

**Christian Life Center**

# **Child Protection Policy**

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## What Constitutes Child Abuse?

According to the Pennsylvania **Child Protective Services Law (CPSL)**, the definition of child sexual abuse or exploitation is:

“The employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement or coercion of any child to engage in or assist any other person to engage in any sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of any sexually explicit conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction, including photographing, videotaping, computer, depicting or filming, of any sexually explicit conduct or the rape, sexual assault, involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, aggravated indecent assault, molestation, incest, indecent exposure, prostitution, statutory sexual assault, or other form of sexual exploitation of children.”

Child abuse according to the Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) includes: serious recent\* physical injury which is non-accidental; mental injury which is non-accidental; **sexual abuse\*\*** or serious physical neglect of children under the age of 18 caused by the acts or omissions of a perpetrator. \**“Recent”* is defined as an abusive act within two years from the date CHILDLINE is called. \*\***SEXUAL ABUSE has NO time limit.**

## According to Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law, *who* is required to report suspected child abuse?

“Persons who, in the course or their employment, occupation or practice of their profession, come into contact with children shall report or cause a report to be made in accordance with section 6313 (relating to reporting procedure) when they have reasonable cause to suspect on the basis of their medical, professional or other training and experience, that a child coming before them in their professional or official capacity is an abused child.”

This means the Children’s or Youth Pastor, or any member of their paid staff is responsible for making the proper report.

## What is your response to suspected child abuse as a lay volunteer worker?

- We believe that all children/youth workers have a personal responsibility and moral obligation to report any suspected abuse to the staff person directly in charge of the activity in which the suspected abuse has occurred.
- To protect every child in our care at *Christian Life Center* we desire you to report any and all suspicions to the Department Staff in charge. The appropriate paid staff will then follow state reporting procedures.

## ☑ Where does *Christian Life Center* stand on the disclosure of child sexual abuse?

If *Christian Life Center* becomes aware of a situation within our church, we will follow the state mandated guidelines and report **the incident** as well as **the offender** to the proper authorities. Even though we believe that God can forgive someone who commits such an act against a child, *Christian Life Center* will in no way ignore, or cover up such an offense.

To aid in the healing process of any victim of child sexual abuse, *Christian Life Center* will cooperate with the proper authorities in an effort to seek justice for any victim.

## ☑ Possible Behavioral & Emotional Indicators of Sexual Abuse

(Compiled by “Center Against Sexual Assault”)

### Infants and Preschoolers

1. Regressive behaviors
2. Persistent and repeated sexualized play
3. Persistent masturbatory behaviors
4. Sexual awareness and knowledge that is precocious for a child’s age
5. Profound change in sleep patterns
6. Sudden, unexplainable fear of person(s) or place(s)

### Latency Age Children

1. Emotional detachment/dissociation
2. Persistent and inappropriate sexualized behaviors
3. Excessive masturbation
4. Eating disorders
5. Angry, aggressive behaviors
6. Self-destructive behaviors
7. Depressed, withdrawn behaviors
8. Sleep disturbances
9. School related problems

### Adolescents

1. Drug and/or alcohol abuse
2. Self-destructive behaviors and relationships
3. Eating disorders
4. Power/control struggles
5. Inability to trust
6. Promiscuous sexual behaviors
7. Poor self-image, feelings of worthlessness
8. Runaway behaviors
9. Depression

#### **NOTE:**

**No one indicator is proof that a child has been sexually abused.**

**It may suggest that there is a possible problem when children display several of the indicators.**

**To protect the children under our care, we have established the following guidelines for all those who desire to work with children and youth under eighteen years of age.**

- You are required to attend the church for at least six months before becoming involved in children/youth ministry on a regular basis.
- You must complete and sign the Volunteer Application(s) and Background Check Authorization along with the accompanying request for reference reports.
- You must be personally interviewed and trained in *Christian Life Center's* Child Protection Policies.
- You may work only after receiving approval from the screening committee.

**Appropriate Behavioral Guidelines for children/youth workers.**

- ***Two-Adult Rule:*** Two approved adults should be present during any church activity. Preferably one of these adults should be a parent of one of the participating children or youth, or at a minimum, someone over 21 years of age.
- ***Rule of Three:*** There will never be fewer than three persons in any given situation. Multiple adults with one child or multiple children with one adult are permissible.
- ***Parental Permission:*** In a situation where an adult has a legitimate reason to be alone with a child, parental consent should be obtained, and departmental leaders are to be notified in advance.
- ***Open Door Policy:*** When possible, doors should be left open so that persons passing by can observe inside.
- ***Overnight Rule:*** All adult chaperons, (supervisors, sponsors, parents, and helpers), must be cleared by the screening committee before they can accompany children/youth on an overnight activity.

- **Empty Room Policy:** When leaving an empty room, after an activity, (where possible) lock and check the door as you leave. This will prevent anyone from taking a child into that room without permission.
- **Expressions of Affection:** Adults must use caution when allowing expression of affection toward children/youth.
  - ✓ Respect a child's/youth's refusal of affection
  - ✓ Never make a child/youth feel uncomfortable
  - ✓ Be aware of where you place your hands. "Shoulders and above" are to be the norm. (a pat on the bottom or bear hug could be misinterpreted by a child or an observer)
  - ✓ A body-to-body embrace, a touch on private areas (those areas covered by a bathing suit), or any type of kiss is **taboo**.

**True expressions of affection contribute to a warm, healthy relationship. Don't stop loving and touching children, just remember to place reasonable limits on physical interaction.**

## **Should an abusive situation take place, what is my role in the public perception?**

If an abusive situation should occur at *Christian Life Center*, we would make the proper reports to all required agencies. Situations like these are difficult for the families of all the parties involved. It is our hope to assist the victim of child abuse/sexual abuse with total recovery. It will also be our expectancy to see that the offender receives help, after the appropriate punitive requirements.

We desire to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved. The Senior Pastor, Official Board, or someone assigned by them, will be the official spokesperson for the church. If the press or public questions anyone to speak on the issue, please refer them to the official spokesperson.

This will help keep confidentiality for the victim and his/her family in a very difficult time.

**Thank you for your cooperation in protecting the children of our church.**

# Discipline Without Abuse

We at *Christian Life Center* never discipline minors in any manner that could be considered abusive. Always try to follow the guidelines below for preventing discipline problems when working with children and youth.

1. Inform children of your expectations and the results of not meeting those expectations. This should be done at the very beginning of a class or activity. State the reason infractions of the rules cannot be tolerated.  
  
(EXAMPLE: “Anyone found in the parking lot area will receive ten minutes of time out. As cars enter the parking lot, they are looking for empty parking spaces, and many times are not watching for children playing. We do not want any children to get hurt.”)
2. Use quiet seats, time out, creative seating, or parental conferences.
3. If you are still frustrated, speak to your department supervisor.
4. We at *Christian Life Center* **will not** tolerate corporal punishment as a valid form of discipline.
  - This means no spanking, hitting, slapping, poking, pushing, biting choking, hair-pulling, finger-flicking, etc.
  - Physical discipline is to be administered by parents only.
5. Yelling and screaming should not be used as a form of discipline.
  - Monitor your volume, tone, and body language.
  - When dealing with a discipline problem speak in a firm but controlled tone and volume.
6. We will not hold back meals or food as a form of discipline.  
(Example: Not feeding a child on a camping trip)

We want to preserve a child’s dignity and caution ourselves against damaging their spirit and emotions. Follow these guidelines in interacting with minors:

- Be careful not to embarrass a child. Never make light of a child’s weight or other physical features.
- Be careful not to belittle a child. Never call a child names because of poor performance of behavior.
- Treat children with the same respect you want to be given.

**Acknowledgment of Receipt of and Compliance to  
Christian Life Center's  
Child Protection Policy**

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I acknowledge receipt of, and pledge my compliance to, this policy, and have no further questions regarding the content thereof.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date