

**SUMMARY OF POLICY AND PROCEDURE OF
ST. JAMES PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CONCERNING
SEXUAL OR OTHER PHYSICAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN**

Policy

There are few problems more painful than the sexual abuse of a child by a member of the clergy, an employee, or any agent of the Church.

The sexual abuse of children is morally reprehensible and emotionally devastating. Although it cuts across all lines of society, and among offenders, knows no distinctions of class, race, religion, or occupation, this behavior, whenever and however it occurs, is clearly wrong and must be condemned in the strongest terms. The life-long effect that such behavior can have on a child must not be underestimated.

As knowledge about the roots of this disordered behavior increases, we pledge to seek the most sound advice possible, in order to aggressively protect the innocent, treat the perpetrator, and safeguard our children.

It is the policy of St. James Presbyterian Church to use every reasonable means to prevent an occurrence of sexual or other abuse of children by any person engaged to do the work of the Church. St. James is committed to the implementation, constant refinement, and improvement of procedures to educate our people about the nature of this problem, and to select and determine more effectively those who will be given any responsibility for dealing with children or other vulnerable persons in the name of the Church. Furthermore, we commit ourselves to alleviate, as far as we are able, the suffering of all persons who may be affected should such an incident occur.

In our attempt to deal with this most grievous problem, and more importantly, to prevent it, we pledge a course of action which will include the following:

- To educate all those involved in the appointment, hiring, or retention processes as to procedures designed to prevent the exposure of unfit persons to children or others who may be vulnerable;
- To respond promptly to all allegations of abuse;
- If such an allegation is supported by sufficient evidence, to relieve the alleged offender promptly of his or her duties and refer him or her for the appropriate medical evaluation or intervention;
- To comply with the obligations of civil law in reporting the incident and cooperating with the investigation;
- To reach out to the victims and to all persons affected by the incident and communicate our sincere commitment to their spiritual and emotional well-being; and
- Within the confines of respect for the privacy of the individuals involved, to deal as openly as possible with members of the community about the incident.

It is essential that every person engaged to do the work of St. James Presbyterian Church, whether clergy, employee, lay employee, or volunteer, adhere to, support and actively assume responsibility for the execution of these policies as a condition of his or her acceptance of any responsibility whatever in the name of St. James Presbyterian church.

Procedure

RESPONSE TO ALLEGATION OF CHILD ABUSE

1. **RECEIPT OF COMPLAINT OR ACCUSATION OF SEXUAL OR OTHER PHYSICAL ABUSE OF A MINOR BY SOMEONE CONNECTED WITH THE CHURCH.**
 - A. If the source is anonymous, try to obtain enough information (names, addresses, telephone numbers of persons having knowledge) to permit an investigation.
 - B. If the source is the victim, or parents of the victim, obtain name, address, telephone number, and assure them that they will be contacted by a representative of the Church.
2. **NOTIFY THE PASTOR, PARISH ASSOCIATE, OR THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATOR.**
 - A. Assure the requirements of the Mandatory Reporting Law of the Oklahoma Criminal Code (see Appendix).
 - B. Information should include: name, address, telephone number and age of victim, together with the name, address and telephone number of parents of the victim, the nature of the injuries, and the name, address, and telephone number of the alleged perpetrator.
 - C. Pastor, Parish Associate or Christian Educator, will assure compliance with the reporting requirements of DHS.
3. **ANYONE ACCUSED OF SEXUAL OR OTHER PHYSICAL ABUSE OF A MINOR WILL BE NOTIFIED OF THE ACCUSATION AND IMMEDIATELY RELIEVED OF THEIR DUTIES PENDING INVESTIGATION.**
4. **THE ACCUSED PARTY WILL BE ADVISED TO OBTAIN HIS/HER OWN INDEPENDENT LEGAL COUNSEL.**

APPENDIX

Definitions

Abuse: In criminal law, child abuse is any harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare, including damage to his physical or emotional welfare resulting from non-accidental physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or negligent treatment or maltreatment. Sexual abuse includes rape, incest and lewd or indecent acts or proposals. Sexual exploitation includes allowing, permitting, or encouraging a child to participate in acts of prostitution or pornography. 10 O.S. Section 7102

Mandatory Reporting Law of the Oklahoma Criminal Code: 10 O.S. Section 7103

... every other person having reason to believe that a child under the age of eighteen (18) years has had physical injury inflicted on him or her by other than accidental means where the injury appears to have been caused as a result of physical abuse or neglect, shall report the matter promptly to the county office of the Department of Human Services in the county wherein the suspected injury occurred ... It shall be a misdemeanor for any person to knowingly and willfully fail to promptly report any incident provided above. If the report is not made in writing in the first instance, it shall be reduced to writing by the maker thereof as soon as may be after it is initially made by telephone or otherwise and shall contain the names and addresses of the child and his or her parents or other persons responsible for his or her care, the child's age, the nature and extent of the child's injuries, including any evidence of previous injuries. ... and any other information that the maker of the report believes might be helpful in establishing the cause of the injuries and the identity of the person or persons responsible therefore if such information or any part thereof is known to the person making the report.

STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING AND CONSENT

The undersigned represents that he/she has received, read, and understood the stated policy and procedures of St. James Presbyterian Church with respect to the sexual or other physical abuse of children, that he/she agrees to strictly adhere to and actively support these policies and procedures as a condition of his/her employment or appointment.

The undersigned specifically understands that a background investigation may be conducted by St. James Presbyterian Church, by whom the undersigned is being considered for employment or appointment as a condition of the appointment or retention of the undersigned. Accordingly, the undersigned specifically consents to the release of otherwise confidential information and records concerning the undersigned by any government or law enforcement agency, and by any former employer or supervisor of the undersigned, as to criminal records related to sexual or physical abuse, to St. James Presbyterian Church and does hereby further consent to the use of such information by St. James Presbyterian Church thereof, in considering my fitness for employment or appointment. It is understood that such information shall be treated by St. James Presbyterian Church as strictly confidential, and shall be used only for the purpose of considering my appointment or retention. It is further understood that this consent is not intended to permit or include the release of any records or information obtained or compiled by any attorney, physician, counselor or other health care professional in the course of performance of any professional services for or on behalf of the undersigned.

DATED this _____ day of _____, 20_____

Signature

Printed Name

Position Sought/Held

Name of Agency/Institution