

CHAPTER TWO

For Children's/ Youth Workers:

KEEPING
KIDS SAFE



Practical Ways to Protect Children

"See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven." (Matthew 18:10)

You serve in this ministry because you love kids. Nothing satisfies a committed children's worker more than seeing a child grow in Christ. Real spiritual growth can only take place in a safe environment—a place where kid questions and their journey to God are honored and protected. This child protection training will teach you about the very real problem of child sexual abuse and its devastating effects in faith communities. Thankfully, there is hope. Because of people like you, children in ministry programs everywhere are better protected. The same love that compelled you to answer the call to serve in this ministry is the love that will inspire you to implement the protection policies you'll learn here.



Training Overview

For Children's/Youth Workers (approximately 2 hours)

WHAT'S THE GOAL OF THIS TRAINING?

- To train children's/youth ministry workers on your child protection principles.
- To inspire ministry workers to keep kids safe at church.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

- All workers of programs geared toward children and youth—whether full-time or occasional—should attend this session.

WHAT WILL I NEED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS TRAINING?

- *Reducing the Risk* Training DVD, or online access to **ReducingTheRisk.com** for individual training
- *Reducing the Risk* Trainee Workbook and pen



Let's Get Started

Today, you'll learn about the problem of child sexual abuse in ministries and how to keep kids safe from this tragedy. Keeping kids safe is the first priority of children's/youth ministries. If children aren't safe, whether physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually—you can't effectively minister to them.

- **View Video #1: "Child Protection as the Foundation of Your Ministry."**

Notes:

- **View Video #2: "A Victim's Story."**

Notes:

OPEN FOR DISCUSSION:

- Why did you choose to serve in children's or youth ministry?
- Based on the first two DVD segments, what initial impressions do you have about our efforts to provide a safe environment for children?
- What should children and their parents reasonably expect from us as children's/youth workers when they participate in our programs?
- How did the "Victim's Story" make you feel? What parts of that DVD segment especially stood out to you?

Fill in the blanks:

When it comes to _____, many people still don't believe that the _____ is real.

When a child has a good ministry experience, he is more likely to _____ in his faith and stay involved with the _____. When a child is a victim of sexual abuse in a faith community, the _____ are devastating and last the child's _____.

Our ministry is committed to being the safest place on Earth for children to grow in their faith. The first way we practice this principle is by following a consistent, thorough screening process. The second step we take toward safeguarding kids is establishing policies for supervision. Our next DVD segment will highlight several common scenarios you're likely to encounter in ministry, and you'll have a chance as a group to brainstorm solutions in between each scene.

■ **View Video #8: "Supervising Scenarios: What Would You Do?"**

Notes:

The Toddler Room: *What would you do?*

Preschoolers: *What would you do?*

Middle Schoolers: *What would you do?*

High Schoolers: *What would you do?*

Now that you've considered each of the scenarios in the video, let's look at our ministry's supervision policies and guidelines, and expectations for behavior by leaders.

Fill in the blanks:

Our ministry's supervision policies include: _____.

I am expected to: _____.

The three factors that determine the level of risk include _____, _____, and _____.

Let's practice using supervision principles on one more scenario. Analyze the situation using the three risk factors of isolation, accountability, and power.

Example: *You serve as a volunteer worker with the high school ministry. The pastor introduces you to Brett, a son of committed church members, who has come home from college to be a summer ministry intern. Three weeks later, your group has a day-long outing at the lake. Several times you notice that, while Brett plays in the lake with a group of kids, a lot of physical contact with several girls occurs. Later in the day you notice Brett giving a neck massage to a girl during a rest period.*

- Does such behavior warrant any response?
- What should you do after witnessing Brett's behavior?



Going Deeper

Reporting Procedures for Children's/Youth Workers

Child sexual abuse thrives when it goes unnoticed or unreported. Often, an abusive situation continues because of someone's failure to report it. As a children's/youth worker you need to know what constitutes an occasion for reporting, the reporting channels you should use, and your obligations to make a report.


REPORTING OBLIGATIONS

An effective reporting procedure enhances the effort to protect children. Ordinarily, child molesters will not remain in a ministry where workers are trained to identify symptoms of child abuse and are encouraged to report suspicious behavior. Child abusers thrive on secrecy and are more likely to commit criminal acts in organizations where they go unnoticed.

STATE COMPLIANCE — A LEGAL OBLIGATION

Every state has a mandatory reporting law that specifies the following:

- What constitutes child abuse.
- Those persons (“mandatory reporters”) who are legally responsible for reporting known and reasonably suspected cases of abuse. Most states require a direct report to a state agency.
- The length of time required to make a report. In most states, those providing professional care or services to children have a 48-hour period to make a report. In some states, an oral report is due within 24 hours.
- The nature and content of the report. Many states permit the reporter to remain anonymous. However, if an individual desires to remain anonymous, the report should be made over the phone in the presence of an attorney or other independent witness who can verify later, if necessary, the identity of the reporter. This may become important if the reporter later is charged with negligence for failing to make a report. If no witnesses to the report exist, and the report is done anonymously, providing a defense becomes problematic.
- The social agencies or department to be contacted. In some states, reports can be made to law enforcement officers.
- The criminal penalties for failing to report. Failure to report may be punishable by a fine or jail sentence.
- Protection from legal and civil litigation if the report is made in good faith.

 **Tip** Be sure to check your state child abuse reporting laws regularly. State legislatures tend to amend these laws often, and children's/youth workers need to be aware of any such changes. Richard Hammar publishes an annual state-by-state listing of child sexual abuse reporting laws. Visit ReducingTheRisk.com for more information.



- **View Video #9: “Responding to an Allegation.”**

Notes:

- In **“Responding to an Allegation,”** Jasmine recounted the steps she and her church took in order to respond to an allegation of an abuse with a youth worker and a young girl. How would you have responded to these allegations?

- Who would you report an incident to if you suspected a child had been abused by a co-worker in your ministry?

- **View Video #10: “Taking the Next Step.”**

Notes:

PERSONAL COMMITMENT

Congratulations! You’ve just completed one of the most important training opportunities of your ministry. Please take a minute to reflect on your personal commitment to protecting children from being abused in our ministry. The final step in your training is to take the test at the back of this book. Please tear it out and turn in your completed test to your supervisor. You may be asked to repeat child protection training periodically.

P R E V E N T I N G C H I L D S E X U A L A B U S E T E S T

PREVENTING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE TEST:

Please indicate whether the following statements are true or false.

1. Child sexual abuse always involves physical contact with children.
 true false
2. Most child molesters are male.
 true false
3. Child molesters are usually strangers to the victim.
 true false
4. Victims of sexual abuse suffer no long-term effects.
 true false
5. Most ministries screen workers for potential molesters.
 true false
6. Ministry leaders cannot be held liable for child sexual abuse.
 true false
7. A child molester who has experienced a religious conversion no longer presents a threat to children.
 true false

Choose the correct answers for the following questions.

10. Which of the following are risk factors as they pertain to supervision?
 - a) isolation
 - b) arrogance
 - c) small rooms
 - d) accountability
 - e) power

11. When a child has been abused, or an accusation has been made, what are the ministry's next steps?
- a) take it seriously
 - b) document the allegation
 - c) take it to a state agency
 - d) provide support for the victim
 - e) all of the above
12. *(For Ministry Leaders only)* What four steps should every ministry take during the screening process?
- a) personal interview
 - b) give a written test
 - c) reference checks
 - d) written application
 - e) observe applicant with children
 - f) background check

Answer the following questions. (For Ministry Leaders only)

13. What makes a ministry susceptible to sex offenders?
14. Who do sex offenders “groom” as discussed in the Roundtable video segment?
15. What is one thing you’ve learned about ministry liability concerning child sexual abuse?

Upon completion of this test, tear it out and turn it in to your supervisor.

Ministry Volunteer Background Check Consent Form

Date: _____

I hereby authorize Sugar Creek Missionary Baptist Church to receive any criminal history record information pertaining to me, which may be in the files of any national, state or local criminal justice agency. This may also include my driving record if deemed necessary by church staff.

FULL NAME (please print) _____

DATE OF BIRTH _____

SOCIAL SECURITY _____ SEX _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE NUMBER _____

Email _____

SIGNATURE _____

*To protect your privacy, this document will be destroyed after background check is completed.

Ministry Volunteer Background Check Consent Form

Date: _____

I hereby authorize Sugar Creek Missionary Baptist Church to receive any criminal history record information pertaining to me, which may be in the files of any national, state or local criminal justice agency. This may also include my driving record if deemed necessary by church staff.

FULL NAME (please print) _____

DATE OF BIRTH _____

SOCIAL SECURITY _____ SEX _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE NUMBER _____

Email _____

SIGNATURE _____

*To protect your privacy, this document will be destroyed after background check is completed.