

Child Protection Guide

Introduction

Creekside Christian Co-op (“The Co-op”) has put in place these procedures to help ensure the safety of all children and adults participating in our organization. These guidelines address specifically those procedures:

1. which are designed to prevent physical abuse; emotional abuse; sexual abuse, molestation, and misconduct
2. for reporting such incidents.

Terms

- **Staff** refers to all paid and unpaid adults who work or otherwise interact directly with children in the co-op on a regular basis. Regular basis is defined as an adult who participates in the coop day 3 or more meeting days in a co-op year (i.e. school year).
- **The Directors** refers to John and Christy Wilson.
- **The Church** refers to Creekside Bible Fellowship.
- **Church Board** refers to the Leadership Board of Creekside Bible Fellowship

Declaration

It is the express policy of The Co-op that staff shall not engage in any abusive behavior; physical, emotional, or sexual in nature. Staff shall not engage in sexually oriented activity, including sexual conversations with children, nor allow such conduct to exist among the children themselves.

Staff shall not develop sexual relationships with children or family members of children during and following services provided to such children and their families by the co-op. Staff shall not engage in non-erotic activities for which the true intended result is sexual arousal or gratification.

Violation Procedure

Any person associated with The Co-op who violates the policy stated in the declaration above will be discharged, reported to the proper authorities and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, molestation and misconduct are crimes. Any adult participating (volunteer or paid staff) in The Co-op who fails to report such activity will be discharged and where possible, prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

Definition

Child abuse is the mistreatment of a child under the age of 18 by a parent, caretaker, someone living in their home or someone who works with or around children. The mistreatment must cause injury or put the child at risk of physical injury. Child abuse can be physical (such as burns or broken bones), sexual (such as fondling or incest), or emotional [such as cruel name calling, punishment to terrorize, and corruption such as causing a child to witness criminal acts or violence]

Sexual abuse and molestation include any conduct or activity leading to, or resulting in, sexual arousal or gratification of one, or all, of the parties involved. It includes, but is not limited to, inappropriate touching, inappropriate physical contact, and/or titillating or romantic conversations.

Child Protection Guide

Preconditions for Sexual Abuse

There are four preconditions which allow incidents of sexual abuse and molestation to take place.

1. There must be an individual with the inclination to sexually abuse children.
2. The individual must overcome his or her internal inhibitions.
3. The individual must overcome external barriers in place to protect children.
4. The individual must overcome the child's resistance to being abused.

Protection Rules

Two Adult Rule

General:

Staff should not be alone with other people's children. Each class is staffed with two or more adults. If an adult must be absent from the co-op or leave the classroom, two adults must remain in the classroom with children at all times. If a child must be accompanied out of the room, two adults must accompany him or her.

Special Circumstances:

If a situation arises where only one adult is present with other people's children, activities should take place in an open door, well-lit, easily accessible setting. In this case, the one adult should remain in the presence of several children.

Private Conversations:

If a private conversation is necessary with another person's child, where possible, the child's parent should also be present. If the parent is not present, the conversation should take place in an open-door, well-lit, easily accessible setting and kept to a minimum.

Closed Door Procedure:

A private, closed door consultation with one adult and another person's child should not take place at The Co-op. If such a closed door consultation is necessary, the parent must be present during the consultation.

Children Leaving the Classroom / Bathroom Use:

If a child 3 years old or younger needs to leave the classroom (bathroom or other), two adults will accompany him or her, or the parent will be called. In the case of bathroom use monitored by adults other than the child's parent, the adults will wait in the outer doorway of the bathroom, oriented to allow for the child's privacy, while the child uses the facilities. Whether children 4 and 5 years old may leave the classroom for bathroom use independently will be based on the child's individual level of independence. It is best to send young children with clothing they can manage independently in the bathroom. For any child who requires assistance in the bathroom, the parent will be called to assist the child. The parent will also be called for diaper changes.

Older children may tend to such matters unaccompanied and return directly to their classrooms.

Nursery Group Bathroom Use:

Children attending the nursery will have group hand washing and bathroom breaks. The girls' bathroom will be used for these breaks for both boys and girls because the size and layout of the space allows for necessary monitoring by adults

Child Protection Guide

in the hand washing area while privacy is maintained in the toilet stall area. If closing the main door to the bathroom becomes necessary in order to keep young children in the bathroom during the break the door may be closed as necessary and only with two or more adults in the bathroom hand washing area, in view of each other. If a nursery child needs to use the bathroom at a time other than during the group break, the regular “2 adults waiting in the doorway” procedure should be followed or the parent called to attend the child.

Men Attending to Bathroom Needs:

Because the girls’ bathroom is used for group bathroom and hand washing breaks for both nursery boys and girls, men are asked not to attend to this duty in order to avoid the presence of adult men in the girls’ bathroom which is inappropriate. (If a man needs to attend to his own young daughter’s bathroom needs, she should accompany him to the boys’ bathroom.)

Adult Bathroom Use:

Because no separate adult bathroom is available, bathrooms become designated as “adult only” when an adult needs to use the bathroom themselves. The adult is to call out into the bathroom something to the effect of, “Knock, knock; anyone here?” If a child is present, the adult is to wait outside in the hall until all children have left. Upon determining that no child is present, the adult is to close the bathroom door. The door has a stop sign attached which is a reminder to children that a closed bathroom door means that an adult is using the bathroom for “privacy” and that the child must wait outside in the hall for his or her turn. When the adult leaves the bathroom, the door should be propped back open and it is now available again for children.

Adult Taking His or Her Own Child to the Bathroom:

An adult in this situation should follow the “adult bathroom use” procedure in order to avoid inadvertently being present in the bathroom alone with other people’s children while attending to his or her own child.

Physical Contact Rules

Nursery children:

Children from 6 weeks old through 4 years old may be cared for in the nursery and associated preschool classes (2-4 years).

Diapering and toileting:

All diaper changes and assisted toileting must be attended to by the parent (or in the case where a parent has made a private arrangement for another adult to supervise his or her child in his or her absence from the co-op, the designated adult must attend to diapering and toileting). If a child is able to manage his own toileting, the above “bathroom use” procedure will be used.

Other Physical Contact:

Physical contact with children in this age range is a normal, healthy, necessary element of child care. Sexual contact with children’s genitals, including through clothing is forbidden. Patting children on the buttocks is forbidden.

However, nursery workers and preschool class staff may interact with these children in non-sexual, nurturing ways such as hugging, comforting, carrying and rocking children. As with all classrooms, there should always be two or more adults present in the nursery and preschool classes.

Child Protection Guide

Older Children:

Children from 4 years old and older who are not cared for in the nursery:

Toileting: See “bathroom use” above.

Other physical contact: Staff should generally avoid touching other people’s children in this age range, particularly initiating contact. Patting children on the genitals or buttocks or touching breasts is forbidden. If a child hugs a staff member, he or she should divert the contact so it becomes shoulder-to-shoulder rather than pelvis-to-pelvis.

Procedure for Documentation and Reporting

Physical; Emotional; or Sexual Abuse, Molestation, or Misconduct:

Every adult at The Co-op is a mandated reporter. This means each of us is required by law to report suspected abuse or neglect. Failure to do so is a crime.

The adult must immediately report suspected abuse or neglect to both the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare and a Co-op Director:

- Idaho Careline (Idaho Department of Health and Welfare):
 - Treasure Valley: 208-334-KIDS (5437)
 - Statewide: 1-855-552-KIDS (5437)
- Contact a Co-op Director by phone or in person (not by email).

1. A Co-op Director will have the reporter immediately complete an Abuse; Sexual Abuse, Molestation, and Misconduct Incident form, available from each Co-op Director which may be hand delivered, emailed, or faxed to the reporter.
2. The reporter will directly acknowledge receipt of the form in person or by phone (not email), complete it immediately, and arrange for the original, completed copy to be returned to the Co-op Director for immediate follow-up.
3. A Co-op Director will immediately contact the proper police authorities as well as the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. The call to the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare is to ensure that the incident was reported by the original reporting adult and to establish proper direct communication regarding the incident.
4. The person reported as engaging in abuse, molestation or misconduct will be confronted by the Co-op Director(s) in a compassionate manner. The accused person will be suspended from the co-op, pending investigation by the proper authorities. The suspension is to protect all parties involved. This suspension does not imply a presumption of guilt.
5. A Co-op Director will contact the insurance carrier to notify them of the allegations and obtain advice in immediate handling of the situation.
6. The Church Board will obtain a lawyer on behalf of The Co-op for legal advice regarding handling of the situation.
7. The Church Board will keep in touch with the accused staff member to confirm whereabouts and response activities that are detrimental and unauthorized by The Co-op.
8. The results of the police and/or Idaho Department of Health and Welfare investigation will determine whether the suspended staff person will be reinstated or permanently dismissed and whether or not criminal charges will be filed.

Child Protection Guide

9. The Co-op Directors will establish and implement additional preventive procedures to eliminate a reoccurrence of the event.

Note: Failure of the Co-op Directors to perform prompt and required reporting is additional misconduct resulting in additional liability independent of the original incident.

Co-op Directors Communication to Staff

The Co-op Directors will communicate to appropriate staff and the Church Board the existence of the reported incident and steps being taken in response.

Communication to the Press

No Co-op Director or Co-op member other than the president of the Church Board should speak to the press or general public regarding the reported incident. The Church Board with the guidance of legal council will determine what, if anything, the president will state to the press or general public.

Church Board and Co-op Member Responses to Accused Staff Member

During an investigation and/or in the case where criminal charges are filed, the following procedures should be followed:

- Co-op Directors, Church Board members and Co-op members should not have unauthorized contact with the accused person regarding the incident.
- The only contact regarding the incident should be in cooperation with Idaho Department of Health and Welfare and as advised by legal counsel.
- In the case where an accused person contacts a board member or co-op member regarding the incident outside of official, monitored Idaho Department of Health and Welfare proceedings, the Church Board member, Co-op Director or Co-op member should state clearly that he or she cannot discuss the situation until the proceedings are concluded. Then terminate the contact by saying good-bye and walking away or hanging up the phone. Email or other electronic contact regarding the incident should not be acknowledged.

Anyone contacted thus inappropriately should document the incident and report it to the Church Board president immediately in person or by phone (not email). The documentation should be filed with the Church Board.

Protection Rule Violation (Not Incident of Abuse)

If a staff member becomes aware (either through a child reporting or through direct observation) of an adult who appears to inadvertently fail to follow a protection rule, yet has not perpetrated an incident of abuse, molestation, or misconduct, the staff member should verbally remind the adult of the appropriate rule.

If the adult continues to violate the rule, the staff member must verbally report the incident(s) to a Co-op Director.

- The Co-op Director will document a report of an incident of failure to follow a protection rule. The Co-op Director will document persons involved, the time of the incident, and the person recording the incident.
- The Co-op Director will immediately report and file the documentation with the Church Board president.
- The Co-op Directors will contact the adult who has violated a protection rule by phone or in person (not by email) before the next co-op meeting day or event and discuss the matter, clarifying the rule. The Church Board president will document this conversation.

Child Protection Guide

- If an adult is cited for rule violation a second time (over the course of their participation in the co-op), the Co-op Directors will meet with the individual before the next co-op meeting day or event to determine the cause of the violation. The board will determine whether dismissal from the co-op is appropriate at such time.
- If an adult is cited for rule violation a third time (over the course of their participation in the co-op), the Co-op Directors will meet with the individual before the next co-op meeting day or event to inform him or her of the report and the individual will be immediately dismissed from the co-op. Such dismissal will be documented by the board.
- In the case of rule violation and/or dismissal only (no actual report of abuse, molestation or misconduct), no report to authorities will be made by the board.

In-service Prevention Training

Each regularly participating Co-op parent must attend annual inservice child protection training and sign that they have received such training. Training includes all information in this guide. The Co-op Directors will maintain records of training dates and attendance.

Screening- Background Checks

Adult staff

Because each regularly participating parent is a volunteer working directly with other people's children, our insurance requires that each participating parent has a formal background check. This is also becoming more and more common among all volunteer organizations who work with children. The background check will include:

- National Criminal Database Search
- National Sex Offender Registry Search
- SSN Verification and Address History Trace
- Automatic Re-Verification of Records and Possible Records
- Automatic Maiden/Alias Name Search
- 1 County or Statewide Court Search

Written permission will be obtained from each staff person before a background check is conducted. The information obtained in the background check will be kept in a secure location and strictly confidential, accessible only to the Co-Directors and members assigned to conduct the screening process.

Youth Volunteers (Age 12-17)

Any youth volunteering as a youth assistant in classes with younger children will have an interview by a Co-Director member to determine that the youth understands the definitions, concepts, and procedures explained in this guide as well as the youth's willingness to follow the procedures. A record will be kept that the interview was conducted.

Monitoring

Co-Op Directors will monitor Co-op activities, staff, and the facility regularly as follows:

- Classroom doors will usually remain open unless they have glass windows. However, they may be closed for short periods when necessary for noise control and only if two or more adults are present.

Child Protection Guide

- Closed bathroom doors, while appropriate under the circumstances described under “bathroom use,” are subject to random checks. Random checks will be made on activities to “see how things are going.” These checks should be viewed as safety checks for all adults and children as well as opportunities for general support.

A log will be kept of these monitoring activities including the date and time of each check.

Symptoms in Children

Sexual Abuse

The following are general behavior changes that may occur in children who have been sexually abused. These changes may also occur when there is physical or emotional abuse, or during stressful life circumstances, such as divorce or the death of a loved one:

- physical complaints; fear and dislike of certain people or places; sleep disturbances
- headaches; school problems; withdrawal from family, friends, or usual activities
- excessive bathing or poor hygiene; return to younger, more babyish behavior
- depression; anxiety; discipline problems; running away; eating disorders
- passive or overly pleasing behavior; delinquent acts; low self-esteem
- self-destructive behavior; hostility or aggression; drug or alcohol problems
- sexual activity or pregnancy at an early age; suicide attempts

Additional symptoms for children who have been abused more frequently:

- copying adult sexual behavior
- persistent sexual play with other children, themselves, toys or pets
- displaying sexual knowledge, through language or behavior, that is beyond what is normal for their age.
- unexplained swelling, bleeding or irritation of the mouth, genital or anal area, urinary infections, sexually transmitted diseases
- hints, indirect comments, or statements about abuse

Physical Abuse

- Visible marks of maltreatment such as cuts, bruises, welts, or well-defined burns
- reluctance to go to location of abuse

Emotional Abuse

- apathy; depression; hostility

Teaching Children

It is the responsibility of parents to teach their children at a developmentally appropriate level how to recognize and report to a trusted adult (such as the parent or other adult) physical; emotional; or sexual abuse, molestation, or misconduct.

Why Children Don't Report

- Often children do not tell anyone about sexual abuse because they:
- are too young to put what has happened into words.

Child Protection Guide

- were threatened or bribed by the abuser to keep the abuse a secret.
- feel confused by the attention and feelings accompanying the abuse.
- are afraid no one will believe them.
- blame themselves or believe the abuse is punishment for being “bad.”
- feel too ashamed or embarrassed to tell.
- worry about getting into trouble or getting a love one into trouble.

Silence enables abuse to continue. Silence protects offenders and hurts children who are being abused. All abuse, including sexual abuse, is an extremely difficult and damaging experience. Today there are many resources to help victims and their families. Children no longer need to suffer in silence.

Protection of Children from Sexual Abuse

As concerned parents, we want to protect children from sexual abuse, but we can't always be there to do that. We can, however, teach children about sexual abuse in order to increase their awareness and coping skills. Without frightening children, we can provide them with appropriate safety information and support at every stage of their development.

We can provide personal safety information to children in a matter-of-fact way, with other routine safety discussions about fire, water, health, etc. Although even the best educated child cannot always figure out sexual abuse, children who are well prepared will be more likely to tell you if abuse has occurred. This is a child's defense. In order to protect children, teach them:

- to feel good about themselves and know they are loved, valued, and deserve to be safe.
- the difference between safe and unsafe touches.
- the proper names for all body parts, so they will be able to communicate clearly.
- that safety rules apply to all adults, not just strangers.
- that their bodies belong to them and nobody has the right to touch them or hurt them.
- that they can say “no” to requests that make them feel uncomfortable- even from a close relative or family friend.
- to report to you if any adult asks them to keep a secret (explain the difference between a surprise, like a birthday gift, and a secret).
- that some adults have problems.
- that they can rely on you to believe and protect them if they talk to you about abuse.
- that they are not bad or to blame for sexual abuse.
- to tell a trusted adult about abuse even if they are afraid of what may happen.

DO:

- Keep calm. It is important to remember that you are not angry with the child, but at what happened. Children can mistakenly interpret anger or disgust as directed towards them.
- Believe the child. In most circumstances children do not lie about abuse.
- Give positive messages such as, “I know you couldn't help it,” or “I'm proud of you for telling.”
- Explain to the child that he or she is not to blame for what happened.
- Listen to and answer the child's questions honestly.

Child Protection Guide

- Respect the child's privacy. Be careful not to discuss the abuse in front of people who do not need to know what happened.
- Be responsible. Report the incident to the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. They can help protect the child's safety and provide resources for further help.
- Arrange a medical exam. It can reassure you that there has been no permanent damage and may verify important evidence.
- Get help. Get competent professional counseling, even if it's only for a short time.

DO NOT:

- Panic or overreact when the child talks about the experience. Children need help and support to make it through this difficult time.
- Pressure the child to talk or avoid talking about the abuse. Allow the child to talk at his or her own pace. Forcing information can be harmful.
- Silence the child. This will not help her or him to forget. o Confront the offender in the child's presence. The stress may be harmful. This is a job for the authorities.
- Blame the child. **SEXUAL ABUSE IS NEVER THE CHILD'S FAULT!!!** (The Sexual Assault Crisis Center)