

ABUSE INFORMATION

Wisconsin Child Abuse and Neglect Act

The intent of the act:

- To protect the health and welfare of children by encouraging the reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect.
- To protect abused and neglected children from further harm.
- To provide support, counseling, and other services to abused and neglected children and their families in order to interrupt the pattern of maltreatment.
- To promote the well-being of children in their homes whenever possible.

(passed 1977)

What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse or neglect includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse; nonsupervision; educational neglect; medical neglect; and abandonment. It also includes for our purposes harassment and intimidation. Specific definitions and examples follow.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is injury inflicted on a child by other than accidental means. Physical injury includes but is not limited to lacerations, fractured bones, burns, internal injuries, severe or frequent bruising, bodily injury which creates a substantial risk of death, bodily injury which causes serious permanent disfigurement, or bodily injury which causes permanent or protracted loss of the function of an organ or body member.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse can be divided into two types—touch and non-touch. Sexual abuse involving touch includes; sexual intercourse or sexual contact; sexual exploitation; or permitting, allowing or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution or a sexual activity. Non-touch sexual abuse includes; showing a child pornography or talking about pornography, obscene jokes, or not respecting a child's right to privacy as they shower or change clothes.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is harm to a child's psychological or intellectual functioning, which may be exhibited by severe anxiety, depression or aggression. A child may have suffered emotional damage if the child exhibits severe anxiety, severe depression, severe withdrawal, or outward aggressive behavior exhibited to a severe degree. If there are substantial and observable changes in behavior, emotional response or cognition, outside the range of what is normal for that child's age and stage of development, the child may have suffered emotional damage.

Emotional damage is not considered reportable child abuse until the parent, guardian or legal custodian has neglected, refused, or been unable to obtain treatment for the child or in some way has failed to take steps to relieve the child's symptoms. The only exception is for parents who failed to seek help for reasons of poverty.

Neglect

A neglected child is one whose parent or caretaker fails, refuses or is unable for reasons other than poverty, to provide the necessary care, food, clothing, medical or dental care so as to seriously endanger the physical health of the child.

Harassment

To annoy or disturb. Including any kind of touch that is unwanted—no matter how minor, repetition of unwanted behavior even after being asked to stop, and a person feeling harassed or singled out for any reason (such as physical characteristics, behavior, talents or abilities, gender, race or ethnicity, etc.).

Intimidation

To make fearful or frighten, to discourage, coerce or suppress as if by threatening. An attempt to frighten by speaking and acting. Using one's size, power or authority, tone or volume of voice to bring about compliance.

Impact of Child Abuse

The impact of child abuse can affect victims throughout their lives. Victims of abuse are more likely than non-victims to suffer with depression and low self-esteem. They are more susceptible to drugs, alcohol, running away, early pregnancy (for females) and becoming involved in prostitution and pornography. Child abuse victims also are more likely than non-victims to become abusers themselves.

Signs of Child Abuse and Neglect

Following are the major signs of physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect, harassment and intimidation. Evidence of one, or even several of the signs may not indicate that abuse has occurred. It may indicate that other conditions or problems exist. Child abuse and neglect may be suspected if a number of the signs occur together or frequently reoccur.

Physical Abuse

- bruises, welts on face, neck, chest, and back
- injuries in the shape of object (belt, cord)
- unexplained burns on palms, soles, back
- fractures that do not fit story of injury
- delay in seeking medical help
- extremes in behavior: very aggressive or withdrawn and shy
- afraid to go home
- frightened of parents
- fearful of other adults

Sexual Abuse

- fear of being touched
- unusual interest in sex for age
- pain, bleeding, discharge in genital areas
- difficulty walking or sitting, frequent urination, pain

- stained or bloody underclothing
- venereal disease
- refusal to take part in sports or other physical activities
- poor peer relationships
- runaway or delinquent behavior
- change in eating and sleeping habits
- regression in age level appropriate behavior
- recurring physical complaints

Emotional Abuse

- low self-esteem
- self-denigration
- severe depression
- aggression
- withdrawal
- severe anxiety
- failure to learn

Neglect

- poor hygiene, odor
- inappropriately dressed for weather
- needs medical or dental care
- left alone, unsupervised for long periods
- failure to thrive, malnutrition
- constant hunger, begs or steals food
- extreme willingness to please
- frequent absence from school
- arrives early and stays late at school or play areas or other people's homes

(Information from "It shouldn't hurt to be a child...but sometimes it does" brochure, produced by the Bureau for Children, Youth and Families, Division of Community Services, Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services.)

Harassment, Intimidation

- any of the above signs can also be signs of harassment or intimidation

How do I respond to a child who's been abused?

- Help them feel believed.
- Assure them that what happened was not their fault and they were right in telling someone.
- Be sensitive to their feelings, concerns and questions.
- Let them know you are willing to listen.
- Let them know that you will not discuss what they tell you with anyone who does not need to know what happened.

**Madison Christian Community
Parish Protection Program for Children and Youth
Policies and Procedures**

When Inappropriate Behavior is Suspected Involving Church Staff or Volunteers

If a volunteer or paid staff person is suspected of inappropriate behavior (ie. physical, sexual, emotional, verbal abuse, threats or intimidation), the following procedure will be strictly followed to evaluate the impact of this behavior on that person's suitability to work with children and youth.

1. If anyone suspects inappropriate behavior toward children or youth on the part of MCC staff or volunteers, that person is strongly urged to speak to a member of the Parish Protection Advisory Group as soon as possible following the incident and to make their allegation in writing using the Incident Report Form. The Parish Protection Advisory Group recommends that an Incident Report Form be completed and submitted to them within 24 hours of the incident or knowledge of the incident whenever possible. All allegations will be handled with utmost concern for everyone's privacy and confidentiality.
2. If the person who suspects inappropriate behavior is not comfortable speaking to a member of the Parish Protection Advisory Group they are urged to speak to either of the pastors, or the president of the MCC.
3. A member of the Parish Protection Advisory Group will notify the parents or guardians of the children or youth involved in the allegation that an allegation has been made.
4. All incidents involving children and youth will be reported to the Dane County Department of Health and Family Services (608) 261-4973 either by the person who witnessed or suspects the inappropriate behavior or by one of the pastors at the MCC. (Under Wisconsin law Clergy are mandated reporters).
5. A member of the Parish Protection Advisory Group will also contact our insurance carrier, seek legal counsel and contact the appropriate Ecclesiastical body – the South-Central Synod of Wisconsin (ELCA) (608) 270-0201 or the Southwest Wisconsin Association office (UCC) (608) 244-3350 to notify them that an allegation has been made and is being reviewed.
6. The Parish Protection Advisory Group will review the allegation to determine if it substantially relates to youth safety and/or the work the individual is performing using the Recommended Standards of Behavior and the Wisconsin Statutes as a basis for evaluation.

7. If the Parish Protection Advisory Group finds that the behavior does not put children, youth or other adults at risk or raise safety concerns, and the insurance carrier agrees in cases involving alleged sexual misconduct, they will have a conversation with the individual whose behavior was called into question about steps to resolve the problem.

OR

8. If the Parish Protection Advisory Group finds that the behavior raises children and youth safety concerns, the individual whose behavior was called into question will be suspended until the circumstances surrounding the allegation are reviewed. Other staff and volunteers will be notified of the suspension and ongoing process on a need-to-know basis. Utmost care and concern will be taken to protect the confidentiality of the children and youth involved as well as that of the alleged perpetrator. Pastoral care will be provided to all parties.
9. After reviewing additional evidence gathered, the committee involved will remove the individual if evidence shows there are child or youth safety concerns.
10. Other staff and volunteers will be notified of the person's removal on a need-to-know basis.
11. All actions taken on the part of the Parish Protection Advisory Group will be carefully documented using the Incident Report Form and Alleged Incident Follow-up Report Form.