

# The Life Church

## CHILD AND YOUTH ABUSE REPORTING GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

### Purposes

- To provide guidance for identifying and reporting suspected abuse involving any child between the ages of birth and 18 years of age.
- To comply with State and Federal laws requiring mandatory reporting of actual and reasonably suspected cases of child abuse.

### Policy

All staff members, pastors, and Team Members acting on behalf of The Life Church are required to report both actual and suspected cases of child abuse to the proper authorities by following the procedures listed below. Staff members should be familiar with reporting requirements that are required by the State of Virginia. Abuse includes harm already caused or harm that has been threatened to the child or youth.

### “Child Abuse and Neglect” Defined

The current law in Virginia defines an “abused or neglected child” as any of the following:

- The victim of illegal sexual activity.
- A child that has been endangered.\*
- A child that exhibits evidence of any physical or mental injury or death, inflicted other than by accidental means, or an injury or death which is at variance with the history given of it. This includes a child that exhibits evidence of corporal punishment.\*\*
- A child that suffers physical or mental injury that harms or threatens to harm the child’s health or welfare because of the acts or omissions of his/her parents, guardian, or custodian.
- A child that is subjected to out-of-home child care abuse.

\*In its present form, state law defines “endangering children” as including any of the following: (1) abuse; or (2) torture or cruel abuse; or (3) corporal punishment or other physical discipline (e.g., such as spankings) or prolonged cruel restraint, which is excessive under the circumstances, and which could likely physically injure the child; or (4) repeated, uncalled-for discipline which, if continued, would seriously impair the child’s mental health or development; or (5) involving the child in any obscene, sexually-oriented, or nudity-oriented activity or conduct.

\*\*In its present form, corporal punishment includes: (1) Denial, as a means of punishment, of proper necessary subsistence, education, medical care, or other care necessary to a child for the child’s health; or (2) Use of restraint procedures on a child that cause injury or pain; or (3) Administration of prescription drugs to a child without the written approval and ongoing supervision of a licensed physician; or (4) Providing alcoholic beverages or controlled substances to a child; or (5) Commission of any intentional act that results in any injury or death to a child; or (6) Infliction of physical or mental injury that threatens to harm a child’s health, welfare, or safety.

There are four types of abuse:

- **Physical**- a physical act directed at a child or youth that causes injury;
- **Sexual**- contact or interactions between a child and an adult, or another child, when the child is being used for sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or another person. This includes exploitation through photographs, videos, and other communication methods;
- **Emotional**- acts or omissions by the parent or other caregivers that have caused, or could cause, serious behavioral, cognitive, emotional, or mental disorders;
- **Neglect**- failure to provide for the child or youth’s basic needs. This includes adequate adult supervision, medical attention, housing, food and clothing. Most cases of physical neglect involve inadequate adult supervision that has caused harm to the child or youth, or places them in danger of such harm.

The following are some warning signs that abuse may have occurred:

- Unexplained injury, patch of hair missing, a burn or bruises on strange places (back of arms, stomach, back, etc.);
- Drawings in conjunction with statements from a child or youth;
- Prayer requests of protection from pain or injury from specific individuals;
- Statements from the child or youth;
- Complaints about numerous beatings;
- Consistent poor hygiene;
- Age inappropriate comments regarding sex or violence.

How to respond to a Child Disclosing Abuse:

- Listen;
- Be sensitive to vague disclosures;
- Avoid expressing shock or outrage;
- Don't threaten or condemn the alleged perpetrator;
- Let the child know that you believe him/her;
- Tell the victim that they were right to disclose;
- Assure the child that the abuse was not his/her fault;
- Reassure the victim that he/she will be safe;
- Avoid questions that could make the child feel responsible;
- Get as many details as the child is comfortable disclosing;
- Write down exactly what happened; and
- Follow authorized reporting procedures.

Failure to report actual suspected cases of child abuse can result in criminal and civil liability for the church, staff member, or Team Member that failed to report it. It is the staff member or Team Member's responsibility to report suspected abuse. It is not his or her responsibility to investigate and draw a conclusion as to whether or not abuse has actually occurred.

The following information is needed when reporting child abuse:

- Name of child;
- Age of child;
- Address of child;
- Parents of guardian of child;
- Alleged abuser's name and address;
- Nature of abuse.

All suspected cases of child abuse must be handled in a confidential manner. Communication of the suspected abuse should only be made with the staff member or authorities that are involved. Campus Pastors provide pastoral support and care to the family through the entire process.

## **Suspected Abuse Reporting Procedures:**

- ✓ Any volunteer that becomes aware of any form of reasonably suspected child or youth abuse must report it to the Team Lead or Staff Member that supervises them. If a Team Lead or Staff Member becomes aware of suspected child abuse, either through a report from a volunteer or through his or her own observations, he or she will report it to their Department Director and complete a Child Abuse Report immediately.
- ✓ The Department Director will provide the report to the Operations Manager for determination of whether a suspected child abuse report is required to be filed with the proper authorities.
- ✓ If it is determined that an abuse report is required to be filed with local authorities, the Operations Manager will work with the staff member and/or the volunteer to file a report with the proper authorities immediately (within 24 hours of the suspected abuse)
- ✓ The Operations Manager will complete the *Child Abuse Follow-Up Form* and send it to the Department Director for follow up as appropriate. The Team Member initially reporting the suspected abuse will be informed of both if and when the report to CPS was made.

**Note:** Nothing in this policy is intended to limit any person who becomes aware of suspected abuse and believes that the victim is in danger of additional abuse from directly contacting CPS. If that is done, a Child Abuse Report still needs to be completed and reported through The Life Church so we can follow-up as necessary.

### To Report Suspected Abuse or Neglect

Virginia State Hotline	800-552-7096
Prince William Co CPS	703-792-4200
Fauquier County CPS	540-422-8400
Frederick County CPS	540-665-5688

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## Child or Youth Abuse Report

This form is to report suspected abuse of a child or youth (under 18 years of age) and must be completed and emailed to the Department Director and Operations Manager within 24 hours of the discovery of the suspected abuse.

Reporting person: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of incident: \_\_\_\_\_ Campus: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of suspected child abuse victim: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Date you became aware of suspected child abuse: \_\_\_\_\_

If victim is under 18, list the parent(s) name: \_\_\_\_\_

Explain the reason you reasonably suspect the child has been abused:

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Is there physical or verbal evidence: Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ If yes, describe:

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Reporting person signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Departmental Director: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Campus Pastor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Operations Manager: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Child or Youth Abuse Follow-Up Report

Suspected Victim Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Suspected Abuser Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Is the suspected abuse supported by reasonable belief or evidence? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

Has the suspected abuse been reported to CPS? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

If yes, with what county was it filed? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, is there a report number? \_\_\_\_\_

Person filing the CPS report: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of report: \_\_\_\_\_

How long has the suspected victim been associated with The Life Church? \_\_\_\_\_

Has any more information been revealed since this report was filed? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

Is so, list the other information and the name of the person providing the information:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Is there a relationship between The Life Church and the suspected abuser? \_\_\_\_\_

If so, what is the relationship? Member\_\_ Employee\_\_ Visitor\_\_ Volunteer\_\_ Unknown\_\_

Is the suspect aware of the abuse revelation? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_ Unknown\_\_\_\_

Any information that is revealed must be reported to the authorities if it is determined there is reasonable belief or physical evidence the abuse occurred.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Acknowledgement for Abuse Reporting Procedures

I acknowledge that I have read, understand and will comply with The Life Church's Abuse Reporting Guidelines and Procedures. I also understand and agree that:

1. All staff members and volunteers acting on behalf of The Life Church are required to report both actual and suspected cases of child abuse to proper authorities.
2. I understand that the four types of abuse are physical, sexual, emotional, and neglect.
3. I understand that failure to report actual or suspected cases of abuse can result in criminal and civil liability on my behalf.
4. I understand it is not my responsibility to investigate and in no instance will I confront a parent or care giver if abuse is suspected.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_