



Child Protection Policy

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Our Standard

What we believe

1. We believe it is our responsibility to protect the children in our care. Children (and parents) need to know that we have taken every reasonable step to ensure children's safety in our ministry.
2. We believe it is our responsibility to protect staff and volunteer workers in our ministry from being exposed to false accusations of sexual misconduct. To this end, we have screening and supervision policies in place to protect our ministry workers.
3. We believe it is our responsibility to protect our ministry. By requiring child protection training, as well as implementing screening and supervision policies, we are modeling good safety procedures to others who look to our ministry as an example of a well-run ministry to children and youth.

What we require

1. **Membership.** All employees and volunteers must be members who have attended regularly for at least six months in order to apply for positions that have access to minors. The purpose of this rule is to prevent predators from gaining quick access to potential victims. A predator will not want to spend an extended period of time waiting to gain access to children, especially when he can go elsewhere and have almost immediate access. Six months provides a threshold of time for individuals to become better known, and gives an opportunity to evaluate their suitability for volunteer service. In some cases, this length of time is reduced based on a person's ability to provide positive character references from other youth-serving organizations and from our ministry leaders, and a person's prior history working with children in a previous faith community.
2. **A written application.** We require a written Volunteer Service Application before approving an individual for service in our children's/youth ministry. We want to be sure we're selecting the best candidates possible for our ministry programs.
3. **Reference checks.** Once the written application is complete, we conduct reference checks. Applicants should indicate that they have been a member of the church for a minimum length of time, such as six months, and should list two or more prior service references, preferably from a youth organization, plus personal references from two or more church members.
4. **Personal interview.** We use the interview time to explore more fully why a candidate wants to work with children or youth. We also review our ministry's policies and procedures regarding the supervision of children. This can be conducted as a part of the membership process.
5. **Additional background checks.** We conduct a criminal records check for all paid staff and clergy who will have access to children. We may conduct criminal records checks on children's/youth workers who serve with minors. If you will be driving as part of your ministry service with minors, we will require you to complete a driving information form.

What we expect

1. **Training.** We expect all staff and volunteers to successfully complete our Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Training program.
2. **Appropriate physical contact.** No one should ever feel uncomfortable in the way they are being touched. Appropriate touching means offering a gentle touch on the shoulders, hands, arms, head, or back. Inappropriate touching would include kissing, demanding kissing or hugs, touching of the chest, waist, stomach, bottom, or private areas, or any physical contact that feels uncomfortable or violating. Toddlers and older children should never be allowed to sit in your lap, covering your private area. Instead, have a child sit beside you.
3. **Responding to inappropriate or suspicious behavior.** All staff and volunteers should report any inappropriate or suspicious behavior to a ministry staff leader immediately. This includes reporting any suspected abuse being committed by another worker, as well as any child who presents signs of abuse. No one will ever be in trouble for reporting suspected abuse.
4. **Follow supervision policies.** Our policies are designed to reduce isolation, increase accountability, and reduce the disparity of power between a worker and a child in our program. We expect all children's/youth workers to follow the supervision policies we have in place to accomplish these goals.

Commitment To Confidentiality

A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret (Prov. 11:13)

The Bible teaches that Christians should carefully guard any personal and private information that others reveal to us. Protecting confidences is a sign of Christian love and respect (Matt. 7:12). It also discourages harmful gossip (Prov. 26:20), invites confession (Prov. 11:13), and thus encourages people to seek needed counseling. These goals are essential to the ministry of the gospel and the work of the local church. As leaders, we will carefully protect all information about applicants received through the Child Protection Policy screening process.

Policy Administrator Responsibilities

The policy administrator will be appointed for Metro Life Church of Greater Orlando, Inc. Child Protection Policy by the leadership team.

The administrator's position is responsible for the following duties:

1. Process all incoming application forms and set up confidential file system with privacy safeguards.
2. Contact by mail the individuals listed as personal references by applicants.
3. Respond to requests for materials and information from sources outside the office, i.e. other churches.
4. Provide appropriate information concerning the applicants as requested by ministerial staff.
5. Maintain accurate and confidential files for all confidential forms.
6. Maintain an adequate supply of forms and updated packets of material.
7. Provide new staff/volunteers Child Protection Policy packets and request they complete the forms, with calendar follow-up.
8. Periodically review program with counsel and staff and make suggestions on improving the screening process.
9. Work under the supervision of the Pastor.

Training of Staff and Volunteers

1. Formal training of all new staff and volunteers will be held semi-annually.
2. Each person who works with minors (staff and volunteers) will receive a copy of the Child Protection Policy.
3. Each person who works with minors is expected to complete the Child Protection Training prior to being allowed access to children and teens. Existing workers must complete the training within 90 days of the effective date this program was adopted.
4. Training will include but is not limited to:
 - a) Instruction in the Child Protection Policies of Metro Life Church,
 - b) Understanding the Risk to Children, the Church and the Worker
 - c) The Five Step Screening Process
 - d) Definitions of Abuse
 - e) Florida's Abuse Statute
 - f) Who, What, When and Where to Report Suspected Abuse
 - g) Recognizing the Signs of Child Abuse
 - h) Physical Contact Policy
 - i) Child Supervision Policies
 - j) Avoiding False Allegations
5. Training will be conducted by the Child Protection Administrator or other Responsible Party designated by the pastor. Outside specialists in the field of child protection (i.e. medical specialists, police, children services, counselors, insurance advisors, etc.) may also be used as training leaders.
6. Attendance of training sessions is to be documented and maintained in the worker personnel file.
7. Additional training may be required as new strategies and/or policies are enacted, specialists become available, or for any other pertinent reason.
8. A training log is to be maintained recording the date and attendance at each training session. Make up sessions can be held at the discretion of the church to ensure that all volunteers and staff are trained.

5 Step Mandatory Screening Process

1. Membership

All employees and volunteers must attend Metro Life Church regularly for at least six months in order to apply for positions that have access to minors. The purpose of this rule is to prevent predators from gaining quick access to potential victims. A predator will not want to stick around a church for an extended period of time waiting to get access to children, especially when he can go elsewhere and have almost immediate access. Six months provides a threshold of time for individuals to become better known, and gives an opportunity to evaluate their suitability for volunteer service. Some congregations may opt for a shorter time than six months, but the principle remains the same: **We do not give volunteers who are new and unknown immediate access to children.**

2. Written Application

Requiring a written application for church volunteers serves the same role as it does for paid employees. The goal is to document the selection process and to be able to demonstrate that the church met the test of reasonable care. A church can be just as liable for the negligent selection of a volunteer as it can be for a paid employee.

Every employee or volunteer must complete the appropriate written Employment or Volunteer Application and Background Consent Release Form.

Verify the applicant has answered all of the questions and if not- return it to the applicant for completion.

3. Background Check

A criminal records check and Florida Department of Law Enforcement Sexual Predator check is REQUIRED for all volunteers who will have access to minors. Obtain a signed Consent to Background Check from the applicant first.

Background checks should also be obtained for individuals who have unsupervised access to children, youth, the developmentally disabled, senior citizens, or who serve in a counseling position. The phrase “unsupervised access to children” appears on both state and federal legislation to identify individuals requiring a higher level of screening and accountability.

The policy administrator should carefully review the completed application. Prior to proceeding with the screening process, based on the application, verify the candidate’s eligibility based on the following criteria:

Qualifiers

1. Six month rule has been met
2. Members who are 18 years of age or older
 - minors of member families in high school may only assist with adequate adult supervision but will not count toward our two person rule related to class staffing

Disqualifiers

Not every criminal conviction is a disqualifier. Some types of convictions will automatically disqualify an individual from serving. Disqualifying information would include any history of a sexual crime, especially those against children.

A crime of violence against another person within the past 7 years would also be disqualifying. The key is to

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determine whether that past behavior, combined with other data available about the person, reasonably suggests that this person could pose a danger of sexually or physically abusing children. If the answer is "yes", that person may not serve. If you are unsure if a particular conviction is a disqualifier, please seek legal counsel.

The following is a list of some of the disqualifiers that meet the disqualification criteria stated above. Criminal conviction for any of the following offenses:

1. Murder, Manslaughter
2. Vehicular Homicide
3. Assault and/or Aggravated Battery
4. Kidnapping and/or False Imprisonment
5. Sexual Battery
6. Prostitution
7. Lewd & Indecent Exposure
8. Arson
9. Felony Theft or Robbery
10. Sale of a Controlled Substance
11. Child Abuse
12. Obscene Literature
13. Drug Charges
14. Any other criminal charges which may be deemed by the Pastor or Elders as a disqualifier

Individuals serving with Special Needs

For member families we want to continue to provide ways for adult volunteers with special needs to serve and play a role in the context of the church.

Individuals offering to serve who have special needs must:

1. Be part of a member family
2. Are welcome to serve in the church as a ministry team has need and ability to provide adequate supervision as determined by the ministry or team leader
3. Will not count toward our two person rule as it relates to supervision of minors

4. Reference Check

The volunteer should list two or more other church members as references, plus any other references that may be available from other forms of service. It is not sufficient to list only parents of children with whom the prospective volunteer may work. Predators may work at grooming the parents of potential victims. The reference list should also include other adults. These people should be contacted for input concerning the volunteer's qualifications for working with children or youth. Often this is done either in person or over the phone. You may also use a written form that is mailed to the reference. Document in writing all of your efforts in collecting the references, and the information you receive. Once you are finished, keep all forms, notes, and application in a specific folder you designate for each candidate.

5. Personal Interview

Explore more fully why the candidate wants to work with children or youth. It's also a good time to review your church's policies and procedures regarding the supervision of children.

Definitions

Abuse

Intentional act by an adult or another child, if older or more powerful, which threaten to harm a child's physical, mental or emotional health.

The adult could be a parent, teacher, youth leader or any person in a position of trust.

Sexual abuse

Sexual contact between a child and an adult, or a child and an older child or more powerful person, or use of a child for sexual gratification.

Sexual abuse can occur with or without physical contact. It can include showing the child inappropriate images or photos or having an inappropriate sexual conversation.

Sexual abuse can be inflicted on a child another child if the other child is older, stronger, or has an advantage in the balance of power. Power includes physical strength, social hierarchy and mental ability.

Physical abuse

Non-accidental physical contact that causes pain or injury to a child. Hitting, shaking, scalding, kicking, biting and burning are examples of physical abuse.

Neglect

Caregiver fails to provide basic needs- food, water, housing, medical care, supervision, clothing or educational needs.

Forms of neglect include abandonment, inadequate supervision, allowing known health hazards to exist in the child's home.

Emotional abuse

Using words or actions to cause extreme emotional pain.

Forms of emotional abuse include humiliation, threat of extreme and unreasonable punishment, physical pain or death.

Definitions from Florida Statutes Chapter 39

Florida State Statute 39.01 Definitions Regarding Child Abuse

(b) "Child abuse" means abandonment, abuse, harm, mental injury, neglect, physical injury, or sexual abuse of a child as those terms are defined in s. 39.01, 827.04, and 984.03.

39.01 Definitions. -- When used in this chapter, unless the context otherwise requires:

(1) "Abandoned" or "abandonment" means a situation in which the parent or legal custodian of a child or, in the absence of a parent or legal custodian, the caregiver, while being able, makes no provision for the child's support and has failed to establish or maintain a substantial and positive relationship with the child. For purposes of this subsection, "establish or maintain a substantial and positive relationship" includes, but is not limited to, frequent and regular contact with the child through frequent and regular visitation or frequent and regular communication to or with the child, and the exercise of parental rights and responsibilities. Marginal efforts and incidental or token visits or communications are not sufficient to establish or maintain a substantial and positive relationship with a child. The term does not include a surrendered newborn infant as described in s. 383.50, a "child in need of services" as defined in chapter 984, or a "family in need of services" as defined in chapter 984. The incarceration of a parent, legal custodian, or caregiver responsible for a child's welfare may support a finding of abandonment.

(2) "Abuse" means any willful act or threatened act that results in any physical, mental, or sexual injury or harm that causes or is likely to cause the child's physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired. Abuse of a child includes acts or omissions. Corporal discipline of a child by a parent or legal custodian for disciplinary purposes does not in itself constitute abuse when it does not result in harm to the child.

(3) "Harm" to a child's health or welfare can occur when any person:

(a) Inflicts or allows to be inflicted upon the child physical, mental, or emotional injury. In determining whether harm has occurred, the following factors must be considered in evaluating any physical, mental, or emotional injury to a child: the age of the child; any prior history of injuries to the child; the location of the injury on the body of the child; the multiplicity of the injury; and the type of trauma inflicted. Such injury includes, but is not limited to:

1. Willful acts that produce the following specific injuries:

- a. Sprains, dislocations, or cartilage damage.
- b. Bone or skull fractures.
- c. Brain or spinal cord damage.
- d. Intracranial hemorrhage or injury to other internal organs.
- e. Asphyxiation, suffocation, or drowning.
- f. Injury resulting from the use of a deadly weapon.
- g. Burns or scalding.
- h. Cuts, lacerations, punctures, or bites.

- i. Permanent or temporary disfigurement.
- j. Permanent or temporary loss or impairment of a body part or function.

As used in this subparagraph, the term "willful" refers to the intent to perform an action, not to the intent to achieve a result or to cause an injury.

2. Purposely giving a child poison, alcohol, drugs, or other substances that substantially affect the child's behavior, motor coordination, or judgment or that result in sickness or internal injury.

For the purposes of this subparagraph, the term "drugs" means prescription drugs not prescribed for the child or not administered as prescribed, and controlled substances as outlined in Schedule I or Schedule II of s. 893.03.

3. Leaving a child without adult supervision or arrangement appropriate for the child's age or mental or physical condition, so that the child is unable to care for the child's own needs or another's basic needs or is unable to exercise good judgment in responding to any kind of physical or emotional crisis.

4. Inappropriate or excessively harsh disciplinary action that is likely to result in physical injury, mental injury as defined in this section, or emotional injury. The significance of any injury must be evaluated in light of the following factors: the age of the child; any prior history of injuries to the child; the location of the injury on the body of the child; the multiplicity of the injury; and the type of trauma inflicted. Corporal discipline may be considered excessive or abusive when it results in any of the following or other similar injuries:

- a. Sprains, dislocations, or cartilage damage.
- b. Bone or skull fractures.
- c. Brain or spinal cord damage.
- d. Intracranial hemorrhage or injury to other internal organs.
- e. Asphyxiation, suffocation, or drowning.
- f. Injury resulting from the use of a deadly weapon.
- g. Burns or scalding.
- h. Cuts, lacerations, punctures, or bites.
- i. Permanent or temporary disfigurement.
- j. Permanent or temporary loss or impairment of a body part or function.
- k. Significant bruises or welts.

(b) Commits, or allows to be committed, sexual battery, as defined in chapter 794, or lewd or lascivious acts, as defined in chapter 800, against the child.

(c) Allows, encourages, or forces the sexual exploitation of a child, which includes allowing, encouraging, or forcing a child to:

1. Solicit for or engage in prostitution; or

2. Engage in a sexual performance, as defined by chapter 827.

(d) Exploits a child, or allows a child to be exploited, as provided in s. 450.151.

(e) Abandons the child. Within the context of the definition of "harm," the term "abandoned the child" or "abandonment of the child" means a situation in which the parent or legal custodian of a child or, in the absence of a parent or legal custodian, the caregiver, while being able, makes no provision for the child's support and has failed to establish or maintain a substantial and positive relationship with the child. For purposes of this paragraph, "establish or maintain a substantial and positive relationship" includes, but is not limited to, frequent and regular contact with the child through frequent and regular visitation or frequent and regular communication to or with

the child, and the exercise of parental rights and responsibilities. Marginal efforts and incidental or token visits or communications are not sufficient to establish or maintain a substantial and positive relationship with a child. The term "abandoned" does not include a surrendered newborn infant as described in s. 383.50.

(f) Neglects the child. Within the context of the definition of "harm," the term "neglects the child" means that the parent or other person responsible for the child's welfare fails to supply the child with adequate food, clothing, shelter, or health care, although financially able to do so or although offered financial or other means to do so. However, a parent or legal custodian who, by reason of the legitimate practice of religious beliefs, does not provide specified medical treatment for a child may not be considered abusive or neglectful for that reason alone, but such an exception does not:

1. Eliminate the requirement that such a case be reported to the department;

2. Prevent the department from investigating such a case; or

3. Preclude a court from ordering, when the health of the child requires it, the provision of medical services by a physician, as defined in this section, or treatment by a duly accredited practitioner who relies solely on spiritual means for healing in accordance with the tenets and practices of a well-recognized church or religious organization.

(g) Exposes a child to a controlled substance or alcohol. Exposure to a controlled substance or alcohol is established by:

1. A test, administered at birth, which indicated that the child's blood, urine, or meconium contained any amount of alcohol or a controlled substance or metabolites of such substances, the presence of which was not the result of medical treatment administered to the mother or the newborn infant; or 2. Evidence of extensive, abusive, and chronic use of a controlled substance or alcohol by a parent when the child is demonstrably adversely affected by such usage. As used in this paragraph, the term "controlled substance" means prescription drugs not prescribed for the parent or not administered as prescribed and controlled substances as outlined in Schedule I or Schedule II of s. 893.03.

(h) Uses mechanical devices, unreasonable restraints, or extended periods of isolation to control a child.

(i) Engages in violent behavior that demonstrates a wanton disregard for the presence of a child and could reasonably result in serious injury to the child.

(j) Negligently fails to protect a child in his or her care from inflicted physical, mental, or sexual injury caused by the acts of another.

(k) Has allowed a child's sibling to die as a result of abuse, abandonment, or neglect.

(l) Makes the child unavailable for the purpose of impeding or avoiding a protective investigation unless the court determines that the parent, legal custodian, or caregiver was fleeing from a situation involving domestic violence.

(33) "Institutional child abuse or neglect" means situations of known or suspected child abuse or neglect in which the person allegedly perpetrating the child abuse or neglect is an employee of a private school, public or private day care center, residential home, institution, facility, or agency or any other person at such institution responsible for the child's care.

Florida Abuse Reporting Statute

39.201 Mandatory reports of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect; mandatory reports of death; central abuse hotline.—

(1)(a) Any person who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect, that a child is abused, abandoned, or neglected by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child's welfare, as defined in this chapter, or that a child is in need of supervision and care and has no parent, legal custodian, or responsible adult relative immediately known and available to provide supervision and care shall report such knowledge or suspicion to the department in the manner prescribed in subsection (2).

(b) Reporters in the following occupation categories are required to provide their names to the hotline staff:

1. Physician, osteopathic physician, medical examiner, chiropractic physician, nurse, or hospital personnel engaged in the admission, examination, care, or treatment of persons;
2. Health or mental health professional other than one listed in subparagraph 1.;
3. Practitioner who relies solely on spiritual means for healing;
4. School teacher or other school official or personnel;
5. Social worker, day care center worker, or other professional child care, foster care, residential, or institutional worker;
6. Law enforcement officer; or
7. Judge.

The names of reporters shall be entered into the record of the report, but shall be held confidential and exempt as provided in s. 39.202.

(c) A professional who is hired by or enters into a contract with the department for the purpose of treating or counseling any person, as a result of a report of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect, is not required to again report to the central abuse hotline the abuse, abandonment, or neglect that was the subject of the referral for treatment.

(d) An officer or employee of the judicial branch is not required to again provide notice of reasonable cause to suspect child abuse, abandonment, or neglect when that child is currently being investigated by the department, there is an existing dependency case, or the matter has previously been reported to the department, provided there is reasonable cause to believe the information is already known to the department. This paragraph applies only when the information has been provided to the officer or employee in the course of carrying out his or her official duties.

(e) Nothing in this chapter or in the contracting with community-based care providers for foster care and related services as specified in s. 409.1671 shall be construed to remove or reduce the duty and responsibility of any person, including any employee of the community-based care provider, to report a suspected or actual case of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect or the sexual abuse of a child to the department's central abuse hotline.

(2)(a) Each report of known or suspected child abuse, abandonment, or neglect by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child's welfare as defined in this chapter, except those solely under s. 827.04(3), and each report that a child is in need of supervision and care and has no parent, legal custodian, or responsible adult relative

immediately known and available to provide supervision and care shall be made immediately to the department's central abuse hotline. Such reports may be made on the single statewide toll-free telephone number or via fax or web-based report. Personnel at the department's central abuse hotline shall determine if the report received meets the statutory definition of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect. Any report meeting one of these definitions shall be accepted for the protective investigation pursuant to part III of this chapter.

(b) If the report is of an instance of known or suspected child abuse by someone other than a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child's welfare as defined in this chapter, the report or call shall be immediately electronically transferred to the appropriate county sheriff's office by the central abuse hotline.

(c) If the report is of an instance of known or suspected child abuse, abandonment, or neglect that occurred out of state and the alleged perpetrator and the child alleged to be a victim live out of state, the central abuse hotline shall not accept the report or call for investigation, but shall transfer the information on the report to the appropriate state.

(d) If the report is of an instance of known or suspected child abuse involving impregnation of a child under 16 years of age by a person 21 years of age or older solely under s. 827.04(3), the report shall be made immediately to the appropriate county sheriff's office or other appropriate law enforcement agency. If the report is of an instance of known or suspected child abuse solely under s. 827.04(3), the reporting provisions of this subsection do not apply to health care professionals or other persons who provide medical or counseling services to pregnant children when such reporting would interfere with the provision of medical services.

(e) Reports involving known or suspected institutional child abuse or neglect shall be made and received in the same manner as all other reports made pursuant to this section.

(f) Reports involving a known or suspected juvenile sexual offender or a child who has exhibited inappropriate sexual behavior shall be made and received by the department.

1. The department shall determine the age of the alleged offender, if known.

2. If the alleged offender is 12 years of age or younger, the central abuse hotline shall immediately electronically transfer the report or call to the county sheriff's office. The department shall conduct an assessment and assist the family in receiving appropriate services pursuant to s. 39.307, and send a written report of the allegation to the appropriate county sheriff's office within 48 hours after the initial report is made to the central abuse hotline.

3. If the alleged offender is 13 years of age or older, the central abuse hotline shall immediately electronically transfer the report or call to the appropriate county sheriff's office and send a written report to the appropriate county sheriff's office within 48 hours after the initial report to the central abuse hotline.

(g) Reports involving surrendered newborn infants as described in s. 383.50 shall be made and received by the department.

1. If the report is of a surrendered newborn infant as described in s. 383.50 and there is no indication of abuse, neglect, or abandonment other than that necessarily entailed in the infant having been left at a hospital, emergency medical services station, or fire station, the department shall provide to the caller the name of a licensed child-placing agency on a rotating basis from a list of licensed child-placing agencies eligible and required to accept physical custody of and to place newborn infants left at a hospital, emergency medical services station, or fire station. The report shall not be

considered a report of abuse, neglect, or abandonment solely because the infant has been left at a hospital, emergency medical services station, or fire station pursuant to s. 383.50.

2. If the call, fax, or web-based report includes indications of abuse or neglect beyond that necessarily entailed in the infant having been left at a hospital, emergency medical services station, or fire station, the report shall be considered as a report of abuse, neglect, or abandonment and shall be subject to the requirements of s. 39.395 and all other relevant provisions of this chapter, notwithstanding any provisions of chapter 383.

(h) Hotline counselors shall receive periodic training in encouraging reporters to provide their names when reporting abuse, abandonment, or neglect. Callers shall be advised of the confidentiality provisions of s. 39.202. The department shall secure and install electronic equipment that automatically provides to the hotline the number from which the call or fax is placed or the Internet protocol (IP) address from which the report is received. This number shall be entered into the report of abuse, abandonment, or neglect and become a part of the record of the report, but shall enjoy the same confidentiality as provided to the identity of the reporter pursuant to s. 39.202.

(i) The department shall voice-record all incoming or outgoing calls that are received or placed by the central abuse hotline which relate to suspected or known child abuse, neglect, or abandonment. The department shall maintain an electronic copy of each fax and web-based report. The recording or electronic copy of each fax and web-based report shall become a part of the record of the report but, notwithstanding s. 39.202, shall be released in full only to law enforcement agencies and state attorneys for the purpose of investigating and prosecuting criminal charges pursuant to s. 39.205, or to employees of the department for the purpose of investigating and seeking administrative penalties pursuant to s. 39.206. Nothing in this paragraph shall prohibit the use of the recordings, the electronic copies of faxes, and web-based reports by hotline staff for quality assurance and training.

(3) Any person required to report or investigate cases of suspected child abuse, abandonment, or neglect who has reasonable cause to suspect that a child died as a result of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect shall report his or her suspicion to the appropriate medical examiner. The medical examiner shall accept the report for investigation and shall report his or her findings, in writing, to the local law enforcement agency, the appropriate state attorney, and the department. Autopsy reports maintained by the medical examiner are not subject to the confidentiality requirements provided for in s. 39.202.

(4) The department shall establish and maintain a central abuse hotline to receive all reports made pursuant to this section in writing, via fax, via web-based reporting, or through a single statewide toll-free telephone number, which any person may use to report known or suspected child abuse, abandonment, or neglect at any hour of the day or night, any day of the week. The central abuse hotline shall be operated in such a manner as to enable the department to:

(a) Immediately identify and locate prior reports or cases of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect through utilization of the department's automated tracking system.

(b) Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the department's program for reporting and investigating suspected abuse, abandonment, or neglect of children through the development and analysis of statistical and other information.

(c) Track critical steps in the investigative process to ensure compliance with all requirements for any report of abuse, abandonment, or neglect.

(d) Maintain and produce aggregate statistical reports monitoring patterns of child abuse, child abandonment, and child neglect. The department shall collect and analyze child-on-child sexual abuse reports and include the information in aggregate statistical reports.

(e) Serve as a resource for the evaluation, management, and planning of preventive and remedial services for children who have been subject to abuse, abandonment, or neglect.

(f) Initiate and enter into agreements with other states for the purpose of gathering and sharing information contained in reports on child maltreatment to further enhance programs for the protection of children.

(5) The department shall be capable of receiving and investigating, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, reports of known or suspected child abuse, abandonment, or neglect and reports that a child is in need of supervision and care and has no parent, legal custodian, or responsible adult relative immediately known and available to provide supervision and care. If it appears that the immediate safety or well-being of a child is endangered, that the family may flee or the child will be unavailable for purposes of conducting a child protective investigation, or that the facts otherwise so warrant, the department shall commence an investigation immediately, regardless of the time of day or night. In all other child abuse, abandonment, or neglect cases, a child protective investigation shall be commenced within 24 hours after receipt of the report. In an institutional investigation, the alleged perpetrator may be represented by an attorney, at his or her own expense, or accompanied by another person, if the person or the attorney executes an affidavit of understanding with the department and agrees to comply with the confidentiality provisions of s. 39.202. The absence of an attorney or other person does not prevent the department from proceeding with other aspects of the investigation, including interviews with other persons. In institutional child abuse cases when the institution is not operating and the child cannot otherwise be located, the investigation shall commence immediately upon the resumption of operation. If requested by a state attorney or local law enforcement agency, the department shall furnish all investigative reports to that agency.

(6) Information in the central abuse hotline may not be used for employment screening, except as provided in s. 39.202(2)(a) and (h). Information in the central abuse hotline and the department's automated abuse information system may be used by the department, its authorized agents or contract providers, the Department of Health, or county agencies as part of the licensure or registration process pursuant to ss. 402.301-402.319 and ss. 409.175-409.176.

(7) On an ongoing basis, the department's quality assurance program shall review calls, fax reports, and web-based reports to the hotline involving three or more unaccepted reports on a single child, where jurisdiction applies, in order to detect such things as harassment and situations that warrant an investigation because of the frequency or variety of the source of the reports. A component of the quality assurance program shall analyze unaccepted reports to the hotline by identified relatives as a part of the review of screened out calls. The Program Director for Family Safety may refer a case for investigation when it is determined, as a result of this review, that an investigation may be warranted.

Recognizing Signs Of Abuse

Child abusers look for a church that does not screen people prior to allowing access to the children. They also target churches where teens are serving without direct supervision.

What the Child Target Looks Like

1. Age, friendliness, shyness, good manners, naivety, curiosity, isolation
2. Single parent home
3. Drug/alcohol abuse by parents
4. Parents emotionally unavailable
5. Stepfather or Mother's boyfriend living in home
6. Parents working different shifts
7. Pornography in the home
8. Inadequate parental supervision
9. A child who is a loner, shy or needy
10. Teens are very susceptible to sexual abuse

Common Characteristics of an Abuser

1. Male and female
2. Adults who seem preoccupied with children.
3. Single adults who work or volunteer with children's clubs/activities.
4. Adults who work with children and also frequently spend their free time doing "special" things with kids.
5. Adults who volunteer with youth groups who DO NOT have kids in those programs.
6. Adults who seem to engage in questionable contact with kids, ie, casual touching, caressing, wrestling, tickling, roughhousing, combing hair, lap sitting.
7. Adults who act like kids (styles, behaviors, etc.) or allow kids to do questionable or inappropriate things.
8. Adults who want to take kids on special outings frequently, or plan activities that include being alone with children.
9. Adults who DO NOT have children and seem to know too much about current fads, music, games etc that are popular with children.
10. Adults who "infiltrate" "family" functions and are "always available" to watch the kids.

11. Many hold responsible jobs and frequently align themselves with reputable organizations, sports leagues and churches.

12. Most do NOT have a criminal record.

What the Sexual Abuser Behavior Looks Like

1. Overly Helpful – one sided
2. Instant Insider status – overstep normal boundaries
3. Peer like play – doesn't employ normal parenting intervention
4. Prefer the company of children – gravitate toward kids in a group setting
5. Roughhousing and tickling
6. Fail to honor clear boundaries
7. Seeks time alone with child(ren) too much – always available/inviting
8. Goes on the offensive – narcissistic personality

Identifying When a Child Is Being Targeted

1. Forced teaming
2. Charm and niceness
3. Too many details
4. Typecasting
5. Loan-sharking
6. The unsolicited promise

Grooming Behaviors of Abusers

1. Grants special favors
2. Extra time and attention
3. Wins friendship and love
4. Pushes sexual boundaries
5. Buys toys, jewelry or clothing
6. Cool kid activities

7. Breaks program or family rules
8. Takes child off premises alone
9. Isolates a child
10. Grooms parents and other gatekeepers

Warnings That a Child May Be a Victim of Sexual Abuse

1. Changes in modesty
 - a) Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities
 - b) Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
2. Physical symptoms
 - a) genital pain
 - b) stomach aches or headaches
 - c) Has difficulty walking or sitting
 - d) sleep disturbances
 - e) bed wetting
 - f) becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease, particularly if under age fourteen
3. Unexplained fear of places or people (e.g., a baby-sitter, a friend, a relative, or some other child)
4. School problems
5. Social problems
6. Crying or depression
7. Escape – running away/drugs or alcohol
8. Abrupt changes in behavior
9. Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver
10. Regressive, such as bed-wetting or thumb sucking
11. Sexual activities with toys or other children
12. New words for private body parts.
13. Refusing to talk about a “secret” he/she has with an adult or older child

14. Talking about a new older friend

15. Suddenly having money

16. Cutting or burning herself or himself as an adolescent

CHILD and TEEN Supervision Procedures

1. Keep children within your sight
2. Two Adult Rule
 - a. At least two eligible adult workers must supervise each room, vehicle or enclosed space for an activity involving children and students during church activities, even if only one or two children need supervision.
 - b. One adult is never to be left alone with one minor.
 - c. A husband and wife working the same room will be considered as one adult. Qualifying teenage or special needs volunteers will not count toward the two adult rule
 - d. The adult assigned primary responsibility for supervision must be at least five years older than the oldest minor child present.
 - e. Men may not serve in any classroom where minors under the age of 5 are present or where changing is necessary at any time.
3. Viewing with windows or open doors
 - a. All reasonable effort will be made to place children and teens in rooms with view windows or open doors
 - b. At no time will an adult meet with a child alone in any room.
4. Watch for inappropriate physical behavior between children or teens
5. If You See Inappropriate Behavior Between Children or Teens Remind Them of the Program Rules, Then Redirect Their Behavior
6. If You a Child Acting Out Sexually with Another Child or Teen, Respond as You would for any other inappropriate behavior. Remind him/her that you like them but what they are doing is not ok
7. If you see OVERT SEXUAL BEHAVIOR or bullying- stop the behavior and report what you have seen to the Child Protection Administrator
8. Sleeping Arrangements
 1. Never lie down with a child for any reason
 2. No child is to share a bed, blanket or sleeping bag with any other child or unrelated adult
 3. All children must wear pajamas - both a top and a bottom
9. Dressing/Undressing
 1. No adult should ever be undressed in front of an unrelated child
 2. No child should ever be undressed in the presence of an unrelated adult
10. Showering, Swimming & Water Activities

1. Presents a higher risk
2. Monitor children from outside the bathroom or shower stall doors within hearing distance
3. Don't allow children or teens to hang out in the bathroom or shower area
4. No games that involve touching a child's bathing suit are allowed

11. Overnight Activities

All participants must have written parental consent and a notarized medical release form.

All Employees and Volunteers shall be required to comply with all of Metro Life Church's policies including, but not limited to, those outlined in Child Protection during Metro Life Church sponsored overnight activities

12. Within Town Activities

All participants must have written parental consent and notarized medical release form

All Employees and Volunteers shall be required to comply with all of Metro Life Church's policies including, but not limited to, those outlined in Child Protection during Metro Life Church sponsored in town activities

13. Out-of-Town Activities

All participants must have written parental consent and a notarized medical release form

All Employees and Volunteers shall be required to comply with all of Metro Life Church's policies including, but not limited to, those outlined in Child Protection during Metro Life Church sponsored out of town activities

14. Special Events, Trips, Camps, etc.

All participants must have written parental consent and notarized medical release form

All Employees and Volunteers shall be required to comply with all of Metro Life Church's policies including, but not limited to, those outlined in Child Protection during Metro Life Church sponsored special events, trips, camps, etc

15. Avoid Distractions

1. Visiting or talking with other adults
2. Cell Phones
3. Know your activity location
4. Know the first and last names of all children you are responsible for
5. If you are going to a public place, be ready to describe the child and what he/she is wearing in case you are separated

16. Authorized Activities in a Residence

1. Avoid one on one interaction with a child or teen

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2. NEVER interact in a bedroom, bed or bathroom
3. ALWAYS have at least two adults present in the room
4. This may call for additional planning and help to have sufficient adults for the house

17. Stay in Designated Activity Area

1. If you must leave the designated area, stay within sight of other adults or supervisors
2. Avoid unmonitored one on one interaction- Follow Two Adult Rule
3. If there is an unplanned one on one - immediately move to an open area with other adults

18. No Secrets

1. Avoid using the word "secret"
2. Use special or surprise

19. No Gifts or Special Privileges to a child

1. Any gifts must be given to the entire class- never to an individual child

20. The adult in charge must be at least 5 years older than the oldest child being supervised

21. The adult in charge must be at least 18 years of age -teens can assist

22. Watch for Abuser "Grooming Behaviors" and report to Child Protection Administrator

23. Driving alone with a child or teen should be avoided as much as possible.

1. Do not sit close to one another in the car
2. No physical contact – including a hug when saying goodbye
3. Do not stop the car to talk
4. Note the time you leave the meeting and the time you arrive at the child's home

Physical Contact Policy

Do not force any form of physical affection on a child.

1. Prohibited Inappropriate Physical Contact

1. Tickling
2. Sitting a child older than toddler on your lap
3. Hugs from front
4. Wrestling
5. Massages
6. Laying down next to a child
7. Touching a child's genitals, breast or buttocks area
8. Any touch that may be misconstrued by a child or makes him/her feel uncomfortable
9. Any game or activity that involves touching area covered by a child's bathing suit
10. Prolonged permissible hugs

2. Permissible Physical Contact within sight of others

1. Shoulder to shoulder
2. Side hug
3. Arm around the shoulder hug
4. Special handshake like a hi-five
5. Pat on the upper back or head
6. Verbal Praise & Recognition is Preferred

3. ABSOLUTELY NO Physical Discipline

1. Children may be restrained if they are in danger of hurting themselves or others
2. Children who are disruptive should be taken to another side of the room or, if necessary, into the hallway (leaving the door fully open and within sight of other people). The worker should explain to the child that a particular behavior is not acceptable

4. Persistent Disruptive Behavior

1. Notify the parents

2. Ask parents to come sit with the child in class the following week, and for as long as necessary until the child can control himself or herself

3. It may be suggested that a child attend the main worship service with their parents if it continues to be difficult for the student to control himself or herself

4. We are committed to working with children to find what they need in order to fully participate, but not to the detriment of other children in the class

5. NO Verbal/Mental abuse

1. Including humiliating, degrading, threatening, or any other communication behaviors that could cause a child extreme emotional pain

6. NO Dating

1. At no time shall anyone working with youth pursue a dating relationship.

2. Staff should be sensitive to youths with "crushes."

3. All workers are held responsible for confronting and discussing immediately with an appropriate leader any signs of possible violations of the above and/or victimization.

All blatantly inappropriate behavior requires immediate reporting to the Child Protection Administrator.