

REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE



Situations regarding minors and abuse can be hard to navigate. It's difficult to be in a situation, where your suspicion and assessment, could potentially cause a lot of upheaval in a family. **Remember this:** your responsibility is only to uphold the policies and procedures of this church established to protect children. If you are made aware of a possible abusive situation, keep in mind that the burden of proof does not depend on you; the system will decide the particulars. Your responsibility is to measure all suspicious incidents against the following guideline provided by Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS):

'When any person... has reason to believe that a child has been subjected to incest, molestation, sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, physical abuse, or neglect, or who observes a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances which would reasonably result in sexual abuse, physical abuse, or neglect, he shall immediately notify the nearest peace office, law enforcement agency or office of the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS)'

PROCEDURE FOR KIDS CHURCH VOLUNTEERS:

1. **Potential physical abuse.** If you notice any unexplained signs of physical abuse, including: bruises, welts, lacerations or abrasions; burns, fractures or sprains; head injuries; shaken baby syndrome. Do this:
 - a. If age appropriate, ask the child how the injury occurred.
 - b. Share the information with the designated team leader.
2. **Potential sexual abuse.** If a child uses inappropriate sexual words or actions toward other children or a volunteer:
 - a. Pull the child aside and ask:
 - i. "Where have you seen or heard this information?"
 - ii. "Has someone done that to you?"
 - b. Share the information with the designated team leader.

PROCEDURE FOR KIDS CHURCH DIRECTOR:

Evaluate the information against the DCFS guidelines above, and do this:

- a. If it is clear that the situation does not merit action with DCFS:
 - i. Share the incident with the parent and keep a watchful eye on the child.
 - ii. Document the incident and share it immediately with the designated pastor or leader.
- b. If you have any reason to believe that the safety of the child is at risk:
 - i. Document the incident and share it immediately with the designated pastor or leader.
 - ii. Report concerns to DCFS.

Note: It is best for the person who first discovered the abuse to make the call to DCFS, however, it is permissible for the director or pastor to make the call on behalf of the volunteer. Reporting is confidential and those reporting will not be brought into any civil or criminal case.

Pastors and directors should verify that this information is correct and up-to-date.

INCIDENT REPORT

Team leaders: (1) use this space to document a reported incident and (2) submit this form to the designated pastor or leader.