

Reducing the Risk of Abuse

The Journey Ministries is committed to reducing the risk of sexual and physical abuse within the ministry and protecting students from physical and sexual abuse outside of the ministry. Cases of sexual and physical abuse within the ministry will have the full consequences of the church and the law. Cases of sexual and physical abuse of students outside of the church must be reported by all volunteers and staff and will be reported to the appropriate officials.

Steps toward preventing sexual abuse

The following are precautions the Journey Ministries takes to prevent sexual abuse within the ministry.

1. Selection and screening

- Clearing the applicants name with the pastoral staff
- Requiring thorough staff application, including references that *will* be called
- Conducting an application interview with the youth minister and a member of the Youth Advisory Board
- Enforcing a probationary period where applicants shadow a veteran volunteer
- Accepting only those applicants willing to let the ministry do a background check with local law enforcement
- Accepting only those applicants willing to let the ministry check them with central abuse registry

2. Supervision

- New volunteers are paired with veterans for a time and are not alone with students
- New volunteers are evaluated monthly during a one-on-one meeting with the youth minister
- All volunteers receive a yearly evaluations based on supervisory observation of appropriate relationships and behaviors
- Our policy requires two adults be present with a student or group of students
- Any one-on-one meeting is conducted in a public place or in a room with an open door where there's regular, human traffic

3. Specific reporting process

Basic steps to be followed in possible abuse cases:

- All efforts to handle the incident will be well documented immediately
- The incident will immediately be reported to ministry supervisors and, very likely, our attorney
- We will contact the proper civil authorities—they, not our ministry, will handle the investigation
- We will notify the parents
- We will take allegations seriously; reach out to the victim and his or her family; and treat the accused with dignity and support
- If the accused is a church worker, that person will be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is finished
- We will use the text of a prepared public statement to answer the press and convey news to the congregation. Safeguarding the privacy and confidentiality of all involved will be our priority

4. The following are reporting procedures for volunteer staff

- If a child or student is observed to have signs of physical abuse (bruises caused by hitting, unexplainable injuries, etc.), volunteer staff should call these things to the attention of a pastoral staff member immediately
- If a child or student verbally accuses a family member or other person of abusing them in some way, the volunteer staff member should ask appropriate questions in an attempt to determine the veracity of the claims and the imminence of danger. If the truth of the claims seems clear, the matter should be immediately brought to the attention of a pastoral staff member. If the truth of the claims seems questionable, the claims should still be brought to the attention of a pastoral staff member on the same day that the claims are expressed
- Whether clearly true or questionable in the estimation of the volunteer staff member, the allegations or observations should put in writing on the day of the incident, including a verbatim/exact account of the observation and/or accusation. Every detail of the events—including date, time of day, names of persons involved, etc.—should be included in this report. The person making the report should keep one copy, and one copy should be given to the pastoral staff member who oversees that area of ministry.

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These reports must be kept safe and confidential. The pastoral staff member will be responsible for making a determination as to the appropriate actions to be taken as follow-up to these observations/accusations

5. Defining Sexual Abuse

A. Touching

1. Fondling—touching the body on private parts
2. Inappropriate kissing
3. Intercourse (consensual or non-consensual)
4. Oral or anal intercourse

B. Non-touching

1. Sexual remarks
2. Showing pornography
3. Watching any sexual activity
4. Exhibitionism

6. Detecting sexual abuse

- Most cases of sexual abuse go undetected. There may be no apparent physical signs, or there may be physical signs detected only through medical examination
- The cases that *are* reported are generally reported by abused children to their parents, siblings, or other caretakers—often in the form of casual remarks that lead the listener to query further
- Most children say nothing. They may not realize that what was done to them was wrong. Or they may be too embarrassed or frightened to speak up. They may not want to get the offender in trouble—especially if a friendship has developed between offender and victim
- In some cases, telltale physical or emotional signs may arouse your suspicion. In its publication *The Educator's Role in the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect*, the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect outlines certain indicators of sexual abuse:

Physical indicators

Difficulty in walking or sitting
Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
Pain or itching in the genital area
Bruises or bleeding in external genitalia, vaginal or anal area
Venereal disease, especially in preteens
Pregnancy

Behavioral indicators

Unwilling to change for gym or participate in physical education class
Withdrawal, fantasy or infantile behavior
Bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual behavior or knowledge
Poor peer relationships
Delinquency or running away
Reports sexual assault by caretaker

These signs can be indicative of other problems and are not exclusively tied to sexual abuse. But the repeated occurrence of an indicator, or the presence of several indicators, warrants further investigation.