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OREGON CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

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Jesus loves to minister to children. Today, we have the privilege of volunteering our time, talents, and service in numerous ways to help fulfill the gospel commission. As a volunteer you have the privilege of working with children, one of God's most precious gifts. Beyond protecting children from abuse, we also desire to empower volunteers to help kids grow in their experience and understanding of Jesus and His saving grace. So we encourage you to walk with God daily, letting His love fill you up and spill over to the kids you serve.

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY (CPP) AND PROCEDURES

MISSION

Our mission is to provide a safe, spiritual and abuse-free environment for every child who attends programs and activities of the Oregon Conference Seventh-day Adventist Church.

PURPOSE

It is our purpose to prevent any form of child abuse, physical, emotional, or sexual and to protect employees and volunteers from false allegations. Our Organization will work in partnership together with children and parents to promote the welfare, health and development of children. Child protection is everyone's responsibility.

All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, socio-economic status, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from all forms of harm and abuse.

PRINCIPLE

Zero tolerance of child abuse: Child abuse is not tolerated by the Oregon Conference of Seventh-day Adventist. Our organization will not knowingly engage, directly or indirectly, anyone who poses an unacceptable risk to children.

Sharing responsibility for child protection: To effectively manage risks to children, the Oregon Conference requires the

active support and cooperation of ministers, all church members, leaders and volunteers implementing the safety procedures in any and all activities.

DEFINITION

Child abuse is “any treatment of a child that threatens his/her safety or leaves in his/her life physical or emotional scars¹.” It constitutes any inappropriate physical contact, sexual contact or communication by any adult through use of their authority over a child. Abuse can also occur between two children. Even if a child out of ignorance, innocence or fear does not resist, it is still abuse.

Physical abuse is any injury to a child which has been caused by other than accidental means, including any injury which appears to be at variance with the explanation of the injury.

Emotional abuse is any verbal communication that harms a child, such as harsh criticism, degrading, belittling, threats, disparaging name-calling, unnecessary shouting, demeaning terminology, unrealistic demands for perfection, violent or obscene language, etc.

Sexual abuse violates a child’s sexual privacy whether by fondling, visually or by verbal remarks. It includes fondling of any intimate parts of the child’s body, oral, genital and/or anal penetration by any foreign object, oral, genital or anal sexual intercourse, telling a child to masturbate, exhibiting or showing any genital parts to a child, allowing a child to witness or watch

any forms of sexual activity, showing any pornographic materials, etc.

Statement on the Nurture and Protection of Children¹

¹Approved and voted by the Executive Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM) and released by the Office of the President, Ted N. C. Wilson, on June 23, 2010, and released at the General Conference Session in Atlanta, Georgia, June 24-July 3, 2010.

Seventh-day Adventists place a high value on children. In the light of the Bible they are seen as precious gifts from God entrusted to the care of parents, family, community of faith and society-at-large. Children possess enormous potential for making positive contributions to the Church and to society. Attention to their care, protection and development is extremely important.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church reaffirms and extends its longstanding efforts to nurture and safeguard children and youth from persons—known and unknown—whose actions perpetrate any form of abuse and violence against them and/or sexually exploit them. Jesus modeled the kind of respect, nurture, and protection children should be able to expect from adults entrusted with their care. Some of His strongest words of reproof were directed toward those who would harm them. Because of the trusting nature and dependence of children upon older and wiser adults and the life-changing consequences when this trust is breached, children require vigilant protection.

Redemptive Correction

The Seventh-day Adventist Church places a priority on church-based parent education that helps parents develop the skills necessary for a redemptive approach to correction. Many children experience harsh punishment in the name of a biblical approach to discipline. Correction characterized by severe, punitive, dictatorial control often leads to resentment and rebellion. Such harsh discipline is also associated with heightened risk for physical and psychological harm to children as well as increased likelihood the youth will resort to coercion and violence in resolving their differences with others. By contrast, examples from Scripture as well as a large body of research confirm the effectiveness of more gentle forms of discipline that allow children to learn through reasoning and experiencing the consequences of their choices. Such milder measures have been demonstrated to increase the likelihood children will make life-affirming choices and espouse parental values as they mature.

MAKING CHURCH A SAFE PLACE FOR CHILDREN

The Church also takes seriously its responsibility to minimize the risk for child sexual abuse and violence against children in the congregational setting. First and foremost, church leaders and members must themselves live by a strict code of ethics that precludes even the appearance of evil as regards the exploitation of minors for the gratification of adult desires. Other practical measures toward making church a safe place for children include attention to the safety of the church facility and its surroundings and the careful supervision and monitoring of children and their environment during all church-related activities. Education regarding what constitutes appropriate and

inappropriate interaction between adults and children, the warning signs of abuse and violence, and the specific steps to be followed should inappropriate behavior be reported or suspected are vitally important. Pastors and church leaders who are visible and approachable play an important role in prevention as well as in responding well to the needs of children whose safety may have been jeopardized. Regular updates are needed regarding their moral and legal responsibility to report child abuse to appropriate civil authorities. The designation of trained personnel and specific protocols at wider levels of Church organization will help to ensure appropriate action and follow-through when abuse is reported within the church setting.

Because of the complex nature of the problem of child sexual abuse and violence against children, intervention and treatment of perpetrators requires resources beyond the scope of ministry provided by the local church. However, the presence of a known perpetrator in a congregation calls for the highest levels of vigilance. While perpetrators should be held fully responsible for their own behavior, the supervision of persons with a history of inappropriate behavior is necessary to ensure that such persons maintain appropriate distance and refrain from all contact with children during church-related activities. Provision for alternative opportunities for perpetrators to grow spiritually in settings where children are not present greatly enhances child protection.

Fostering Emotional and Spiritual Healing

Children who have been personally victimized or who have witnessed disturbing events need the care of adults who treat them with sensitivity and understanding. Practical support that helps children and families maintain stability in the midst of

turmoil empowers victims and their families and promotes healing. The Church's commitment to breaking the silence frequently associated with child sexual abuse and violence, its efforts toward advocacy and justice for all victims, and deliberate action to safeguard children from all forms of abuse and violence will contribute much toward the emotional and spiritual recovery of all concerned. The Church regards the nurture and protection of children as a sacred trust.

(This statement has been informed by the principles expressed in the following biblical passages: Lev. 18:6; 2 Sam. 13:1-11; 1 Kings 17:17-23; Ps. 9: 9, 12, 16-18; 11:5-7; 22:24; 34:18; 127:3-5; 128:3-4; Prov. 31:8-9; Is. 1:16-17; Jer. 22:3; Matt. 18:1-6; 21:9, 15-16; Mark 9:37; 10:13-16; Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21; 1Tim. 5:8; Heb. 13:3.)

SEXUAL ABUSE FACTS

- Research suggests that one in 20 men may have sexually molested children, and between 5 and 20% of the individuals who offend children are females. Also, 40% of children who are abused are abused by older children or teens. There is NO easy way to identify an offender at a glance. Therefore, the only way your children can be kept safe is for you to know where your child is and what he/she is doing at **all times!**
- Offenders who primarily target girls abuse an average of 12 girls before being apprehended.
- Offenders who primarily target boys abuse an average of 30 boys before being apprehended.

- One out of every 3 to 5 girls and one out of every 6 to 11 boys are molested prior to their 18th birthday.
- Sex offenders commit an average of 120 separate crimes before they are caught.
- There are offenders living in all of our neighborhoods and communities.

How Sex abuse is most likely to occur:

- 75% of cases involve parents, step-parents, boyfriends, in-laws, grandparents, uncles, friends of the family, or neighbors.
- 25% involve people who work in youth service organizations such as sports, youth clubs, camps, churches, and daycare programs.
- 5% of cases involve strangers.

How Criminal Sexual Behavior Starts:

- Most sex offenders grow up in homes where there is a lower level of stability and empathy for others.
- The majority report childhood neglect, emotional and physical abuse, and domestic violence. These experiences create self-centeredness and interfere with the development of pro-social behavior and moral development.

- *(Being sexually abused, though, is NOT the primary cause of pedophilia if it were, we would have more female offenders than male.)*
- 75% of offenders started offending prior to age 18. The average age of first offense is 14.

Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse:

- There is evidence that exposure to domestic violence may cause more long-term harm than other forms of child abuse.
- Exposure to domestic violence may cause male children to develop pro-rape attitudes and arousal to violence.
- Parents who abuse drugs and alcohol provide a lower level of care and stability for children, forget to feed them, don't supervise them, thus making these an easier prey for offenders.
- Some offenders specifically target drug addicts to "trade sex for drugs" and abuse their children.
- When "high," some offenders become hyper-sexual.

The Internet:

- The Internet offers offenders another avenue to contact and approach children.

- The Internet is causing some people to cross the line for the first time in their lives.
- Cyber sex becomes addictive to some people.
- The Internet is exposing children to more, and worse deviant forms of sexuality.
- 20% of children are accidentally exposed to pornography via the Internet.
- One in five children who use the Internet are approached online by an adult seeking sex.

Sexual Behavior Among Children:

- Remember, normal healthy children experience sexual curiosity and pleasurable feelings, and that sexual play and development are normal.

Sexual Behavior Clues:

- Adults who seem pre-occupied with the sexual development of children, or make sexualized comments to or about children.
- Adults who act “flirty” around children or teens.
- Adults who act jealous of children’s or teens’ relationships with each other.

- Adults who “*accidentally*” touch private parts.

“Boundary Violation” Clues:

- Adults who engage in frequent physical contact with children (wrestling, tickling, horseplay, hugging or lap-sitting).
- Adults who don’t allow children privacy, “walk in on them” while they are dressing or using the bathroom.
- Adults who act like children or allow children to do questionable or inappropriate things.
- Adults who “override” the parents or whom children like for reasons parents don’t understand.

Child / Teen – Focused Lifestyle Clues:

- Adults who work with children but also spend their free time doing “special” things with children.
- Adults who do not have children but seem to know a lot about the current fads or music that is popular with children or teens.
- Any behavior, which seems abusive or inappropriate, shall be reported to the pastor or elder immediately.

“Too Good To Be True” Clues:

- Adults who buy children special gifts **for no reason**.
- Adults who want to take children on outings that involve being **alone** with them.
- Adults who seem able to infiltrate family / social functions or are always available to baby-sit.

And Finally:

- Remember, probably 90% or more of the people you know are really good folks!
- Adults, not children, are responsible for the safety and welfare of children.
- If a child says he / she has been abused, it’s likely true, believe them.
- Most victims can overcome the abuse if we all act calmly and responsibly.
- It’s best for everyone if we report and if the victim, family, and offender get good treatment.

PROCEDURES – TIPS TO KEEP CHILDREN SAFE

The local church should take reasonable steps to safeguard children engaged in church-sponsored activities by choosing individuals with high spiritual and moral backgrounds as leaders and participants in programs for children. ***Jesus placed a high value on the protection of children (Matthew 18:1-6);*** therefore, child protection is an essential element in all church-sponsored children's activities. Volunteers will be expected to conduct themselves at all times in accordance with biblical principles.

In addition to the Code of Conduct and Guidelines for Volunteers, all volunteers are expected to adhere to the following local church rules:

- S** Supervise minors at all times
- A** Appropriate verbal communication and physical behavior
- F** Follow the two- adult rule
- E** Engage, support, and supervise youth interactions

- K** Kids' privacy is to be respected
- I** Implement travel safety
- D** Discipline kids appropriately
- S** Screen volunteers

1. All employees and volunteers who regularly work with children must complete (*every three years*) a Volunteer Application Form for background check purposes. Individuals who are unwilling to support the volunteer screening guidelines and practices should not be allowed to serve. *No changes are allowed on the form without the consent of legal counsel.*
2. New members who desire to work with children and youth must have been an active member of the local church for a minimum of six (6) months, or have been known by the organization for a minimum of six (6) months before beginning to work with children.
3. Never leave a child or group of children for whom you are responsible unattended. Provide appropriate adult supervision at all times.
4. Always have at least one other adult, eighteen (18) years of age or older, to help with the supervision of children. If you find yourself in a situation where you are the only adult present, UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES allow yourself to be alone with one child (the “two-person rule”). This protects the child as well as protecting the adult from possible allegations.
 - *If an emergency situation arises where it is necessary to be alone with a child, another responsible adult should be informed immediately, by telephone if necessary.*

- *Once it is possible and safe, the child's parent or guardian must be informed of the one-on-one interaction and the reason for it.*
5. Volunteers should not travel alone with a child or young person.
 - *If only one adult is available, there should be a minimum of two children or young people present for the entire journey.*
 - *If an emergency situation arises where it is necessary to travel alone with a child, the child's parent or guardian should be informed as soon as possible and safe.*
 6. Individuals convicted of committing physical or sexual abuse may not work or serve as volunteers or staff in for any church sponsored activity or program for children.
 7. Any behavior, which seems abusive or inappropriate, shall be reported to the pastor or elder immediately.
 8. Parents are responsible for supervising their children before and after church sponsored children's programs and seeing that their children are picked up at the appointed dismissal time. Every reasonable effort will be made to release children to their parent or designee.
 9. No child shall be released to another older child or permitted to go to the restroom accompanied by an older child unless the child is a sibling. Provide extra care when taking small children to the restroom. Take another adult along, or leave the door open.

10. Children and young people should not be permitted to remain on church property unless two adults are present.
11. A disproportionate amount of time should not be spent with any particular child or group of children.
12. Under no circumstances may volunteers give alcohol, tobacco or drugs to children or young people.
13. Alcohol, tobacco or drugs must not be used by any individual on church premises or during a sponsored activity.
14. Only age-appropriate language, material on media products (such as camera phones, internet, video) and activities should be used when working with children and young people (sexually explicit or pornographic material is never acceptable).
15. Always ask a child's permission before physically touching him/her anywhere, even when responding to an injury or problem. This is especially true for any areas that would normally be covered by a T-shirt and/or shorts. (If an injury is within this area, make sure another adult works with you as care is provided.)
16. Volunteers must not engage in inappropriate physical contact of any kind – including rough physical play, physical reprimand and horseplay (this should not prevent appropriate contact in situations where it is necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of a child).

17. Affirm children with appropriate touching by keeping hugs brief and “shoulder-to-shoulder” or “side-to-side.” Always keep hands at (not below) the shoulder level. A caregiver’s kiss should be to the forehead or cheek only – not elsewhere. For small children who like to sit on laps, encourage them to sit next to you.
18. Any discipline administered shall occur within the visual contact of another adult. Any form of physical punishment of children is not permissible under any circumstances.
19. Verbal abuse of children or telling jokes of a sexual nature in the presence of children is unacceptable.
20. Keep door open to allow observation of the activity when the room is without an interior viewing area.
21. Children’s need for privacy should be respected at all times.
 - *Particular care regarding privacy must be taken when young people are in locations such as changing areas, swimming pools, showers and restrooms.*
22. Photographs of children or young people must never be taken while they are in changing areas (for example, in a locker room or bathing facility).
23. Tasks of a personal nature (for example, helping with toileting, washing or changing clothing) should not be carried out for children or young people if they can undertake these tasks themselves.

24. All trips and any meetings conducted off the church premises must be pre-approved by the church board. All overnight activities or miscellaneous trips must have prior documented approval of the church board. All minor attendees must have a signed parental permission slip for each trip as well as an emergency medical treatment release. Parents must be notified of adults in charge of the activity.

25. **TRIPS**

- All trips, including day trips and overnight stays, need careful advance planning, including adequate provision for safety in regard to transport, facilities, activities and emergencies.
- Adequate liability insurance through the Oregon Conference of Seventh-day Adventists should be in place prior to any trip.
- Appropriate auto insurance companies should be in place prior to any trip.
- Written consent by a parent or guardian specifically for each trip and related activities must be obtained well in advance.
- A copy of the trip itinerary and contact telephone numbers for leaders should be made available to parents and guardians.
- There must be adequate, gender-appropriate, supervision for boys and girls.

- Arrangements and procedures must be put in place to ensure that rules are followed and appropriate boundaries are maintained.
 - The provision of appropriate and adequate sleeping arrangements should be ensured in advance of the trip.
 - Sleeping areas for boys and girls should be separate and supervised by two adults of the same gender as the group being supervised.
 - If any emergency situation, an adult considers it necessary to be in a child's sleeping areas without another adult being present he or she should immediately inform another adult in a position of responsibility.
26. If there is a convicted sex offender attending church, a deacon or other responsible adult should be assigned to monitor the person while on the premises. The offender shall be informed of the procedure.
27. If a sex offender transfers to or attends another church, notification of the previous history will be provided to the new congregation.
28. Be aware of the signs and symptoms of child abuse. You should be knowledgeable of the legal requirements for reporting suspected cases of abuse.
29. Cooperate with church leadership in conducting children and youth ministries by being a volunteer who is loving, kind, firm, and professional. Working with children and

youth is not only a privilege; it is also a serious responsibility that must be approached with utmost care.

30. Participate in orientation and training programs conducted by the church.

The above Policies and Guidelines have been adapted from the North American Division working policy and may be different in some areas. The Oregon Conference has implemented certain policies and guidelines with the intent of enhancing the safety and welfare of our children.

DEALING WITH A CONVICTED SEX OFFENDER

What should church leaders do when they learn that a convicted sex offender is attending church?

This is a problem that poses a significant “dilemma” to a church pastor who wishes to make his church safe for members, particularly children, and also wishes to deal with the offender in a “redemptive” manner and afford him (or her) the opportunity to worship. Even so, it is important for the pastor to know that sex offenders are often individuals who cannot be cured, who are driven to repeat their conduct, and many times sincerely hold a persuasive conviction that they will not repeat their offense.

If a person abuses a child on church premises or at church functions and its leaders know *or should have known* the person is a sex offender, the church will have a difficult case to defend.

The church will need to demonstrate that it exercised a high degree of care and vigilance in the supervision of the individual. The following guidelines have been developed for implementation:

1. Individuals who are known to have committed physical or sexual abuse may **not** work or serve as volunteers or staff in any church sponsored activity or program for children.
2. **Exclusion.** Obviously, the risk of liability based on negligent supervision of the abuser is eliminated by total exclusion from the church property and activities.
 - a. The person does not have to be cut off entirely.
 - b. The pastor or other church leadership can meet with such a person off the church premises to provide spiritual support.
3. **Close Supervision.**
 - a. The church board or board of elders will designate a “chaperone” to accompany the abuser **at all times** when present on the church property or at church functions.
 - b. The chaperone should be a responsible, mature adult of the same gender as participant, over 30 years of age; with no sexual misconduct history, and not a relative of the abuser.
 - c. It need not be the same chaperon every week.
4. **Church Attendance / Participation Agreement for Known Sex Offenders.**
 - a. The church leaders can permit an offender to attend church and participate in its activities subject to

specified conditions to which the abuser agrees in writing.

- b. Such an agreement may specify that:
 - i. He or she is not to perform any responsibilities directly or indirectly with children.
 - ii. Is not to transport children to or from church or church functions.
 - iii. Is not to attend youth functions.
 - iv. Does not sit with children during church services or functions.
 - v. And does not have any contact off the premises with children who are church members.

Any church knowing that a sex offender is transferring to or attending another church will notify the leadership of the previous history.

If the abuser is a minor, the agreement has to be signed by his or her parents. The church's legal counsel should review the agreement.

5. **Notification of Families.** The church should consider the possibility of privately notifying the parents of children.

Under certain circumstances, courts have found the church to have a “duty to warn” church members of the presence of child abusers and other persons believed to be child abusers who attend church or otherwise participate in church functions. Such a step is often difficult to administer, particularly since new or guest families may not receive the warning. Furthermore, the child abuser may feel this is an unjustified step to take. Nevertheless, warning other families may be necessary. The abuser or

his/her family should be informed if such a step is contemplated.

Dealing with child abusers who attend church services and other functions should be done aggressively. In most cases the abuser has a criminal record. Be sure to determine whether there are any paroles or probation conditions to his/her release. Consider contacting the parole or probation officer or prosecuting attorney who pursued the criminal action for advice. The benefit of any doubt should be in favor of the church members.

DEALING WITH INDIVIDUALS WHERE ALLEGATIONS HAVE BEEN MADE

If it is alleged that an individual has shown inappropriate conduct toward children the following guidelines have been developed for implementation:

1. Don't try to handle the situation yourself and don't talk to the alleged offender before you call DHS (Child Protective Services) or law enforcement.
2. Report to your church pastor or first elder. **The pastor is to notify conference administration of the situation.**
3. Don't allow any further contact between the child and alleged offender unless Child Protective Services tells you it is alright.

4. Remove the individual from all church responsibilities until evaluated. The church should respect the rights of all parties involved in the alleged incident and treat all matters concerning the situation discreetly, confidentially, and in accordance with local Child Protective Services.
5. Provide appropriate supervision for the individual when they attend any church events.

If alleged offender is causing custodial interference (interfering with parental control of the child), seek assistance from law enforcement.

Reporting is considered a request for an assessment of a suspected incident of abuse or neglect. Remember a report is not an established fact of guilt, but rather a request for assessment of the safety and condition of a child. It is the beginning of a helping process for children and families. All citizens are encouraged to report suspected cases to DHS or law enforcement. Over 25 percent of the substantiated cases of child abuse are reported by concerned citizens who are not required to report. Failure to report is a violation and carries a maximum penalty of \$1,000.00. Mandatory reporters have also been successfully sued for damages in civil court for failing to report.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT REPORTING ABUSE AND NEGLECT. (DHS)

Q. WHO MUST REPORT?

Any person who has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect should report such incident.

Q. WHO DO I CONTACT IF I SUSPECT CHILD ABUSE?

A person making a report of child abuse shall make an oral report by telephone or otherwise to a local Child Welfare office of the Department of Human Services/CPS, to the division's designee, or to a law enforcement agency within the county where the person making the report is at the time of the contact. A law enforcement agency can be defined as a local police department, county sheriff, county juvenile department, or Oregon State Police (Washington State police if you are located in Washington).

Q. HOW DO I RESPOND TO A CHILD WHO REPORTS ABUSE TO ME?

Believe the child if she/he reports sexual abuse. It is rare for a child to lie about sexual abuse. So, tell the child that you believe them and that you are going to contact people who can help.

Respect the privacy of the child. The child will need to tell their story in detail later, so don't press the child for details.

Remember, you need only suspect abuse to make a report. Don't display horror, shock, or disapproval of parents, child, or the situation. Don't place blame or make judgments about the parent or child.

Q. WHAT INFORMATION DO I NEED TO REPORT?

If possible report the names and addresses of the child and parent; the child's age; the type and extent of the abuse, as well as any previous evidence of abuse; the explanation given for the abuse; and any other information that will help establish the cause of abuse or identify the abuser.

Q. WILL MY REPORT BE CONFIDENTIAL?

The reporter's identity will remain confidential to the full extent allowable by law. If court action is initiated, the reporting person may be called as a witness or the court may order that the reporter's name be disclosed. Only people with firsthand knowledge of the child's situation can provide testimony proving that abuse has occurred.

Q. WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I REPORT?

Child Protective Services (CPS) follows a process that includes six possible decision points for every child abuse report.

For each call CPS receives, the process begins with screening. If the information indicates possible abuse, a caseworker assesses the family situation by getting more in-depth information and determines whether abuse occurred and whether a child is at risk of further harm.

If a child has been abused or neglected, CPS and law enforcement staffs decide, with family help if possible, whether the child can be safely left at home. Risk factors, strengths and needs of the child and family are assessed. A safety plan may be developed immediately. Later, the agency and family may develop a plan for service.

A case is closed when protective services are no longer needed to keep the child safe.

Q. WHO DO I CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT?

If you need more information on child abuse and neglect, contact your [local Child Welfare branch office](#) of the Department of Human Services.

If someone is being hurt or is in danger right now, call 911 immediately. Report child abuse to the Department of Human Services (DHS) or a local policed department, county sheriff, county juvenile department, or Oregon State Police.

http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/children/abuse/cps/cw_branches.shtml
<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/safety/abuseReport.asp?2>