



Adult Awareness Training 2022

Reducing the Risk of Abuse in
the Church for Children and
Youth

(Adapted, and used with permission of VAUMC – Virginia United Methodist Church)



Our Biblical Mandate

But Jesus Called for them and said, “Let the little children come to me and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.” –Luke 18:16

Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. –Matthew 18:5

(Let us pray.....)

The Subject of Child Abuse...



- Is a difficult and complex subject
- Makes us feel uncomfortable
- Might discourage volunteers
- Shouldn't happen in the church
- Is painful for persons who may have been victims of child abuse

PURPOSE of TRAINING

- To explain that child abuse does happen in churches with devastating consequences
- To define types of child abuse & increase our *awareness* of signs & symptoms
 - To identify areas of vulnerability within church ministries & programs
 - To outline COB risk reduction procedures



Child Abuse Definition

Child abuse refers to an *intentional* act committed by a person in a position of trust (parent, caregiver, other) which harms or threatens *to harm* a child's welfare or physical/mental health.



Types of Abuse



- Physical
- Emotional
- Neglect
- Sexual

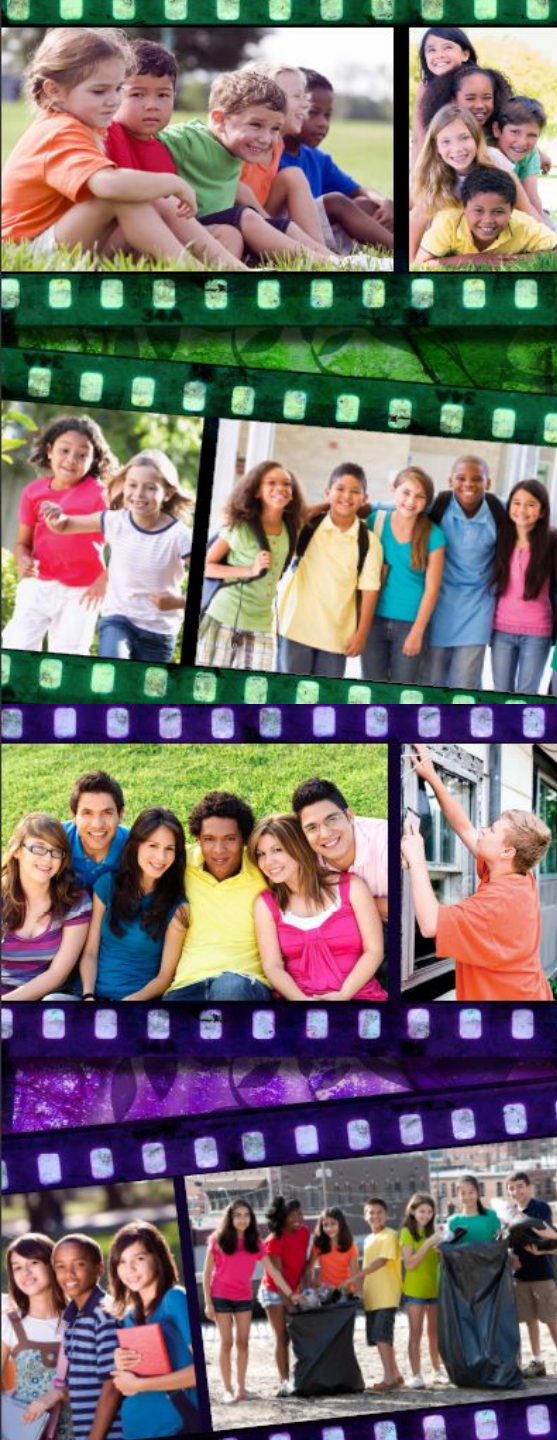
Physical Abuse



Physical abuse occurs when an adult injures a child and it is not an accident. It can include:

- assault
- shaking, slapping, kicking
- burning or scalding
- seat belts

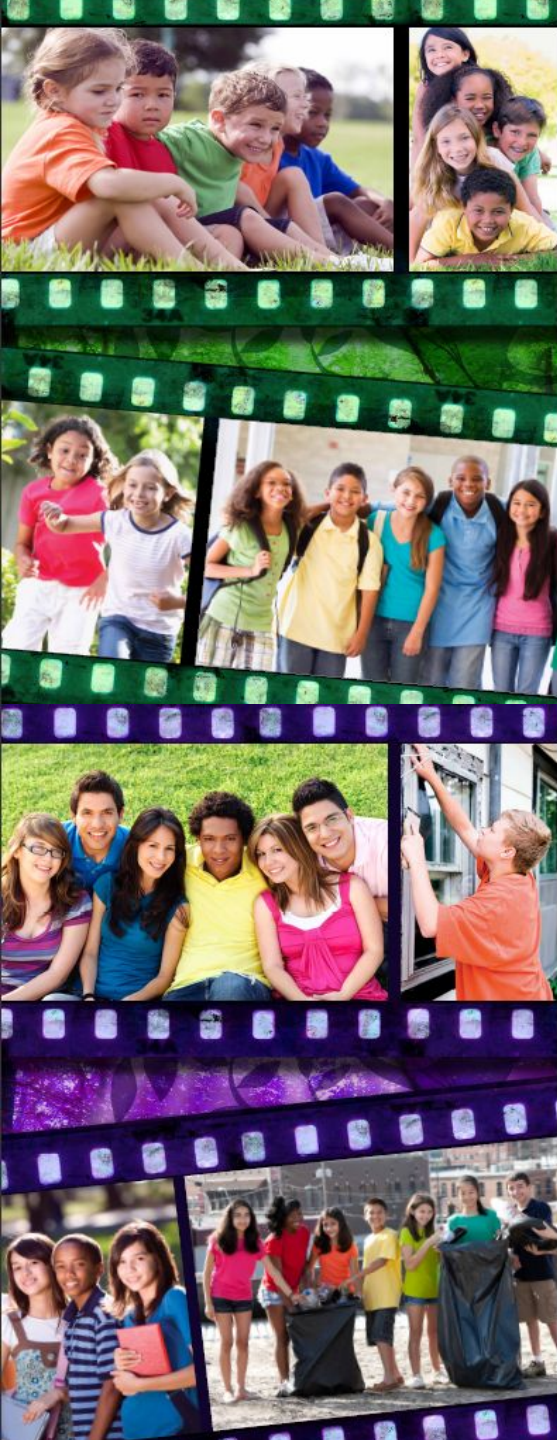
SIGNS OF ABUSE...



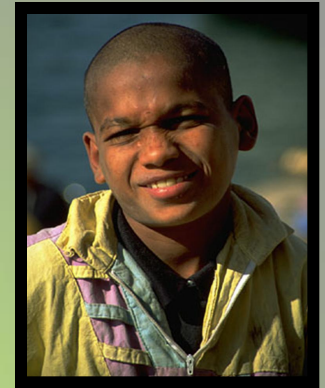
Physical Abuse: Signs

- Unexplained injuries, such as bruises, fractures or burns
- Injuries that don't match the given explanation
- Untreated medical or dental problems

(From Mayo Clinic)



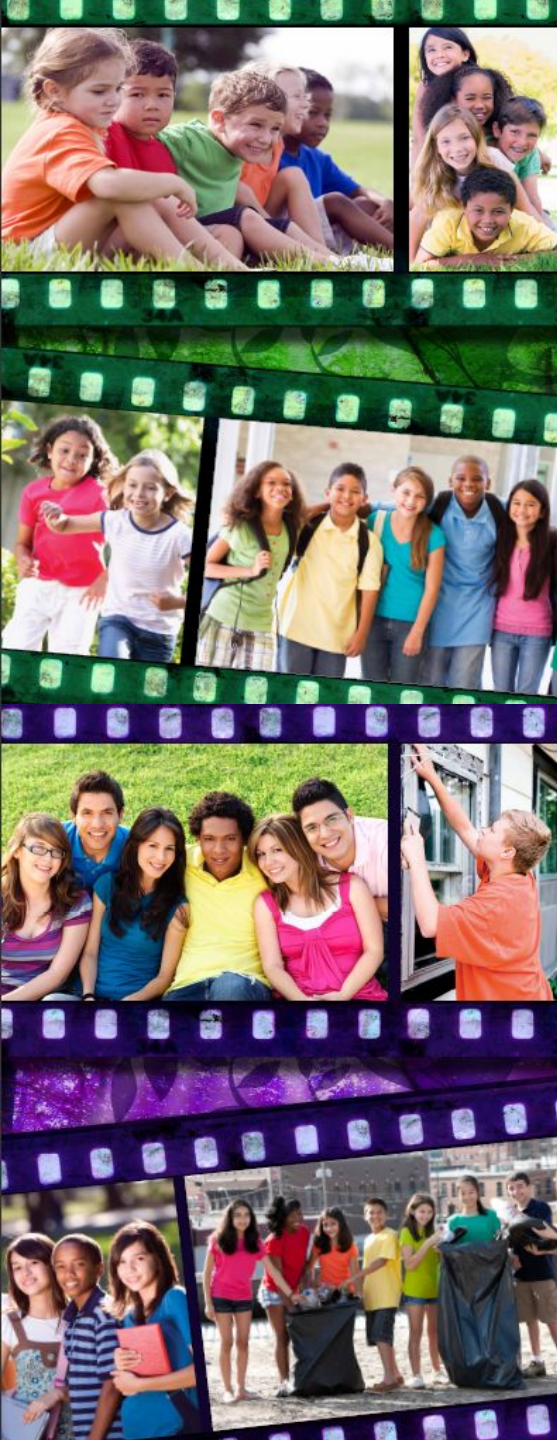
Emotional Abuse



Emotional abuse deeply affects a child's self-esteem by submitting him/her to verbal assault or emotional cruelty. It can include:

- close confinement
- excessive/extreme punishment
- permitting drug/alcohol abuse
- verbal humiliation - shaming

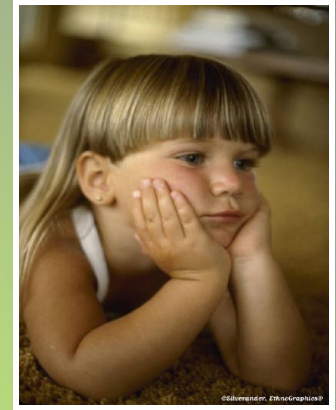
SIGNS OF ABUSE...



Emotional Abuse: Signs

- **Delayed or inappropriate emotional development**
 - **Loss of self-confidence**
 - **Social withdrawal; Depression**
- **Headaches or stomachaches with no medical cause**
 - **Avoidance of certain situations**
 - **Desperately seeks affection**

Neglect

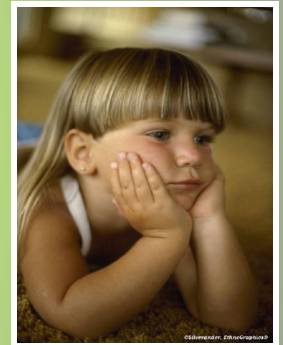


Neglect is failure to provide a child's basic needs resulting in harm to the child. It is any of the following acts of negligence or maltreatment:



Neglect

- failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing or medical care
- inadequate supervision
abandonment
- hazardous conditions in the home, school, or church
- ignoring needs for nurture/contact



SIGNS OF ABUSE...

Neglect: Signs

- Poor growth or weight gain
 - Poor hygiene
- Lack of clothing or supplies to meet physical needs
 - Taking food or money without permission
- Eating a lot in one sitting or hiding food for later
 - Indifference (Mayo Clinic)



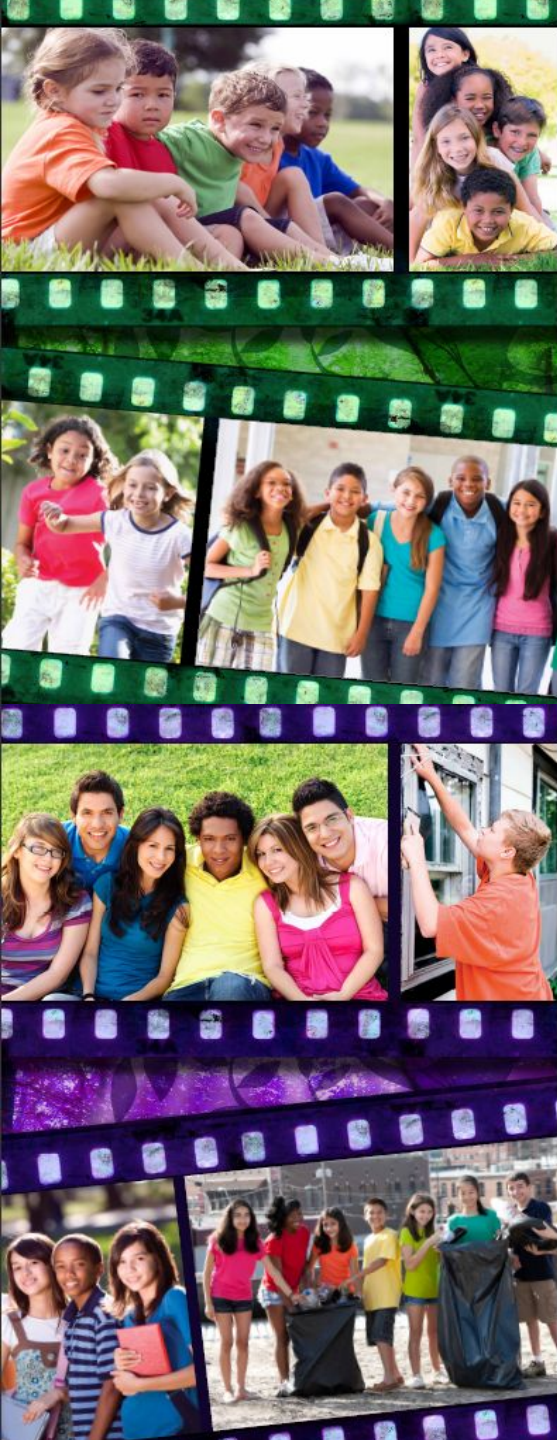
Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves an act of a sexual nature between a child or teenager and an adult or significantly older, more powerful person who initiates that contact for the purpose of his/her own sexual arousal and/or gratification. It includes any of the following exploitive behaviors:

Sexual Abuse

- inappropriate verbal stimulation
- fondling, incest, or rape
- exposing a child to pornography or adult sexual activity

SIGNS OF ABUSE...



Sexual Abuse: Signs

- **Sexual behavior or knowledge that's inappropriate for the child's age**
- **Pregnancy or a sexually transmitted infection**
- **Statements that he or she was sexually abused**
 - **Trouble walking or sitting**
- **Abuse of other children sexually**

The Scope of the Problem



- 3 million incidents of child abuse are reported each year - that is 1 incident every 10 seconds 24/7!
- Less than 20% of child abuse is perpetrated by strangers
- 1 in 3 girls and 1 in 7 boys have been sexually abused by the age of 18

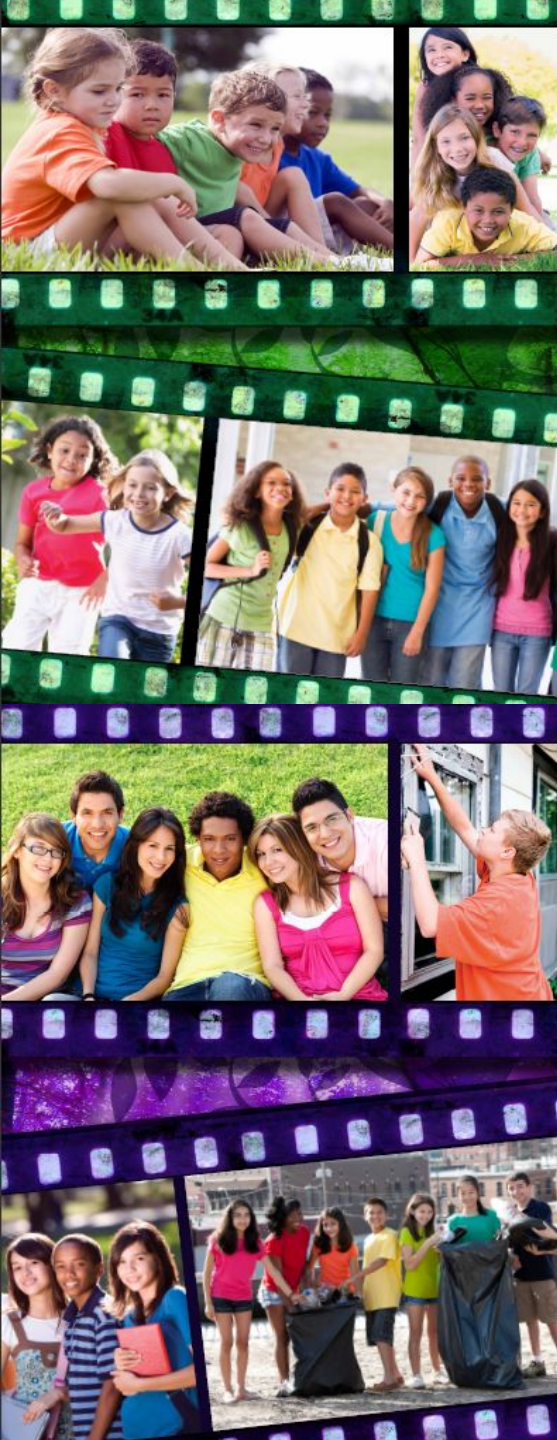


Why Implement a Protection Policy?

Because our church is a community of faith – a safe haven and sanctuary – where children and youth should be affirmed and strengthened in a way that leads to a healthy, holy life.

Protection Policies are for:

- Children/youth/adults at risk
- Church staff and volunteers
 - Families
 - The Church



Basic Procedures

- **Implement policy & background checks**
 - **Two-adult rule (non-related) preferred**
- **Use of middle-school or high school helpers**
- **Annual volunteer orientation and training (required every two years)**
- **Windows in classroom doors/open doors**
 - **Advance notice about activities**
 - **Parent & family education**
- **Appropriate supervision, commitment**



COB Policy

- Read and sign policy now



- Distribute Background Check form for those who are in training for the first time

Checkpoints for Reducing Risk in Churches

(from VAUMC)

- **Preferred: use 2 adult rule - two unrelated adults present at all times when working with children or youth.**
- **If 2 adults are not available, 1 adult may lead a group with visible line of sight and the door open with another adult in the vicinity.**
- **Under no circumstances will 1 adult be alone with 1 child privately.**



Checkpoints for Reducing Risk in Churches continued

(from VAUMC)

ALSO:

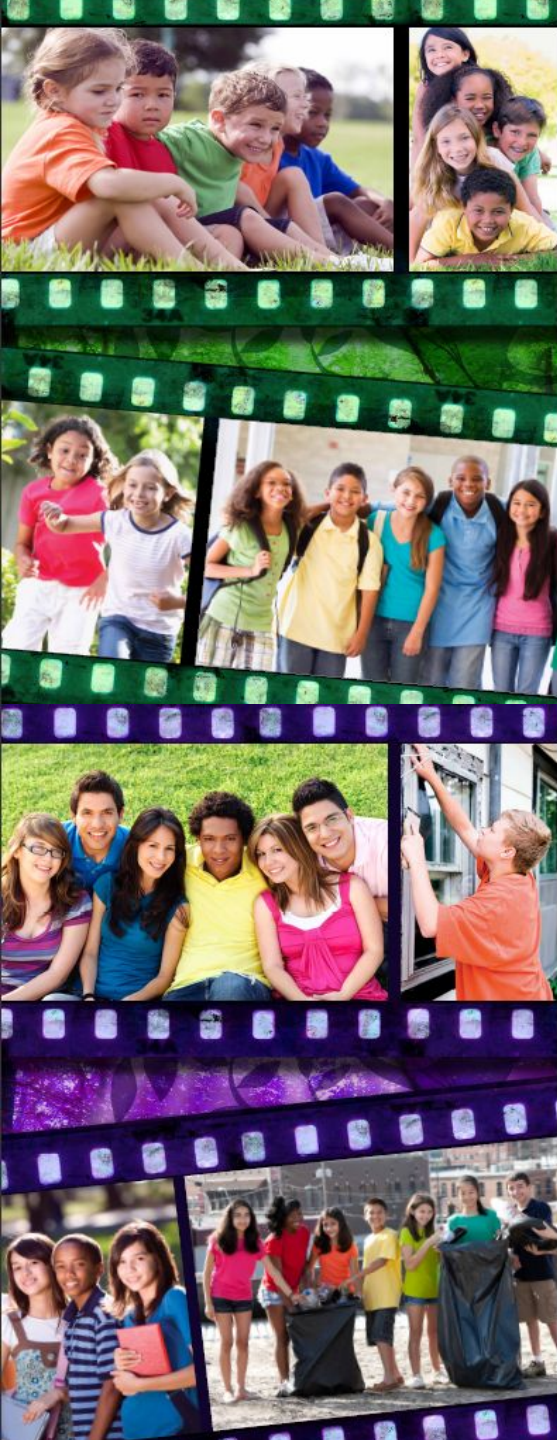
- “floaters” in hallways
 - in line of vision
- open doors or windows in doors
- volunteer driver agreement signed
(never one adult/one minor in vehicle)
- sufficient supervision ratios
- Cancel if no other option



Checkpoints for Reducing Risk in Churches

Employ 6 month rule of church membership as a requirement to work with minors.

- discourages pedophiles who benefit from the desperate need for volunteers



Checkpoints for Reducing Risk in Churches



Establish guidelines for screening all church staff and volunteers.

- **conduct criminal/sex offender background checks**
- **require a sworn disclosure statement from volunteers**
- **systematic supervision**
- **Follow policies**



Special Considerations with Youth

Appropriate Boundaries

- **Physical**
- **Verbal**
- **Counseling**
- **Social Networking & Texting**
 - **Multiple Relationships**
 - **Walking home**



What to Do if You Suspect Abuse at Church or Home

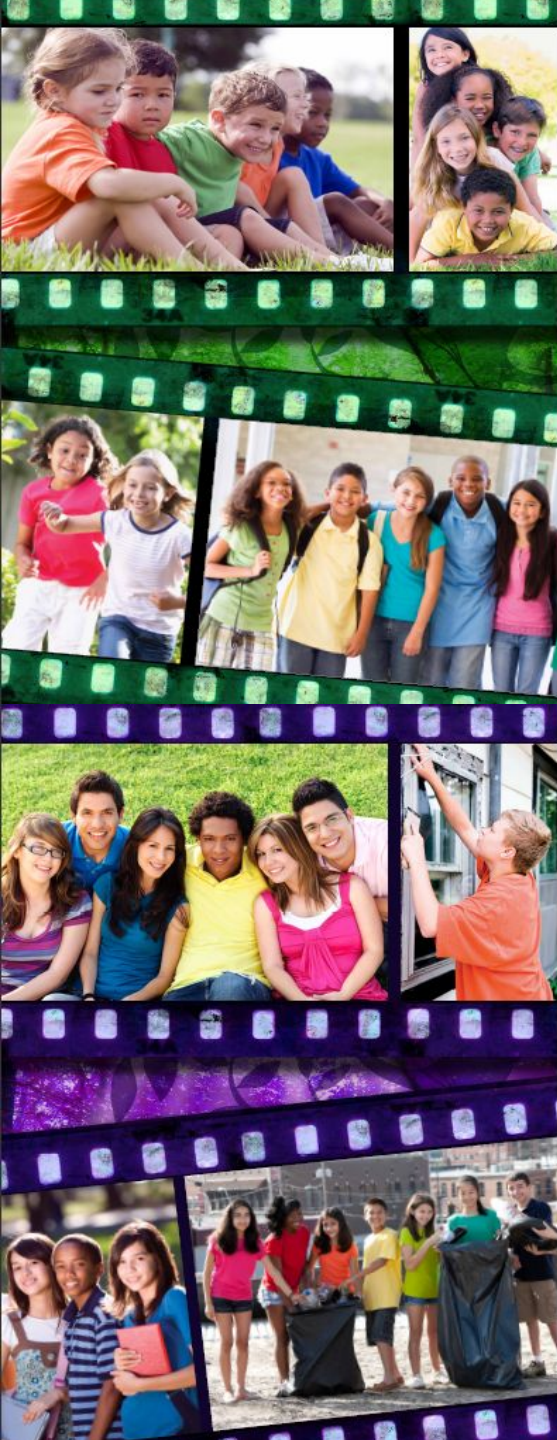
- **It's your responsibility to report child abuse if you suspect it (COB Policy) to Pastor, Pastoral Associate, Youth Coordinator or Parish Council Member**
- **You can call Child Protective Services & report anonymously or ask questions about your observations**
- **Keep records as you observe unusual behavior or symptoms**

What to Do if You Suspect Abuse at Church or Home

•To report child abuse in
Adams County 24-hours:
303.412.5212

Child Abuse Emergencies: 911
Adult protection:
720-523-2057

Colorado's toll-free hotline at
1.844.CO4.KIDS (1.844.264.5437)





COB Pathway for Reporting Suspected Abuse or Impropriety

- 1. Report suspicion or discomfort to a parish council member or pastoral staff.**
- 2. If it is determined that an investigation is needed and it is not an emergency, the parish council will refer the matter to an objective, trained Listening Team.**
- 3. The Listening Team will follow the procedures in the governing documents.**

What to Do if You Suspect Abuse at Church or Home

- Document all procedures in handling the allegation but do **NOT** try to investigate yourself
 - Don't confront the accused
 - Reassure the child *that you believe them*
- Observe *strict confidentiality* about both the victim and alleged perpetrator



What Can I Say to the Child???

- “Thanks for telling me.”
 - “I believe you.”
 - “It is not your fault.”
 - “You are not alone.”
- “It took courage to tell me. I am proud of you.”
- “I am going to call someone whose job it is to help keep children safe.”

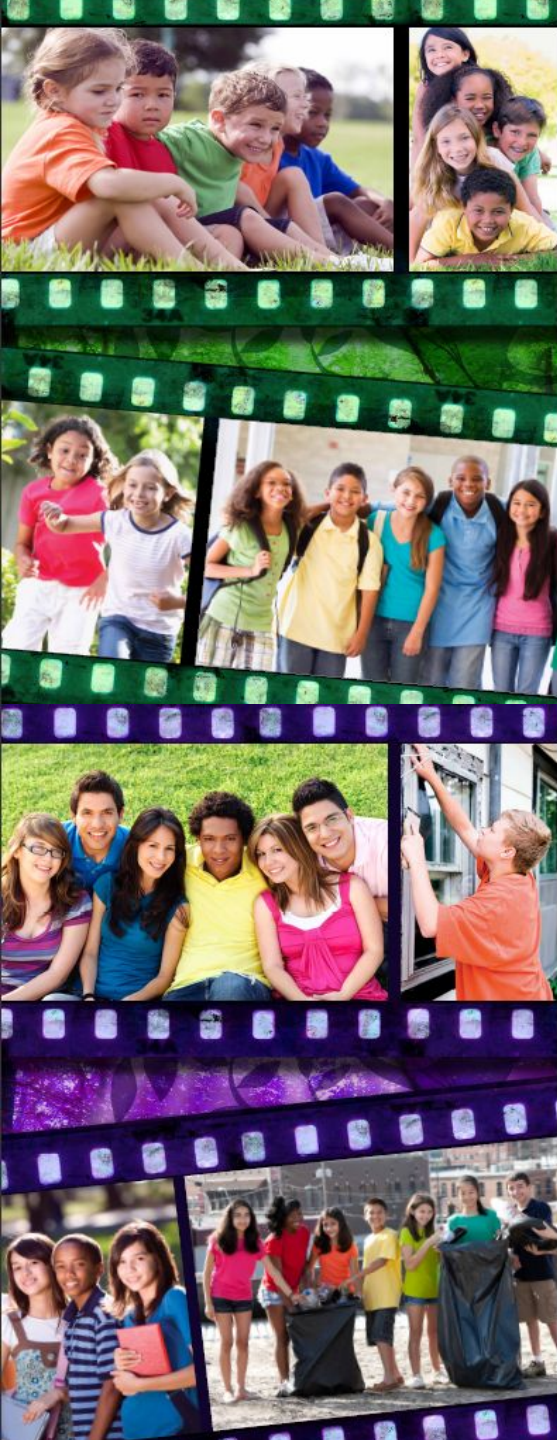
(Blue Sky Bridge)



Supporting the Child and the Family

- Believe the child
 - Don't judge
 - Be respectful
 - Be available
 - Encourage
 - Pray
- Continue relationships
- Remember, even the offender needs help

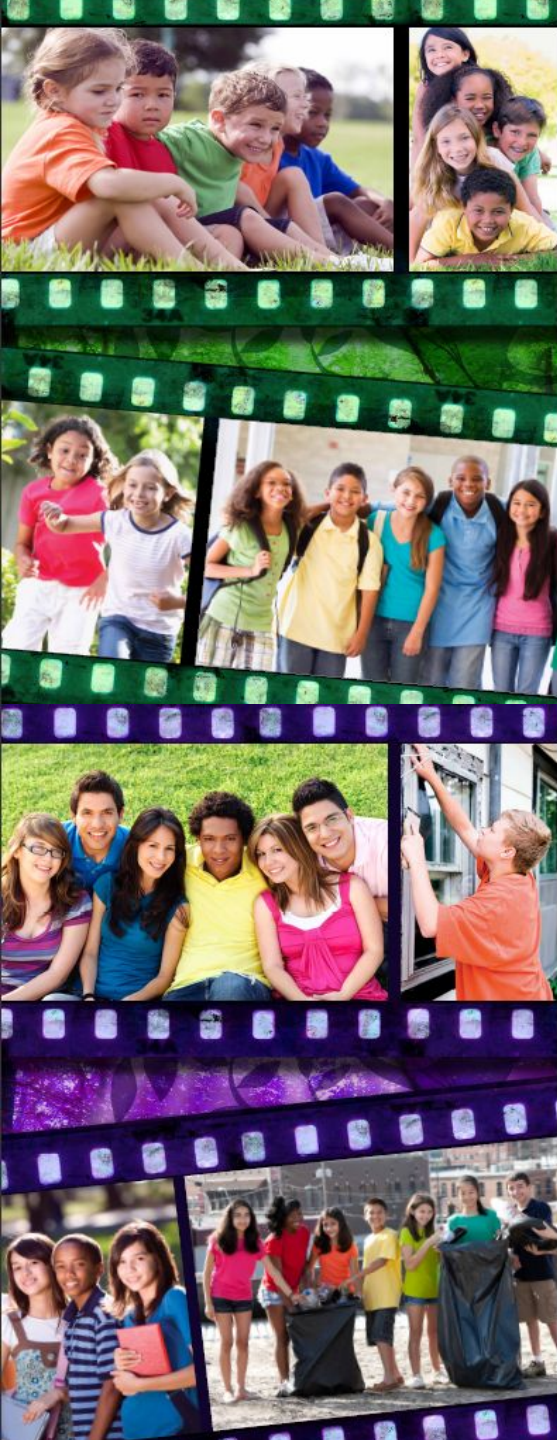
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5 “R’s” of Handling a Disclosure

- Remain calm
- Respect the child
- Refrain from conducting your own investigation
- Refuse to discuss outside of appropriate people
- Report the disclosure

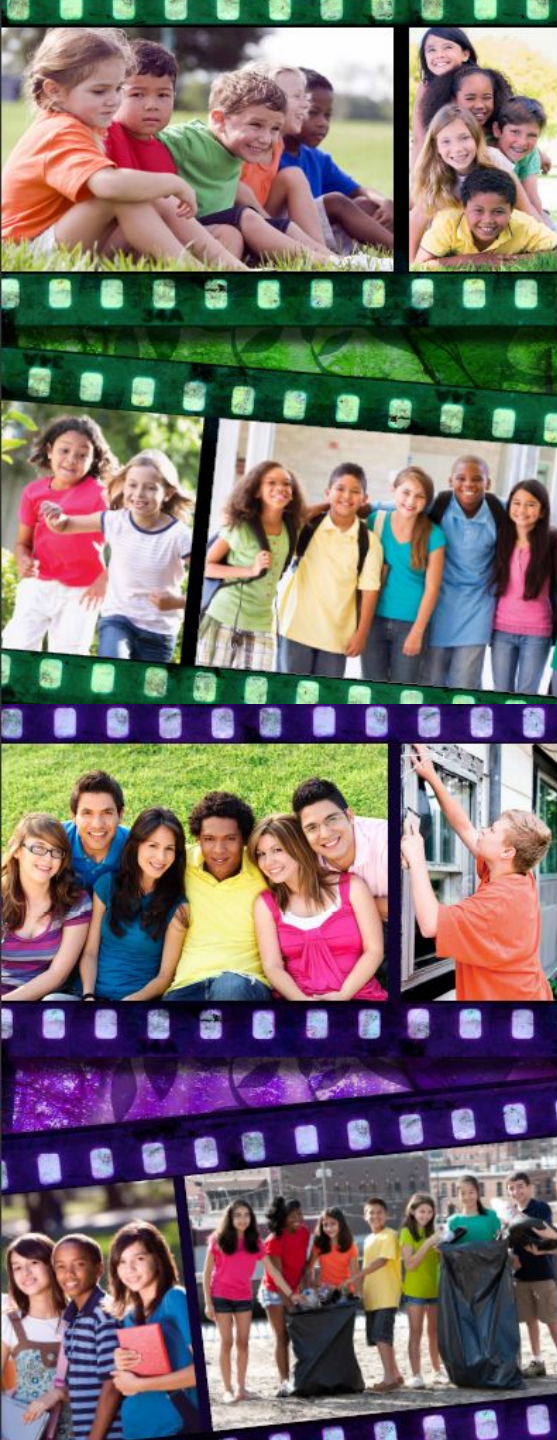
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Take Care of Yourself

- Prayer/Meditation
- Support Systems
(Pastor, Ministers of Care)
- Self-Care activities
- Professional Assistance
 - Take a break
 - Exercise well
 - Eat well

(Blue Sky Bridge)



Prayer for Children

Dear God,

We thank you for the gift of children to raise, for their lives to share, their minds to help mold, their bodies to nurture, and their spirits to enrich.

Let us never betray our children's trust, or dampen their hope, or discourage their dreams.

Help us to enable our precious children to become all you want them to be for the journey ahead.

(Adapted from a prayer by Marian Wright Edleman)

Resources



- Abuse Awareness and Prevention Policy
 - Blue Sky Bridge
- Adams County Child Protective Services
- Virginia United Methodist Church (online resources)
 - Church Mutual

