

Definitions of Abuse

Child abuse is any activity (or failure to act) that exploits a child's vulnerability and powerlessness in which the abuser is fully responsible for their behaviors.

The four major types of abuse are:

Sexual Abuse

(The subjection of a child to sexual contact by a person responsible for the child's care, a person with a significant relationship to the child, or a person in a position of authority)

- Fondling, touching of intimate parts
- Sexual intercourse
- Exposure to adult sexuality (Pornographic materials, dirty jokes, sexual, suggestive comments)
- Violations of bodily privacy

Emotional Abuse

(Any attitude, behavior, or failure to act that interferes with a child's mental health or social development)

- Intimidation
- Belittling or shaming
- Confinement
- Racial prejudice
- Manipulation

Physical Abuse

(Any physical injury, mental injury or threatened injury inflicted by a person responsible for the child's care to a child other than by accidental means)

Neglect

(The failure of parents or caretakers to provide a child with necessary food, shelter, clothing or medical care)

- Endangering a child's physical or mental health

Screening/ Application Process

All staff and volunteers in children's and youth ministries will be required to complete the "Volunteer Abuse Prevention Screening Form" prior to serving in any roles that have direct contact with children or youth. This form requires the following information:

- Name and current address
- Social security number and drivers license number
- Relationship to Oak Haven church (6 months attendance required before serving)
- Previous experience with children/students
- 2 personal references with names, addresses, and phone numbers
- Questions regarding previous sexual misconduct, abuse history, and criminal convictions
- Consent to conduct background check
- Covenant and Affirmation of faith agreement

All staff and volunteers in children's and youth ministries will be required to familiarize themselves with this prevention plan and the guidelines contained within and attend any training sessions applicable to their specific ministry area.

Guidelines to Help Create Safe Environments

1. A minimum of 2 prevention trained adults should be present **on-site** at all times for any children's and youth activities or events.
2. Each classroom used should provide **visual access** for those supervising any activities/programs. This means that a door should remain open in classrooms without windows, especially if only one adult is present in the classroom.

3. A claim check system will be used for all children in the nursery, pre-school ages, and K-2nd grades *at a minimum*. Only a pre-authorized adult or teen may pick up their children. Under no circumstances, should these children be released unsupervised to go find a parent.
4. Individual children needing to use the bathroom should be accompanied to the restroom either by an adult or with another child. If with an adult, they should make sure the room is clear and then wait outside the door until the child is finished.
5. Adult and teen volunteers should be identified by appropriate nametags. If a stranger is loitering in a children's area feel free to ask, "Can I help you"?
6. Any Oak Haven Church sponsored off campus activities require any designated chaperones to be prevention trained and screened. The only exception would be a parent who will **only** be responsible for their own children.
7. All bus drivers and drivers of any vehicles who will be transporting children or youth, other than their own, to an Oak Haven Church activity will have consented to a background check of their driving record. No students should ever transport other students other than their siblings.
8. Any Oak Haven Church sponsored off campus activities require a **consent and release form** completed from the parents of any children or youth attending. If a form is not completed, a verbal consent must be obtained from a parent with the appropriate emergency contact information.
9. Children and youth that have been left in Oak Haven church care may not leave campus until the end of the ministry or event.

Guidelines for Appropriate Behavior w/ Children & Youth

1. The staff/volunteers are responsible for the safety of all the members of their class/group. They should always be aware of their environment and anything or anyone that could possibly result in unsafe circumstances or behavior.
2. The staff/volunteers should seek to minimize any opportunities for, or the appearance of, questionable conduct toward children and youth. Seek to avoid any situations or conduct where your behavior may be misinterpreted by others.
3. Staff/volunteers shall have no dating privileges with any students.
4. Immediately notify the staff or ministry team leader of any situation or environment that is or could be unsafe.
5. It is not appropriate to physically discipline a child or even to touch or hold a child who does not want to be touched (except to gently restrain a child for safety reasons).
6. Permission needs to be given for physical contact with young children, such as holding hands or sitting on a lap, and preferably, should be initiated by the child.
7. If a person is offended, they define what is offensive. Handle seriously anything said or done to children or youth that they find abusive, offensive, frightening, demeaning or disrespectful.

Adult volunteers have an obligation to report suspected violations of these guidelines to their ministry leader or staff. In the event that an adult volunteer has violated these guidelines, the volunteer may be asked to step-down from their volunteer responsibilities depending on the severity of the situation or accusation. Ministry leaders/staff will respond and act in accordance with this policy (immediately, if necessary) at their discretion. Further action will be taken by church leadership as the situation warrants.

Mandatory Reporting Of Abuse

1. If Oak Haven Church knows of or has reason to believe any activity listed in this plan under *the definitions of Abuse* has occurred, it will report such information to the proper authorities as mandated by MN Stat. Sec. 626.556, sub 3(a) (2) and Minnesota Statutes, section.595.02, subdivision.1(c).
2. Each staff member or volunteer is responsible to immediately report to their ministry team leader or pastor or overseer (in case the alleged abuser is the staff member or ministry team leader) any known or suspected cases of sexual, emotional or physical abuse.
3. Good faith reporting will be kept protected and confidential.
4. Ministry staff will report any known and/or reasonably suspected cases of abuse to Anoka County Protection Services within 24 hours. Failure to report such cases is subject to possible punishment as mandated above.
5. The alleged offender will be notified of the accusations and be encouraged to meet with a pastor or overseer.
6. Oak Haven Church will notify our insurance company and consult with an attorney for advice as necessary.
7. The ministry staff will be sensitive to the victim and the offender and encourage any meetings or professional counseling where necessary.
8. Oak Haven Church will cooperate with any subsequent investigations.



Abuse Prevention Plan for Children's and Youth Ministries

Why?

The safety of children and youth and the task of protecting them from abuse is an important and necessary function of our church. The problem of child abuse and the allegations of abuse are real and startling. The National Center on Child Abuse reports that one out of every five girls, and one of eight boys is a victim of some form of sexual abuse by age 12. We cannot morally or legally ignore the possibility of abuse or attempted abuse happening in our church body. Consider the impact of such criminal activity on the life of the child, the church, and its leaders such as:

- The trauma to victims
- The emotional and spiritual impact on the congregation
- The negative response of the community
- The stress of litigation and of the investigative process

Objectives

The objectives of this plan are to:

- Protect our children by helping prevent sexual, emotional or physical abuse
- Reduce the risk of abuse by limiting opportunities for it to occur
- Protect volunteers and staff from false accusations of abuse
- Establish guidelines for the reporting of abuse
- Educate volunteers and staff regarding abuse and its recognition

Revised and approved by CE Board 8-9-2011