

Frequently Asked Questions About Creating a Safe Environment for Children and Youth

Detecting child abuse

What do I do if I have reasonable belief that child abuse has occurred? The person who has reasonable belief of child abuse is required to cause a report to be filed. Reasonable belief means that if there are any facts from which one could reasonably believe a child is in imminent danger or has been abused, they should immediately tell their supervisor. State law requires all church children or youth workers to report child abuse or neglect. Even though you need to discuss your suspicions with your supervisor, you are ultimately responsible to call Child Protective Services or the appropriate law enforcement agency.

A report must be made immediately by telephone or in person and shall be followed by a written report within 72 hours. The report shall contain:

- Your name
- The names and addresses of the minor and the minor's parents or the person or persons having custody of the minor, if known
- The minor's age and the nature and extent of the minor's abuse, child abuse, physical injury or neglect, including any evidence of previous abuse, child abuse, physical injury or neglect
- Any other information that the person believes might be helpful in establishing the cause of the abuse, child abuse, physical injury, or neglect
- When you report get a police report number or a CPS number

Remember: A report of suspected child abuse, neglect, exploitation or abandonment is a responsible attempt to protect a child.

Do I have to provide my name if I make a report? Yes. According to ARS 41-1010, state law requires that you provide your name as the reporting source. CPS will keep your name confidential and will only disclose it if they receive a court order to do so, or if need by law enforcement for an investigation or to provide for the immediate safety of a child.

How certain must a person be that child abuse has occurred to have a duty to report? Any person who reasonably believes that a minor is or has been the victim of physical injury, abuse, child abuse, a reportable offense or neglect that appears to have been inflicted on the minor by other than accidental means or that is not explained by the available medical history as being accidental in nature, or who reasonably believes that there has been a denial or deprivation of necessary medical treatment or surgical care or nourishment with the intent to cause or allow the death of an infant who is protected under A.R.S. 36-2281, shall immediately report or cause reports to be made of this information to a peace office or to Child Protective Services in the Department of Economic Security, except if the report concerns a person who does not have care, custody or control of the minor, the report shall be made to a peace office only. Keep in mind, that the Law imposes a duty to report possible child abuse, not to investigate it.

Do I make a report without telling my director? Your director should always be notified when you suspect abuse. However, it is ultimately the volunteer's responsibility to call Child Protective Services or the proper authorities if they suspect abuse.

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Do I confront the parents? No. Eighty-four percent of abuse is perpetrated by parents or caretakers.

How do I differentiate between normal bruises and possible abuse? This is difficult. Bruises from abuse are often in various stages of healing, indicating the child was struck multiple times over a period of days. However, it also could be a result of being a child. There probably should be another reason that you suspect abuse, like familial alcoholism or other family problems. Finally, asking the child may or may not get to the truth. Abused children often lie about their marks to cover for their parents. However, ask the child anyway.

How do I know I'm not overreacting? Collaborate with your director, who will help you determine if your suspicions are valid. How would you answer the following question? Would you feel comfortable testifying to the following under oath; "based on what I knew, I didn't do anything?"

Is a CPS worker sent out on every call? No, many calls are merely documented.

Can a person be sued for making a child abuse report? A person complying with the law is immune from any civil or criminal liability unless they acted with malice or unless the person is reporting themselves.

What are the penalties for failing to report child abuse? A staff person or volunteer who fails to report child abuse is in violation of the Law and is guilty of a class 1 misdemeanor. It is a criminal offense that is punishable by a sentence of up to six months in jail and a fine of up to \$4000.

Preventing abuse (or even allegations)

Should men be changing diapers of two year olds?

Our policy has always been that any adult in the nursery can change diapers. It is necessary since the parents are gone for an extended period of time.

Is there a procedure for taking kids to the restroom?

In preschool, there are bathrooms in each room up to 4 years old. For kindergarten through second grade we ask a leader to go with more than one child. The leader should crack the bathroom door and call in to see if anyone is in the restroom. Upon getting the all clear, they can let the child go in and wait outside. The leader should crack the door and check with the child if the leader feels the child is taking too long. For third and fourth graders, they can go without a leader, but must take a buddy. Let them know when you expect them back and follow up if they take longer.

Is there anything I should or should not do when helping preschool children use the restroom? (clothing, wiping etc)

As much as possible, let the child do as much as they can by themselves. If they need help pulling up their pants or zipping up, go ahead and help them with the door open. If a child has an accident or needs help wiping, do so, but make sure there is another adult present as a safeguard.

What do I do if I'm alone with one child in a class?

Sometimes when all but one child has been picked up and the other leaders have left, a leader finds they are alone with a child in a classroom. If possible, have another leader stay until the last child has been picked up. If a leader is in that situation she should do one of three things. 1. Step outside with the child in an open, easy to observe area and simply wait for the parent, or 2. Open your classroom door so you are more visible, or 3. Take the child to KidzCheck and leave a note for the parent to pick the child up there.

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What kind of screening do we do for leaders who work with children? First, all prospective leaders are required to fill out an application form. References are called and followed up with and an interview is conducted with the prospective leader. All prospective leaders are asked to give the church permission to do a background check. Background checks are done on the following prospective leaders:

- If the prospective leader has attended Scottsdale Bible Church less than six months.
- If an SBC staff person cannot give a personal reference, or
- If the interviewing director has an encounter with the prospective leader that causes concerns.



Child Abuse Hotline: 1-888-767-2445

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