



## Child Abuse and Neglect Training Procedures

Please check the box next to each item to show that you have read, understand and agree to comply with each section of this policy.

**What do I do if I suspect that a child has been physically, emotionally, or sexually abused?**

In the case of suspected parental abuse, volunteers will report concerns to a Preschool or Children's Director or a Westwood Kids' Minister. It is not the responsibility of the reporting person to substantiate any allegations or suspicions. Rather, we are responsible as a church community to comply with Alabama's Mandatory Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Law and cooperate fully with Child Protection Services and the law enforcement officials in our community. At all times in such a process, confidentiality will be upheld. Do not discuss concerns with other parents, childcare workers or volunteers and under NO circumstances should you discuss the situation with the child's parents.

**Who is considered a "mandatory reporter" of child abuse and neglect?**

According to Alabama's Reporting Law, code 26-14-3, everyone is NOT a mandatory reporter. This is why we have asked you to report your concerns to a Westwood Kids staff member. The aforementioned law states, all hospitals, clinics, sanitariums, doctors, physicians, surgeons, medical examiners, coroners, dentists, osteopaths, optometrists, chiropractors, podiatrists, nurses, school teachers and officials, peace officers, law enforcement officials, pharmacists, social workers, day care workers or employees, mental health professionals, members of the clergy as defined in Rule 505 of the Alabama Rules of Evidence, or any other person called upon to render aid or medical assistance to any child, when the child is known or suspected to be a victim of child abuse or neglect, shall be required to report, or cause a report to be made of the same, orally, either by telephone or direct communication immediately, followed by a written report, to a duly constituted authority.

**How do I know if something is reportable or not?**

Alabama 26-14-1 defines the following:

**Child:** a person under the age of 18 years

**Abuse:** harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare that can occur through non-accidental physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or attempted sexual abuse or sexual exploitation.

**Sexual Abuse:** employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or having a child assist any other person to engage in any sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of the conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of the conduct; or the rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children, or incest with children as those acts are defined by Alabama law.

**Sexual Exploitation:** includes allowing, permitting, or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution and allowing, permitting, encouraging or engaging in the obscene or pornographic photographing, filming, or depicting of a child for commercial purposes.

**Neglect:** negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child, including the failure to provide adequate food, medical treatment, supervision, clothing, or shelter.

**“Wouldn’t I know an offender if I saw one?”**

Over 80% of the time, the abuser is someone known to the victim and most abuse occurs within the context of an ongoing relationship. Child abusers are often married and have children and are the people that you would least expect.

**Understanding Predators**

False assumptions that we make: it will happen to someone else, we are safe, we can recognize them, and they exist only in certain social and economic demographics.

**What happens if a child touches *ME* inappropriately?**

Be prepared before this occurs, remain calm and ask yourself if this was an accident or on purpose. Redirect appropriately (e.g. “Molly, please keep your hands to yourself”). Take into account the age of the child you are working with, you should be able to talk about inappropriate touching with children ages 3 and older. Therefore, if possible, take the child aside and explain good touch/bad touch. We do not touch areas covered by a swim suit. Be aware that for an abuse child, inappropriate touching may seem “normal” and they may do this to gain your attention or see how you will respond. If there has been an inappropriate touch by a child, immediately report this to a Westwood Kids Director or Minister.

**How can I best minister to a child that has been abused or neglected?**

Pray for the children you are working with that they will be safe, secure, and loved. Speak to children with integrity. Children will often feel safe in a church setting, and they may open up to you because they think that you are someone they can trust. If a child says that they want to tell you something only if you promise not to tell anyone, you should respond, “I want to hear what you have to say, but I can’t promise that I can keep a secret.” This way, if they disclose any abuse or neglect, you can report without betraying their trust. Remember children don’t always tell the truth but it’s our responsibility to listen and report what was stated.

**What additional care is required for a child that is in foster care?**

Do not discuss the situation with anyone outside of the Westwood Kids staff, do not solicit information from the child and do not allow any photos to be taken. The staff will notify you if there are other restrictions.

**Personal Etiquette**

Guidelines for physical touch:

1. Always remain in open sight of other adults. Never be alone with a child.
2. Holding and rocking is only appropriate in the nursery: birth through pre-K.
3. Only females may change diapers.
4. Only females may offer potty assistance with an open door.
5. Sitting on laps is only appropriate for ages birth through pre-K, it is not appropriate for a man to pick up or hold a child who is older.
6. No volunteer should roughhouse, wrestle, give shoulder or piggyback rides to children.
7. Use discernment when hugging a child, a **brief side-hug** is appropriate for comforting a child. Prolonged, frequent or frontal hugs are **not** appropriate. You should not initiate hugs with older children for any reason. If an older child initiates a hug, redirect them to a more appropriate contact such as a "high-five".
8. Only briefly touching children in "safe" areas (hands, arms, shoulders or gently head pat) is appropriate.
9. Never touch a child out of frustration or anger. Physical discipline is not an appropriate means of correcting someone else's child.

By signing below you agree to comply with all policies and procedures of the Westwood Kids Ministry.

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**Print Name**

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**Your signature**

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**Date**

