



# Woodland Presbyterian Church Safe Conduct Training: Abuse/Prevention



Spring 2018 Source: Presbytery of Sacramento

# Rationale

- As a Christian Community...
- We are called to provide a safe environment for individuals in our care.
- We are called to intercede on a person's behalf if he or she experiences abuse, neglect or exploitation.
- We are called to protect our volunteers, officers and staff from malicious and false reports of intentionally harmful acts.



# Definitions

- Child: Any person under 18 years of age.
  - General Assembly (G.A) defines “child” as birth – 11 years
  - G.A. defines “youth” as 12-17 years
  - Minors are defined as any individual birth through 17 years
  
- Elder Adult: Any person 65 years or older.
  
- Dependent Adult: Someone between the ages of 18 and 64 that has certain mental or physical disabilities that keep him or her from being able to do normal activities or protect himself or herself.

# Reality Check...

- According to [www.childhelp.org](http://www.childhelp.org), child abuse occurs at every socioeconomic level, across ethnic and cultural lines, within all religions and at all levels of education.
- More than 4 children die every day in the U.S. due to abuse. Every 10 seconds a report of suspected abuse is made.

# Reality Check...

- According to the Department of Health and Human Services, approximately 7-10% of elder adults are abused each year (excluding financial abuse).
- For Dependent Adults, the lifetime prevalence of abuse reaches as high as 90%. Those with greater degrees of disability are more likely to have been abused at some point.

# A Sampling of Statistics... (As of 9/7/17)

- Within 10 miles, there are
  - 297 registered sex offenders near Shepherd of the Sierra PC
  - 10 registered sex offenders near First Pres., Colusa
  - 76 registered sex offenders near Davis Community Church
  - 1538 registered sex offenders near Celtic Cross PC
  - 85 registered sex offenders near PC Red Bluff
  - 1522 registered sex offenders near Westminster PC
  - 93 registered sex offenders near El Dorado Federated
  - 13 registered sex offenders near Burney PC

# What Is Child Abuse?

- CA Law: An act of omission or commission that endangers a child's physical or emotional health and development.

# What Is Elder or Dependent Adult Abuse? (CA Law)

- Physical abuse, neglect, financial abuse, abandonment, isolation, abduction, or other behavior that causes physical harm, pain, or mental suffering; OR
- Deprivation by a caregiver of things or services that the elder or dependent adult needs to avoid physical harm or mental suffering.



# The Law & Mandated Reporters

- The PC(USA) *Book of Order 2015/2017* mandates that any member engaged in ordered ministry (teaching elders, ruling elders, deacons, and certified Christian educators) report to ecclesiastical and civil authorities suspected abuse, neglect or molestation when such knowledge is attained outside of a privileged communication or when there is risk of “future physical harm or abuse.” (G-4.0302.)
- CA law defines a “Mandated Reporter” as one who in the course of *employment* has a special relationship or contact with children or the home.

# CA Law: Mandated Reporters

- Must be informed by their employers that they are Mandated Reporters.
- As a condition of employment, must sign a statement provided by the employer stating that he/she has knowledge of the law, understands provisions for making reports, and will comply with the law.

## Volunteers – CA Law

- b) Except as provided in paragraph (35) of subdivision (a)[CASA Volunteers], volunteers of public or private organizations whose duties require direct contact with and supervision of children are not mandated reporters but are encouraged to obtain training in the identification and reporting of child abuse and neglect and are further encouraged to report known or suspected instances of child abuse or neglect to an agency specified in Section 11165.9.

# Reporting & Confidentiality

- **California Penal Code Section 11167**
- A Mandated Reporter's name is to be held confidential at all times and can only be shared:
  - Between Child Protective Agencies
  - With Child Protective Agency's Council
  - With the Child's Council
  - With the District Attorney in cases of:
    - Criminal Prosecution
    - Parental Rights Termination
  - With Licensing Agencies in Abuse Cases in Out-of-Home Care
  - By Court Order
  - If the Mandated Reporter Waives Confidentiality
- And – Never to the Mandated Reporter's employer except by consent or Court Order

# How to Report Suspected Abuse or Neglect to Civil Authorities

- Immediately, or as soon as practically possible, call civil authorities to make a *verbal* report.
  - Sheriff's Department
  - Police Department
  - Child Protective Services
  - Other civil authority in your jurisdiction
- File a *written* report within 36 hours. See DOJ form SS 8572.

# How to Report Suspected Abuse or Neglect to Ecclesiastical Authorities

- Immediately, or as soon as practically possible, call identified church authorities to make a *verbal* report. This may or may not have been defined at your site. Potential authorities:
  - Pastor
  - Moderator or Clerk of Session
  - WPC Safety Committee
    - Committee members are the Pastor, Personnel Committee, Director of Preschool, Elder for Children and Youth.
  - Sac Presbytery's COM
  - Executive Presbyter or Stated Clerk
- File a *written* report within 36 hours. See DOJ form SS

# “Best Practices” Guidelines for Working with Dependent Adults, Children, and Youth



# Guidelines: Staff & Volunteers

- All volunteers and staff members working with children or dependent adults should complete an application process, including background check and/or fingerprint clearance with county, state or federal agencies, or, with insurance-approved background check providers (ex: Praesidium, Inc.). Note: WPC pays for the Live-Scan of volunteers and employees. The WPC Office Manager schedules this appointment for you, please email Woodland Presbyterian Church <[info@woodlandpresbyterianchurch.org](mailto:info@woodlandpresbyterianchurch.org)> with your availability.
- Volunteer Application is available at: <http://woodlandpresbyterianchurch.org/index.php?nid=44585&s=rs>



# More Guidelines

- All volunteers, elders, deacons, and staff should complete an *annual* training program to educate them in recognizing, preventing and reporting abuse and neglect.
- Training may cover: current law, signs of abuse or neglect, procedures to protect children and dependent adults, procedures to protect volunteers, and procedures for reporting suspected abuse.

# Protecting *Everyone*

- All events and gatherings should be considered public and open.
- “Two Caregiver Rule” – Whenever possible, a single caregiver should not be left alone with a single child or dependent adult, unless written permission is obtained from the parent or guardian.
- In the case of a single caregiver and a small group of minors or vulnerable adults, easy visual access should be maintained into the meeting area. (Open windows/doors, no blinds.)

# Exceptions

- During the course of mentorship, counseling, or other one-on-one activity, a single adult should obtain permission from the parent or guardian to meet with the child or vulnerable adult on a one-to-one basis.
- In the case of an emergency or urgent need, a single child or vulnerable adult may be left in the care of a single caregiver if a second caregiver is unavailable or tending to an urgent situation or emergency. Example: On an outing, one adult may transport one student to/from emergency or urgent care while a second adult remains with the group.

# More Protection

- For individuals requiring help with toileting, the following are recommended:
  - Sibling accompaniment
  - Two caregivers with open stall doors (young child) or open exterior doors (vulnerable adult)
- Permission Slips and Medical Release/Information Forms should be kept on file for all events outside of normal worship hours.

# Making a Report

- Any parent or volunteer who suspects abuse, neglect or exploitation, is encouraged to report the suspected abuse to a staff member or any civil authority.
- Staff members and ordered officers, as mandated reporters, shall make an immediate verbal report, followed by the filing of DOJ Form SS 8572, to civil authorities. (Form available in WPC Safety Policy).

# Who Can You Contact if You Suspect Abuse at Your Church?

- Any civil or legal authority
- Pastor – Employee/Mandated Reporter
- Employed Directors of Youth & Children
- Officers (Elders, Deacons)
- Sac Presbytery's Executive Presbyter, Stated Clerk, or COM

# What Are the Signs of Physical Abuse?

- Injuries that are inconsistent with the explanation provided for the injury.
- Injuries that appear on the face, back, or multiple places on the body.
- Bruises or fractures in different states of healing, indicating repeated trauma.
- Burns, especially with defined edges

# Behavioral Indicators

- Hostile
- Aggressive
- Destructive
- Secretive
- Wary of contact
- Clingy
- Showing signs of depression, substance abuse, sleeping or eating disorders



## Other Indicators

- Individual states that injury was caused by abuse.
- Knowledge that the injury is not typical for the individual's age or ability.
- Parent or guardian does not seek medical attention for the injuries.

# Signs of Neglect: Extreme or Persistent Presence of:

- Failure to thrive or grow
- Malnutrition
- Poor personal hygiene
- Inadequate supervision
- Inappropriate dress for the weather
- Clinginess, depression, apathy, fearfulness, sleepiness or hunger, destructive behavior, “forgetfulness” (when a compromised memory is not at play)

# Indicators of Emotional Abuse

- Withdrawn, depressed or apathetic
- Clingy
- Hostile or provocative
- Sleep or eating disorders
- Repetitive rhythmic movements (Exception: Autism Spectrum Disorder)
- Toileting accidents
- Substance abuse

# Indicators of Sexual Abuse

- An indirect or direct report by the individual
- Physical indications include: torn or stained underclothing, physical trauma, abdominal pain, pain in toileting, difficulty walking or sitting, sexually transmitted disease, psychosomatic symptoms.

# Sexual Abuse: Behavioral Indicators in Children & Teens

- Unusual guilt or shame
- Precociously sexualized behavior
- Excessive curiosity about sexual things
- Seductive behavior with others
- Fear of certain places or spaces
- Fear of certain individuals
- Fear and denial, especially if the abuse is in the family

# Scenario for Discussion

You are serving as a volunteer on a mission trip with teenagers. You want to get to know one of the kids better, so you decide to take a drive with the teen.

Is this permissible? Under what conditions? Other thoughts?

# Possible Responses

- Not permissible
- Only permissible if two or more adults or two or more youth are present.
- Better practice: Find an open/public place to meet with the youth.

# Scenario for Discussion

You are volunteering at VBS. The day is unbelievably hot and kids are shedding their morning sweatshirts. One child is sweating profusely, but will not take off her sweatshirt.

Your thoughts? Potential action?



# Possible Responses

- Perhaps the child is hiding bruises.
- Perhaps the child only has a sweatshirt with no tee-shirt underneath.
- Perhaps the child has a poor self-image.
- Offer a spare tee-shirt. Refer your concerns if child refuses your offer.

# Scenario for Discussion

You are an ordained ruling or teaching elder, or a deacon. A member of the congregation tells you that another adult in the congregation is abusing her child.

What do you do?

# Possible Responses

- Make a verbal report to the sheriff and/or child protective services, followed by a written report.
- Make a verbal report to the designated authority in your church (Pastor, Administrator, Clerk of Session, COM, or other designated authority)
- Avoid engaging in investigative activity. It is essential that this be left to civil authorities.
- Ensure that the adult in question is withheld from lists of approved volunteers until resolved.

Thank you for your attendance!



- Thank you for completing this training. Please send an email to the WPC office manager acknowledging you have read and understood this training.
- WPC [info@woodlandpresbyterianchurch.org](mailto:info@woodlandpresbyterianchurch.org)