

Child Protection Training for Camps

The purpose of this training course to provide all staff, volunteers counselors and church leadership with a clear understanding of how to recognize, reduce, prevent and report suspected sexual abuse or molestation while at camp.

This course is divided into four sections. The sections are as follows:

- A. The Definitions and Effects of Sexual Abuse and Child Molestation
- B. Typical Patterns and Methods of Operation of a Child Molester
- C. Signs, Symptoms and Reporting of Suspected Sexual Abuse
- D. Recommended procedures to reduce, prevent and report suspected abuse or molestation of campers.

Section A: The Definitions and Effects of Sexual Abuse and Child Molestation

The purpose of Section A is to clearly define what constitutes sexual abuse and child molestation. The section will also identify the different types of abuse as well as the effects of child abuse.

The precise legal definition of child sexual abuse or molestation varies from state to state, but in general includes any form of sexual contact or exploitation in which a minor is being used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator. In this training the terms molestation and sexual abuse will be used interchangeably.

(From Texas Administrative Code) Title 25, Part 1, Chapter 1, Subchapter Q, Rule 1.203

(4) Child—A person under 18 years of age who is not and has not been married or who has not had the disabilities of minority removed for general purposes.

(22) Sexual abuse—Any sexual activity, including any involuntary or nonconsensual sexual conduct that would constitute an offense under the Penal Code 21.08 (indecent exposure) or Chapter 22 (assaulting offenses), involving a facility and a patient or client. Sexual activity includes but is not limited to kissing, hugging, stroking, or fondling with sexual intent; oral sex or sexual intercourse; and request, suggestion or encouragement for the performance of sex.

Child sexual abuse may be violent or non-violent. All child sexual abuse is an exploitation of a child's vulnerability and powerlessness in which the abuser is fully responsible for the actions.

Child sexual abuse or molestation is CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR that involves children in sexual behaviors for which they are not personally, socially, and developmentally ready.

Types of Abuse

- **Physical Abuse**—includes bodily harm or injury caused by blows or harmful substances, as well as exposure to unreasonable risk of harm or injury.
- **Emotional and Psychological Maltreatment**—attacks a child's self-image, often through labels and ridicule.
- **Neglect**—is the failure to provide for a child's physical, medical, emotional, and safety needs.
- **Sexual Abuse**—can occur through showing and communicating as well as through touching. Not only forced activity, but also permission and persuasion, can be abusive.
- Non-touching sexual abuse offenses include:
 1. Indecent exposure / exhibitionism
 2. Exposing children to pornographic material
 3. Deliberately exposing a child to the act of sexual intercourse
 4. Masturbation in front of a child
- Touching sexual offenses include:
 1. Fondling
 2. Making a child touch an adult sexual organ(s)
 3. Any penetration of a child's vagina or anus by an object that doesn't have a medical purpose
- **Other types of abuse**—include abandonment and threats of harm.

(From Church Mutual Safety Tips on a Sensitive Subject: Child Sexual Abuse)

Effects of Child Abuse

“Studies have shown that abuse and neglect may negatively affect children's physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development, resulting in aggressiveness, anxiousness, the inability to control emotions, depression, and learning difficulties, among other problems.” (AWANA Child Protection Policy Training)

Victims of child abuse often suffer from:

- Inability to trust, which leads to problems in relationships
- Feelings of guilt, anger, and low self-esteem
- A tendency toward alcohol and drug abuse
- Eating disorders
- Suicidal thoughts and suicide

These effects continue long after the abuse has stopped, even into adulthood.

Victims of child abuse also tend to:

- Engage in criminal activity at a higher rate than the general population.
- More likely than others to engage in risky sexual behavior.

However, the greatest loss to society comes from lost innocence, lost joy, lost hope, and lost potential. In the life of a child, it may mean loss of faith and trust in God.

Section B: Typical Patterns and Methods of Operation of Child Molesters

The purpose of Section B is to identify typical patterns and methods of operation of child abusers.

A child molester is described as a person older than the victim, male or female, which experiences any type of sexual act with a child. The majority of child molesters are male.

When young children are close in age (no more than a 3-year age span) sexual contact is called camper-to-camper (peer-to-peer) contact. In many cases this is normal childhood behavior, particularly in younger children. In other cases, especially with more than a 3-year age difference or children that are pubescent, molestation may be involved. Any case of sexual contact, regardless of the age of the child, is to be reported to the licensed youth camp operator (camp manager) immediately. He/she will make the determination of the appropriate action to take.

Who is the typical child molester?

Often camps, churches and communities fall victim to the “Stranger Danger” by believing that molesters are “dirty old men” or “strangers in trench coats.” These stereotypes are not only inaccurate but dangerous as they allow a false sense of security. Often the public becomes obsessed with the stereotype while never suspecting the real molester may be a respected member of the church, camp staff or community.

There are two types of child molesters, **preferential offenders** and **situational offenders**.

Preferential Offenders

- Have a particular sexual preference for children of a particular age, gender or a child with specific physical characteristics.
- Extremely dangerous because of their predatory nature.
- Proactive in seeking their victim and aggressively engage in bold and repeated attempts to molest a child.
- Invest significant amounts of time, energy, money and other resources to fulfill their sexual desires.
- Have excessive interest in children, seek access to children, and frequently move to avoid capture.
- May maintain pornographic collections and photograph children and/or their victims.

This type of offender may appear to be the ideal children's/youth worker. They enjoy children and socialize well among children. One preferential offender may have hundreds of victims in a lifetime.

The best way to deter this kind of offender is to develop an environment that puts the offender, rather than the child at risk. A thorough screening program, proper supervision and accountability will discourage this type of offender.

Situational Sex Offenders

Far more situational offenders exist in society than preferential sex offenders, but they have fewer victims.

Situational Offenders:

- Are opportunists engaging in misconduct when the opportunity presents itself.
- Are indiscriminate concerning whom they molest and act completely on impulse.

An example of a situational sex offender would be a youth worker who plans various activities for his youth. After the meeting he takes several of the students home following the activity. The last person to be dropped off is a young girl who comes from a dysfunctional family. A pattern develops where the offender and the girl sit in the car and talk for an extended period of time. One thing leads to another, the opportunity presents itself and the youth worker has a sexual relationship with the girl.

To reduce the risk of situational molestation camps must create an environment of accountability. Screening and supervision are the two key strategies to establish such an environment and, in turn reduce the risk of sexual molestation.

Methods of Operation

Sexual predators could employ any of the following methods or strategies to gain access to a child.

- **Seduction**—The molester usually is known to the child. He spends time with the child and normally is trusted by the child. The initial contact with the child

is non- sexual but over time advances to be sexual in nature. Molesters may use pornography to lower the sexual inhibitions of the child. The abuser may also use a technique called “grooming”.

- “Grooming is a gradual and subtle process, and one that has extraordinary power, desensitizing the victim to increasingly inappropriate behavior while rewarding the victim for tolerance of that behavior.” (Where Wolves Wear Shepherds’ Clothing: Helping Women Survive Sexual Abuse, Diana Garland, Ph.D. LMSW-APC, ACSW, and Sheri Ferguson, LCSW, LMFT)
- **Trickery**—Molesters are creative in using the natural desires of a child. Children see adults as authority figures; children are naturally curious and need attention and affection. A molester may use these natural tendencies to trick the child into a situation where these molestations can occur. Molesters will isolate a child from adult supervision where they will be more vulnerable to molestation.
- **Force**—Usually there is little a child can do to resist force. When force is used the child rarely is acquainted with the molester.
- **Secrecy** is the common thread in these methods of operation. Secrecy is maintained by several methods they include but are not limited to:
 - Bribery—This could include gifts, animals or any favors that interest a child.
 - Blame—The molester tells the child they are at fault for what has happened.
 - Embarrassment—Children realize that what has taken place is wrong.
 - Loss of Affection—Often the molester is a person that is loved by the child.
 - Displaced Responsibility—The child blames themselves for the molestation.
 - Threats—Molester will threaten the child or someone in the child’s family with physical harm.

Signs to Watch For

- Workers who spend an exorbitant amount of time with kids
- Adults who prefer the company of children to adult relationships
- Adult who singles out one child for “special” attention
- Seems to spend money on other people’s kids
- Owns children’s books, games, and toys even though he/she has no children

Section C: Signs, Symptoms of Sexual Abuse

This section will teach warning signs and symptoms of sexual abuse or child molestation, recognition of these signs as well as recommended methods of reporting suspected abuse.

Sometimes there may be signs of sexual abuse even if a child or youth does not speak to you about it. There are many symptoms to look for that may indicate that abuse has occurred, especially if more than one symptom is present.

Listed below are some symptoms that may present themselves in a child or youth that is being abused sexually or otherwise. Many times, an individual, that does not know the child well, may not recognize changes in the child's behavioral patterns. People that spend time on a regular basis with the particular child may more easily recognize the changes. Often times a child may not report abuse; therefore, we must look for symptoms. Children who have been abused may exhibit several symptoms or no symptoms. Pay attention when a child exhibits these symptoms:

Symptoms/Signs of Sexual Abuse

- Inappropriate interest in or knowledge of sexual acts
- Seductiveness
- Avoidance of things related to sexuality, or rejection of own genitals or bodies
- Nightmares and bed wetting
- Drastic changes in appetite
- Over compliance or excessive aggression
- Fear of a particular person or family member
- Withdrawal, secretiveness, or depression
- Suicidal behavior
- Eating disorders
- Self-injury
- Torn, stained, or bloody underwear
- Pain or itching in the genital area
- Bruises or bleeding of the genitalia
- Inappropriate sex play with peers or toys
- Fascination with pornography
- Fear of touch
- Abuse of animals
- Masturbation in public
- Apprehension when sexual abuse is mentioned
- Cross dressing

This list of symptoms may be a serious indicator of sexual abuse and a person noticing these symptoms should pay particular attention to a child that exhibits them. The presence of any of these behaviors may indicate that sexual abuse has occurred. These behaviors are not, in and of themselves, conclusive evidence that a child has been abused.

Did You Know?

- Most children are abused by people they know.
- Many people are afraid of reporting sexual abuse.

- Most sexual abuse is probably never reported to authorities.
- Possibly one in three cases of child sexual abuse is not remembered by the adults who experienced the abuse. The younger the child at the time of the abuse and the closer the relationship to the abuser, the less likely the individual will remember the abuse as an adult.
- Other children are often the perpetrators of child abuse, especially if they have been abused themselves.

Other Signs to Watch For

- Workers who spend an exorbitant amount of time with kids
- Adults who prefer the company of children to adult relationships
- Adult who singles out one child for “special” attention
- Seems to spend money on other people’s kids
- Owns children’s books, games, and toys even though he/she has no children
- Spends a lot of time on the internet/computer
- Shuns accountability

LOOK FOR PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOR

How to Report Abuse While at Camp

- Remove child from immediate danger, call “911” only if an extreme emergency exists
- Immediately report abuse to the Licensed Youth Camp Operator (Camp Manager)
- **The Licensed Youth Camp Operator (Camp Manager) must call the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services**
- Complete an Incident Report form, gathering as many details as possible.
- **Church and parental notification will be the responsibility of the Licensed Youth Camp Operator.**

Section D: Recommended Rules and Procedures for Youth Camps

In this section we will teach (1) how to avoid being accused of sexual abuse or child molestation, (2) prevention of camper on camper abuse, (3) reporting sexual abuse or molestation, and (4) the need to minimize one on one isolated encounters between adult and minors, or between two minors.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to persons choosing to work with children and youth in Christian camping is when one suspects sexual abuse or child molestation or when one confides that they have been abused or molested.

1. How to Avoid Being Accused of Sexual Abuse or Child Molestation

Barriers to abuse within Christian camping

The following policies are primarily for the protection of campers; however, they also serve to protect adult counselors from false accusations of abuse.

- **Two-deep counselor supervision.** No adult will be allowed to be alone with a camper in an isolated place. In situations that require personal conferences, the meeting is to be conducted in view of other adults.
- **No child or teenager is to sit in the lap of an adult.** No adult is to allow a child or teenager to sit in his/her lap or lie in his/her bed. The only exception would be the parent of the child.
- **No frontal hugs.** An adult from time to time may feel a child's need for hug, in order to support or comfort the child. The adult must use a shoulder to shoulder hug.
- **Respect of privacy.** Adults must respect the privacy of campers in situations such as changing clothes and taking showers. An adult would only intrude to the extent that the health and or safety of the camper would be in question. In the case of safety, one adult may enter the private area, but whenever possible two adults should be present. Campers must also respect the privacy of the adults in these situations. Therefore, it is not permissible for campers or adults to move about in the housing area unclothed.
- **Sleeping accommodations.** Adults should sleep in an area where the highest level of supervision is possible and should not isolate themselves from general view. When wilderness camping, adults are prohibited from sleeping in pup-type tents with campers unless it is a parent and his or her child. Larger tent housing would require at least two adult counselors following the same procedures as regular camp housing.
- **Appropriate attire.** Adults will at all times be dressed modestly. Clothes such as swimsuits, shorts, and tops are not to be revealing or in anyway draw attention to the breasts, buttocks or genital area.
- **Rough housing or hazing is prohibited.** An adult will not wrestle, tickle, or in anyway engage a child or teenager in an activity where the adult's hands might come in contact with the breasts or genital area of the camper. The adult must be particularly careful about physical contact with campers while in the swimming area. No counselor or camper is to participate in any kind of hazing or initiation activity.

NOTE: Adult counselors must monitor each other, not to accuse, but to protect each other in case of an allegation.

2. How to Prevent Camper-on-Camper Abuse

Nationally, more than one-third of serious physical and sexual abuse incidents are youth on youth and the number is increasing.

- **Campers-Counselor assignment.** Campers assigned to a counselor should be accounted for at all times.
- **Campers in sleeping areas.** Campers will not be permitted to be in the sleeping area of any camper of the opposite sex.
- **Camper visibility.** No camper will be allowed to be alone with another camper out of sight of an adult or other camper.
- **Sleeping assignments.** Campers are to sleep in his/her assigned bed. Campers are not to sleep together. Beds are not to be arranged in such a way as to make supervision by the counselor impossible.
- **Adult supervision.** Adults are to supervise all activities of the camper, both organized and unorganized. The camper is not allowed to enter into any bullying activities.
- **Supervision during swim activities.** Close supervision by adults during all swim activities is mandatory. Close attention should be paid to the activities of couples in the swim area.
- **Older campers.** Older campers who tend to spend a great deal of time with younger campers should be encouraged to engage in activities with their appropriate peer group.
- **Reporting by a camper.** When a camper reports a situation that makes him/her uncomfortable, the counselor must take action to protect the camper.

3. Reporting of Sexual Abuse and Molestation at Camp

The adult who has witnessed or who becomes aware of any form of abuse of a camper must inform the Licensed Youth Camp Operator as soon as possible.

- **Investigation of allegations.** Counselors are not to investigate the allegation. Counselors are to report the information to the Licensed Youth Camp Operator as soon as possible.
- **Reporting of Camper on Camper.** All incidents of inappropriate activity involving sexual matters, regardless of whether it is consensual, must be reported to the camp director and the Licensed Youth Camp Operator as soon as possible. Non-consensual or abusive conduct must be reported via means below. Inappropriate consensual conduct should normally result in parental notification and may lead to removal from camp.

- **Reporting.** If a person, including any member of camp staff, a camp counselor, or camp director has cause to believe that a minor has been or may have been abused or neglected, then that person shall immediately make a report to one of the following agencies:
 - **Any local or state law enforcement agency**
 - **Department of Family and Protective Services Abuse Hotline**, which may be contacted at (800) 252-5400 or through the secure website <http://www.txabusehotline.org/>
 - **Department of State Health Services' Policy, Standards and Quality Assurance Unit** by phone at (512) 834-6788 or submitting the [Reporting Abuse and Neglect Form](#) (available at dshs.texas.gov/youthcamp), by fax at (512) 834-6707 or email at PHSCPS@dshs.texas.gov
- Notification Requirement:** A person making a report, to local law enforcement or the Department of Family and Protective Services, of alleged abuse or neglect at a youth camp, must also notify the Department of State Health Services' Policy, Standards and Quality Assurance Unit by phone at (512) 834-6788, by fax at (512) 834-6707, or by email at PHSCPS@dshs.texas.gov

Remember, when a child or teenager confides in you, allow him/her to feel that you care, are listening, and will do what is necessary to be of help. It helps to sit at eyelevel, keeping your conversation from being overheard by others. It is not your role to question or determine the facts or to suggest that he/she was or was not abused. Let the student know how much you admire the courage and confidence it took to share what has happened.