

What do I do if I suspect that a child has been physically, emotionally, or sexually abused?¹⁴

In the case of suspected parental abuse, staff and servants will report concerns to the Campus Kids Director or to one of Sojourn's pastors. It is not the responsibility of the reporting person or the staff to substantiate any allegations or suspicions. Rather, we are responsible as a church community to comply with the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) 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.

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

- Any person who knows or has reasonable cause to believe that a child is neglected or abused shall immediately cause an oral or written report to be made (KRS 620.030, section 1-3).
- This includes but is not limited to teachers, school personnel, or child-caring personnel. This makes anyone working with children at Sojourn a mandatory reporter.
- If child abuse (physical, emotional, sexual, malnutrition) is suspected, notify Jared Kennedy, Pastor of SojournKids immediately. **DO NOT DISCUSS WITH OTHER PARENTS OR CHILDCARE WORKERS.**

How do I know if something is reportable or not?

CAPTA (Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act) mandates "minimum definitions" for child abuse and sexual abuse.

Child **abuse or neglect** is any recent act or failure to act:

- Resulting in imminent risk of serious harm, death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation
- Of a child (usually a person under the age of 18, but a younger age may be specified in cases not involving sexual abuse)
- By a parent or caretaker who is responsible for the child's welfare

Sexual abuse is defined as

- Employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of such conduct; or
- Rape, and in cases of caretaker or inter-familial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children, or incest with children.

¹⁴ Compiled by Kim Rees, Family Consultant for Home of the Innocents

- There are many signs of child abuse. Any one sign may not mean anything, but if there are a number of signs, or if they occur frequently, you may suspect maltreatment. Some signs are (The information that follows is from the Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information, Department of Health and Human Services, P.O. Box 1182, Washington D.C. 20013. Telephone: 301-251-5157):
 - Physical:
 - Unusual bruises, welts, burns, fractures or bite marks.
 - Frequent injuries, always explained as accidental.
 - Wears concealing clothes to hide injuries.
 - Child seems frightened.
 - Child seeks affection from any adult.
 - Unpleasant, hard to get along with, demanding, often does not obey.
 - Emotional:
 - Self-destructive, apathetic, depressed, withdrawn, passive.
 - Seems overly anxious when faced with new situations or people.
 - Disorganized, distrustful, or rigidly compulsive.
 - Takes on adult or parent roles and responsibilities.
 - Throws tantrums, seems impulsive, defiant, antisocial, aggressive.
 - Fearful, hyper-alert, lack of creativity and exploration.
 - Sexual:
 - Has torn, stained, or bloody underclothing.
 - Experiences pain or itching in genital areas.
 - Has venereal disease.
 - Appears withdrawn or engages in fantasy or baby-like behavior.
 - Has a poor relationship with other children.
 - Is unwilling to participate with other children.
 - States that he or she has been sexually assaulted.
 - Acts like an adult, not a child.

A more detailed list of definitions from the Child Welfare Information Gateway and Home of the Innocents Identification Criteria is available in the Sojourn office. If you suspect abuse or neglect, ask more specific questions to get information and talk with a SojournKids coordinator immediately.

Important to note...

- Over 80% of the time, the abuser is someone known to the victim, most abuse takes place within the context of an on-going relationship, the usual offender is between the ages of 20-30 years, 20% of sex offenders begin their activity before the age of 18, and finally, child abusers often are married and have children.
- If the child is disclosing that a parent is causing the harm, DO NOT talk with the parent about this. This is where much discernment needs to take place and the situation needs to be handled very carefully. Talking with the parent could lead to additional abuse, shaming, etc. Contact Child Care Director to discuss immediately.

What do I do if a child touches me inappropriately?

- Remain calm (Ask yourself if this was accidental or purposeful)
- Think about how you would respond before this occurs
- Redirect appropriately (i.e. Sarah, please keep your hands to yourself)
- Take aside at a good time and explain good touch/bad touch if given opportunity (“We do not touch areas covered by a swimming suit”). Take into account the age group you are working with (you should be able to talk about inappropriate touching with children age 3 and older).
- For abused children inappropriate touching may seem “normal.” Or, the behavior may be to gain attention or see how the adult will respond.
- Notify a SojournKids service coordinator or campus director about purposeful and inappropriate touching.

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

You are an important part of the healing process to a child who may have been abused or neglected. It is imperative that you ...

- 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 may open up to you because they think you are someone who they can trust. If a child says that they want to tell you something only if you promise not to tell anyone else, you can 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 that children don’t always tell the truth but it is our responsibility to listen and report what was stated. You may end up saving the life of a child!
- If any child has been abused and we DO know about it and action IS being taken, there are a few things to remember when working with this child (The information that follows was taken from Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in your Church by Richard Hammer):
 - Have lots of patience and understanding.
 - Report to the parents/guardians each time the child brings up the assault.
 - Show lots of love and care for the child.

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

When a child is in foster care their legal guardian is the CHFS (Cabinet for Health and Family Services) so often the biological family or the foster family does not have any decision making rights over the child if he or she is committed to a foster care facility. This includes visitation rights of biological family, who can have contact with the child, etc.

When a child is in foster care, there is often a need for added privacy. No photos should be taken of these children. Names not talked about outside of church. Moreover, staff and servants should

not solicit information about whether foster parents plan to adopt, why the children are in care, or where their birth parents live.