

No. 10 Protecting Minors From Abuse

Note to the speaker:

Audience discussion. Be sure the main points are highlighted. Read and apply scriptures from the cited material as time allows. Highlight the importance of closely adhering to the guidelines provided by the branch office when handling child abuse matters. If questions arise regarding the material in this outline, please direct the elders to contact the Service Department

INTRODUCTION (6 min.)

During this part, we will review the September 1, 2017, letter to all bodies of elders. Please follow along in your copy

When handling matters involving child abuse, be sure to review this letter along with pertinent direction in the *Shepherding* textbook

Question for paragraph 2: What does child sexual abuse include?

Questions for paragraph 3:

1. What is our view of child sexual abuse?
2. What will the congregation *not* do in behalf of someone who sexually abuses a child?
3. When an individual reports an allegation of child sexual abuse to the elders, of what should the elders inform him?

A person who reports such an allegation to the elders should be clearly informed that he has the right to report the matter to the secular authorities. Elders do not criticize anyone who chooses to make such a report (Ga 6:5)

Questions for paragraph 4:

1. What responsibility do parents have?
2. What help is available to parents?

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS (5 min.)

Paragraphs 5-9 present *legal considerations* regarding accusations of child abuse

Question for paragraphs 5-7: What immediate action should be taken when the elders learn of an accusation of child abuse and why?

Two elders should call the Legal Department in all of the situations listed in paragraph 6 to ensure that the body of elders complies with any child-abuse reporting laws. (Ro 13:1-4) After being informed of any legal obligation to report, the call will be transferred to the Service Department

Question for paragraphs 8-9: In what other situations should two elders immediately call the Legal Department?

PROVIDING SPIRITUAL ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS (10 min.)

Paragraph 10 presents *congregation considerations* regarding accusations of child sexual abuse

As stated, “We are referring to an adult guilty of sexually abusing a minor who is a young child, or an adult guilty of sexual involvement with a minor who is approaching adulthood but was not a willing participant”

Paragraphs 11 and 12 outline factors to be considered in *shepherding* victims of abuse and their families

As you provide ongoing spiritual shepherding, it is especially important that you demonstrate empathy and compassion to victims of child sexual abuse and their families (Isa 32:1, 2)

Questions for paragraph 11:

1. Who should be included when the elders shepherd a child abuse victim who is still a minor?

No. 10 Protecting Minors From Abuse—Page 2

2. In addition to spiritual shepherding, what other assistance may a victim or her parents choose?

Questions for paragraph 12:

1. When the elders are approached by an adult who is concerned or distraught about past abuse, how should they deal with the person?
2. What should elders remember when it comes to shepherding a sister who is a victim of child abuse?

INVESTIGATING ALLEGATIONS (5 min.)

Questions for paragraph 13:

1. Regardless of the source of the allegation and if the accused is a member of the congregation, what should the body of elders do after receiving assistance from the branch office?

Every accusation made against a member of the congregation should be Scripturally investigated

2. What is a victim of child sexual abuse not required to do during the investigation process or during the judicial committee process?

A victim of child sexual abuse is not required to make her allegation in the presence of the alleged abuser

3. In the exceptional event that the two elders conducting the investigation believe it is necessary to speak with a minor who is a victim of child sexual abuse, what should they do before proceeding?

The elders should first contact the Service Department. Such a request is considered exceptional because in most cases elders should be able to obtain necessary information from the parents. In addition, sufficient evidence needed to establish wrongdoing on the part of an alleged abuser may already be available to the elders (*ks10* 5:37-39)

JUDICIAL AND REINSTATEMENT PROCEDURES (8 min.)

Questions for paragraph 14:

1. If judicial action is warranted on the grounds of child sexual abuse, what should the coordinator of the body of elders do?

If the elders determine that a baptized member of the congregation is guilty of child sexual abuse as explained in paragraph 10, the abuser will be handled judicially. Victims of child sexual abuse are not handled judicially. However, if the body of elders believes that congregation action may be warranted in the case of a mature minor who was a willing participant in wrongdoing, two elders should call the Service Department before proceeding

2. What is the role of the circuit overseer in such matters?
3. If the wrongdoer is repentant, why is an announcement of reproof always necessary?

Questions for paragraph 15:

1. If a person who has been disfellowshipped for child sexual abuse applies for reinstatement, what should the coordinator of the body of elders do?
2. If the decision is to reinstate, what should two elders do, and when?

This step is taken before the reinstatement is announced to the congregation so that the Service Department can outline to the elders the steps that should be taken to protect minors from one who has engaged in child sexual abuse

Questions for paragraph 16:

1. If a person who has been disfellowshipped for child sexual abuse has moved and applies for reinstatement, what should the coordinator of the body of elders of the new congregation do?

No. 10 Protecting Minors From Abuse—Page 3

2. What should be done if the reinstatement committee in the new congregation recommends that the person be reinstated?
3. If both reinstatement committees agree to reinstate, what should two elders from each congregation do, and when?

This step is taken before the reinstatement is announced to the congregation so that the Service Department can outline to the elders the steps that should be taken to protect minors from one who has engaged in child sexual abuse

BRANCH-IMPOSED RESTRICTIONS (3 min.)

Question for paragraph 17: Under what circumstances should elders expect to receive direction from the Service Department?

Paragraph 18 adds that in such cases, the Service Department will outline restrictions to be imposed on the individual's activity within the congregation. The Service Department will direct elders to inform family heads of minors within the congregation of the need to monitor their children's interaction with the individual. The elders would take this step *only* if directed to do so by the Service Department

Question for paragraph 19: What should be done if the body of elders believes that one who has engaged in child sexual abuse decades ago may now qualify for minor privileges?

MOVING TO ANOTHER CONGREGATION (3 min.)

Question for paragraph 21: When an individual who has been accused of child sexual abuse (established or not) moves from the congregation, what is the procedure to follow?

The Congregation Service Committee should not send any information to the new congregation until after receiving legal advice from the Legal Department and direction from the Service Department

Question for paragraph 22: When an individual who has been accused of child sexual abuse (established or not) moves into the congregation, what steps should the elders take?

If the individual is disfellowshipped and living within the congregation's territory, the elders should list that address on the appropriate congregation territory card as a "Do Not Call"

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT INVOLVING ONLY MINORS (2 min.)

Question for paragraph 24: What steps should the elders take when minors engage in sexual misconduct with one another?

NOTATIONS IN THE *SHEPHERDING* TEXTBOOK (1 min.)

If you have not already done so, confirm that your copy of the *Shepherding* textbook has been updated in harmony with the adjustments noted in paragraph 26

JEHOVAH WILL BLESS THE SPIRITUAL CARE YOU PROVIDE (1 min.)

It is imperative that you adhere closely to organizational direction each time a matter involving child abuse comes to your attention

By carefully following this direction, you will uphold the sanctity of Jehovah's name and protect minors as you "shepherd the flock of God under your care" (1Pe 2:12; 5:2)

[Introduce the next part on the program]