

Children's Ministry Policy on Child Protection and Safety

Simonhouse Bible Camp
April, 2000

A. Policy

- Our goal is that the camp is a safe place for all who attend our ministries.
 - People are entitled to expect that relationships in the camp will be characterized by respect, integrity, and Biblical morality.
 - Measures to prevent and minimize the possibility of abuse will be identified and actively pursued.
 - Abuse will not be tolerated.
 - All complaints of abuse will be investigated and appropriately dealt with.
- Support will be provided for complainants.
- Support and accountability will be provided for respondents (accused camp workers).
- Support will be provided for the other campers.

1) Rationale

- a) Children are easy targets of abuse.
- b) Child abuse as well as false allegations have lasting and far reaching effects.

2) Scriptural Basis

Matthew 19:14 "Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these'." (NIV)

Ephesians 5:3 "But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people." (NIV)

I Peter 2:12 "Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us." (NIV)

Galatians 6:2 "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." (NIV)

Galatians 5:13 "You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love." (NIV)

3) Application

This policy applies to all workers, whether paid or volunteer, in our camp programs.

Camp workers have a responsibility to use their influence for the benefit of those they serve rather than for personal advantage.

B. Definitions

1) Child

"A person under the age of majority" (Section 1, **Child and Family Services Act** of Manitoba)

In Manitoba the age of majority is 18 years of age.

2) Abuse

According to Section 1 of the **Child and Family Services Act** "abuse is defined as: an act or omission of a parent or guardian or of a person having care, custody, control or charge of a child, where the act or omission results in:

- a) physical injury to the child,
- b) emotional disability of a permanent nature in the child or is likely to result in such a disability, or
- c) sexual exploitation of the child with or without the child's consent."

For further clarification:

- a) physical abuse includes any physical force or action which results in or may potentially result in a non-accidental injury which exceeds that which could be considered reasonable discipline.
- b) sexual abuse includes touching of a sexual nature and sexual intercourse. In determining whether behaviour is of a sexual nature, one should ask whether a reasonable observer looking at the behaviour in its context would conclude that it is. This would exclude normal affectionate behaviour towards children and normal hygiene care.

3) In Need of Protection

According to Section 17(1) of the **Child and Family Services Act** "a child is in need of protection where the life, health or emotional well-being of the child is endangered by the act or omission of a person.

A child is in need of protection where the child

- a) is without adequate care, supervision or control;
 - b) is in the care, custody, control or charge of person
- (i) who is unable or unwilling to provide adequate care, supervision or control of the child, or
- (ii) whose conduct endangers or might endanger the life, health or emotional well-being of the child, or
- (iii) who neglects or refuses to provide or obtain proper medical or other remedial care or treatment necessary for the health or well-being of the child or who refuses to permit such care or treatment to be provided to the child when the care or treatment is recommended by a duly qualified medical practitioner;
- c) is abused or is in danger of being abused;
 - d) is beyond the control of a person who has the care, custody, control or charge of the child;
 - e) is likely to suffer harm or injury due to the behaviour, condition, domestic environment or associations of the child or of a person having care, custody, control or charge of the child;

- f) is subject to aggression or sexual harassment that endangers the life, health or emotional well-being of the child;
- g) being under the age of 12 years, is left unattended and without reasonable provision being made for the supervision and safety of the child; or
- h) is the subject, or is about to become the subject, of an unlawful adoption under subsection 63 or of an unlawful sale under section 84."

4) Worker/Employee

includes the Director, assistant Directors, Counselors, Counselor's In Training, Lifeguards, Nurses, Cooks, Maintenance Help, unpaid volunteers, and any other person hired or approved by the camp.

5) Allegation

a claim of abuse

6) Agency

a child and family services agency incorporated under the Child and Family Services Act.

C. Prevention

Purpose:

- to make the camp a safe place
- to prevent and minimize the possibility of the occurrence of abuse
- to protect workers from false allegations of abuse

Desired Results:

- The Executive Director shall be responsible for the screening of the workers.
- The camp shall establish a screening process for all workers.
- The camp shall maintain a registry of workers.
- Avoidance of situations where activities cannot be overheard or observed.

D. Supervision and Training

All camp workers will have:

- knowledge of the basic principles of this policy, and any guidelines adopted by the camp.
- access to this policy and to the guidelines adopted by the camp.

All workers will indicate in writing a willingness to sign any release of information document that is requested of them.

E. Dealing with Allegations of Abuse

1) Legal Duty to Report

Section 18(1) of the **Child and Family Services Act** requires that "where a person has information that leads the person reasonably to believe that a child is or might be in need

of protection as provided in section 17, the person shall forthwith report the information to an agency or to a parent or guardian of the child.”

Any camp staff who is led to believe that a child might be in need of protection is required to report the information to the Executive Director or the Board Chair-Person.

If the situation is reported to Child and Family Services, Child and Family Services is responsible for taking action to protect the child, contacting the police, arranging a medical examination and informing the parent.

2) Reporting a Child in Need of Protection

As stated, The Act requires a person to report a child in need of protection to an agency or to the parent. Section 18 (1.1) however states that the information is reported only to the agency and **NOT** reported to the parents “if the person

- a) does not know the identity of the parent or guardian
- b) has information that leads the person reasonably to believe that the parent or guardian
 - (i) is responsible for causing the child to be in need of protection; or
 - (ii) is unable or unwilling to provide adequate protection to the child in the circumstances; or
- c) has information that leads the person reasonably to believe that the child is or might be suffering abuse”

The Manitoba Guidelines issued by the Province of Manitoba caution that “While reporting of a child in need of protection is mandatory, some discretion is required in deciding on whether or not a child is or reasonably might be in need of protection.”

David Thwaites, a lawyer, recommends in CCCC Bulletin #3 (1994) that “if one is in doubt about reporting an incident, that you or a third party can phone Child and Family Services anonymously describing the situation and get counsel on how to proceed. It is always good to contact an outside person trained in abuse issues for advice.”

Appendix “C” lists indicators of possible abuse. **One should remember however that these same indicators are sometimes consistent with problems that have nothing to do with abuse.**

In any event the duty to report applies even where the information was obtained through the discharge of professional duties or within a confidential relationship.

3) Handling Disclosures

The following a), b) and c) are condensed from the Red Cross Child Abuse Prevention Program.

a) Listen

- provide privacy
- stay calm – do not express shock or anger
- don't promise not to tell

b) Believe

- express belief in the person
- reassure them that they've done the right thing by telling
- reassure them that abuse is not their fault

c) Affirm

- acknowledge the feelings that they are feeling
- it's important to convey the following:
 - "I'm glad you told me"
 - "I'm sorry this happened to you"
 - "It's important that this never happens again to you or anyone else."
- affirm them as worthy individuals
- avoid telling them how they should feel
- avoid looking for cause
 - do not probe or ask "why"
 - make no presuppositions – avoid being judgmental
 - avoid projecting your own reactions onto them
 - determine their immediate need for safety and any possible medical concerns
- do not ask leading questions or encourage a more detailed description or introduce more precise language. (Remember that it is not your job to investigate, this is the responsibility of the assigned investigators. Any help in this area could negatively affect results.)
- allow the child to maintain as much control over their situation as possible (when they will tell, whether you will accompany them, etc.), telling only those who need to know.

d) Document

Document everything that happens between you and the child as well as others involved in the situation including as much of the conversation as possible. Document only facts, not your own theories.

e) Report

Determine:

- who the worker reports to.
- who is responsible to contact the agency or the parents. This person must contact the parents if the child claims to have been hurt by a third party.
- who supports the worker.
- who sets up the initial support system for the child.

f) Follow Up

- Respect confidentiality of the case of the child
- If a support system exists, determine what, if any, additional supports the child requires.
- Collaborate with the Task Force (G. 2. b) and hand over responsibility to them.

g) The Needs of the Worker

- Recognize and acknowledge your own feelings.
- Talk to someone trustworthy about your response to the situation if you find this necessary, but remember, it is important to maintain the child's confidentiality.

F. Allegations of Abuse Against a Worker

- When an allegation surfaces, the employee, paid or unpaid, shall be asked to temporarily step aside from his duties, pending the outcome of the police investigation into the allegation.
- When questionable conduct surfaces, which in and of itself would not interest the police, such as extended hugging, spending time alone with a child behind closed, windowless doors, spending too much time alone with a child, or any other conduct which might pose a danger to a child, steps shall be taken to prevent a recurrence.
- When an allegation of sexual misconduct arises amongst staff, an appropriate response shall be made by camp authorities.

G. Responses / Procedures

1) What to do While a Complaint is Being Investigated

- While the police investigation is underway, the camp must stay as far removed from the situation as possible.
- This is necessary from the police perspective so that the investigation is not interfered with.
- It is also an indication to all parties that the complaint is being investigated impartially, and that the camp is not "siding" with one party or another.
- Statements made to a pastor or minister are not privileged, and anything said by a complainant or alleged offender to their pastor is admissible in court. Even if such statements were given under the impression that they would not be passed on to anyone else, the person to whom they were made could be compelled to disclose what those statements were. Where such statements disclose that a child is in need of protection, then the disclosure must be reported.

2) Responsibility after the Child and Family Services Investigation is Completed

a) The Camp and the Alleged Offender (Respondent)

- The procedures set out in the Adult Sexual Abuse Policy should be followed in dealing with the Respondent.

b) Camp Task Force

- The camp shall appoint a Task Force of 3 – 5 persons who may include resource persons from outside the camp.
- The camp shall provide such funds as the Task Force may reasonably require to do its work.

Appointment of Persons to the Task Force

- Care shall be taken not to appoint personal friends and/or relatives of the person complained against or of the person making the allegation.

- Persons appointed shall be of high integrity and good repute.

Purpose

The Task Force shall prepare an action plan for the following:

- A general evaluation with a view to preventing any further occurrences of abuse.
- The support of the complainant which should include counseling. It is preferable that the counselor not be a part of the camp staff.

The Task Force shall implement the Action Plan, reporting periodically to the camp leadership. Persons in Camp Leadership who may be in a conflict of interest position should disqualify themselves from any discussion or other dealings with this matter.

The Task Force shall report on the action plan to the camp.

Appendix A - Prevention Strategies

Guidelines for Selection and Training of Staff and Workers

I. Guidelines for Selection of Staff and Workers

1. No staff person shall be hired or approved without some screening and without some minimal check into his background.
2. When a person applies to work with the camp, such staff shall fill out a full Application Packet for longer positions which are directly related to children (ie. Assistant Directors, Counselors, Counselors-In-Training, Lifeguards, etc., and at least a Personal Information Form for people working for shorter periods of time (ie. 1 week) or for positions not directly involved with children (ie. Cooks, Maintenance etc).

These forms will inquire about prior records and require a signature to allow background checks to be made on the individuals.

Once a potential staff person has been accepted, along with their acceptance form and contracts, they will be sent the Abuse Registry form provided by the Child Abuse Registry to the camp. This form must be filled out completely and returned with the contract before final approval.

3. The persons identified as references shall be contacted for their input. A record shall be kept on file of the response made by each of the references.
4. All staff in long term positions (ie. For the whole summer) directly relating to children will be checked through the Child Abuse Registry Search prior to the camp. Anybody found to have a record will NOT be approved for work at the camp.
5. Prior to approval, the name of any questionable potential staff people may be brought to the Simonhouse Bible Camp Board for their opinion. If anyone knows of reasons why a person would not be a suitable staff person, further investigation should take place, following which a final approval or denial of the applicant will be made.
6. Potential staff people will be required to fill out an Application Packet/Personal Information Form each year they apply to work and the Abuse Registry Search will be made each year.

The camp should never hire staff or allow volunteers with a prior conviction of sexual abuse to work with children. Even if a known child molester has repented, perhaps served time in prison and had extensive counseling, it is not a sign of "unforgiveness" to prevent access to children. Rather, it is a dangerous mistake to present temptation to them.

II. Supervision & Training of Employees

1. Initially, employees should be trained regarding child safety, abuse and misconduct prevention as well as post-incident procedures.

2. Employees shall be given some instruction which will lessen the probability of an allegation subsequently being made against them.
3. Such instruction might include some of the following areas:
 - The potential emotional difficulties experienced during camp counseling.
 - The dangers of extended hugging or other inappropriate touching.
 - The danger of being alone with a child behind closed windowless doors.
 - The need to discipline children in an appropriate but not in a harsh manner.
 - Appropriate adult/child ratios.
4. This instruction will be formally given each year during the Staff Training session at the beginning of each camping season. It will be reviewed as needed throughout the camping season.

III. Records

1. Records shall be kept of the names and addresses of parents, campers, employees, and guests who stay on site.
2. Appropriate records of the hiring/recruiting process shall be maintained.
3. Where abuse or sexual misconduct is alleged or has occurred, records shall be kept relating thereto for at least 10 years.

Appendix B - Prevention Strategies

Guidelines for Conduct of Workers

Worker Guidelines

- Aim for a minimum of 2 staff in any room or cabin with children. This reduces both the possibility of molestation, and false accusations of abuse.
- If only 1 staff person can be in a room with children, try leaving the door of that room open, or have a window in the door.
- Workers should be encouraged to always conduct themselves in a godly manner, being an example of obedience, respect and honesty to young believers.
- "Weggies" and other questionable practical jokes will NOT be tolerated and are cause for dismissal.
- Extra care should be taken during swimming times and at night time to be sure that sexual or physical jokes are not being played or made towards campers or staff.
- Male campers and staff are NOT to be on the designated female side of the premises. Female campers and staff are NOT to be on the designated male side of the premises. During night checks or in a situation where a male needs to be on the female side, or a female needs to be on the male side, a staff member of the opposite sex should accompany that person if at all possible.

When a Child Under Your Care Gets Hurt

- Perform necessary basic first aid.
- Inform nurse or in absence of nurse the Director immediately.
- The nurse or Director will document how injury happened and what was done to care for child.

Methods of Discipline

- Remember, discipline is a very sensitive issue. Any form of discipline must be carefully executed. Where possible, more than one worker should be present when a child is being corrected.
- Set limits before starting a session with children. Reminding them often of the rules does not hurt and is important because of short memories. Setting limits helps children know what behaviors are appropriate and inappropriate.
- Clarify consequences ahead of time. If limits are set without clarified consequences, there is confusion and disciplining is difficult.
- Give clear instructions with authority. Maintain eye contact while doing this.
- After inappropriate behavior or language, try logical reasoning first. Talk the child through the inappropriate behavior.
- Use activities to try to redirect distracting behaviors.
- If this fails, implement consequences: enforce "Time Out" (a short, supervised quiet time away from the rest of the children). Misbehavior must be identified clearly and Time Out limits clearly defined.
- Remember to reward and praise appropriate behavior to enforce positively.
- Children who repeatedly cross the limits and should be considered for dismissal from camp should be brought to the Director. After consultation with the camper and the staff person the Director will make the decision whether to dismiss the camper or not.

Allegations of Abuse Against a Worker

- When an allegation surfaces, the staff person, paid or unpaid, shall be asked to temporarily step aside from his duties, pending the outcome of the police investigation into the allegation.
- When questionable conduct surfaces, which in and of itself would not interest the police, such as extended hugging, spending time alone with a child behind closed, windowless doors, spending too much time alone with a child, or any other conduct which might pose a danger to a child, steps shall be taken to prevent a recurrence.

Appendix C – Signals of Possible Abuse Within a Potential Victim

Those who work in settings with children should become familiar with the possible indicators of abuse typically portrayed by victims. Obviously, however, one must proceed with caution in this area, because the same signals which are consistent with abuse can often be consistent with a great many other life-related problems. Rarely is one indicator conclusive proof that a child has been harmed. In most instances, children will present with a cluster of behavioral and physical indicators. When considered in conjunction with other possible indicators of abuse, however, the staff member may suspect abuse and need to make a report.

Indicators of Physical Abuse (behavioral)

- Cannot recall how observed injuries occurred, or offers inconsistent explanation

Indicators of Physical Abuse (physical)

- Unexplained welts or bruises
- Presence of several injuries that are in various stages of healing
- Presence of various injuries over a period of time
- Injuries inconsistent with the child's age and development phase

Indicators of Sexual Abuse (behavioral)

- Age-inappropriate sexual play with toys, self, others e.g. replication of explicit sexual acts
- Age-inappropriate, sexually explicit drawings and/or descriptions
- Bizarre, sophisticated or unusual sexual knowledge
- Promiscuity
- Prostitution
- Seductive behavior directed towards members of the opposite sex
- Self-mutilating
- Obsessively clean

Indicators of Sexual Abuse (physical)

- Unusual or excessive itching in the genital or anal area
- Torn, stained or bloody underwear
- Pregnancy
- Injuries to the genital or anal areas e.g. bruising, swelling or infection
- Experiences pain when urinating
- Venereal disease

Appendix D – Signals of Possible Abuse Within Your Ministry

In those rare instances where you will actually witness them, the following are observable actions in those who could be engaged in sexual abuse:

- An adult treating a particular child with extreme favoritism.
- The “accidental” touching of a child’s private parts or the rubbing of one’s body against the child.
- The suggestions that an adult should see and/or touch a child’s body to monitor development.
- The unnecessary application of lotion on a child’s body.
- Failure to respect the child’s right to privacy while changing.
- An adult’s suggestions to a child that he or she is involved in sexual activities with other boys or girls.
- An adult’s attempt to teach a child about sex education by displaying pornography, showing off his or her body, or touching the child’s body.
- An adult’s use of sexually suggestive language while referring to the child’s body.
- An adult’s use description of her/his sexual exploits to a child.
- An adult’s warning a child not to tell anyone about the things that happened or were discussed between the adult and the child.
- An adult’s “accidental” removal or opening of some or all of his/her clothing in the presence of a child beyond that of usual changing in the cabins. Care needs to be taken to ensure that the two aren’t confused.