

A Biblical Response to Sexual Abuse

A Manual for Dunkard Brethren Congregations

Version 1.3



**Sexual Abuse Awareness Task Force
of the
Dunkard Brethren Church**

Rationale

In the fall of 2021, participants at the Leadership Conference of the Dunkard Brethren Church attended the Anabaptist Symposium on Sexual Awareness. That event became the springboard for greater discussion and fostered a desire for the church to develop a cohesive policy that would allow consistent and deliberate action in the unfortunate occurrence of sexual abuse within the church. At General Conference in 2022, Standing Committee created the Sexual Abuse Awareness Task Force to develop protocols to ensure that our response covers Scriptural, legal, and ethical standards. The task force members appointed were:

Mark and Beth Cordrey Caleb and Mary Heckman
Lloyd and Carol Lorenz Tom and Dawn Priest
Jonathan and Jill Skiles Paul and Sarah Skiles
Jason and Colleen St. John

This handbook is our response to the request from Standing Committee. It covers Scriptural Foundations, General Guidelines, State Laws, and other topics that will provide general guidance. This handbook serves as a reference for members to quickly access relevant material. Much of the material is taken directly from the sources listed at the end of each section and detailed in the bibliography and is not original to the Task Force. Hochstetler Law Firm, P.C. has also reviewed this Manual and believes it is useful as a guiding document. This is not intended to be legal advice, and this Manual is not intended to be exhaustive. The topic of sexual abuse is one that is not static and is one that requires church leaders to remain current with the reporting practices and laws specific to local areas. May God guide and bless you as you are called to help shepherd His flock.

Scriptural Foundations for Dealing with Sexual Abuse

Protecting the Vulnerable

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Matthew 18:3-6 | 3. And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. 4. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. 6. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. |
| Exodus 3:7-8 | 7. And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; 8. And I am come down to deliver them... |
| Psalms 82:2-5 | 2. How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah. 3. Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. 4. Deliver |

the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked. **5.** They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course.

Job 34:28 So they cause the cry of the poor to come unto him, and he heareth the cry of the afflicted.

Proverbs 31:8-9 **8.** Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. **9.** Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.

Isaiah 1:17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

Isaiah 58:6 Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?

Psalms 10:18 To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress.

Ecclesiastes 4:1 So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter.

Luke 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.

Psalms 9:9-10 **9.** The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. **10.** And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.

Dealing with Sin

Ephesians 5:3-17 **3.** But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; **4.** Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. **5.** For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. **6.** Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. **7.** Be not ye therefore partakers with them. **8.** For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: **9.** (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) **10.** Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. **11.** And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. **12.** For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. **13.** But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. **14.** Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. **15.** See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, **16.** Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. **17.** Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

Deut. 22: 25-26	25. But if a man find a betrothed damsel in the field, and the man force her, and lie with her: then the man only that lay with her shall die. 26. But unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing; there is in the damsel no sin worthy of death: for as when a man riseth against his neighbour, and slayeth him, even so is this matter: (<i>sexual assault was treated the same as murder</i>)
I Timothy 5:20	Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.
I Corinthians 5:1-5	1. It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. 2. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. 3. for I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, 4. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 5. To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.
I Thess. 5:14	Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.
Jeremiah 22:1-3	1. Thus saith the LORD; Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word, 2. And say, Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, that sittest upon the throne of David, thou, and thy servants, and thy people that enter in by these gates: 3. Thus saith the LORD; Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place.
Luke 12:1-5	1. In the meantime, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. 2. For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. 3. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.
Proverbs 28:4	They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them.
James 4:17	Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.
Ephesians 5:11-12	11. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. 12. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.
Romans 6:12-18	12. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. 13. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. 14. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. 15. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. 16.

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? **17.** But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. **18.** Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

1 Cor. 6:19-20

19. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? **20.** For ye are bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

Perverting Justice

Proverbs 31:5

Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert judgment of any of the afflicted.

Micah 3:9-12

9. Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity. **10.** They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. **11.** The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us. **12.** Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.

Proverbs 18:5

It is not good to accept the person of the wicked, to overthrow the righteous in judgment.

Deut. 24:17

Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take a widow's raiment to pledge:

Deut. 27:19

Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow. And all the people shall say Amen.

Isaiah 5:7

For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.

Luke 11:42

But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

John 7:24

Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

Proverbs 29:27

An unjust man is an abomination to the just: and he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked.

Ecclesiastes 3:16

And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there.

Proverbs 17:15

He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord.

Psalms 52:3

Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness.

Ezekiel 34:10

Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall

the shepherds feed themselves any more: for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.

Submission to Government

Romans 13:1-5 **1.** Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. **2.** Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. **3.** For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: **4.** For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. **5.** Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

Miscellaneous Scriptures

Micah 6:8 He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

Luke 6:45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

Psalms 11:5 The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.

Romans 12:9 Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

Isaiah 5:20 Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

Matthew 18:10 Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

Consequences of Abuse for the Victim

Sexual abuse causes numerous areas of damage and negative consequences in a victim's life. It causes damage to their body, their emotions, their thinking, their relationships, and their spirit. Sexual abuse often causes great damage to the victim's relationship with God and their relationship with truth and trust; the damage done often affects many of their human relationships for the remainder of their lives. There is hope for significant healing here on earth if intentional steps are taken to address each different area of damage, but complete healing will likely not come until eternity. Due to the significant consequences of sexual abuse on a victim for years after the abuse, we will address three specific types of consequences an abuse victim suffers.

I. Spiritual Consequences – Understanding the spiritual impact of abuse on the child victim and adult survivor is critical for pastors and leaders who seek to create a spiritually safe and healthy religious environment for congregants. (*Tchividjian 43*). "What does abuse teach about God? The natural conclusion of the abused child is that He is cruel, impotent, or uncaring. He does not hear, or if He hears, He does not

answer. He thinks children are expendable. He does not keep His word. He is not who He says He is. That since He says He is powerful, distance is wise. Let's make sure that we grasp the profound impact of ongoing abuse to a child's understanding of God by considering a specific example: Sarah is five. Her parents drop her off at Sunday school every week. She has learned to sing, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to Him belong. They are weak, but He is strong." Sarah's daddy rapes her several times a week. Sometimes she gets a break because he rapes her eight-year-old sister instead. The song says that Jesus loves her. It says that He is strong. So, she asks Jesus to stop her daddy from hurting her and her sister. Nothing happens. Maybe Jesus isn't so strong after all, she concludes. Or at least not as strong as Daddy. Nothing, not even Jesus, can stop Daddy. The people who wrote the Bible must not have known about her daddy." (*Langberg 85*).

II. Emotional/Psychological Consequences – Have an immediate and long-term impact on a victim's emotional, behavioral, and psychiatric health. Emotional/Psychological consequences may include an increased risk for the following:

- Obesity
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Suicidal ideation/attempts
- Early initiation of sexual activity
- Unintended or teen pregnancies
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases
- Illicit drug use
- Smoking
- Alcohol abuse
- Academic difficulties
- Exhibiting low self-esteem or self-loathing
- Employment issues
- Relationship struggles – withdrawal from family, friends, church, or school.
- Hallucinations
- Memory disturbances
- Sleep disturbances
- Self-injury (e.g., "cutting")
- (*Tchividjian 40*)

III. Medical Consequences – Physical harm that may result from sexual abuse.

- Genital trauma or bleeding
- Urethral irritation or discharge
- Painful urination
- Frequent urinary tract infections
- Pregnancy
- Diagnosis of a sexually transmitted disease (STD)
- Oral trauma
- Children may also present with somatic complaints such as recurrent abdominal pain or frequent headaches resulting from psychological stress. (*Lahoti et al*)

Reporting Abuse

You **do not need proof** of sexual abuse to make a "good faith" report to authorities.

What is a good faith report?

A good faith report includes a report when you have reasonable suspicion of abuse, including any of the following:

- You witnessed a pattern of boundary violations by an adult or youth.
- You intervened in boundary violations, and yet the person continues.

- You received a disclosure of abuse or boundary violation from a child.
- You see physical signs of abuse.

Before you report, take a few moments to jot down some notes in two categories:

1. What is the action, or failure to act, on the part of the parent or caregivers?
2. How are these actions or failures to act affecting and hurting the child?

What do I need to make a report?

Make your report immediately to child protective services and law enforcement and include:

- Name and age of the alleged victim
- Address where the child can be located
- Contact information for the child's parents or caregivers, if known
- Types of abuse or neglect suspected
- Reason for making the report, including specific signs of maltreatment and whether it is part of an ongoing pattern
- Other children in the home, if known
- Name of the alleged perpetrator, if known
- The emergent nature of the report and whether the child is in imminent danger
- Name, phone number, and address of the reporter

When known, the following should also be shared with child protective services:

- Exact time the child disclosed abuse if there was a disclosure
- Whether the perpetrator is aware of the report
- Whether the non-offending parent was notified of the report
- Last occurrence of the offense

(Making a Report)

When the victim delays disclosure: When disclosure of sexual abuse comes from an adult that was abused as a child, it should be determined if the abuser still has access to children. If the answer is "yes," then a CPS report should be made immediately.

Care for the Victim

An integral part of Christ's ministry was freedom from sin and healing for the oppressed. An important part of church ministry is becoming as skilled in ministering to the suffering as pointing out sin.

Ecclesiastes 4:1 So I returned and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter.

I. Acute Care for the Abused

Caring for the abused after the initial disclosure of the abuse will require an openness to their story. The fear of not being believed will be tested when they have the courage to share their story for the first time.

Points to remember when they are sharing their story include:

1. Affirm their choice to speak.
2. Tell them that you believe their story.
3. Listen carefully and respectfully.
4. Allow them to tell the story as they recall it.
5. Avoid expressions of disbelief.
6. “Listen hard, talk little”
(*Becoming a Church that Cares Well for the Abused* 19)
7. Early in the conversation, let them know that others will need to hear the story to keep them safe and obtain proper help.

After the story is completed, know what steps to take next:

1. Safety: What needs to occur before the victim leaves?

- a. The victim’s safety and recovery come first.
- b. What fears do they have?
- c. Connect the victim with an appropriate counselor.
- d. Create a care team
- e. Ask the victim who they would be comfortable with as personal advocate.

2. Know Who to Call

- a. Police, if possible crimes have been committed. (see Reporting Section)
- b. Child Protective Services or equivalent
- c. Church Leadership

3. Mandatory Reporting

- a. All states have mandatory reporting requirements for child abuse.
 - b. Know if you are a mandatory reporter.
 - c. Know what needs to be reported and the legal standard for your state. (See the State Law Section in Appendix.)
 - d. The legal standard is reasonable suspicion or reasonable cause to believe, in most states.
 - e. It is not the role of the reporter to determine if the disclosures are true. Just report them!
 - f. Investigation of the events should only be conducted by qualified individuals. Police detectives and forensic interviewers can be helpful in this process.
- Note:** Investigation of the events by untrained or inexperienced individuals, even when well-intentioned, often re-traumatizes the victim and can hinder legal proceedings.

II. Long-Term Care for the Abused

Romans 15:1

We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

1. Social Support

- a. Prayer – in person and from a distance.
- b. Frequent encouragement.
- c. Assist victim in finding their “voice” in decision making.
- d. Intentional friendships which assure the survivor that they are not alone in the process.

2. Deacon Care

- a. Determine and meet financial needs as the church is able.
- b. Provide or coordinate home maintenance.
- c. Go with victim to court, legal meetings, or counseling, if allowed.
- d. Practical care (Particularly if a parent is the abuser and has been separated from the family)
 - Childcare during meetings.
 - Transporting children to / from school.
 - Respite care.
 - Advise CPS that church families are willing to serve as a foster family, if there is a need.
 - Assist with home maintenance as needed.

3. Spiritual Guidance

- a. When the abuser is a parent, separating the family and the non-abusive spouse does not violate the principle of submission.
- b. Fleeing danger is wise and biblical.

Exodus 3:9-10 9. Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.
10. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

Psalms 140:1 Deliver me, O LORD, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man.

Proverbs 22:24 Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go:

- c. Continue discipleship for a child even after they are removed from a member's home.
- d. Coordinate with the counselor, CPS, social worker, and attorney.

Reassure victims that what they are suffering matters to you, and it matters to God.

III. Care that Harms the Abused

1. Giving the impression that the perpetrator matters more than the victim:
 - Further isolates the abused.
 - Appeases the abuser by validating their belief that there is joint responsibility of the abusive behavior.
2. Rushing reconciliation:
 - Creates a false sense of peace or safety.
 - Hinders the victim's ability to process grief and begin healing at their own pace.
3. Potential Causes of Nonresponse:
 - Abuse is often thought of as "severe sin" rather than "crime."
 - Not understanding the differences and the applicable uses of Matthew 18 and Romans 13.
 - Biblical teachings sloppily applied (this doesn't provide safety).
 - We know the abuser and are reluctant to report potential abuse.
 - Church leaders protecting the reputation of the church over the welfare of the victim.

Privacy kills change and fuels sin. Transparency kills sin and fuels change.

4. Overresponse:

- Hasty reactions and confrontations of the abuser often lead to additional abuse of the victims, in private.
- Victims may be ready to tell their story but not ready to confront their abuser.

Luke 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.

Caring for the abused has its foundation in the gospel with the beginning of Christ's ministry. Therefore, we are called to accept this responsibility as His ambassadors when it comes knocking on our door.

Care for the Perpetrator

I. Professional and Legal Considerations

Most investigation mistakes do not happen because of asking the right questions and arriving at a wrong conclusion. Most investigation mistakes arise from the right questions not being asked. In abuse cases, do not only consider Matthew 18, but also consider Romans 13.

Biblical steps sloppily taken do not provide safety. It is possible to hurt people with the best of intentions, and to apply good theology poorly. When "severe sin" is also "illegal," we need to understand how Romans 13 relates to Matthew 18, in order for Matthew 18 to be applied in a way that honors God's design for both passages.

Let's think about how these two passages relate to one another. First, we ask ourselves the question "Is it like God to assign different roles to different people in complex tasks?" Our answer is "yes." In the care of a congregation, God assigned different roles to deacons (Acts 6:1-7) and pastor-elders (Ephesians 4:11-13) and the one-another ministry among church members (Galatians 6:2).

Now we ask, "Has God assigned different roles to different people in the specific complex task of caring for abuse victims?" Because most forms of abuse are illegal, we again find that the answer is "yes."

- In Romans 13 God assigns the governing authorities to run point on things that are *illegal*.
- In Matthew 18 God assigns the church to run point on things that are *immoral*.

It can feel awkward to differentiate immoral from illegal. The categories do overlap. For our purposes here, suffice it to say that abuse is always immoral and usually illegal.

What do we, as ministry leaders, do when Romans 13 overlaps with Matthew 18? What do we do when there are *civil responsibilities* and *pastoral responsibilities* for the same people and events? Even by asking the question this way, we are much more likely to arrive at a wise and good answer.

Here are five key priorities necessary to answer this question well:

1. *If civil authorities need to be involved, make sure they are notified.*
2. *View civil authorities as complementary teammates who have the same initial objective: the safety of the victim(s).* The jurisdictional authority of a social worker or police officer can help promote safety in a way that a pastor, deacon, or small group leader cannot. We should be grateful for their involvement.

3. *Realize the legal process may delay some aspects of ministry involvement.* The civil authorities are not a competitor in pastoral care efforts.
4. *Seek to be an asset to the civil authorities.* When church leaders fulfill their role in notifying civil authorities, civil authorities are more prone to view church leaders as an asset to their work. Ask the simple, open-ended question, “How can we help?”
5. *Realize that even though the church’s role is broader (redemptive) and longer (not just to the resolution of the legal concern), the input and expertise of the civil authorities can be very helpful to good pastoral care.*

II. Congregational and Pastoral Care of the Abuser

Meeting Resistance

Abuse is committed in secret. When you attempt to minister to someone who has been abusive, it will feel like an invasion of privacy to them. This accounts for much of the resistance you are likely to experience.

Abusers are used to being in control. The demeanor they show when they are in control changes dramatically when their sense of control is threatened.

In the early phases of pastoral care, it doesn’t matter whether the abusive actions were intentional or instinctual. Until an abusive individual acknowledges *what* they’ve done (i.e., actions and effects), it is of little pastoral value to focus on *why* they did it (i.e., intent or motive). *Though abusers may not “intend” to harm, this does not make their actions less destructive or less dangerous.*

How do we know an abuser’s life is changing?

How can we tell if an abuser is changing in meaningful ways? What are the key qualities that should serve as markers to show us change is happening? We will discuss three:

Humility: How do you know when you are talking to a humble person? They ask good questions and listen. When we don’t listen well, we are trapped in our own way of interpreting life. Bad listeners are by definition self-centered. Blame-shifting will stop as humility emerges.

Patience: When a humble person hears the pain their abuse has caused, they do not rush or demand a gracious response. Until an abusive person can say, “I created a destructive environment in our home for years. You are learning to see me as a safe person. It is hard for me to be patient, but it is harder for you to trust. I am willing to accept that and focus on needed changes in my life,” they are not patient.

Accountability: Why does most abuse happen in homes? In a word, privacy. *Privacy kills change and fuels sin. Transparency kills sin and fuels change.* An abusive person desiring to change will be honest with at least three types of people: (1) a pastor or elder, (2) a counselor experienced with abuse, and (3) members of the church discipline restoration team. They respond positively to accountability out of a desire to change their sinful behavior and put safeguards in place to prevent its recurrence.

(Adapted from *Becoming a Church that Cares Well for the Abused* 21-25, 139-142).

Offenders and Repentance

Repentance is a complex and important topic. A youth pastor who abused about one hundred boys before he was caught said, “I considered church people easy to fool . . . they have a trust that comes from being Christians; they seem to want to believe in the good that exists in all people. I think they want to believe in people. And because of that, you can easily convince, with or without convincing words.”

As Christians, we love words like forgiveness, redemption, and transformation. The use of such words does not make a transformed soul. Nor are such things accomplished by a few words, tears, and a little time.

Too often, the Christian community's response to sexual abuse in its midst is naïveté about sin. The Scripture is clear that the human's capacity for deception is incomprehensible to us. It is clear that when we keep sinning, we actually become a slave of that sin, and slaves cannot free themselves. If someone hates the exposure of sin, they will deny, justify, and blame in order to escape responsibility. The Scripture is also clear that sin is the worst thing in the world, not exposure, not getting caught, and not the loss of all things.

An abuser is a slave to sin. The narcotic of self-deception can become so powerful that an abuser not only cannot stop lying; the abuser does not even know when they are lying, and they lose capacity to tell truth from lies, and good from evil. Habituated sin has roots and tentacles and has long done damage to the soul so it is not easily routed out. Exposure, consequences, and treatment are necessary if there is ever to be freedom from the cancer of perpetrating abuse.

A second thing we need to understand is that neither grace nor forgiveness means letting people do what they want, giving them what they feel they must have, or what will immediately alleviate their suffering. Grace is not a lack of restrictions. In fact, sometimes the thing that is most grace-filled is restriction. When our God says, "Do not murder, do not commit adultery" – is He not full of grace to try and prevent us from engaging in those things that will eat us alive? We do so with our own children when we tell them not to play in the street. The restriction is full of love and grace. Abusers need that grace extended to them. They have spent years playing in the street of deception, evil and abuse damaging both their victims and themselves. To say to the abuser, "No, you cannot stay in the pulpit; no, you cannot simply transfer to a different ministry" is not an assault on their dignity; it is not an accusation; it is not even a failure to trust (though not trusting them is wise); it is a keen awareness that their sensibility to sin has been so deadened that they cannot see clearly and are in great danger of further destroying their own soul, not to mention other vulnerable sheep. Of course, we need to protect the vulnerable. Our God calls us to that, but we are also protecting the abuser from their own habituated sin and deadness.

Thirdly, repentance of habituated sin is not immediate. When discernment of good and evil, conscience, or any desire to obey God have all been trampled and killed, such things are not immediately awakened. Repentance is not seen in tears; it is not seen in words; it is not seen in emotion. Repentance is long, slow, consistent change over an extended period of time because it is from the heart outward. Heart change is supernatural work.

Any abuser who insists they are fine and need no oversight is not safe because they still have no awareness of their capacity for self-deception. Any abuser who insists they are trustworthy has not understood the Scriptural teaching about self-deception and how it results in being unable to tell good from evil. Any abuser who thinks saying "I'm sorry" readies them for a return to ministry has no grasp of their heart's capacity for deceit, their abuse of power, their assault on the sheep, and their tragic dishonor of the name of Christ.

Finally, we cannot reject a victim's testimony based on the social or financial status of the accused. Personal financial success, or growth in a Christian organization, do not prove there is godliness in the hidden places. Do not instinctively move to protect a revered leader based on his status. Do not move to protect the reputation of an organization due to the horror of an accusation. Do not mistrust a victim because of their youth. God would have His people instinctively follow Him in ways that are full of truth and holiness and give honor to His name, which means being willing to follow the trail and discover what is true before the eyes of God, not before the eyes of man. (Adapted from *Suffering and the Heart of God* by Diane Langberg, pages 224-226).

2 Timothy 2:24-26

24. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, 25. In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; 26. And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

II Corinthians 10:3-6

3. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: 4. (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) 5. Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; 6. And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

The only solution that will work: The exposure of abuse is an invitation – a sweet invitation – to the abuser to step into the light. When deception has been so practiced in a life, exposure will first result in denial and more lies. Someone who has been abusing has lost the capacity to tell the truth to him/herself. Healing is only possible when the light shines relentlessly in the darkness until the offender falls down before our crucified God knowing that it is against that wounded Savior that he/she has sinned. That abuser demands *nothing* from any human, no position, no restoration – *including forgiveness* – acknowledging their inability to live in truth and knowing better than any they are not to be trusted and the choices behind their actions are theirs and theirs alone. As Jesus said, “What comes out of a person comes from that person and that person alone.” (Mark 7:20-23).

(Adapted from *Becoming a Church that Cares Well for the Abused* 21-25, 139-142).

General Recommendations

The Sexual Abuse Awareness Task Force recommends that:

- all members of the Dunkard Brethren Church understand the distinction between sexual abuse and sexual assault – both vile behaviors. Sexual abuse is generally criminal behavior that involves an adult and an underage individual, while sexual assault occurs between adults. While sexual assault and sexual abuse are both criminal and reprehensible behaviors, this manual deals with sexual abuse.
- all members of Dunkard Brethren Churches see themselves as protectors of the vulnerable and abused and take immediate action to report any suspected abuse to local authorities and local church officials.
- we all grasp the horror of sexual abuse and the pathology of its long-term consequences. In many cases, a victim is not able to speak freely about their deep pain until years after the crime. Some may say, “It happened years ago. Why bring it up now?” Others may make well-intentioned statements like, “He apologized already,” “Just forgive,” “Quit talking about it,” “Let it go,” or “It is all in the past.” These statements alone only serve to heap insult to injury upon the victims. Determine to be understanding and advocate for the victim without any equivocation, and you will help healing begin. Show genuine compassion by urging perpetrators to demonstrate genuine sorrow and repentance, and you enable forgiveness to take place. Seek justice for the abused, and healing will continue to take place. Perpetrators may offer a trite apology to their victim and not give their crime and sin much further thought. The child, the victim, may be devastated for life. A casual approach to abuse will serve to enable the perpetrators, hinder healing, and lead to cover-up and suppression of the truth, all of which are evil actions.

- any church member criminally charged with sexual abuse be placed on probation by the church (considered to be a member **not** in good standing) pending the outcome of the legal process. During the investigation, the accused will also be removed from all church responsibilities and will not be allowed to commune. Should the accusations be confirmed to be correct, the accused will officially be removed from membership.
- if membership is later reinstated, any person who was previously convicted of sexual abuse of a minor will be prohibited from all participation in children's ministry and will not be eligible to hold any official position (deacon, minister, or elder). Since a hallmark of true repentance is being willing to let go of self-preservation, we recommend that an Offender Covenant be established between the Church and the offender. (See guidelines and Offender Covenant on pages 27-29. Pages 28-29 may be copied for local use).
- Church officials and members of a congregation will refrain from testifying on behalf of the accused except when subpoenaed or after receiving written consent from the presiding elder and the majority of the official body. Additionally, letters of recommendation written by church officials or members on behalf of the accused to be presented at trial or prior to sentencing will also need written approval from the presiding elder and the majority of the official body.
- all adult members review the available content from www.churchcares.com to be better equipped for recognizing sexual abuse and dealing with it appropriately.
- the congregation where the perpetrator held membership cover the cost of counseling for the victim(s) as well as all ancillary costs. This counseling is to be provided by a licensed clinical counselor. Dealing with sexual trauma falls outside the scope of lay counselors.
- local law authorities be given adequate trust to investigate and handle charges onsite and work with the appropriate congregational or district officials in dealing with the charges while allowing the legal system to work. Investigation of such cases often takes extensive amounts of time, so grace must be given to the people directly involved in determining the truth. Abuse issues cannot be investigated and tried in absentia by those with limited knowledge or partial truth.

General Guidelines

Preventing Child Sexual Abuse in the Church

Reduce risks by improving selection, supervision, and education.

No church is immune to the problem of child sexual abuse, regardless of size, location, or denomination. Child sexual predators exist, and they're always looking for opportunities to interact with children. They may volunteer to work with children in your Sunday school or youth program. How are you going to manage this risk?

Strengthen these areas within your ministry:

Use the Six-Month Rule

Don't give any volunteer worker the opportunity to be involved in children's work or youth work until he or she has been associated with your church for at least six months.

Screen All Workers

Investigate prior church membership and volunteer work. Adhere to all legal requirements in your state regarding background checks.

Use the Two-Adult Rule

On or off premises, always have at least two, unrelated adults supervising each room, vehicle, or other enclosed space – even if only one child needs care. Isolation and privacy create vulnerability.

Proactive Instruction for Children

Encourage parents to educate their children regarding sexual abuse and to disclose abuse immediately to a safe adult (see resources in Educational Resources section).

Other Preventive Measures

- Increase supervisors for large groups.
- Prohibit situations in which one adult is alone with children in changing areas or restrooms.
- Be sure that all classrooms have windows. When permitted by fire code (or otherwise feasible), all classroom doors should have windows.
- Don't permit participation in off-premises events, especially when they involve overnight stays, unless an adequate number of adult workers will be present.

(Preventing Child Sexual Abuse in the Church).

Child Safety Committee: A Child Safety Committee should be appointed for each congregation to administrate this document as a child safety policy, and committee members should serve rotating three year terms. The committee would report to the church leadership. This committee should be proactive in learning how the applicable law enforcement community deals with sexual offenses. Building relationships with detectives, social workers, and treatment program staff members is advised. These contacts can be valuable in times of crisis.

Child Safety Monitors: One or more Child Safety Monitors should be appointed by the Child Safety Committee for one year terms. The monitors will answer to the Committee and will help monitor child safety during all organization functions. However, Monitors do not assume the responsibility of the parents.

No Retaliation and No Disparagement: Retaliation and disparagement against victims or reporters is contrary to Christian values. No one reporting concerns of sexual abuse should suffer harassment, retaliation, or disparagement as a result of reporting. This document is intended to encourage those associated with the organization to raise concerns and make appropriate reports to address and prevent abuse. Anyone associated with the organization who retaliates against a good faith reporter should be subject to discipline and/or excommunication.

Annual Checklist: The checklist below describes the tasks of the Child Safety Committee. Each of these tasks should be completed annually:

- _____ Review policies
- _____ Evaluate whether church practice is consistent with policy
- _____ Do a facility safety walk-through and document needed changes
- _____ Report to church leadership after review of policies, practices and walk-through
- _____ Ensure the congregation knows there is a child safety policy, and that they all have access to it
- _____ File the completed task Checklist

Summary Statement

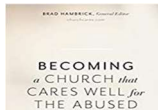
Our God demonstrates again and again in His Word that His kingdom is the kingdom of the heart, not the kingdom of institutional structure. He makes utterly clear that He does not desire form over substance. When Israel was following the Temple rituals while worshiping other gods – when they followed form, and the substance was rotten – God destroyed them. God hates sin wherever He finds it and has gone to death to destroy it. Do we really think He wants us to avoid the death of an organization or institution by hiding sin, by failing to drag it into the light? He would rather see every human organization and institution fall than see such things preserved while full of sin.

He desires our primary allegiance to be love and obedience to Him no matter the cost. He does not want primary allegiance to ministry or service or to institution, system, or organization. He does not want our goal to be knowledge, growth, money, reputation, success, or tradition. When we pursue Him above all else, the body of Christ will be the safest place on earth for the most vulnerable sheep.

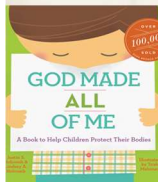
Our Head puts before us a choice: the preservation of our systems, our families, churches, organizations, and cultures-or love and obedience to Jesus Christ no matter the cost. Ask yourself, will I be complicit with darkness to preserve my world? Will I say I do so for the sake of the mission, the church, and God's work? Or will I ever and always be faithful to the name and character of the Head I follow, though the earth shakes and the mountains fall into the sea? May we, who are already in positions of power and influence, lead the way by falling on our faces, imploring God to make us like Himself no matter the cost to our positions, our programs, our organizations, our ministries, or our traditions. (Adapted from Langberg 228-229).

Educational Resources

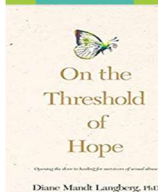
Books:



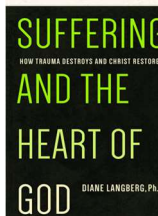
Becoming a Church that Cares Well for the Abused. Editor: Brad Hambrick
ASIN: B07SKM7PGN. Also available for free download at: <https://churchcares.com/>



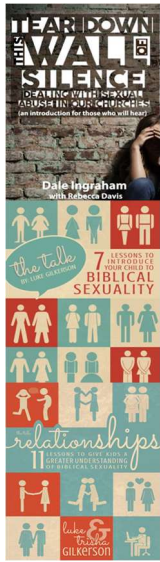
God Made All of Me: A Book to Help Children Protect Their Bodies. Author: Lindsey & Justin Holcomb. ISBN-10: 1942572301



On the Threshold of Hope: Opening the Door to Healing for Survivors of Sexual Abuse. Author: Diane Langberg. ISBN-10: 0842343628



Suffering and the Heart of God: How Trauma Destroys and Christ Restores. Author: Diane Langberg. ISBN-10: 1942572026



Tear Down This Wall of Silence: Dealing with Sexual Abuse in Our Churches (an introduction for those who will hear). Author: Dale Ingraham. ISBN-10: 0998198110

The Talk: 7 Lessons to Introduce Your Child to Biblical Sexuality. Author: Luke Gilkerson. ISBN-10: 1500659444

Relationship: 11 Lessons to Give Kids a Greater Understanding of Biblical Sexuality. Author: Luke and Trisha Gilkerson. ISBN-10: 1537393294

Links:

Church Cares: Resources for the pastoral care of abuse victims – www.churchcares.com/

Sexual Abuse in Marriage: 3-Part Article – <https://www.ccef.org/sexual-abuse-in-marriage/>

Anabaptist Awareness Symposium: <https://www.anabaptistawareness.org/product/2021-symposium-audio-workbook-set/>

Works Cited

“Evaluating the Child for Sexual Abuse.” *American Family Physician*, 2001, pp. 886–892, www.aafp.org.

Hambrick, Brad, et al. *Becoming a Church That Cares Well for the Abused*. B&H Books, 2019.

Langberg, Diane. *Suffering and the Heart of God: How Trauma Destroys and Christ Restores*. First, New Growth Press, 2015.

Langberg, Diane Mandt. *On the Threshold of Hope: Opening the Door to Healing for Survivors of Sexual Abuse (AACC Counseling Library)*. Tyndale Refresh, 1999.

“Making a Report.” *Darkness to Light*, www.d2l.org. Accessed 5 Aug. 2022.

“Preventing Child Sexual Abuse in the Church.” *Brotherhood Mutual*, www.brotherhoodmutual.com. Accessed 5 Aug. 2022.

Sanchez, David. “The Biblical Principles Behind Reporting Sex Abuse.” *The Biblical Principles Behind Reporting Sex Abuse*, 9 Sept. 2021, www.texasbaptists.org.

Tchividjian, Basyle, and Shira Berkovits. *The Child Safeguarding Policy for Churches and Ministries*. First, New Growth Press, 2017.

Establishing Safety Parameters with Sex Offenders

1. Establish a Covenant with the Offender.

Ask the person to commit to a covenant designed to prevent opportunities for further offense.

The covenant should:

- State specific types of participation permitted (e.g., attending church services is fine, but contact with children on church property or at church-sponsored activities is forbidden).
- Permit church leaders to tell others in the congregation about the offender's conviction.
- Permit church leaders to contact probation officers and others assigned to work with the offender.
- Outline other stipulations, such as ongoing counseling.
- State consequences: If the offender violates any of the covenant's provisions, he or she will no longer be allowed to attend your church or access church property.

2. Assign Accountability Partners.

- Appoint at least one prescreened individual to meet regularly with the offender, to hold him/her accountable, and to ensure they are getting the help they need. Implementing good electronic controls and discipline are also a key element of accountability. (Several people can share this responsibility, provided the offender is constantly supervised).
- Require that the offender and the accountability partner stay within sight of each other during church activities.
- Effective, ongoing accountability is necessary for sex offenders, regardless of whether they were formally charged and prosecuted.

3. Communicate with church members.

- Communicate transparently with church members, so they know that a person has a history of sex offenses.
- Tell the church leadership and teachers that the person has agreed to the conditions of a covenant.

4. Obtain criminal record information.

- Obtain a record of the sex offender's prior criminal convictions by conducting a national criminal records check. The church must be fully informed regarding the sex offender's criminal background.
- If the sex offender is on probation, identify his or her probation officer and determine the conditions that have been imposed.

Offender Covenant

I recognize the concerns and responsibilities of the church to ensure a safe environment for its members, especially minors, and wish to comply with the following conditions that would allow my participation in church activities:

1. I will not associate with or be in proximity to any minors attending or participating in any church/school activity.
2. I will not sit next to a child except for those involving my own child or children, and if a child sits next to me, I will move to a different seat. I will attempt to sit on the aisle seat with my Accountability Partner.
3. I will not linger in areas where children are being taught and will not go to any area where children's or youth ministries are being conducted or to any other area that the church prohibits me from entering.
4. I will not place myself into, or accept, any position of leadership, authority, or activity that may affect or influence children.
5. I will under no circumstances take a child home with me or transport him or her anywhere at any time, except for those involving my own child or children, whether by walking, driving, or any other means.
6. I will not develop any special relationships with minor children or their parents.
7. I will not go to a church member's home if they have children present without full knowledge and prior written consent of the parents, ministers, or presiding elder.
8. I will not hold any church office or speak or participate in any church function in any leadership role or teaching capacity, including but not limited to taking part in any event or activity on the platform.
9. I agree to maintain an accountability network with individuals as defined by the church and make sure my whereabouts at church or church activities are always known to those individuals and to church leadership as required.
10. I authorize the church to obtain information regarding myself from my parole officer, case worker, governmental agencies, or other persons who might have information relative to my criminal records.
11. I agree to comply with any court-mandated or parole restrictions, conditions, treatments, and/or requirements and recognize that these take precedence over any less restrictive parts of this agreement. Any conflict between this agreement and court-mandated restrictions will be resolved in favor of the court-mandated restrictions.
12. I understand and agree that the church, in fulfilling its responsibilities in providing a safe environment for its members and guests, will disclose an account of my past behavior and criminal history to parents, church leaders, members, volunteers, and all other persons who may need to have such information to meet their parental or supervisory responsibilities and interact safely within the church.
13. I consent to the disclosure of any of my personal information including but limited to anything relating to or arising out of any of my activities at the church or during the term of this agreement, to any person as the church may deem necessary, in their sole discretion, for the purposes of implementing this agreement or protecting any person.

14. For the purposes of this document, my signature below constitutes a release of information. I grant this permission to enable the church to communicate with my probation officer, case worker, counselor, or therapist, and to release any personal information about me to any third party, upon that party's written request and upon notice (written or oral) to me of said release.

15. This agreement shall remain valid until mutually terminated by a writing signed by the church and myself. The obligations stated herein shall survive termination, for so long as the church deems it necessary, in its sole discretion, for the purposes of protecting any person. Should I wish to transfer my attendance, participation, or membership to another congregation, a copy of this document will be sent to them.

16. I affirm that I have fully disclosed to the church leadership all aspects of my personal history, including all details related to my criminal convictions, the sentences related thereto, and treatments and counseling received.

17. I agree that if it is discovered that I have not fully disclosed such details, the church may terminate any further participation in any church activities. Further, I have read and understand the above conditions and agree to abide by them.

18. If at any point I break one of the above conditions or in any way breach the terms of this agreement, I recognize that I will be visited by a deacon or the presiding elder of the church to obtain a detailed understanding of what occurred.

19. At the conclusion of the visit with deacon or the presiding elder, it may be decided that I will not be allowed to attend worship services or church activities.

20. I understand if a breach of this agreement rises to the level of a reasonable suspicion that a reportable event has occurred, I will be reported to the appropriate governmental, police, and/or parole authorities, as required by law.

Dated this _____ day of _____, 20____.

Participant Signature: _____

Participant Printed Name: _____

Presiding Elder Signature: _____

Presiding Elder Printed Name: _____

Accountability Partner Signature: _____

Accountability Partner Printed Name: _____

Appendix

Current State Laws

Child abuse and neglect are governed by both federal and state laws. Each state has its own definition of what constitutes child abuse and neglect in both the criminal and civil context. State law also dictates when suspicions of abuse or neglect of a child must be reported.

At the federal level, the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (known as CAPTA) defines abuse and neglect as “any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caregiver that results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation, or an act or failure to act that presents an imminent risk of serious harm.”

Child abuse is typically related to nonaccidental injury to a child (such as kicking, burning, biting, striking, or other actions that cause physical injury). All states include sexual abuse or exploitation in definitions of child abuse, and a majority of states include emotional abuse or mental injury as a form of child abuse.

Child neglect is typically related to a parent or other responsible person’s obligation to provide necessary food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision.

Legal standards for reporting child abuse or neglect vary from state to state. But federal law (CAPTA) requires every state to require certain individuals to report known or suspected instances of child abuse or neglect. These individuals are referred to as *mandatory reporters*. Typically, mandatory reporters have a legal obligation to make a report if they suspect or have reason to believe that a child has been abused or neglected. Whether a person reasonably suspects child abuse or neglect can be a difficult conclusion to make, so it is important to know the legal standard of the relevant state.

Resource for State Laws:

The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services provides a [Child Welfare Information Gateway](#) that provides valuable information on states statutes related to child abuse and neglect, child welfare, and adoption. Search results can be narrowed by state and area of law (e.g., mandatory reporters of child abuse, definitions of child abuse and neglect, definitions of domestic violence, making and screening reports of child abuse and neglect, etc.). This resource should be consulted when determining whether a report of child abuse or neglect must be made to law enforcement or child welfare state actors.

Each state has its own set of statutes and regulations that defines what constitutes child abuse or neglect, when suspicions of abuse must be reported (and by whom), penalties for failing to report suspicions of abuse or neglect that meet the required standard, and various exceptions to the normal state rules.

Upon receipt of an allegation of abuse or neglect, church leadership must be vigilant to determine what legal obligations they may have in responding to reports of abuse or neglect of a child. The Child Welfare Information Gateway is a valuable resource for helping church leadership make informed decisions. *It is not, however, a substitute for obtaining legal advice about a particular situation.*

To review legal information about child abuse and neglect, child welfare, and adoption, please visit the [Child Welfare Information Gateway](#). **Follow the instructions to select the relevant state and issue area, and then click “Go” to run the state statutes search.**

[See attached Addendum: **Abuse Response Protocol**]

Abuse Response Protocol

Upon receiving a report of abuse, use the following step-by-step guide and document how you evaluated each step using the attached form. **If the victim is in immediate danger or requires immediate medical attention, call 9-1-1 first.**

1. Listen

- a. Assume the report is credible unless and until there is credible evidence to the contrary. When making an initial assessment, assume facts are accurately described by the victim.
- b. Discover enough details to ensure you have enough contextual understanding to make wise decisions. Details will ideally include the following when known:
 - i. Name, age, address, contact information of victim(s) (if known).
 - ii. Name of abuser (if known).
 - iii. Description of abuse, fear, or concern (include specific examples).
 - iv. Description of other instances or patterns of abusive behavior.
 - v. Date(s), time(s), and location(s) of abuse.
 - vi. Description of related or affected people and surroundings.
- c. Do not promise confidentiality. You may be required to report the information to law enforcement.
- d. Listen with love and care, do not victimize the victim with interrogation.

2. Protect

- a. Evaluate whether reporting to law enforcement is required (review state law) or advisable based on the circumstances.
 - i. If the victim needs physical protection, call local law enforcement.
 - ii. If the victim is a child, or is the victim of sexual abuse, call law enforcement or the appropriate child protection agency.
- b. Church Leadership: Provide for immediate needs: Does the victim have a need for medical care, food, shelter (immediate or long-term), clothing, or friendship? If so, offer to help make arrangements to meet these needs.
- c. Church Leadership: Remove church leaders or childcare workers who are accused of sexual abuse from their positions until an independent investigation is completed.
- d. Church Leadership: Protect the victim from slander. Disparagement of a victim at any point, especially during investigation, should be immediately stopped.

3. Report

- a. If reporting to law enforcement is required or advisable, make the report.
- b. Since the victim is a minor, the parent(s) should be notified, only if the parent is not the alleged abuser.
- c. Notify church leadership.
- d. Notify Standing Committee.

4. Plan

- a. The local church officials will appoint a committee to investigate the sexual abuse. This investigation shall not interfere or replace the local authorities' investigation. Individuals with a history of sexual abuse, or of failing to properly handle reports of sexual abuse, are not permitted to serve on such committees. The local committee will forward a report of their investigation to Standing Committee.
- b. Create a protection plan with the victim when appropriate. Ensure the victim receives counseling and care needed.
- c. Maintain a victim-focused approach during and after the investigation.
- d. Provide effective accountability for the perpetrator.

5. Document

- a. Use an Abuse Incident Report Form.
- b. Save notes, emails, texts, letters, or other types of communication.
- c. Protect the confidentiality of the victim, while also taking proper investigative, corrective, and accountability steps.

ABUSE INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Reporter Name: _____

Reporter Contact Phone/Email: _____

Date of Incident: _____ Incident Time: _____ AM / PM

Incident Location: _____

Victim(s): _____

Report (describe what you observed): _____

Additional Details (describe what you heard from others – attach witness statements as necessary):

Actions Taken (describe what response(s) have been taken to date): _____

Actions Requested (describe what responses you or other victim(s) are requesting): _____

Date Submitted: _____

CHURCH INCIDENT RESPONSE FORM

Specific Action(s) Taken: _____

_____ Date: _____

Law Enforcement Notified? (who/when?): _____

_____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Church Leadership Notified? (who/when?): _____

_____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Response Plan (include specific future actions and deadlines): _____

Standing Committee Officers Notified - Date: _____

Investigation Committee Members:

Signature: _____ Print: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Print: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Print: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Print: _____ Date: _____