



P R E V E N T I N G
CHILD
S E X U A L A B U S E
Identify, Report and Respond

Participant Handbook



**CHRISTIAN
BROTHERS**
SERVICES

Risk Management Services

Preventing Child Sexual Abuse: Identify, Report and Respond

Definition of Child Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse of a minor is defined as behavior in which an adult uses a minor as an object of sexual gratification. Each state has its own definition of what constitutes a minor; however, it is generally a child under the age of 18.

All adults who work with children need to be observant and vigilant. They need to be able to recognize, identify, and report any signs of child sexual abuse and inappropriate actions. All 50 states have passed a mandatory reporting act that requires adults who work with children to report suspected child abuse to the proper authorities. Adults who work with children also need to be prepared to respond to a child's disclosure of sexual abuse.



Recognizing Child Sexual Abuse

Recognizing the signs of child sexual abuse is a step toward preventing child sexual abuse. In order to recognize child sexual abuse all employees and volunteers need to be aware of the signs of child sexual abuse.

Recognize – how perpetrators of child sexual abuse gain access to children. Abusers are very adept at blending into a community and gaining the trust of those around them. It is important to keep in mind that abusers come in all shapes, sizes, races, and income levels. There is NO look to an abuser. Some general points to keep in mind are:

1. Abusers seek out jobs and activities that involve children
2. Abusers sometimes use their church association and volunteer work to gain trust
3. Abusers know how to gain trust from colleagues, parents, children, and people in the community
4. Abusers look like everyone else and blend easily into a normal community

Recognize – that young victims of child sexual abuse often do not report abuse. The victims often have a hard time disclosing and reporting abuse for a number of reasons. Among those reasons are:

1. Victims are afraid no one will believe them
2. Victims do not know who to tell
3. Victims fear negative consequences for themselves and their family members
4. Victims are afraid of how parents and friends might react

5. Victims trust the abuser and they do not want to see the abuser get into trouble
6. Victims do not understand what is happening to them
7. Victims feel cared for and loved by all the special attention they receive from the abuser
8. Victims are afraid the abuser will hurt them or their family
9. Victims perceive the abuser as having more power because the abuser is an adult

Recognize – that appropriate affection between employees/volunteers and minors is a positive part of the educational and human experience. Some forms of physical contact are an appropriate means by which to communicate that affection. Appropriate forms of physical contact are:

1. Side hugs
2. Shoulder-to-shoulder or “temple” hugs
3. A pat on the shoulder or back
4. Handshakes
5. High fives and hand slapping
6. Touching hands, shoulders, and arms
7. Arms around shoulders
8. Holding hands during prayer or when a minor is upset



Recognize – that natural boundaries exist between adults and children. In order to protect children from the risk of sexual misconduct and abuse, and to protect yourself and your organization against false allegations of abuse, adult employees and volunteers need to follow an explicit code of conduct. Employees and volunteers should refrain from the following actions:

1. Any form of unwanted affection
2. Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
3. Full frontal hugs or bear hugs
4. Kisses, wrestling, tickling, and piggyback rides
5. Allowing a minor to sit on one's lap
6. Touching the buttocks, chest, knees, thighs, or genital areas of a minor
7. Placing one's hands in a minor's pockets, or allowing a minor to place his/her hands in an adult's pockets
8. Lying down, cuddling or sleeping near a minor
9. Giving or receiving any type of massage
10. Showing affection in closed offices or isolated areas such as closets, staff only areas, and private rooms

Recognize – while your intentions may be honorable, certain behaviors are considered inappropriate when dealing with children. Physical behaviors may be obvious to some, but psychological and emotional violations are just as important. As an employee or volunteer, you need to refrain from these behaviors, and be able to recognize these behaviors in others. Examples of psychological and emotional violations are:

1. Spending too much time with a particular child
2. Calling or emailing a child for purposes other than those directly related to school or ministry
3. Engaging in sexually oriented conversations not related to church teaching or school curriculum

4. Excessive involvement in a minor's personal, non-school activities
5. Acting possessive towards a minor
6. Meeting alone in off-site locations
7. Asking a child to keep secrets

Recognize - behavioral boundaries need to be established when working with children, just as you have to establish psychological and emotional boundaries. Behavioral boundaries should not be crossed by employees or volunteers, at any time. Some of those behavioral boundaries are:

1. Commenting on minors' bodies
2. Offering minors cigarettes or other smoking materials
3. Allowing minors to visit inappropriate websites
4. Providing gifts or money to, or receiving gifts or money from, minors without their parent's permission
5. Criticizing the beliefs of a minor's parents
6. Asking a minor to keep secrets from the minor's parents



Recognize - that when transporting minors, employees and volunteers must follow these guidelines:

1. Never transport a minor without his or her guardian's written permission
2. Avoid unnecessary physical contact with minors while in a vehicle
3. Never transport a minor alone, except in extreme emergencies
4. Never make any unauthorized stops when transporting minors

Recognize - there are certain prohibited behaviors employees and volunteers should refrain from in the presence of minors. Those prohibited behaviors include:

1. Using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while in the presence of minors
2. Providing or allowing minors to consume alcohol or drugs
3. Using profanity or telling inappropriate jokes in the presence of minors
4. Allowing a minor to have access to pornography
5. Discussing sexual activities with minors, unless it is a specified job requirement and the employee or volunteer is trained to discuss these activities
6. Being nude in the presence of a minor
7. Sleeping in the same bed, sleeping bag, or the same quarters with minors
8. Engaging in sexual contact with minors
9. Possessing any sexually oriented or morally inappropriate materials, such as magazines, cards, videos, films or clothing, in the presence of minors



Recognize - that young victims of sexual abuse may exhibit certain warning signs or short term effects of abuse. Some warning signs to watch for are:

1. Anxiety, shame, self blame, guilt
2. Difficulty concentrating
3. Mood swings and behavioral extremes
4. A fear of touch or a new self-consciousness
5. An unexplained fear of a particular person or place
6. Avoiding or seeking out adult relationships
7. Peer relationships decline
8. Mature behavior or development of a pseudo-maturity with regard to his or her sexuality
9. Self mutilation



Recognize - a false allegation of abuse will not simply surface out of nowhere; it is generally the result of poor judgment in interactions with minors. Behaviors that may lead to false allegations of sexual abuse include:

1. Meeting a minor alone in an isolated place
2. Showing favoritism
3. Engaging in physical contact which may be misinterpreted by others
4. Failing to adhere to the standards of affection outlined in the school or youth-serving organization's policies
5. Showing affection to a minor when no one else is around



Identification and Reporting of Child Abuse

The identification and reporting of child sexual abuse is an extremely important step in helping to stop the abuse. Being able to identify the warning signs of abuse both in victims and abusers can help stop the victim's abuse, and help prevent any further abuse. It is important to be aware of the proper procedures for reporting signs of abuse within your organization, and it is important to understand the legality of being a mandatory reporter of child sexual abuse.

Identify and Report - reasonable suspicions/beliefs of abuse as required by law. All 50 states have passed some form of mandatory reporting law whereby adults who work with minors are required by law to report their suspicions of child sexual abuse. If a report of child sexual abuse is made in good faith, even if it turns out to be false, the mandatory reporter is safe from criminal or civil prosecution. If, however, a mandatory reporter has a reasonable suspicion of child sexual abuse and does NOT report that suspicion, they can be subject to criminal prosecution, civil liability, and forfeiture of certification and licenses.

Identify and Report - any breach in the code of conduct for your organization or institution and any signs of abuse, boundary violations, or procedures that are not being followed. Learn your organization or institution's policies and procedures for the reporting of child sexual abuse.



Responding to a Disclosure

Responding to a child's disclosure of sexual abuse is not an easy task; however, how an adult responds is critical in reducing the trauma experienced by the child, and can be a determining factor in whether the healing process for that child actually begins. Remember, it is not the adult's responsibility to investigate a report of child sexual abuse. The adult's responsibility is only to report an allegation of child sexual abuse.

Respond – by being well prepared to accept a report of sexual abuse from a child. Below are some simple tips to follow in response to a child's disclosure:

1. Listen attentively to the child
2. Encourage the child to talk
3. Remain calm, cool, and collected
4. Do not express shock, outrage or condemn the person the child is accusing
5. Do not press a child for more information

6. Do not attempt to conduct an investigation at that time
7. Let the child lead the conversation
8. Be sensitive to vague reports
9. Tell the child they did the right thing by coming forward
10. Tell the child this is the first step in getting help
11. Immediately following a report of sexual abuse, write down everything that was said
12. Be familiar with your organization's internal reporting procedures
13. If required, alert the civil authorities and do all that is required under state law

Additional guidelines to follow to insure a sensitive response to a child's disclosure.

1. Find a private, but not secluded, place to speak with the child without interruption.
2. Don't sit behind a desk. Sit down near the child to make them feel more comfortable.
3. Use the child's own language to avoid confusing or embarrassing them.
4. Show you understand and take seriously what the child is saying.
5. Assure the child it was not their fault.
6. Reassure the child they will be safe.
7. Avoid questions that could make the child feel responsible.
8. Avoid asking "why" questions. This type of question can make the child feel as if he/she has done something wrong.
9. Avoid asking leading questions.

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Information Sheet

Fill in the spaces below with the name(s) and phone numbers(s) of the person(s) you should report any policy violations or inappropriate behavior to within your organization.

Organization Name: _____

Name of Administrator: _____

Title: _____

Phone Number: _____

Record additional names and numbers below.

Name of Administrator: _____

Title: _____

Phone Number: _____

Name of Administrator: _____

Title: _____

Phone Number: _____

If your organization's policy calls for you to directly report all disclosures of child sexual abuse to the authorities, record that information below in the spaces provided.

Government Agency/Department: _____

Phone Number: _____



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