



Child Protection Policy Part 2:

Pastoral Protocols and Guidelines

The Word of Life Community
Ann Arbor, MI

The Child Protection Policy (CPP) of the Word of Life Community consists of two booklets.

The first booklet, ***Safeguarding Our Children***, deals with how we safeguard our children and protect them from abuse. We use this material to train those who work with our children and youth. It provides the rules and guidelines for how our programs and activities are conducted.

This second booklet, ***Pastoral Protocols and Guidelines***, covers our protocols and pastoral guidelines for dealing with situations that may occur in the conduct of our programs.

The two booklets work together to safeguard our children and to provide responsible protocols for when issues arise.

This second booklet also contains several appendices: a code of conduct, additional policies, and documents for use in children and youth programs.

Please note: the definitions used in the first booklet also apply to this booklet.

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Introduction:

Engaging the proper civil authorities at the proper time as we deal with a child protection issue is a key part of our approach. Community staff and volunteers should know and adhere to the relevant government reporting requirements for their program, position, or operating license. We do not want to substitute community authority and pastoral processes for legitimate governmental authority and processes. In this regard, if parents or community members think they are endangered or that police or other legal authorities should be involved, we will fully support them in this engagement. If they feel a crime has been committed, they should contact the police.

Dealing with suspected or confirmed cases of child abuse can be challenging. Situations are sometimes unclear and relationships between brothers and sisters in the community can become stressed or damaged. As a result, the Sword of the Spirit International Assembly has agreed that local communities should engage outside pastoral resources of the region in dealing with any case of suspected or confirmed child abuse; we should not handle these matters alone. In particular, the community's outside coordinator and the regional president must be notified of the concern at the onset and should be engaged in the process of dealing with the concern.

The process outlined below follows a sequence:

- Determining if there is a legitimate concern
- Reporting the concern to the appropriate parties
- Responding to a suspected case
- Responding to a confirmed case.

Member communities in the Sword of the Spirit shall follow this process, unless it conflicts with the civil process.

Dealing with Suspected or Confirmed Child Abuse

Determination of Suspected Child Abuse

- A. Child abuse may be suspected by witnessing suspicious behavior or through the allegations of a victim or another witness.
- B. Information that raises a reasonable suspicion of abuse must be acted upon promptly, seriously, discreetly, and with confidentiality: for the protection of the victim and to preserve the reputation of the accused.
- C. Information that does not initially rise to the level of reasonable suspicion, but nevertheless raises concern about possible child abuse, should be reported to and investigated by the community authority responsible for the activity or program (for example, the program director or youth program coordinator). If the possible victim is female, a woman leader or supervisor will be included in the communication. The

inquiry shall be conducted in a manner that respects the privacy of the child and the authority of the child's parents.

1. The inquiry should be limited to clarifying the nature of the concern and obtaining further information that will alleviate or validate the concern.
2. Until the concern is confirmed as credible or dismissed, the matter should remain confidential, and the inquiry should avoid creating unnecessary alarm or casting doubt on the character or actions of any individuals involved.
3. While confidentiality is important, so is good counsel. Having more than one leader aware of the question ensures we are pastorally vigilant. A program director cannot dismiss an allegation as invalid without receiving counsel from his/her supervisor.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

- A. A Coordinator, Senior Women's Leader, Program Director, or child/youth worker who obtains credible information that a child has suffered physical or sexual abuse, shall:
1. Take prompt, lawful, and reasonable intervention to:
 - Separate the child from the suspected abuser
 - Stop the suspected abuse
 - Provide the child with safety.
 - When necessary the police should be engaged to protect the child.
 2. Report the suspected abuse as soon as practicable to:
 - The child's parents
 - The appropriate civil authorities as warranted
 - The Program Director
 - If the Program Director is the alleged perpetrator, suspected abuse should be reported to the Coordinator or Senior Women's Leader responsible for the program.
 - If the allegations implicate the Coordinator responsible for overseeing the program, then the matter must be reported to the Senior Coordinator and Presiding Senior Women's Leader.
 - In the event the Senior Coordinator is implicated, then the matter must be reported directly to the Outside Coordinator.
 - A Coordinator, Senior Women's Leader, and Senior Coordinator
 - The Regional President, Outside Coordinator, and Outside Senior Women's leader
 - In appropriate circumstances, inform insurance carriers and obtain legal counsel.
- B. If a child/youth worker has a concern about the conduct of another child/youth worker, they have a duty to report that concern to the program director.

Responding to Suspected Child Abuse

- A. The community, its Coordinators, and staff must be committed to cooperating with government authorities (criminal, civil, and regulatory) as they investigate or prosecute suspected child abuse.
- B. While investigations or prosecutions are taking place, we will take measures to protect the children, the reputation of the alleged perpetrator of child abuse, and the integrity and credibility of the community. Such measures include but are not limited to:
 - 1. Immediately suspending an alleged perpetrator from service in child and youth ministry.
 - 2. Immediately suspending an alleged perpetrator from pastoral and service roles that brings him/her into regular contact with children.
 - 3. Immediately suspending an alleged perpetrator from a leadership role whose validity would be undermined by the allegations of abuse if they were later confirmed true.
 - 4. Providing pastoral care to those families affected by the alleged abuse.
 - 5. Keeping the names of allegedly abused children and their family members confidential.
 - 6. Encouraging community members to refrain from unnecessarily and prematurely publicizing accusations of wrongdoing, whether directed at the alleged victim, the alleged perpetrator, or members of either family.
 - 7. For the good of all involved, community leaders may forbid the alleged perpetrator (whether a member of the community or not) from attending community functions until the allegations are resolved.
- C. If a charge is not substantiated, community leadership should take steps to restore the good name of the person who may have been harmed through unsubstantiated charges.

Responding to Confirmed Abuse

- A. We accept as confirmation of abuse:
 - 1. A criminal conviction
 - 2. A civil judgment against the perpetrator
 - 3. Other substantiation by civil authorities
 - 3. Placement on a sex-abuse or child-abuse registry
 - 4. A confession or other acknowledgment by the perpetrator that the allegations of child abuse are true
- B. In the absence of an official determination by civil authorities, evidence and circumstances surrounding abuse allegations may compel community leadership to conduct an independent investigation. This investigation is not to determine guilt or innocence, but to determine how the community will resolve issues related to participation and membership.

1. The community will undertake an independent determination and on the basis of prudent pastoral judgment.
2. It will not attempt an independent investigation without the consent of the alleged victim or, if the victim is a minor, his/her parents.
3. An independent investigation will not begin until the official investigation is closed, suspended, or otherwise ceases to be active.
4. Information reviewed should be limited to
 - Information gathered by the authorities
 - Information freely and consensually offered by the alleged victim, his/her parents, the alleged perpetrator, and witnesses.

C. Individuals who pose an unreasonable threat to the safety or well-being of minors should not be permitted access to children. The community may determine that an individual poses an unreasonable threat to the safety or well-being because the individual:

1. Has prior credible allegations of child abuse involving:
 - Serious physical abuse, or attempted abduction
 - Child sexual abuse
 - Repeated boundary violations
2. And, he/she:
 - Does not express remorse, acknowledge responsibility, or appreciate the severity of the abuse
 - Does not acknowledge the adverse effect the abuse or investigation has had on the child victim and the victim's family
 - Indicates in any way that child abuse might recur.

D. In the case of confirmed child abuse, and assuming the perpetrator has appropriately repented of his actions, the community will:

1. Bar the perpetrator from service in child/youth ministry
2. Bar the perpetrator from a pastoral or service role that would bring him/her into regular contact with children
3. Bar the perpetrator from a leadership position whose validity would be undermined if held by one who has perpetrated child abuse
4. Provide pastoral care to those families affected by the confirmed abuse
5. Keep the names of abused children and their family members confidential
6. Encourage community members to refrain from unnecessarily and imprudently publicizing or discussing accusations of wrongdoing, whether directed at the alleged victim, the alleged perpetrator, or members of either one's families.
7. If the perpetrator does not pose an unreasonable threat to safety and well-being of children, the community may allow him/her to attend community functions, with the following limitations:
 - If the perpetrator is an underway or covenant member, the community will provide on-site, one-on-one supervision by a mature and reliable covenant member selected by the Coordinators: a Monitor. The Monitor will observe the perpetrator's interactions at all community events the perpetrator attends.
 - The perpetrator must consent and adhere to the following conditions:

- Disclosure of the allegations and extent of abuse to the Coordinators and the Monitor
 - Supervision by the Monitor at community functions
 - Limiting attendance to activities where the Monitor can provide sufficient supervision, as determined by the Monitor and, if deemed necessary, approved by one or more of the Coordinators.
8. Communicate to members of the community the facts of the case, the fact that the perpetrator has acknowledged and repented for these acts, and the proposed terms on which the perpetrator can re-engage with community life
- D. The community may choose to bar from participation, or attendance any individual (member or non-member) who poses a plausible threat to the safety or well-being of others, especially of children.
1. Indicators of plausible threat include, but are not limited to:
 - Showing children inordinate and/or inappropriate attention
 - Overly familiar and affectionate with children
 - Giving children money, toys, candy or other gifts without the parents' knowledge or consent,
 - Without parental knowledge or consent, taking pictures of children
 - Engaging with children in secrecy, isolation, intimacy, etc.
 2. If child/youth workers witness suspicious behavior by members or non-members, they shall immediately tell their supervisor or Program Director.
 3. When necessary to protect the safety and well-being of minors, the community may demand and pursue an individual's lawful removal from community activities, functions, or property.

Appendix 1: Word of Life Child/Youth Worker Code of Conduct

The Word of Life Community is a community of disciples on mission that strives to support the conversion, spiritual growth, and development of children and youth. Child/youth workers work closely with children and youth in a ministerial environment. The Word of Life Community recognizes that a position of ministry carries with it a responsibility for appropriate behavior. As a child/youth worker, I understand that I will be seen as a role model and that my actions directly communicate God's nature and reflect on the Word of Life Community. Therefore, I agree to conduct myself with appropriate moral behavior. As a child/youth worker, I promise to follow the rules and guidelines as stated here:

Standards of Conduct:

Ministry Responsibility:

1. Child/youth workers will treat every person with respect, loyalty, patience, integrity, courtesy, dignity, and consideration.
2. They will follow the reasonable directives of the community leaders and carry out responsibilities given to them to the best of their abilities.
3. They will attend the training that is pertinent to their responsibilities.
4. They will attend events to which they are assigned, to the best of their ability, unless their absence has been approved by their supervisor.

Personal Responsibility:

1. Child/youth workers will conduct their ministry efforts in such a manner as to be above criticism.
2. They will be conscientious with the money, property, and possessions of the community and others.
3. They will take appropriate concern for the health and well-being of minors and adults involved in the event/program.

Participation:

As a Christian organization, the Word of Life Community expects its child/youth workers to be active Christians who support and live consistently Christian morality and the teachings of the community. For some roles, participation in the community for a period of time may be required.

Confidentiality:

Child/youth workers will uphold the confidential nature of information to which they are privy. They will not disclose confidential information to those who do not need to know it.

Reporting Abuse:

1. In the case of suspected sexual or physical abuse, child/youth workers will comply with the mandatory reporting regulations of the State of Michigan law, as outlined in ***Safeguarding Our Children***, and the reporting protocols outlined in ***Pastoral Protocols and Guidelines***.
2. The Michigan Child Protection Law requires certain professions to report their suspicions of child abuse or neglect to Centralized Intake (CI) at the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). These people are mandated reporters and have established relationships with children based on their profession. A complete list of mandatory reporters can be found at Michigan.gov DHHS.
3. Child/youth workers will immediately report suspected child abuse to the supervisor in charge of the event/program. When necessary, child/youth workers will cooperate fully in civil or community investigations of abuse.

Inappropriate conduct:

1. Sexual Contact/Pornography:
 - Child/youth workers will not touch or relate to minors in a sexual or inappropriate manner.
 - While serving, child/youth workers will not have intimate physical contact with another adult: e.g., fondling, sexual intercourse, prolonged kissing.
 - Child/youth workers will not possess or show pornographic materials.
2. Harassment/bullying:
 - While serving, child/youth workers will not act in ways that cause discomfort or humiliation.
 - They will not ridicule, threaten, make degrading remarks, or make comments of a sexual nature.
 - They will not use profanity, make sexually explicit statements, or tell inappropriate stories or jokes.

- They will not initiate unwelcome physical contact or use corporal punishment such as hitting, spanking, shaking, or slapping
 - They will immediately stop a behavior when they receive reasonable input that it is inappropriate or cause discomfort.
3. Romantic relationships:
- Child/youth workers will not initiate a romantic relationship with any underage person.
 - Child/youth workers will not reciprocate if any underage person attempts to initiate a romantic relationship. The child/youth worker will also immediately report this situation to their supervisor.
4. Drugs/Alcohol/Tobacco:
- Child/youth workers will not use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol or recreational/illegal drugs while serving a child/youth program or event.
 - Child/youth workers will not smoke or use tobacco products while serving a child/youth program or event.
5. Firearms/Lethal Weapons:
- Child/youth workers will not have any firearm/lethal weapon on their person, in their possession, or in their vehicle while serving a child/youth program or event.
 - Exceptions to this policy are allowed for people engaged as security personnel or a police officer.

My signature confirms that I have read the Word of Life Community Child Protection Policy and that as a person ministering to children and youth, I agree to follow these standards. I understand that any action inconsistent with this Personal Conduct Policy or failure to take action mandated by this Personal Conduct Policy may result in my removal from serving the child and youth programs of the Word of Life Community.

Child/Youth Worker Printed Name

Child/Youth Worker Signature

Date

Appendix 2: Screening and Training

Overnight Event with minors

- Screening: Background Check, signed Code of Conduct.
- Training: Event training meeting covering community's CPP, Code of conduct, and other event-specific training topics.

Weekly youth ministry nights including large and small groups (**IGNITE Staff**)

- Screening: Background Check, signed Code of Conduct.
- Training: Program training meeting covering community's CPP, Code of conduct, and other program specific training topics.

Children's ministry volunteers (**Upper Elementary & Middle School Staff**)

- Screening: Background Check, signed Code of Conduct, community participant for at least six months.
- Training: Program training meeting covering community's CPP, Code of conduct and other program specific training topics.

Childcare during community prayer meetings (**Prayer Meeting Childcare workers**)

- Screening: Background Check, signed Code of Conduct, community participant for at least six months.
- Training: read the community's CPP, read Code of conduct, other program specific training topics presented. Understand evacuation procedures in case of an emergency.

Child/ Youth Worker Information Form

Form filled out with personal information and approval to complete an Ichat Background Check.

Background Check (Ichat)

Child/youth workers 18 years old and older will be asked to participate in a criminal background check through the Michigan State Police ICHAT

Training

All staff and volunteers working with children and youth will receive training for their specific area of involvement.

- Training will vary in length and depth depending on what is needed for the specific service but it should equip individuals with the knowledge and tools to safely serve the young people they will be interacting with.
- Safe environment training should clearly communicate acceptable ways of relating with children and youth, inappropriate behavior that will not be tolerated, and the lines of supervision that should be included.

Personal Recommendation Screening

It is important to have a recommendation, personal interaction, and communication with individuals looking to work and serve with children and youth. The Youth Coordinator and other program leaders will meet yearly to discuss staffing needs and form a list of people to fill those positions. Those people will be contacted to begin the screening process. Time will be taken, whether formally or informally, to get to know those wishing to serve, and through this discover if there are areas of concern that need further investigation.

CPP Agreement and Code of Conduct

Child/youth workers will be given the community's Child Protection Policy and specific policies associated with the particular program or activity for their review and acknowledgment.

- The CCP document will be reviewed annually with those serving as community child/youth workers.
- A Code of Conduct will be signed annually by those serving as community child/youth workers.

Participation

For some areas of work and service with children and youth, it may be required that the individual has been a regular participant of the community for a specific amount of time (for example 6-12 months).

Appendix 3: Record Keeping

The Word of Life Community will organize its CPP materials and documents on a Google Drive account. The materials will be stored digitally and be available for reference as necessary.

- An up-to-date list of staff and volunteers working with minors (Google Sheets)
- Checklist of requirements met by child/youth workers (Google Sheets)
background check, signed agreement of the CPP and code of conduct,
completion of required training
- The documents underlying the above checklist.
 - Background check results organized by last name
 - Signed code of conduct (scanned)
 - Date of completed community child/youth worker training

Appendix 4: Technology and Social Media Guiding Principles

Communication

- **E-mail:** When using email to communicate with minors it is important to always be professional and appropriate. All email communications should be kept for reference for a reasonable time and ideally a superior should be able to access these emails if required. This will require those who work with minors to agree to voluntarily provide access if requested. Informing parents of communication methods used with children and youth is also suggested.
- **Text:** If text messaging is going to be used with children and youth, it is important to inform parents or guardians and give them the opportunity to let the child/youth worker know if they are not comfortable with this method. Text message conversations with minors should be kept and available for reference if requested as described above for email.
- **Other Options:** Should any other method of communication be used with minors (letters, apps, or other), these general principles apply:
 - Always be appropriate and professional
 - Keep a record of all communications
 - The supervisor should have access to all communications as required
 - Inform parents of communication methods in advance of using them

Social Media

Social media can be a challenging area to navigate with children and youth. Child/youth workers frequently are unsure how to approach this area and whether it should be avoided altogether or navigated with care. Here are some principles to consider:

- Child/youth workers should never actively “follow” social media accounts of minors
- Child/youth workers need to be mindful themselves of what they post on their social media accounts. The children and youth they work with may see these posts.
- If using social media accounts with children and youth, content should always be appropriate.
- Individual minors should never be featured in social media or other online publications without the written consent of a parent or guardian.

Appendix 5: Safety Event Plan Example

This document can be adapted and used as an event safety plan. As events for minors can vary widely, not all items that could be included on a safety plan are included here, nor would every item listed here be included for every event. Use this form as a source of ideas and adapt for each individual event as needed.

Event Safety Plan

Event Information:

Event Date:

Event Time:

Event Location & Address including zip code:

Supervising Adults (at least 1 man & 1 woman if joint event):

Emergency Phone Numbers:

Safety Plan Checklist

- Event staff and volunteers have been involved in the local community or outreach for an agreed upon time. May be required to have a community commitment
- Staff and volunteers work under a supervisor and should have ready access to that supervisor during the event. Be sure each staff & volunteer knows who their supervisor is and has opportunities to connect with them. Should also know who to go to if the supervisor is unavailable
- Staff and volunteers have been trained for the service(s) they are asked to perform.
- Staff and volunteers must read, sign, and follow an event child/youth worker policy. An event child/youth worker policy should include a child protection policy and personal conduct policy
- Adult staff and volunteers (age18+) have cleared a criminal background check