do not try to handle it as an internal problem, or as a spiritual problem.
3. Contact the proper civil authorities following the guidance of your insurance company and attorney. Once your "reporting form" is complete, **do not conduct an in-depth investigation**. This should be left to your attorney and insurance company.
4. Notify the parents. Be careful to follow your attorney's or insurance company's advice at this time.
5. Do not confront the accused until you know that the child or youth member is safe and in a secure environment.
6. The care and safety of the alleged victim is priority. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Be supportive to the alleged victim's family and let them know that you care. Do not make a judgment on the situation as to anyone's guilt or innocence. Leave that to the legal authorities. By remaining caring and concerned, you generate good will. Lack of support and/or a negative reaction can increase the alleged victim's anger and hurt, and make reconciliation more difficult and litigation more likely.
7. The accused should be treated with love, care and dignity. If the accused is a pastoral staff member, or church employee, he/she should be temporarily relieved of his/her duties until the investigation has been completed. If the accused holds a compensated position, arrangements should be made to maintain his/her income if possible until allegations are cleared. If this is not possible, arrangements should be made to suspend the accused's income, with restoration of the income when allegations are cleared.
8. Use the pre-written text of your church's position on sexual misconduct and abuse to answer the press and convey information to the congregation. This should be done by the designated spokesperson. Do not engage in speculation, bias, or accusation. Confidentiality and privacy of all involved should be safeguarded at all times.

BASIC BEHAVIOR BOUNDARIES

The primary Goal of Children's Ministries is to provide an environment within which the children feel safe and loved -- and are exposed to the truths about God's love for them as individuals both through the lessons and activities and through our lives.

Boundary setting and options are the domain of the teachers. (Discipline is the parent's domain.)

BOUNDARIES

- We give NO THREATS.
- We do NOT withhold snacks for behavior control.
- It is OK for a child to choose not to participate
- It is NOT OK for a child to choose to disrupt the entire class or to hurt or endanger another child.
- Do NOT leave the child alone outside the classroom, or in another room. Do not leave the child with just one adult -- follow the "three" rule (two adults/one child or one adult/two children).

Basic Options:

There are **two basic options** to be given to a child who is overtly disrupting the ongoing flow of the class. Please tell the child:

1. You can choose to participate or not participate (time-out), but you need to choose to be nice and help the class, or
2. You can choose to have me call you parent so that your parent can come and help you.

Note regarding toys from home and items for sharing: A child's personal possessions are a "piece of home." These items are often touchstones of security. It is OK to bring items from home. If they become disruptive or in danger of being broken, tell the child you are putting it up on the shelf to keep it safe until it is time to go home.

Guidelines for Sharing with Parents:

1. Smile! Be gentle and kind - our foremost goal is to bless them.
2. Say, "May I share something with you about _____ *child's name* _____." Be discreet. Take the parent aside. Confidentiality and privacy are important to everyone.
3. Be specific regarding the incidents of concern.

PUBLIC POLICY STATEMENT

INSTRUCTIONS

This is a SAMPLE Policy Statement which has been drafted for use by District Supervised Churches. This Policy Statement should be released to the public in the event of allegations of sexual misconduct or abuse of a minor by any church employee or volunteer. No other information should be released to the media or congregation without the advice of your attorney and/or insurance carrier.

- We believe that our children are a precious resource which must be safeguarded. We seek to give our children every opportunity to reach their full potential. Physical and sexual abuse jeopardizes that potential and steals away the innocence of childhood.
- Our church takes very seriously the safety and protection of all children and adults who participate in our church programs and activities. To minimize the risk to children and youth of sexual misconduct or abuse during church sponsored activities we have set the following policies and procedures in place:
- We screen all paid employees, including clergy, and all volunteer workers who work with youth or children. No adult who has been previously convicted of child molestation or abuse is allowed to work with our children.
- We check references on all paid employees and all volunteers working with youth and children.
- We train all of our staff who work with children or youth, both paid and volunteer, to understand the nature of child sexual abuse.
- We train all of our staff who work with children or youth, both paid and volunteer, to carry out our policies to prevent sexual abuse.
- We take our policies to prevent sexual abuse seriously and see that they are enforced. We recognize that child physical and sexual abuse are criminal actions which we do not tolerate.
- We train our staff to understand state law concerning child abuse reporting obligations.
- We have a clearly defined reporting procedure for a suspected incident of abuse.
- We offer pastoral counsel to victims of sexual abuse or misconduct and their family members.

REPORT OF INCIDENTS OR CONCERNS

This report must be given to the pastor in charge of the youth or children's activity during which the incident allegedly took place, or was first mentioned. If this pastor is not available, the report should be given to a member of the Youth and Children Worker's Review Board. All incidents of suspicious behavior are to be taken seriously and reported.

Name of person reporting: _____ Position: _____

Date of report: _____ Date and Time of Incident: _____

Church Activity (Sunday School, Church Picnic, etc.) _____

Child's name: _____

Description of incident, comment or observation of concern: _____

Were there other adult witnesses? yes no If yes, please name them and their position and/or relationship to the church: _____

Were there other children/youth present? yes no If yes, please list their names:

Any additional concerns or previously reported incident relative to this child:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

ACTIVITY REQUEST FORM

Whenever an activity is planned which is not a regularly scheduled program, or which will take place off-site, the Activity Request Form must be completed, and approval obtained prior to announcing the activity.

Name of Activity: _____

Location (on site classroom, off sit park, etc.): _____

Group(s) involved (youth, specific S.S. class, boys, girls, etc.): _____

Youth/Children's Workers Attending:

Name	Application on File	
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no

Transportation:

Vehicle	Driver	Application on File	Proof of Insurance
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no _____
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no _____
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no _____
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no _____
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no _____

Activity Approved Not-approved

Comments: _____

Additional Requirements: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

CLASSROOM/ACTIVITY REGISTRATION FORM

Each activity or class for children or youth must have a completed a registration form. These forms are to be completed at the beginning of any activity, any additional comments added at the end, and turned into the pastor or staff member in charge of the children/youth program.

Activity or Class: _____

Regular Teacher/Director: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____ Location: _____

List of all Adult Workers *(Staff and Volunteers)*:

Name	Position
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

List of all Adult guests *(including parents of children or youth who stay longer than to drop off or pick up child)*:

_____	_____
_____	_____

List of child/youth participants *(or attach a roll sheet)*:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Report any incidents which may be of concern: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

EARLY CHILDHOOD CHECK-IN SHEET

Date: _____ Time: _____ Total Children: _____ Total Workers: _____

	Please Print Child's Name First & Last	Please Print Parent/Guardian's Name	Time In	Adult Classroom/Worship Service/Other	Parent/Guardian Initial Out
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					
17					
18					
19					
20					
21					
22					
23					
24					
25					

Ministry worker for the hour:

ADDITIONAL PROCEDURES & CAUTIONS WHICH MAY BE IMPLEMENTED FOR YOUR CHURCH SITUATION

We are aware that it may not be possible, or practical for every church to implement the suggested policy in its entirety, therefore, we have some suggested modifications, guidelines, and principles which you should follow if your church can not comply with all aspects of the policy.

1. **Two Adult Rule:** We realize that many churches will not have enough workers to have two adults in each class. In that case, classrooms should have windows on the doors, or the doors should remain open, and a supervisor should visit the classrooms randomly throughout the class/activity period. In no event should a single child be left with a single adult unsupervised or in a vehicle without a third person.
2. **Temporary or Periodic Helpers:** Occasionally, a temporary helper is needed to fill-in or assist in a classroom or activity who has not gone through the application and screening process. In this event, a “Secondary Screening Process” may be instituted. Please refer to the Secondary Screening Procedures outlined on page 35 of Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church (available from the District Office or through Richard Hammar). Please realize, the Secondary Screening Process is only appropriate for helpers who assist 4 times per year or less and who otherwise already attend the church, meet the six-month rule, etc.
3. **Six Month Rule:** Ideally, all workers will have attended the church for at least six months prior to becoming youth/children workers. If this is not possible (i.e., you are a new church plant or have no workers to choose from) then all of the other recommendations must be followed, including contact with all references.
4. **Adult Family Members as Workers Teachers:** Many churches are employing the “workers teacher” approach to satisfy the two adult rule. However, be cautious about using spouses as the workers teachers. Some insurance carriers feel that this arrangement increases the risk of sexual molestation/abuse since the spouse will be less likely to report an incident. In classes or activities involving minors, therefore, it is preferable that the ministry worker be composed of members of different families.
5. **Using Minors as Junior Teachers or Helpers:** Care should be taken when using minors as children’s workers. It is more difficult to check records or references on a minor. Therefore, it is advisable to always have an adult work in conjunction with the minor worker.
6. **Criminal records check:** Current law allows for criminal records check of any applicant to be an employee or volunteer wishing to be in any position where he/she would have supervisory or disciplinary power over a minor or any person under his or her care. In cases where you cannot confirm references, or where there is a charge pending trial, or a conviction, you may obtain a criminal record check. Contact your local law enforcement agency or the Department of Justice for instructions. The District has used the following agency for criminal checks First Advantage, <https://volunteer.fadv.com>. Also available for background checks: Safe Hiring Solutions, www.safehiringsolutions.com, 888-215-8296 (recommended by Brotherhood Mutual Insurance).