

Grace Bible Fellowship Church
CHILD ABUSE REPORTING PROCEDURE

Purpose

This procedure shall be followed if abuse or neglect of a child occurs in the ministry of GBFC or evidence of abuse or neglect is suspected while that child is under the care, supervision, guidance or training of Grace Bible Fellowship Church, Wallingford, Pennsylvania (Grace BFC). This procedure shall also be followed if a child under the care of Grace BFC has evidence of or gives witness to possible abuse or neglect in the recent past, whether that abuse occurred within or outside the ministry of Grace.

Any person having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect will report his or her belief in accordance with this procedure. Every allegation of sexual offense or molestation should be investigated promptly and thoroughly. It is our policy to cooperate fully with law enforcement officials. Confidentiality of the investigation shall be maintained as much as possible. Confidentiality is out of concern for the victim and any accused.

Contents

Purpose 1
Contents 1
Definitions 2
Steps to follow if abuse or neglect of a child occurs in the ministry of GBFC..... 2
Steps to follow if there is evidence of child abuse from outside the ministry of GBFC 4
Appendix A – Definition of Child Abuse as included in PA Child Protective Services Law..... 5
Appendix B – Answers to Common Question on Mandated Reporters 6
Current Designated Representatives and Key Contact Information 7

Related Child Protection policies

- Child Protection Policy
- Discipline Involving Children and Youth Policy
- Volunteer Code of Ethics and Rules

Related Reporting forms

- Reducing the Risk Application Checklist
- GBFC Child Abuse Incident Report Form

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy the following definitions will apply:

Child, youth, and minor - will be defined as any individual under the age of eighteen or comparable mental capacity.

Worker - will be defined as anyone over the age of 18 who serves as a volunteer and/or paid person given the responsibility of working with or caring for minors.

Child Abuse - will be defined as physical or sexual abuse or exploitation of a child. Abuse includes any recent act or failure to act which causes non-accidental serious physical or mental injury to a child. (see Appendix A for extended PA definition of Child Abuse)

Child Protection Designated Representatives (Designated Rep)– will be defined as the persons appointed by the Elders to oversee and administer all Child Protection policies and procedures for the church. There must at all time be at least two appointed representatives, at least one of which must be a paid employee of the church.

PA Mandated Reporter – Those who the state of PA requires by law to report all suspected child abuse to the state. Who is a mandated reporter will be defined as per the current legal definition in Pennsylvania, which as of July 2018 included the following that are relevant to our church context:

- Clergyman, priest, rabbi, minister, Christian Science practitioner, religious healer or spiritual leader of any regularly established church or other religious organization;
- An individual paid or unpaid; who, on the basis of the individual's role as an integral part of a regularly scheduled program, activity or service, accepts responsibility for a child;
- An individual supervised or managed by a person listed above who has direct contact with children in the course of their employment; and
- An independent contractor who has direct contact with children.

Steps to follow if abuse or neglect of a child occurs in the ministry of GBFC

1. Immediately remove the child from harm and remove suspected abuser from the environment.

2. Call **Childline Abuse Registry (800-932-0313)**.

****IMPORTANT LEGAL NOTICE:** All adult workers within our Children and Youth Ministries are considered by the State of Pennsylvania to be Mandated Reporters with respect to any suspected incidence of Child Abuse of children under their care. According to PA law the Mandated Reporter must call Childline immediate upon suspecting abuse. The mandated reported must make the call themselves, they cannot delegate it. They may not talk to a supervisor before making the immediate

oral report, even to discuss the propriety of making a report. If the mandated reporter is unsure whether the situation warrants a report, s/he may immediately call an attorney for advice on the spot (ie. No callbacks allowed). However, if an attorney is not reached immediately, a report must be made immediately.

3. Immediately find and inform either the **Director of Children's Ministry** or one of Grace BFC's **Child Protection Designated Representatives** about the incident (current Designated Reps are listed at the end of this policy). It is the responsibility of the Designated Rep to collect data concerning the child's name, address and other pertinent information through discussions with the initial reporter and other staff members. The name and address of the person responsible for the care of the child, if available, will be obtained. The Designated Rep will also record who reported the incident, all other workers, children and witnesses in the immediate vicinity of the incident and all workers and children who may have had direct contact with the accused through that program / event. Use the "**Reducing the Risk Application Checklist**" to complete the Designated Rep responsibilities involved with the occurrence. The Designated Rep will be the main contact for the incident.
4. Within 48 hours of the incident the reporter must write and submit a written report. On the same day that the case is first reported verbally to the Designated Rep, the Designated Rep will document the incident on the "**GBFC Child Abuse Incident Report Form**". If a report was made to the ChildLine Registry, then the Designated Rep must submit all legally required paperwork to the State. (currently a CY47 report is required within 48 hours).
5. All employees and volunteer workers are required to cooperate fully and openly with law enforcement. Throughout the investigation the reporter, the victim, and the accused shall be kept informed of overall progress and they shall each be informed of the final findings.
6. If one of the Designated Reps is among those suspected of abuse or is suspected of neglect of duties in following up on a report of abuse, then the Senior Pastor and the Chairman of the Board of Elders shall immediately take over all investigative and other responsibilities of the Designated Rep. with regard to Child Protection.
7. While any suspected incident of child abuse is being investigated, the accused will be barred from serving in any youth or children's ministries until the investigation is complete. If the accusations are proven to be founded the offender will be barred from having any contact with children within the ministry contexts of Grace BFC. If the convicted offender is a paid employee of Grace, their employment will be terminated according to employment laws.
8. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the investigation as much as possible out of concern for the victim and the accused. All documentation gathered throughout the investigation will be marked CONFIDENTIAL and handled according to our Child Protection Policy confidentiality section. Upon completion of the investigation if there are other concerned parties that need to be informed of the final verdict we will seek to balance transparency and confidentiality to assure the injured parties are protected.

9. Efforts will be made to keep the reporters / witnesses of the incident confidential (with the exception of cooperating with legal authorities). No victim involved in an allegation or anyone responsible for reporting an allegation will be retaliated against in any way.
10. All inquiries into the incident outside of law enforcement officials, including all media inquiries, will be referred to the Designated Rep. or to a spokesperson appointed by the Board of Elders.

Steps to follow if there is evidence of child abuse from outside the ministry of GBFC

1. If any child was potentially abused within the ministry of Grace BFC refer to the procedure in the previous section on “Steps to follow if abuse or neglect of a child occurs in the ministry of GBFC.” If any child under the supervision of Grace BFC has clear evidence of current abuse occurring outside the ministry of Grace, or if you are given a disclosure that an identifiable child under your care has been abused outside of Grace BFC, or if someone over the age of 14 discloses to you that they have abused a child in the past 2 years, then you must follow the procedures below.
2. **Call Childline Abuse Registry (800-932-0313).**
****IMPORTANT LEGAL NOTICE:** All adult workers within our Children’s Ministry are considered by the State of Pennsylvania to be Mandated Reporters with respect to any suspected incidence of Child Abuse of children under their care. According to PA law the Mandated Reporter must call Childline immediate upon receiving a disclosure of abuse of an identifiable child, even if that abuse has occurred outside of the ministry of Grace. The mandated reported must make the call themselves, they cannot delegate it. They may not talk to a supervisor before making the immediate oral report, even to discuss the propriety of making a report. If the mandated reporter is unsure whether the situation warrants a report, s/he may immediately call an attorney for advice on the spot (ie. No callbacks allowed). However, if an attorney is not reached immediately, a report must be made immediately.
3. Immediately find and inform either the **Director of Children’s Ministry** or one of Grace BFC’s **Child Protection Designated Representatives** about the incident (current Designated Reps are listed at the end of this policy). It is the responsibility of the Designated Rep to collect data concerning the child’s name, address and other pertinent information through discussions with the initial reporter and other staff members. The name and address of the person responsible for the care of the child, if available, will be obtained. The Designated Rep will also record who reported the incident, along with the names of any other workers, children and witnesses that observed or heard the disclosure of abuse.
4. Within 48 hours of the incident the reporter must write and submit a written report. On the same day that the case is first reported verbally to the Designated Rep, the Designated Rep will document the incident on the “**GBFC Child Abuse Incident Report Form**”. If a report was made to the ChildLine Registry, then the Designated Rep must submit all legally required paperwork to the State.
5. All employees and volunteer workers are required to cooperate fully and openly with law enforcement.

6. If the suspected perpetrators of the abuse are within the congregation of Grace BFC, then the accused will be barred from serving in any youth or children's ministries until the investigation is complete. If the accusations are proven to be founded the offender will be barred from having any contact with children within the ministry contexts of Grace BFC. If the convicted offender is a paid employee of Grace their employment will be terminated according to employment laws.
7. Confidentiality will be maintained as much as possible out of concern for the victim and the accused. All documentation gathered will be marked CONFIDENTIAL and handled according to our Child Protection Policy confidentiality section. Upon completion of any investigation if there are other concerned parties that need to be informed of the final verdict we will seek to balance transparency and confidentiality to assure the injured parties are protected.
8. Efforts will be made to keep the reporters / witnesses of the incident confidential (with the exception of cooperating with legal authorities). No victim involved in an allegation or anyone responsible for reporting an allegation will be retaliated against in any way.
9. All inquiries into the matter outside of law enforcement officials, including all media inquiries, will be referred to the Designated Rep. or to a spokesperson appointed by the Board of Elders.

Appendix A – Definition of Child Abuse as included in PA Child Protective Services Law

(reprinted from <http://www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov/about/faqs/index.htm> , July 12, 2018)

Child abuse, according to the CPSL, means intentionally, knowingly or recklessly doing any of the following:

- Causing bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- Fabricating, feigning or intentionally exaggerating or inducing a medical symptom or disease which results in a potentially harmful medical evaluation or treatment to the child through any recent act.
- Causing or substantially contributing to serious mental injury to a child through any act or failure to act or a series of such acts or failures to act.
- Causing sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any act or failure to act.
- Creating a reasonable likelihood of bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- Creating a likelihood of sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- Causing serious physical neglect of a child.
- Causing the death of the child through any act or failure to act.
- Engaging a child in a severe form of trafficking in persons or sex trafficking, as those terms are defined under section 103 of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (114 Stat. 1466, 22 U.S.C. § 7102).

Child abuse also includes certain acts in which the act itself constitutes abuse without any resulting injury or condition. These recent acts include any of the following:

- Kicking, biting, throwing, burning, stabbing or cutting a child in a manner that endangers the child.
- Unreasonably restraining or confining a child, based on consideration of the method, location or the duration of the restraint or confinement.
- Forcefully shaking a child under one year of age.
- Forcefully slapping or otherwise striking a child under one year of age.
- Interfering with the breathing of a child.
- Causing a child to be present during the operation of a methamphetamine laboratory, provided that the violation is being investigated by law enforcement.
- Leaving a child unsupervised with an individual, other than the child's parent, who the parent knows or reasonably should have known was required to register as a Tier II or III sexual offender or has been determined to be a sexually violent predator or sexually violent delinquent.

"Recent" is defined as an abusive act within two years from the date the report is made to ChildLine. Sexual abuse, serious mental injury, serious physical neglect and deaths have no time limit.

Appendix B – Answers to Common Question on Mandated Reporters

(reprinted from <http://www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov/about/faqs/index.htm> , July 12, 2018)

When must a mandated reporter make a report?

A mandated reporter must make a report of suspected child abuse if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse under any of the following circumstances:

- The mandated reporter comes into contact with the child in the course of employment, occupation and practice of a profession or through a regularly scheduled program, activity or service.
- The mandated reporter is directly responsible for the care, supervision, guidance or training of the child, or is affiliated with an agency, institution, organization, school, regularly established church or religious organization or other entity that is directly responsible for the care, supervision, guidance or training of the child.
- A person makes a specific disclosure to the mandated reporter that an identifiable child is the victim of child abuse.
- An individual 14 years of age or older makes a specific disclosure to the mandated reporter that the individual has committed child abuse.

Must I report suspected abuse if I learn of the abuse from someone other than the child who was allegedly abused?

Yes. Nothing requires the mandated reporter have direct contact with the child in order to make a report.

How does a mandated reporter make a report if they suspect child abuse?

Mandated reporters must make an immediate and direct report of suspected child abuse to ChildLine either electronically at www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis or by calling 1-800-932-0313.

What if a mandated reporter fails to follow the law?

The penalties for a mandated reporter who willfully fails to report child abuse range from a misdemeanor of second degree to a felony of the second degree.

Am I protected from civil and criminal liability if I make a report of suspected child abuse?

Yes, persons making a report of suspected child abuse are immune from civil and criminal liability as long as the report was made in good faith. The good faith of a mandated reporter is assumed.

If I make a report is my identity protected?

The identity of the person making the report is kept confidential with the exception of being released to law enforcement officials or the district attorney's office. Law enforcement and district attorney's office must treat the mandated reporter as a confidential informant.

Additional Official PA Child Safety Information: go to www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov

Current Designated Representatives and Key Contact Information

(updated August 2018)

Grace BFC Director of Children's Ministries

Daniel Phillips, dphillips@gracbfc.org, cell phone: (215) 218-8144

Grace BFC Child Protection Designated Representatives

Pastor Mark Bickel, mbickel@gracebfc.org, cell phone: (484) 788-9026

Daniel Phillips, dphillips@gracbfc.org, cell phone: (215) 218-8144

Grace BFC Child Clearance Administrator

Barbara Brennan, office@gracebfc.org, office phone: (610) 876-8725

PA ChildLine (Report all suspected child abuse or neglect)

1-800-932-0313