



Child Safety Training

We are so excited that you've joined our team!
Thank you for taking time to review the policies and procedures
in this training tutorial.

What's covered in this Training?

- Purpose of our prevention policies
- What we do to prevent abuse at Waterstone
- Definition of child abuse
- Basic policies and procedures for safe ministry
- What to do if a child discloses abuse to you
- Reporting suspected child abuse

Training Steps

- Read through the entire training
- If you have questions, please talk with your area director
- Click on the link to the Commitment Form to complete the process

Purpose

The purpose for establishing this Child Safety Training and the accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all of our children.

At Waterstone Community Church, we believe that working in children's ministry is a privilege, honor and high calling. We are committed to providing excellent, top quality programs within a safe and secure environment for every child. Our goal is that every classroom and activity be a place of safety, warmth, love and concern for each child who attends.

To best ensure the safety of our children, to protect our volunteers and paid staff from false accusation, and to safeguard the reputation of our church and Christian community, the elders of Waterstone Community Church have adopted policies and procedures for the prevention and intervention of child abuse in our church.

Waterstone's Child Abuse Prevention Strategy

- Develop and implement ongoing educational opportunities for children's ministry volunteers on the reality of child abuse, risk factors leading to child abuse, and strategies for prevention
- Ministry Partner Screening
- Basic policies and procedures for safe ministry
- Advise kids and families of whom they can contact for advice and help if they have suffered abuse
- Carry liability insurance

What is Child Abuse?

Colorado Statutory Definition of Child Abuse- in Colorado, children are defined as anyone under the age of 18.

The Colorado statutory definition of child “abuse” or “neglect” means an act or omission in one of the following categories which threatens the health and welfare of a child:

Any case in which a child exhibits evidence of skin bruising, bleeding, malnutrition, failure to thrive, burns, fracture of any bone, subdural hematoma, soft tissue swelling, or death and either such condition or death is not justifiably explained; the history given concerning such condition is at variance with the degree or type of such condition or death; or the circumstances indicate that such condition may not be the product of an accidental occurrence;

Any case in which a child is subjected to sexual assault or molestation, sexual exploitation, or prostitution;

Any case in which a child is a child in need of services because the child’s parents, legal guardian, or custodian fails to take the same actions to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision that a prudent parent would take. The requirements of this subparagraph (III) shall be subject to the provisions of section 19-3103.

Any case in which a child is subjected to emotional abuse. As used in this subparagraph (IV) “emotional abuse” means an identifiable and substantial impairment of the child’s intellectual or psychological functioning or development or a substantial risk of impairment of the child’s intellectual or psychological functioning or development.

Any act or omission described in section 19-3-102 (1) (a), (1) (b), or (1) (c).¹

Colorado. Rev. Stat. § 19-1-103.

¹ Colorado. Rev. Stat. § 19-3-102 (1) (a) defines the “neglect” of a child as when “[a] parent, guardian, or legal custodian has abandoned the child or has subjected him or her to mistreatment or abuse or a parent, guardian, or legal custodian has suffered or allowed another to mistreat or abuse the child without taking lawful means to stop such mistreatment or abuse and prevent it from recurring.”

Colorado. Rev. Stat. § 19-3-102 (1) (b) defines the “neglect” of a child as when “[t]he child lacks proper parental care through the actions or omissions of the parent, guardian, or legal custodian.”

Colorado. Rev. Stat. § 19-3-102 (1) (c) defines the “neglect” of a child as when “[t]he child’s environment is injurious to his or her welfare.”

Types of Child Abuse

Generally, child abuse is categorized in five primary forms: physical, emotional, neglect, sexual and ritual. A word of caution: Always look for a cluster of indicators. One or a few is usually not enough to be “reasonable cause” for reporting suspected abuse.

Type of Abuse

Physical – abuse in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to a child. Examples may include violent battery with a weapon (knife, belt, strap), burning, shaking, kicking, choking, fracturing bones, and any of a wide variety of non-accidental injuries to a child’s body.

Emotional – when a person exposes a child to spoken and/or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty. Emotional abuse sends a message to the child of worthlessness, badness, and being not only unloved but undeserving of love and care. Children exposed to emotional abuse may have experienced being locked in a closet, being deprived of any sign of parental affection, being constantly told they are bad or stupid, or being allowed or forced to abuse alcohol or drugs. Emotional abuse is often very difficult to prove and is devastating to the victim.

Neglect – when a person endangers a child’s health, safety, or welfare through negligence. Neglect may include withholding food, clothing, medical care, education, and even affection and affirmation of the child’s self-worth. This is perhaps the most common form of abuse.

Possible Indicators

- Hostile and aggressive behavior toward others
- Fearfulness of parents and/or other adults
- Destructive behavior toward self, others, and/or property
- Inexplicable fractures or bruises inappropriate for child’s developmental stage
- Burns, facial injuries, pattern of repetitious bruises
- Exhibits severe depression and/or withdrawal
- Exhibits severe lack of self-esteem
- Failure to thrive
- Threatens or attempts suicide
- Speech and/or eating disorders
- Goes to extremes to seek adult approval
- Extreme passive/aggressive behavior patterns
- Failure to thrive
- Pattern of inappropriate dress for climate
- Begs or steals food; chronic hunger
- Depression
- Untreated medical conditions
- Poor hygiene

Sexual – sexual contact between a child and an adult (or another older and more powerful youth) occurs. The child is never truly capable of consenting to or resisting such contact and/or such sexual acts. Often, the child is physically and psychologically dependent upon the perpetrator of the abuse. Examples of sexual abuse may include fondling, intercourse, incest, and the exploitation of and exposure to child pornography or prostitution.

Ritual – physical, sexual, or psychological violations of a child are inflicted regularly, intentionally, and in a stylized way by a person or persons responsible for the child's welfare. The abuser may appeal to some higher authority or power to justify the abuse. The abuse may include cruel treatment of animals or repeated threats of harm to the child, other persons, and animals. Reports of ritual abuse are often extremely horrifying and may seem too grim to be true. Children making such reports must not be ignored.

- Unusually advanced sexual knowledge and/or behavior for child's age & developmental stage
- Depression—cries often for no apparent reason
- Promiscuous behavior
- Runs away from home and refuses to return
- Difficulty walking or sitting
- Bruised/bleeding in vaginal or anal areas
- Exhibits frequent headaches, stomachaches, extreme fatigue
- Sexually transmitted diseases

- Disruptions of memory or consciousness
- Unexplained mistrust and mood swings
- Flashbacks
- Eating disorders
- Fear of the dark, especially at sundown or a full moon
- Agitation or despair that seems to occur in cycles
- Fear of ministers, priests, or others wearing robes or uniforms
- Nightmares or sleep disorders
- Any of the symptoms of sexual abuse

Who are Abusers?

Abusers are not easily recognizable – they may look just like you or me! Abusers are people who have greater power in relation to a child, and they use that power to harm the child. Less than 20% of child abuse is perpetrated by strangers. So within our churches, who are the abusers? They may be Sunday school teachers, nursery workers, preschool teachers, Vacation Bible School leaders, camp counselors, youth group counselors, clergy, or anyone else.

Basic Procedures for Safe Ministry with Children

Two-Adult Guideline

We strive for no fewer than two adults to be present as much as possible during any church-sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children. Applying this guideline as much as possible drastically reduces the possibility of an incident of child abuse. Abusers thrive on secrecy, isolation, and their ability to manipulate victims. When abusers know they will never have a chance to be alone with potential victims, they quickly lose interest in “working” with children. Parents and children who know that two adults will be present as much as possible are less likely to make false allegations. It would be nearly impossible to prove allegations against two workers. This guideline protects volunteers as well as the children!

Identification

All staff and ministry partners in children’s ministries must wear a name tag (lanyard). This ensures that parents know they are leaving their child(ren) with an approved worker. It allows for quick and easy identification by staff and others.

Training

Waterstone provides easy access to teaching trainings (online and hard copies) as well as access to first aid/CPR classes for all ministry partners and for paid staff.

Five-Years-Older Guideline

In Children’s Ministry youth attendants need to be 5 years older than the group they are assisting. This helps ensure that relationships are appropriate and that the youth can be effective leaders in the classroom.

Windows in all Classroom Doors

We have windows or ½ window doors in all classrooms. This removes the opportunity for secrecy and isolation or false accusations. Window blinds are to be kept open at all times unless it is necessary to darken the room for proper showing of videos.

Open-door Counseling

During any counseling/visiting/time-out sessions with children, the door of the room used should remain open for the entire session. Ideally, the session will be conducted at a time when others are nearby, even if they are not within listening distance.

Advance Notice to Parents

A basic rule for ministry with children is to give the parents advance notice and full information regarding the event in which their children will be participating. We require signed permission slips whenever applicable.

Restroom Guidelines

As a general guideline, volunteers should not take a child alone to the restroom. It is recommended to take children of the same gender to the restroom accompanied by another adult when possible. Children in grades 3 and above may be sent in pairs with permission from their teacher(s) to the restroom without the supervision of an adult. We respect children's privacy as much as possible and enter a bathroom stall only when absolutely necessary to assist the child. Additionally, diapers are to be changed only by females in designated areas and in the presence of other workers.

Physical Contact

Physical contact is important for kids. However, we want to be careful that our conduct is appropriate for the age group we work with. Below are age appropriate examples of ways to show a child you care.

Age Group Infants

Appropriate Physical Contact

- being held
- hugged
- gently patted
- NO kissing, please

Toddlers and Preschoolers

- being held
- hugged
- gently patted
- NO kissing or lap sitting, please

Kindergarten and Above

- handshakes
- high fives
- side-to-side hugs
- brief pats on the arm or shoulder

Sunday school Check-In Procedures

Children, birth - 6th grade, must be checked-in using the computer kiosk. Children, birth - 4th grade will not be released to siblings or anyone without a security pick-up tag.

Ministry Partner Screening

The screening process includes:

- ✓ Ministry Partner Application Form
- ✓ Reference Check
- ✓ Background Check with the Colorado Bureau of Investigations (CBI)

This screening process coupled with the regular use of all the safety procedures substantially reduces not only the legal liability of the church, but protects you as a ministry partner from false allegations.

In general, ministry partners should be associated with WCC for 3-6 months before serving regularly unless waived by the Ministry Director or Senior Pastor.

General Guidelines If a Child Discloses Abuse to You

- Remain calm
- Listen and accept what the child tells you
- Keep your involvement as limited as possible
- Avoid asking questions unless absolutely necessary
- Do not personalize the situation or make judgments
- Do not play detective or investigator
- Do not make promises to the child that you will not tell anyone else
- All information must be kept confidential. Do not share information with anyone else except department director or Children's Ministries Director
- Remember clergy reporting is mandated regardless of degree of credibility

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

- Any suspected or alleged child abuse or any questionable activity involving children is to be reported immediately to the Area or Ministry Director.
- It is the responsibility of the Area Directors to immediately report the suspected abuse to the Children's Ministries Director.
- The Children's Ministries Director is responsible for reporting to the Elder Board and the Senior Pastor.
- It is the Senior Pastor's responsibility to report the information immediately to the appropriate agencies.
- It is the responsibility of the Senior Pastor to inform the parent about the alleged report.
- An appointed elder (or Senior Pastor) is the only spokesperson in the event the media is involved.

**You made it through the Child Safety Training.
Thank you for your time.**

**Please complete the Commitment Form located on the
Kids/Get Involved page at www.waterstonechurch.org.**

If you have any questions, please contact your Area Director.