

Victory Church Abuse Policy

As a community, Victory Church is committed to protecting the vulnerable, caring for survivors, and holding abusers accountable. Our commitments come from God, who is a refuge for the abused and never ignores their cry (Psalm 9:9, 12). Our community seeks to embody God's care for justice and the vulnerable that comes with his Kingdom.

Abuse is a particularly grievous sin (and often a crime), when someone in a position of power and trust violates or exploits someone who is often powerless to stop it. Abuse is sadly a common reality in this world. As Christians we cannot face abuse if we are in denial about its reality. Instead, Jesus calls us to be "wise as serpents." (Matthew 10:16) We all must take responsibility to become educated about abuse and take responsibility to uphold our policy.

Our goal is to prevent and respond appropriately to abuse by becoming a community that is educated on various forms of abuse and common dynamics, clarifying appropriate boundaries, and doing the hard work of holding each other accountable. All persons should experience an environment of safety and justice and one that is free from any form of abuse.

By its very nature, our community includes interaction with vulnerable children and adults. Sadly, predatory individuals often seek environments with vulnerable people. Abuse in all its forms is almost always perpetrated by someone known to the victim. Abusers utilize a variety of tactics to gain trust, deceive both victims and others within a community, and keep the abuse secret. This policy states the things in our community of which we all must take ownership as we walk with a God who loves justice and hates oppression.

Definitions

Abuse: In general, abuse occurs when a person in a position of power and/or trust (e.g. pastor, elder, boss, mentor, supervisor, parent, adult, older child, etc.) uses that position to exploit or violate someone who is more vulnerable. That exploitation or violation can take a variety of forms such as emotional, financial, physical, sexual, spiritual, etc.

Sexual Abuse: When a person in a place of power and/or trust engages in sexual behavior with a child or an adult under their supervision, authority, mentoring, or spiritual care, including:
Sexual Penetration - Any act or attempted act of vaginal or anal penetration, however slight, by a person's penis, finger, other body part, or an object, and/or any oral-genital contact.
Sexual Contact: Any intentional touching of a person's breasts, buttocks, groin, genitals, or other intimate parts. Touching may be over or under clothing and may include the abuser touching or making the person touch them, or making the person touch their own body. This also includes contact with non-sexual areas of the body for the sexual gratification of the perpetrator (such as with certain paraphilic disorders).

Non-Contact Sexual Acts:

- observing a person's nudity or sexual activity or allowing a person to observe sexual activity;
- recording, photographing, transmitting, showing, viewing, streaming, or distributing intimate or sexual images, audio recordings, or sexual information of persons; or
- exposing one's genitals or inducing a person to expose their own genitals

- within a power dynamic (boss-employee, doctor-patient, teacher-student, pastor-congregant, adult-child) communicating romantic or sexual desire, interest, or sexually stimulating content toward a person

A child cannot consent to any sexual behavior with an adult or older child. An adult under the authority, care, or mentorship of a leader cannot consent to sexual activity. Even when both people are adults and the contact is not forcible, any crossing of sexual boundaries within a power structure is not an “affair” or a “relationship” but an egregious abuse of power. Adult sexual abusers often develop an emotional and spiritual connection and then exploit it. While not always recognized as a crime according to state laws, this is a serious violation and Victory Church will treat it as such. If any staff person wishes to pursue a consensual relationship with someone under their spiritual care or a power hierarchy within Victory Church, they must contact the Victory Church Board for the sake of transparency and to discuss any appropriate boundaries given the power dynamics or other factors.

Sexual Assault: sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the consent of the victim. Sexual harassment generally violates civil laws—all have a right to work or learn without being harassed—but in many cases is not a criminal act (see more on harassment below). Sexual assault usually refers to acts that are criminal. Some forms of sexual assault include:

- Penetration of the victim’s body, also known as rape.
- Attempted rape.
- Forcing a victim to perform sexual acts, such as oral sex or penetration of the perpetrator’s body.
- Fondling or unwanted sexual touching.

Consent is defined as words or overt actions indicating a freely given agreement to the sexual act or contact. Silence or the absence of an explicit “no” does not equal consent. Physical submission by the victim - such as “freezing” or “fawning” - does not equal consent. Consent also implies the ability to say no in a mutual relationship: Children, adults with certain developmental disabilities, certain vulnerable adults (e.g. elderly or ill), or those within a power differential (e.g. with a religious leader, mentor, teacher, or supervisor) are unable to consent to sexual activity. Other circumstances such as intoxication or unconsciousness also render a person unable to give consent to sexual activity.¹ Deception or manipulation of a person also render that person unable to consent.

Sexual Harassment: The legal definition of Sexual Harassment by the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (1980) is “Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

1. submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual’s employment
2. submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual;
3. such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.”

Beyond the legal definition, harassment, sexual or otherwise, can also occur in a community, conference, or event when the people involved are not employees of the church. In accord with our values, sexual harassment is not restricted to what is defined as sexual harassment under the law. Victory Church considers any unwanted sexualized behavior or sexualized behavior

¹ For more discussion on consent including state laws see <https://www.rainn.org/articles/legal-role-consent> and https://apps.rainn.org/policy/?_ga=2.24798265.200928410.1590493313-413255437.1539433206

within a power differential to be a serious form of harassment (including unwanted touch or communication, other unwanted sexual attention, or any behavior that objectifies or degrades.) Other common forms of harassment include bullying and acts of discrimination. Harassment can include discrimination against a specific group of people based on age, race, sex, ethnicity, national origin, religion, language, disability, health conditions, socioeconomic status, marital status, domestic status, or parental status.

Intimate Partner Violence (Domestic Violence): A pattern of behavior where a person in or who has been in an intimate relationship uses tactics of control, belittling, isolation, fear, stalking, and/or intimidation to dominate, harm, degrade, or otherwise undermine the worth and agency of the other person in the relationship. Intimate partner violence can be physical, verbal, emotional, sexual, social, or financial.²

Emotional Abuse: A pattern of controlling behaviors such as shaming, insulting, degrading, intimidating, threatening, humiliating, and/or domineering. Bullying is a common term for acts that typically constitute emotional abuse.

Financial Abuse: The illegal or improper use of a vulnerable person or his/her financial resources for another's profit or advantage. Some examples of financial abuse may include: the taking of money or property; forging a signature; getting a person to sign a deed, will or power of attorney through deception, coercion, or undue influence; or, illegally or improperly adding names to bank accounts or safety deposit boxes. The elderly in particular are often targeted for financial abuse.

Physical Abuse: Non-accidental physical injury (ranging from bruises to severe fractures or death) by way of bodily contact (such as slapping, punching, pushing, beating, kicking, shaking or striking with an object) or non-injurious contact with the goal or effect of intimidating, threatening, or controlling.

Spiritual Abuse: a form of emotional abuse using religion. Many acts of abuse in a religious environment will have a spiritual dimension. Examples include:

- Use of religious ideology, precepts, tradition, or sacred texts to harm
- Compelling a person to engage in religious acts against his or her will
- Abuse that occurs in a religious context or by a religious leader
- Invoking of divine authority to manipulate a person into meeting the needs of the abuser
- Using spirituality or spiritual authority to dismiss a person's perspective, agency, or value.
- Attempts to use the divine, sacred texts, sacred tradition, theology, or spirituality to put their leadership or decisions beyond questioning or accountability.
- Attempts to spiritualize or justify harm using the divine, sacred texts, sacred tradition, theology, or spirituality.

Stalking: A pattern of unwanted, fixated, and obsessive behavior which is intrusive and causes alarm, distress, or fear of violence. Stalking is a terrifying reality and is now recognized as a crime in all fifty states.

² For more information and examples an excellent resource is The Duluth Model at <https://www.theduluthmodel.org/wheels/>

Examples of stalking include (from The Justice Department's Stalking Victimization Survey):

- Making unwanted phone calls/texts or sending unwanted messages or emails
- Following or spying on the victim
- Showing up or waiting at places without a legitimate reason
- Leaving unwanted items, presents, or flowers
- Posting information or spreading false or confidential information about a person or victim on the internet, in a public place, or by word of mouth

Administrative Policy

Safeguarding Team

The Safeguarding Team is responsible for equipping the community of Victory Church for effective prevention and response. Currently, our Safeguarding Team is a group of 4-6 members and includes women and men. Victory Church staff members, board members and church members are eligible to be on the Safeguarding Team. Victory Church Senior Leadership (SLT) team will invite members based on recommendations from church leadership. This process will be conducted annually, and positions will be filled as they become available. The Victory Church SLT also appoint a chairperson for the Safeguarding Team. The team should include a variety of ministry backgrounds, and have a professional understanding of abuse and trauma.

Duties of the Safeguarding Team:

- Implement and oversee compliance with the Victory Church Abuse Policy
- Maintain rigorous familiarity with the Victory Church Abuse Policy
- Brief all staff, volunteers, and members on the application of the policy on a regular basis
- Receive, document, and respond to any policy violations or concerning behavior
- Lead in responding to any allegations of abuse (see below)
- Audit the screening of pastors, officers, staff, and volunteers conducted by ministry teams.
- Complete continuing education from a qualified organization on an annual basis

Screening of Pastors, Officers, Staff, Members and Volunteers

Victory Church shall utilize the following screening tools for all pastors, officers, and staff:

- The completion of a written application including questions related to abuse and protecting the vulnerable. (we would need to create)
- At least three references to be contacted. These references should include:
 - Previous employers (if applicable) and any work with survivors or vulnerable persons
 - At least one reference not supplied directly by the applicant
- A background check that includes the following information:
 - Confirmation of education and employment
 - FBI criminal record check
 - An internet and social media search
 - An interview that explores a candidate's written application and includes questions related to abuse, protecting the vulnerable, and the Victory Church Abuse Policy (need)

In addition, Victory Church shall utilize the following screening tools for all pastors, officers, staff, team leaders and group leaders:

- The completion of a membership course and application to become a member, including questions related to our abuse policy and whether they have ever abused or been accused of abuse
- A commitment to the Victory Church Abuse Policy
 - National sex offender registry check

In addition, Victory Church shall utilize the following screening tools for all pastors, officers, staff, team leaders, group leaders, volunteers in the following departments: Victory Kids, Victory Youth, Creative, Digital, and volunteers going on mission trips and working with vulnerable populations in any capacity:

- State criminal record check
- State central child/dependent adult abuse registry check

Victory Church shall utilize the following screening tools for all members:

- The completion of a membership course including questions related to our abuse policy and whether they have ever abused or been accused of abuse
- A commitment to the Victory Church Abuse Policy
- An understanding of the operation of the Victory Church Abuse Policy in case of abuse in the church environment

If the screening process yields information that an individual abused a child or others in any way or has been convicted of a violent and/or sexual crime, that individual may not work with children or vulnerable adults in any capacity. If any potentially concerning information comes to light OR if the screening process shows that a candidate has ever been accused or convicted of any type of crime, Victory Church will consult with an expert to help assess the situation.

Training

The staff, officers, volunteers, and members shall receive annual continuing education on abuse and harassment issues from outside experts and regular internal briefings on our policy.

Healthy Boundaries

At all times our community upholds the following standards of respect and safety:

Show respect in physical touch, space, and visibility:

- Appropriate touch, whether an adult or child, is always welcomed by the person and accountable to others (If you are not sure, just ask - e.g. Can I give you a hug?)
- Children who need assistance in the restroom outside of the children's ministry must be helped by their own parent or guardian. Within the children's ministry, all diapering or assistance must be observable by two screened adults.
- Be considerate of others and give them appropriate space: Notice the body language of others and be aware of your impact on others
- Stay in visible and accountable spaces: No one should be alone with a child who is not their own child (this includes while riding in a vehicle together)

Show respect in your words:

- Determine to use words that convey the respect always due to others

- Avoid any language that belittles or objectifies (e.g. commenting on a person's body or sexual attractiveness)
- Avoid sexualized comments including inappropriate jokes or stories

Show respect in agency and personal boundaries:

- Healthy people do not seek to control others, but rather encourage and empower others to take healthy agency in their own life (e.g. making decisions for someone or taking control of an aspect of their life such as directing their finances or career or social life)
- Avoid volunteering inappropriately intimate information or asking someone to reveal intimate details or personal information when the person is not ready or comfortable doing so
- Give agency to others (e.g. "Where would you be comfortable meeting up?")
- Always respect the "no" of others in setting personal boundaries

It is always the responsibility of the person in the position of greater power to maintain appropriate boundaries with others. The following behaviors are unacceptable by any pastors, elders, deacons, or staff at Victory Church:

- Any abuse of power as defined by this policy
- Sexual harassment of any kind, including unwanted sexual attention, comments, or unwanted physical touch
- Behavior or words that discriminate against anyone based on age, race, sex, ethnicity, national origin, religion, language, disability, health conditions, socioeconomic status, marital status, domestic status, or parental status
- Any words that belittle or threaten

In addition, those with greater power need to adhere to these behaviors in a professional working environment:

- All one-on-one meetings and counseling should be conducted in office space with windows where others are present and working (or similar working environment where others are present). These one-on-one meetings should be conducted during normal business hours (not before 9AM or after 7PM).
- All one-on-one hospital visits should be limited to 10 minutes, and the only touching should be for prayer on hand, arm, or head. The hospital room door should remain open if possible.
- All home visits should be conducted in the presence of more than two people.
- Ensure communications are documented and not deleted, consider adding third person to text/social media threads for accountability.
- When possible, avoid one-on-one car rides. In the case of a minor, no one-on-one car rides are permitted.

Abusers often use charm or other tactics to manipulate others. Targets of abuse often report feeling flattered and then later confused, upset, guilty, ashamed, and like it is all their fault. Victims should know that although it is normal to feel this way, abuse is never their fault. Those in positions of power and trust are responsible and able to respect appropriate boundaries.

Abusers are often skilled at explaining away concerning behavior. Anyone who experiences or has information regarding concerning behavior or a policy violation should document it and speak up as soon as possible to the Safeguarding Team. All of us should be mindful of what is happening around us and speak up to the Safeguarding Team if anyone is demonstrating concerning behavior, crossing boundaries, or violating this policy in any way.

Responding to Boundary Violations

Victory Church takes seriously all policy violations and all concerns related to respect and safety. Any person who witnesses or learns of a violation of this policy is encouraged to inform a member of the Safeguarding Team as soon as possible. Furthermore, any concerns related to vulnerable persons should be brought to the attention of a member of the Safeguarding Team. The Safeguarding Team will document all concerns or policy violations and collaborate on any appropriate response and accountability.

Responding to Abuse and Harassment

Victory Church is committed to providing a timely and effective response to any allegations or findings of abuse or harassment within our church. We will work to create an environment where everyone feels comfortable raising questions and concerns, coming forward with reports of any misconduct, and being proactive about preventing and responding to abuse. In responding to abuse, Victory Church will always prioritize the safety and needs of the victim(s) and other vulnerable persons.

Immediate Response Protocols

1. When there is a reasonable belief that any person is in immediate danger (e.g. an act of violence is actively happening or has just occurred), call 911.
2. If there is a disclosure of abuse, any evidence or knowledge of abuse, or any reasonable belief of abuse against a minor (age 17 or younger) or vulnerable adult (e.g. elder abuse, or abuse against an adult with developmental disabilities³), all adults within Victory Church must immediately report to the Pennsylvania ChildLine Hotline by calling 1-800-932-0313. Child abuse may also be reported to a local police department, county sheriff, county juvenile department, or Pennsylvania State Police. DO NOT try to investigate the matter. Any delay in reporting could result in a loss of critical evidence, potentially be a violation of the law, and worst of all, enable the continued abuse of vulnerable children or adults. After the report, contact a member of the Safeguarding Team. Abuse against a vulnerable adult needs to be reported to the protective services hotline at 1-800-490-8505.
3. If there is a disclosure, any evidence or knowledge, or any reasonable belief of abuse or harassment against an adult, all persons within Victory Church are encouraged to report as soon as possible to a member of the Safeguarding Team. The Safeguarding Team member shall immediately inform the entire team (except a member or partner of a member involved in any allegation). If the misconduct allegations involve the Safeguarding Team, the report may go to any member of the official Board of Victory Church.

³ Visit <https://www.dhs.pa.gov/contact/Pages/Report-Abuse.aspx> for more details.

4. The Safeguarding Team shall respect the agency of the adult victim(s) in reporting any and all suspected crimes to the appropriate authorities. The decision to report adult abuse is ultimately up to the adult victim(s). However, the Safeguarding Team should work to encourage and support the victim(s) in every possible way and there may be situations where the Safeguarding Team feels bound by conscience to report information pertaining to a potential crime against an adult. When reporting seems in the best interest of the safety of the community, and there is any potential reason to believe the victim or others at Victory Church may still be in danger (e.g. in cases involving domestic violence, stalking, assault, or threats), the Safeguarding Team shall also consult with national or local experts and the victim to make a safety plan.
5. If the alleged perpetrator is within Victory Church Staff, upon notification from the Safeguarding Team, the Victory Church Board shall immediately place the alleged offender on administrative leave until the completion of any investigations and/or Victory Church has sufficient information to make a determination concerning any personnel decisions and/or other accountability. The Safeguarding Team shall coordinate any immediate steps required for the protection of the vulnerable and the community and inform the Victory Church Board.

Further Response Protocols

Whenever possible, the Safeguarding Team should refer the victim(s) to local expert help (where available) and/or national organizations such as The National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-SAFE), The Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network Hotline (RAINN - 1-800-656-4673), or SAMHSA's National Helpline (1-800-662-HELP).

Any victim has a right for their privacy to be respected as much as possible. At times, it may be necessary for Victory Church to share certain information in order to safeguard other vulnerable persons and allow for any other potential victims to come forward.

The Safeguarding Team shall coordinate further appropriate response including but not limited to:

- Ensuring all potential crimes against children have been reported to appropriate authorities according to the policy above
- Taking any further action for the protection of vulnerable persons
- Facilitating cooperation with any investigations including helping investigators assess the possibility of other victims and communicating in appropriate ways within the church or with others
- Ongoing, appropriate care for the victim(s) including helping them connect with professional trauma informed care if desired
- When appropriate, with careful attention to protecting the privacy of any victims, offering public support and/or opposing harmful narratives toward victims
- Maintaining contact with the alleged offender during any investigations or administrative leave to ensure proper boundaries and accountability, especially with regard to controlling the narrative, retaliation, and access to other vulnerable people
- Caring for others in the church and coordinating with outside resources as needed
- Documenting relevant actions and information related to the case
- Reaching out to qualified experts when an independent investigation is appropriate

Independent Investigations

There are several scenarios when it is strongly advisable that Victory Church pursue an independent investigation in response to allegations of abuse or harassment, such as:

1. Authorities decline to investigate or prosecute a report of abuse even though there is evidence of wrongdoing.
2. The alleged offender is cleared of criminal wrongdoing by the authorities, but sufficient concerns remain whether the alleged offender engaged in wrongful conduct that may disqualify him/her from continued participation in leadership or the church.
3. There is a serious pattern of misconduct denied by the alleged perpetrator.
4. The alleged offender is either a pastor, officer, or member of the Safeguarding Team.
5. The alleged victim(s) requests an investigation.
6. The church wants to investigate and assess how it responded to the allegations of abuse in order to better understand how it could have responded more effectively and to improve for the future.

When the Victory Church board decides to engage in an independent investigation, the independent investigation must be conducted by an organization or persons completely independent of Victory Church and must be experienced in investigating cases of the specific form(s) of abuse or misconduct in view. The organization or persons must utilize a multidisciplinary team of trained investigators (examples can include current or past law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and/or mental health experts) who are trained in best practice investigative standards, have significant experience investigating a wide range of misconduct and/or abuse cases, and utilize trauma-informed practices in their investigations.

Upon completion of each investigation, the independent investigator will deliver to the Board of Elders a report that will consist of its investigative findings, analysis, and recommendations. Any personnel decisions will be made in view of the recommendations by the Board of Elders according to the values and employment practices of our church.

The Safeguarding Team will make a recommendation to the Victory Church board regarding the need for an independent investigation. When the Victory Church board declines to engage in an independent investigation, the Victory Church board and the Safeguarding Team shall document all related information along with their reasons. The Victory Church board shall have this material reviewed by an independent expert(s) (e.g. law enforcement official, prosecutor, advocate, and/or therapist/counselor) who has professional experience with the type of abuse or misconduct alleged. The written review shall be delivered to the Victory Church board and made known and available to the members for the sake of transparency.

Those who use any position to abuse anyone who is vulnerable will never again serve in any leadership capacity with Victory Church.

Retaliation

Victory Church prohibits any form of retaliation against any individual or group who are involved in any activity in this policy, such as reporting concerns or potential evidence, or cooperating in a criminal or independent investigation. Retaliation can take many forms, including, but not limited to, shunning, violence, threats, or intimidation that would discourage some persons from engaging in activity required or encouraged by this policy. Actions in response to a good faith report or response under this policy are considered retaliatory if they could reasonably have an adverse effect on the wellbeing of an individual or if they impact their ability to fully participate in

church activities, including compliance with this policy. Reports, concerns, or questions about retaliation should be immediately reported to the Safeguarding Team or a member of the Board of Elders. All individuals and groups of individuals engaging in retaliation will be held accountable under this policy.

Caring for Survivors

Survivors should have agency over sharing their story. When survivors choose to do so, they need our utmost support.

This support will include:

- Listening and staying calm
- Affirming without judgment
- Validating strong emotions (such as anger, betrayal, and confusion)
- Respecting their privacy
- Encouraging and empowering their agency
- Encouraging them to seek professional medical or mental health care as appropriate

Our support will recognize our limitations and will not offer therapeutic, legal, or other professional advice, but will focus on personal support and empowerment.

We will be careful to avoid causing further harm, and under no circumstances - even when the abuse is alleged and not proven - will we:

- Place any portion of blame for the abuse on the victim
- Probe for intimate details of the abuse
- Express disbelief
- Attempt to silence the victim
- Encourage noncompliance with the law
- Express support for the perpetrator
- Urge reconciliation with or forgiveness of the perpetrator

Receiving an adult's abuse disclosure is an honor, not a burden; it is a sign of trust. Survivors often choose to disclose their abuse years, even decades, after it occurred. Victory Church encourages anyone receiving an adult's abuse disclosure to be guided by the following responses:

DO Say

Thank you for telling me.

I believe you.

I'm so sorry this happened to you.
How can I help?

Take as much time as you need.

I am here.

DON'T Say

Why are you telling me this?

Why didn't you _____ (run/scream/stop him etc.)

What do you mean when you say he abused you? What exactly did he do?

You need to forgive and move on.

It'll take some time, but you'll get over it.

The following should only be said if the victim indicates these concerns are on his/her mind.

It was so long ago, why are you still letting your abuser win by hanging on to it? Let it go.

It is okay to be angry.

Try to be strong.

It's understandable you're feeling that way.

Out of tragedies good things happen.

Your reaction is not an uncommon response.

You're lucky that _____ didn't happen.

You're not going crazy. These are normal responses following abuse.

I know how you feel.

It wasn't your fault.

Perhaps you misunderstood...

Policy on Known Sex Offenders

Victory Church is committed to holding admitted or convicted offenders we believe are repentant to a high standard of accountability. Known offenders who demonstrate evidence that they are not repentant are extremely dangerous and are not welcome in our church. Jesus welcomed sinners, but he did not command us to welcome wolves among the sheep. Known offenders who wish to have any connection to our church must be willing to undergo a process designed to assess their individual situation, ongoing repentance, and what safeguards are appropriate. Offenders must agree to accept whatever accountability and safeguards our leadership, in consultation with experts, deems appropriate. Offenders must be willing to agree to this before the process of assessment begins. No assessment will begin if the victim(s) of the perpetrator are still in our church as any victim should be free to worship without their perpetrator present.

If a convicted offender asks to join our community, we will contact experts to assist with the assessment of the situation. Similarly, if an individual was in the past credibly accused of abuse, the Safeguarding Team will contact an outside expert on how to best proceed.

Leaders will use the following process:

1. Communicate to church staff and safeguarding team that we are in the process of interviewing a known offender
2. Interview with the Known Offender
3. Interview with other Relevant Parties (e.g. family, treatment provider, counselor, parole officer, etc.)
4. Acquiring Records relating to the Offender
5. Assessing Repentance in Consultation with Experts
6. [If applicable]: Setting Level of Participation, Accountability, and Safeguarding Requirements (Including listening to any known survivors about the impact in their life, and accountability on and off church property)

Leaders will consult with experts as needed throughout this process to ask appropriate questions and assess them.

No one who is convicted of or who has admitted to abusing a child may work with children or vulnerable persons in the ministry of our church, have any access to children in our church (on or off church property), or hold any position of power or trust, even if it is not directly connected to ministry to children. Any offender who evidences deception, minimization, excuses, victim blaming, or other indicators they are not repentant shall not be allowed any connection to our church. Unrepentant offenders are not welcome.

Any adult who is a convicted or admitted sex offender who attends group activities shall agree to have their name known to the congregation and shall abide by all accountability and safeguards. Any adult offender who is known or believed to be attracted to children or fantasizes about children will not attend in any settings with children.

The safeguards shall address accountability on and off church property and will involve communication with appropriate persons such as family, friends, employers, counselors, and parole/probation officers. The safeguards shall be reviewed as needed, and at a minimum every year by leadership and the Safety Team, and in consultation with child protection experts.

When a known offender is judged to be repentant and has some connection to the church, those who have responsibility to minister to him or her will have specific training.

Appendix I - Potential Indicators of Child Abuse

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse if a child has:

- Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
- Difficulty, pain or blood in the genital area when walking, sitting, or using the bathroom
- Discharge from the penis or vagina
- Injuries (e.g., bruises, tearing, bleeding), itching, or swelling in the genital, vaginal, or anal area
- Urinary tract infections, yeast infections, sexually transmitted diseases
- Pregnancy

It is atypical for children to engage in the following sexual behaviors:

- Placing mouth on sex part
- Asking others to engage in sexual acts
- Trying to have intercourse or imitating intercourse
- Undressing others, especially if done forcefully
- Imitating sexual positions with dolls
- Inserting an object into vagina or anus, especially if child continues to do so despite pain
- Manually stimulating or having oral or genital contact with pets
- Making sexual sounds
- Inserting tongue in mouth when kissing

Consider the possibility of physical abuse if you notice:

- Frequent injuries of any kind (e.g., bruises, cuts, fractures, burns)
- Especially if the child is unable to provide an adequate explanation of the cause of injury
- These injuries may appear in distinctive patterns such as grab marks, human bite marks, cigarette burns, or impressions of other instruments

- Pay particular attention to injuries that present on both sides of the head or body, as accidental injuries typically only affect one side of the body

Consider the possibility of neglect if a child:

- Is obviously malnourished, listless, or fatigued
- Begs, steals, or hoards food or complains frequently of hunger
- Is consistently dirty or has severe body odor
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
- Has untreated illness, injuries, health (e.g., unfilled cavities) or serious educational needs
- Has broken or missing eyeglasses, hearing aid, or other necessary aids or equipment
- Has an untreated need for glasses, dental care, or other medical attention
- Stays at school outside of school hours
- Is frequently absent or significant academic struggles
- Is inappropriately left unsupervised
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs