

A vibrant sunset scene with silhouettes of children playing. One child is swinging on a swing set under a large tree, while others are playing with a ball on the grass. The background features a bright sun with radiating rays and colorful bokeh effects.

**CHILD
PROTECTION
POLICY**

Keeping Children Safe in Our Church

Oregon Conference Risk Management Department

IT'S ALL ABOUT JESUS!

 KNOWING  LOVING  SERVING  SHARING

As a volunteer you have the privilege of working with children, one of God's most precious gifts. Beyond protecting children from abuse, we also desire to empower volunteers to help kids grow in their experience and understanding of Jesus and His saving grace. So we encourage you to walk with God daily, letting His love fill you up and spill over to the kids you serve.

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Oregon Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

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CHILD PROTECTION POLICY (CPP) AND GUIDELINES

MISSION

Our mission is to provide a safe, spiritual, and abuse-free environment for every child who attends programs and activities of the Oregon Conference Seventh-day Adventist Church.

PURPOSE

It is our purpose to prevent any form of child abuse, physical, emotional, or sexual and to protect employees and volunteers from false allegations. Our Organization will work in partnership together with children and parents to promote the welfare, health, and development of children. Child protection is everyone's responsibility.

All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, socio-economic status, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from all forms of harm and abuse.

PRINCIPLE

Zero tolerance of child abuse: Child abuse is not tolerated by the Oregon Conference of Seventh-day Adventist. Our organization will not knowingly engage, directly or indirectly, anyone who poses an unacceptable risk to children.

Sharing responsibility for child protection: To effectively manage risks to children, the Oregon Conference requires the active support and cooperation of ministers, all church members, leaders, and volunteers implementing the safety procedures in any and all activities.

DEFINITION

Child abuse is “any treatment of a child that threatens his/her safety or leaves in his/her life physical or emotional scars.” It constitutes any inappropriate physical contact, sexual contact or communication by any adult through use of their authority over a child. Even if a child out of ignorance, innocence or fear does not resist, it is still abuse. Abuse can also occur between two children.

Physical abuse is any injury to a child which has been caused by other than accidental means, including any injury which appears to be at variance with the explanation of the injury.

Emotional abuse is any verbal communication that harms a child, such as harsh criticism, degrading, belittling, threats, disparaging name-calling, unnecessary shouting, demeaning terminology, unrealistic demands for perfection, violent or obscene language, etc.

Sexual abuse violates a child’s sexual privacy whether by fondling, visually or by verbal remarks. It includes fondling of any intimate parts of the child’s body, oral, genital and/or anal penetration by any foreign object, oral, genital or anal sexual intercourse, telling a child to masturbate, exhibiting or showing any genital parts to a child, allowing a child to witness or watch any forms of sexual activity, showing any pornographic materials, etc.

PROCEDURES – Tips to Keep Kids Safe

The local church should take reasonable steps to safeguard children engaged in church-sponsored activities by choosing individuals with high spiritual and moral backgrounds as leaders and participants in programs for children. **Jesus placed a high value on the protection of children (Matthew 18:1-6)**; therefore, child protection is an essential element in all church-sponsored children's activities. Volunteers will be expected to conduct themselves at all times in accordance with biblical principles.

In addition to the Code of Conduct and Guidelines for Volunteers, all volunteers are expected to adhere to the following local church rules:

- S** Screen volunteers.
- A** Appropriate verbal communication and physical behavior.
- F** Follow the two-adult rule.
- E** Engage, support, and supervise youth interactions.

- K** Kids' privacy is to be respected.
- I** Implement travel safety.
- D** Discipline kids appropriately.
- S** Supervise minors at all times.

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1. **All employees and volunteers who regularly work with children must complete** (every three years) a Volunteer Background Check form. Individuals who are unwilling to support the volunteer screening guidelines and practices should not be allowed to serve. No changes are allowed on the form without the consent of legal counsel.
 2. **New members who desire to work with children and youth** must have been an active member of the local church for a minimum of six (6) months, or have been known by the organization for a minimum of six (6) months before beginning to work with children.
 3. **Provide appropriate adult supervision at all times.** Never leave a child or group of children for whom you are responsible unattended.
 4. **Always have at least one other adult**, eighteen (18) years of age or older, (the “two-person rule”) to help with the supervision of children. If you find yourself in a situation where you are the only adult present, UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES allow yourself to be alone with one child. This protects the child as well as protecting the adult from possible allegations.
 - **If an emergency situation arises** where it is necessary to be alone with a child, the child’s parent should be contacted. If contact cannot be made with parent, another responsible adult should be informed immediately, by telephone if necessary.
 5. **Volunteers should not travel alone with a child/young person.**
 - If only one adult is available, there should be a minimum of two children present for the entire journey.
 - If an emergency situation arises where it is necessary to travel alone with a child, the child’s parent or guardian should be informed as soon as possible.
 6. **Individuals convicted of committing physical or sexual abuse** may not work or serve as volunteers or staff in any church sponsored activity or program for children.
 7. **Any behavior, which seems abusive or inappropriate**, shall be reported to the pastor or elder immediately.

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8. **Parents are responsible for supervising their children before and after** church sponsored children's programs; and making sure that their children are picked up at the appointed dismissal time. Every reasonable effort will be made to release children to their parent or designee.
 9. **No child shall be released to an older child** or permitted to go to the restroom accompanied by an older child unless the child is a sibling. Provide extra care when taking small children to the restroom. Take another adult along, or leave the door open.
 10. **Care should be taken that no child/young person is on church property** without two adults being present.
 11. **A disproportionate amount of time** should not be spent with any particular child or group of children.
 12. **Under no circumstances may volunteers give alcohol, tobacco or drugs** to children or young people.
 13. **Alcohol, tobacco or drugs must not be used by any individual on church premises** or during a sponsored activity.
 14. **Only age-appropriate language, material on media products** (such as camera phones, internet, video) and activities should be used when working with children and young people (sexually explicit or pornographic material is never acceptable).
 15. **Always ask a child's permission before physically touching him/her anywhere**, even when responding to an injury or problem. This is especially true for any areas that would normally be covered by a T-shirt and/or shorts. (If an injury is within this area, make sure another adult works with you as care is provided.)
 16. **Volunteers must not engage in inappropriate physical contact of any kind** – including rough physical play, physical reprimand, and horseplay.

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- 17. Affirm children with appropriate touching** by keeping hugs brief and “shoulder-to-shoulder” or “side-to-side.” Always keep hands at (not below) the shoulder level. For small children who like to sit on laps, encourage them to sit next to you.
- 18. Any discipline administered shall occur within the visual contact of another adult.** Any form of physical punishment of children is not permissible under any circumstances.
- 19. Children’s need for privacy should be respected at all times.**
- *Particular care regarding privacy must be taken when young people are in locations such as changing areas, swimming pools, showers and restrooms.*
- 20. Photographs of children or young people** must never be taken while they are in changing areas (for example, in a locker room or bathing facility).
- 21. Tasks of a personal nature** (for example, helping with toileting, washing or changing clothing) should not be carried out for children or young people. If they are unable to undertake these tasks themselves, a parent should be called to help their child.
- 22. Be aware of the signs and symptoms of child abuse.** You should be knowledgeable of the legal requirements for reporting suspected cases of abuse.
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/can/reporting/>
- 23. Cooperate with church leadership** in conducting children and youth ministries by being a volunteer who is loving, kind, firm, and professional. Working with children and youth is not only a privilege; it is also a serious responsibility that must be approached with utmost care.
- 24. Participate in orientation and training programs conducted by the church.**
- 25. Participate in conference training for child protection once every three years.**

TRIPS

- **All trips, meetings, and overnight activities conducted off the church premises** must be pre-approved by the church board.
- **All minor attendees must have a signed parental permission slip** as well as an emergency medical treatment release form should be obtained for each outing.
- **All trips, including day trips and overnight stays**, need careful advance planning, including adequate provision for safety in regard to transport, facilities, activities and emergencies.
- **Adequate liability insurance** through the Oregon Conference of Seventh-day Adventists should be in place prior to any trip.
- **The use of 15 passenger vans are not approved** for use in church and or school sponsored events by Adventist Risk Management Insurance.
<http://adventistrisk.org/prevention-resources/solutions-newsletter/january-2017/15-passenger-vans-what-is-the-danger#.WHuzmCavWBE.email>
- **Appropriate auto insurance** should be in place prior to any trip.
- **A copy of the trip itinerary and contact telephone numbers for leaders** should be made available to parents and guardians.
- **There must be adequate, gender-appropriate, supervision for boys and girls.**
- **Arrangements and procedures must be put in place** to ensure that rules are followed and appropriate boundaries are maintained.
- **The provision of appropriate and adequate sleeping arrangements** should be ensured in advance of the trip.
- **Sleeping areas for boys and girls should be separate and supervised** by two adults of the same gender as the group being supervised. **At no time should an adult be alone with a child/young person, in a confined space (two-person rule).**

The above Policies and Guidelines have been adapted from the North American Division working policy and may be different in some areas. The Oregon Conference has implemented certain policies and guidelines with the intent of enhancing the safety and welfare of our children.

DEALING WITH A CONVICTED SEX OFFENDER

What should church leaders do when they learn that a convicted sex offender is attending church?

This is a problem that poses a significant “dilemma” to a church pastor who wishes to make his church safe for members, particularly children, and also wishes to deal with the offender in a “redemptive” manner and afford him (or her) the opportunity to worship. Even so, it is important for the pastor to know that sex offenders are often individuals who cannot be cured, who are driven to repeat their conduct, and many times sincerely hold a persuasive conviction that they will not repeat their offense.

If a person abuses a child on church premises or at church functions and its leaders know or should have known the person is a sex offender, the church will have a difficult case to defend. The church will need to demonstrate that it exercised a high degree of care and vigilance in the supervision of the individual. Remember, individuals who are known to have committed physical or sexual abuse may NOT work or serve as a volunteer or staff in our churches or schools. The following guidelines have been developed for implementation:

1. The church pastor should first ask the individual to cease attending church until they can work through the required protocols for an offender to attend church. The person does not have to be cut off entirely. The pastor or other church leadership can meet with such a person off the church premises to provide spiritual support.
2. The pastor must contact the Oregon Conference Risk Management department for further instructions. A convicted sex-offender should at no time attend one of our churches without first going through the **participation agreement process**.
3. The church leaders can permit an offender to attend church and participate in its activities once they have gone through the participation agreement process.
4. Any church knowing a sex offender is transferring to or attending another church will notify the leadership of the previous history. They will also notify the Oregon Conference Risk Management Director of the change in attendance.

If the offender is a minor, the agreement has to be signed by his or her parents.

The church's legal counsel should review the agreement.

Dealing with child sex offenders who attend church services and other functions should be done aggressively and with the Risk Management department's assistance. In most cases the offender has a criminal record. Be sure to determine, and share with the Risk Management department, whether there are any paroles or probation conditions to his/her release. Consider contacting the parole or probation officer or prosecuting attorney who pursued the criminal action for advice. The benefit of any doubt should be in favor of the church members.

DEALING WITH INDIVIDUALS WHERE ALLEGATIONS HAVE BEEN MADE

If it is alleged that an individual has shown inappropriate conduct toward children, the following guidelines have been developed for implementation:

- 1. Don't try to handle the situation yourself** or talk to the alleged offender before you call DHS (Child Protective Services) or law enforcement.
- 2. Report to your church pastor or first elder. *The pastor or first elder is to notify the conference Risk Management director of the situation.***
- 3. Don't allow any further contact between the child and alleged offender** unless Child Protective Services tells you it is alright.
- 4. Remove the individual from all church responsibilities until evaluated.** The church should respect the rights of all parties involved in the alleged incident and treat all matters concerning the situation discreetly, confidentially, and in accordance with local Child Protective Services.
- 5. Provide appropriate supervision for the individual when they attend any church events.**

If alleged offender is causing custodial interference (interfering with parental control of the child), seek assistance from law enforcement.

SEXUAL ABUSE FACTS

- Research suggests that one in 20 men may have sexually molested children, and between five and 20% of the individuals who offend children are females. Also, 40% of children who are abused are abused by older children or teens. There is NO easy way to identify an offender at a glance. Therefore, the only way your children can be kept safe is for you to know where your child is and what he/she is doing at **all times!**
- Offenders who primarily target girls abuse an average of 12 girls before being apprehended.
- Offenders who primarily target boys abuse an average of 30 boys before being apprehended.
- One out of every three to five girls and one out of every six to eight boys are molested prior to their 18th birthday.
- Sex offenders commit an average of 120 separate crimes before they are caught.
- There are offenders living in all of our neighborhoods and communities.
- Being sexually abused is not the primary cause of pedophilia, if it were, we would have more female offenders than male.
- 75% of offenders started offending prior to age 18. The average age of first offense is 14.

How Sex Abuse is Most Likely to Occur

- 75% of cases involve parents, step-parents, boyfriends, in-laws, grandparents, uncles, friends of the family, or neighbors.
- 25% involve people who work in youth service organizations, such as sports, youth clubs, camps, churches, and daycare programs.
- 5% of cases involve strangers.

The Internet

- The Internet offers offenders another avenue to contact and approach children.
- The Internet is causing some people to cross the line for the first time in their lives.
- Cyber sex becomes addictive to some people.
- The Internet is exposing children to more, and worse deviant forms of sexuality.
- Seventy percent of children, eight to eighteen years of age, are accidentally exposed to pornography via the Internet.
- One in five children who use the Internet are approached online by an adult seeking sex.

Sexual Behavior Clues

- Adults who seem pre-occupied with the sexual development of children, or make sexualized comments to or about children.
- Adults who act “flirty” around children or teens.
- Adults who act jealous of children’s or teens’ relationships with each other.
- Adults who “accidentally” touch private parts.

“Boundary Violation” Clues:

- Adults who engage in frequent physical contact with children (wrestling, tickling, horseplay, hugging or lap-sitting).
- Adults who don't allow children privacy, “walk in on them” while they are dressing or using the bathroom.
- Adults who act like children or allow children to do questionable or inappropriate things.
- Adults who “override” the parents or whom children like for reasons parents don't understand.

Child/Teen–Focused Lifestyle Classes

- Adults who work with children but also spend their free time doing “special” things with children.
- Adults who do not have children but seem to know a lot about the current fads or music that is popular with children or teens.
- Any behavior, which seems abusive or inappropriate, shall be reported to the pastor or elder immediately.

“Too Good to Be True” Clues:

- Adults who buy children special gifts **for no reason**.
- Adults who want to take children on outings that involve being **alone** with them.
- Adults who seem able to infiltrate family/social functions or are always available to baby-sit.

And Finally:

- Remember, probably 90% or more of the people you know are really good folks!
- Adults, not children, are responsible for the safety and welfare of children.
- If a child says he/she has been abused, it’s likely true, believe them.

Information was collected from Cory Jewell Jensen – former co-director,
Center for Behavioral Intervention/Beaverton, Oregon 97005 – www.guardchild.com/statistics/
<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/research-data-technology/statistics-research/child-maltreatment>

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT REPORTING ABUSE & NEGLECT (DHS)

Reporting is considered a request for an assessment of a suspected incident of abuse or neglect. Remember a report is not an established fact of guilt, but rather a request for assessment of the safety and condition of a child. It is the beginning of a helping process for children and families. All citizens are encouraged to report suspected cases to DHS or law enforcement. Over 25 percent of the substantiated cases of child abuse are reported by concerned citizens who are not required to report. Failure to report is a violation and carries a maximum penalty of \$1,000.00. Mandatory reporters have also been successfully sued for damages in civil court for failing to report.

Q. AM I A MANDATORY REPORTER?

A. If you are reading this booklet, you are a mandatory reporter.

Q. WHO MUST REPORT?

A. Any person who has firsthand reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect should report such incident.

Q. WHO DO I CONTACT IF I SUSPECT CHILD ABUSE?

A. A person making a report of child abuse shall make an oral report by telephone or otherwise to a local Child Welfare office of the Department of Human Services/CPS, to the division's designee, or to a law enforcement agency within the county where the person making the report is at the time of the contact. A law enforcement agency can be defined as a local police department, county sheriff, county juvenile department, or Oregon State Police (Washington State police if you are located in Washington).

Oregon State Reporting: <https://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ABUSE/Pages/index.aspx>

Washington State Reporting:

<https://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/child-safety-and-protection/how-report-child-abuse-or-neglect>

Q. HOW DO I RESPOND TO A CHILD WHO REPORTS ABUSE TO ME?

A. Believe the child if she/he reports sexual abuse. It is rare for a child to lie about sexual abuse. So, tell the child that you believe them and that you are going to contact people who can help. Respect the privacy of the child. The child will need to tell their story in detail later, so don't press the child for details. Remember, you need only suspect abuse to make a report. Don't display horror, shock, or disapproval of parents, child, or the situation. Don't place blame or make judgments about the parent or child.

Q. WHAT INFORMATION DO I NEED TO REPORT?

A. If possible report the names and addresses of the child and parent; the child's age; the type and extent of the abuse, as well as any previous evidence of abuse; the explanation given for the abuse; and any other information that will help establish the cause of abuse or identify the abuser.

Q. WILL MY REPORT BE CONFIDENTIAL?

A. The reporter's identity will remain confidential to the full extent allowable by law. If court action is initiated, the reporting person may be called as a witness or the court may order that the reporter's name be disclosed. Only people with firsthand knowledge of the child's situation can provide testimony proving that abuse has occurred.

Q. WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I REPORT?

A. Child Protective Services (CPS) follows a process that includes six possible decision points for every child abuse report.

For each call CPS receives, the process begins with screening. If the information indicates possible abuse, a caseworker assesses the family situation by getting more in-depth information and determines whether abuse occurred and whether a child is at risk of further harm.

If a child has been abused or neglected, CPS and law enforcement staffs decide, with family help if possible, whether the child can be safely left at home. Risk factors, strengths and needs of the child and family are assessed. A safety plan may be developed immediately. Later, the agency and family may develop a plan for service.

A case is closed when protective services are no longer needed to keep the child safe.

Q. WHO DO I CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT?

A. If you need more information on child abuse and neglect, contact your local Child Welfare branch office of the Department of Human Services.

http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/children/abuse/cps/cw_branches.shtml

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/safety/abuseReport.asp?2>

For the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Statement on Nurture and Protection of Children please see link below: <https://www.adventist.org/en/information/official-statements/statements/article/go/0/nurture-and-protection-of-children/>

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Thank you for taking the time to read this important information. Keeping children safe and growing their relationship with Jesus is our number one priority! We are confident this booklet with the Oregon Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Child Protection Policies will enhance your churches ministry programs. We hope these policies are clear and easy to understand, however, if you need further assistance, please feel free to contact the Oregon Conference Risk Management department.



Oregon
Conference

OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS