

Rules & Boundaries For Volunteers Working With Children And Youth

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In working with children and youth, establishing a strong relationship is a necessary prerequisite

- ▶ They will reject the message if they don't know and trust the messenger

- ▶ This relationship must contain:


 - A belief that you have their best interest at heart


 - A belief that you love and care for them unconditionally

 - A belief that you have something of value to offer
(wisdom, insight, experience, etc.)



Once this special relationship is established, children and youth will:

- Lower their defenses
 - Become trusting and vulnerable
 - Become receptive and listen to what you tell them
 - Become influenced by the guidance and direction you offer
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When these relationship objectives are established by an adult who is committed to the welfare and best interest of children and youth under their care, we call this mentoring, teaching coaching, disciple training, etc.

But, when the same strategy is employed by an adult who is placing their own self serving interests and sexual needs above the welfare of children or youth, we call this "predatory" or "grooming" behavior.




TRAITS OF HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

- Clearly defined and roles, rules, boundaries, policies, standards, etc.
- Healthy relationship systems (family, church, military, sports team, business, etc.) are organized hierarchically.
 - Authority
 - Accountability
 - Supervision and oversight
 - When the order is compromised, the system acts to restore




Traits Of Unhealthy Relationships

- The person in the superior position uses the power and influence of their rank to subtly control their subordinate
 - Rules and boundaries are changed as needed to accomplish this objective
 - There is insufficient accountability or authority elsewhere in the system to stop this process
 - "The elephant in the living room"
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Risk Management In The Church


- ▶ Churches in our area have been particularly vulnerable to negative media coverage regarding children and youth being sexually mistreated by leaders, employees and/or volunteers.
- ▶ Whether such allegations are ultimately found to be true or false, they are always detrimental to the evangelical and discipleship missions of the church, and the perception that church is a safe place to send our children.
- ▶ With these concerns in mind, we are strongly recommending that each church or church program establishes an official policy that incorporates the following rules and boundaries for those working with children and youth

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1. Do not give any gift personally from yourself. The source of the gift should be identified as coming from the church, youth program, specific ministry of the church, etc. This includes lending money or personally purchasing an item for them.
 2. Be aware of playing favorites with any one particular individual. Keep your efforts and attention balanced across several.
 3. Do not be alone with one individual, particularly in situations outside of sanctioned church events and activities.
 4. Do not engage in any physical display of affection in any private setting.
 5. Make no promise of confidentiality in private communications. Only clergy, licensed mental health professionals, and other professionals defined by law can do so, and even then there are limits to what may be kept secret.
 6. All electronic communication (texting, email, social media, etc.) with youth must also be copied to at least one additional adult. Ideally, this third party should be one of the parents.
 7. Be accountable on a regularly scheduled basis to at least one other adult for your interactions with children and youth.
 8. If you observe another volunteer or staff person engaging in behavior that appears to be violating a rule or boundary established by your church, do something!
 9. Department of Homeland Security motto: "SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING!"



See Something...Say Something

- ▶ The following slides will define the "something(s)" that require response: clear communication to defined authorities
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In order of high risk to low(er) risk management what MUST you report by law, and what SHOULD you report locally to your pastor or minister in charge

MUSTS:


- Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Sexual Exploitation
- Neglect
- imminent harm to self or others

Should's:


- behavior that appears to mimic grooming:
- one on one meetings without another adult present - bending the rules just this time
- secretive communication between volunteer and child that does not include a parent or guardian
- "you can tell me, I won't tell your parents"





Oklahoma State law (10 O.S. § 7103 *et seq.*) requires every person, private citizen or professional, who has reason to believe that a child under the age of 18 is being abused and/or neglected, or is in danger of being abused, to promptly report the suspicion to the statewide hotline (1-800-522-3511).



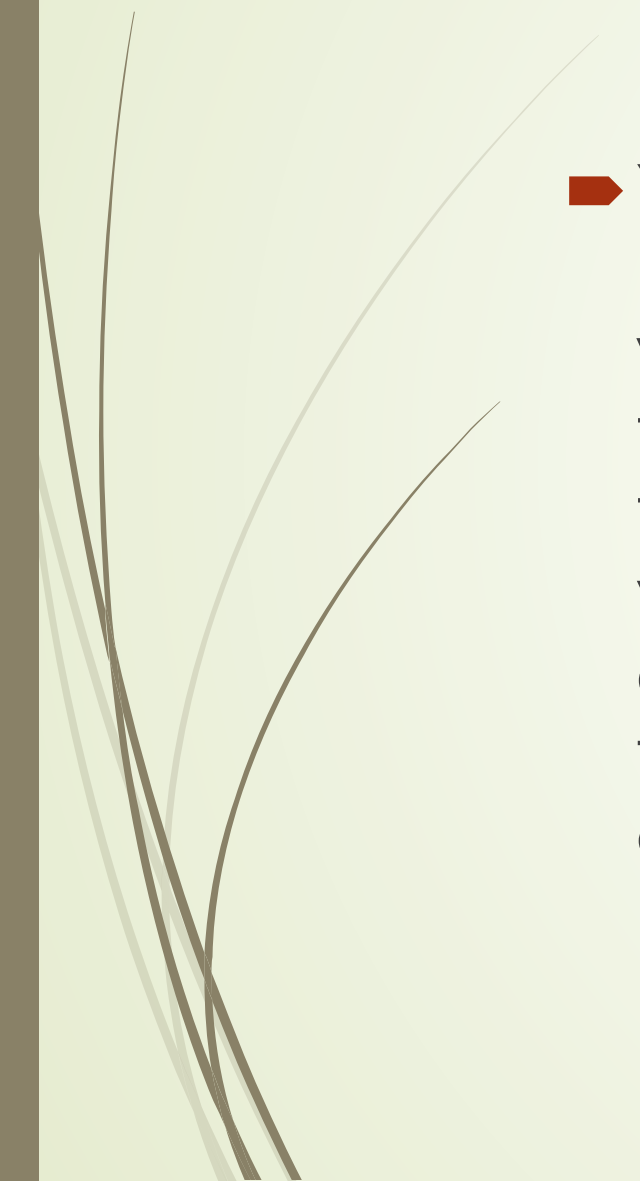
Failure to report suspected abuse is a crime – legally and morally. No person, regardless of his or her relationship with the child or family, is exempt from reporting suspected abuse. A person reporting in good faith; however, is immune from both civil and criminal prosecution.



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- But these things don't happen in our community
 - Required to report if you have "reason to believe" or suspect that a child is "in danger of being abused"
 - Does the incident make you think twice? Does it make your eyebrows raise? "I wonder if..."



Do you report if...

- ▶ You (and another responsible adult) take turns helping young ones with a bathroom break and you happen to see, while a little boy pulls his trousers down (as kids do) to relieve himself in the #1 position, that the back of his thighs are varying colors of black/blue/yellow bruising. You don't say anything to the boy at the moment for fear of embarrassing him, but you do tell your colleague. Any other responses or actions needed?
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Do you have to report if...

- ▶ A family is visiting the church on a Sunday morning and brings their children to Sunday School. When it comes time for parents to pick up their children, you engage the parent of the visiting family in small talk about where they are from, where do their kids go to school, what brought them to church today. Shortly into the conversation, the parent says to you "I'm worried about my sister's kids. Her husband often leaves bruises on them when he spanks them. Do you think that's right?" You respond about the role of discipline and express concern over the possibility that children may be exposed to harm. Should you do anything else?



Do you report if...

- ▶ You know that a couple of families spend a lot of time together in community outside of church, but at church, you see the mom of one of the families who also volunteers in Wednesday night activities spend the majority of the evening one-on-one with the other families daughter. They often find mostly isolated places in the room to sit to the side and converse quietly, almost secretively. Does it make your eyebrows raise? If this is an example of "seeing something" what do you say and to whom?