

CHILD SAFETY POLICY & RELATED FORMS

(updated Sept. 2026)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	3
What is Child Sexual Abuse?	4
The Profile of a Child Molester	5
Recognizing the Symptoms of Sexual Molestation.....	7
Why Churches are Susceptible	8
Why Churches and Church Leaders are Sued.....	9
Why Litigation Is on the Increase	10
The Problem of False Allegations.....	11
What Can Our Church Do to Reduce the Risk?	12
Policy Statement	13–15
Steps for Reporting an Incident or Responding to an Allegation	16
Witness to Incident Statement Form.....	17
Incident Report Form	18
Training Activity Participant Completion Form.....	19

"KID CARE"

Introduction

God has blessed our church family by entrusting us with many wonderful children and young people whom we dearly love. To glorify God, we are committed to providing excellent ministry programs led by qualified staff to train our children and youth to love God and His Word. Thank you for your willingness to be part of a team devoted to sharing Christ with our youth.

Unfortunately, there has been an increasing number of incidences of child molestation at churches. Child sexual abuse strikes children from every social background, race, and age and the results are so devastating to the life and development of the child. Christ has commanded us to put no hindrance in the way of letting a child come to him (Matthew 19:14) and therefore, the Village Bible Church of Amherst, developed the "Kid Care" program to ensure this is so.

The objectives for the "Kid Care" Child and Youth Protection Program are:

1. To provide a safe and secure environment for our children and youth.
2. To protect the cause of Christ and testimony of Village Bible Church.
3. To protect our church staff and volunteer workers from potential unfounded allegations of misconduct, negligence, child abuse or sexual abuse.
4. To minimize the church's liability due to misconduct, negligence, child abuse or sexual abuse.

As part of the policies and procedures that have been developed for this program, we have created this training manual for use by the people who serve the Lord at our church by ministering to our children and youth. Please read the materials in this manual, participate in the training presentations and discussions when offered, and ask any questions or state any concerns you may have to the training instructor or ministry coordinator. Please fill out the training participant's form upon completion of the training requirements.

Thank you very much!

Josh Lupo
Director of Family Ministries

What Is Child Sexual Abuse?

The precise definition of child sexual abuse or molestation varies from state to state*, but in general includes any form of sexual contact or exploitation in which a minor is being used for sexual stimulation of the perpetrator. In short, child sexual abuse is:

"Any tricked, forced, manipulated, or coerced sexual activity for the pleasure of the abuser."

(MinistrySafe, 2024)

Note the broad nature of this definition. This is intentional, meaning that child abuse encompasses more than just physical contact. It can include verbal or visual as well. Child sexual abuse may be violent or non-violent. All child abuse is an exploitation of a child's vulnerability and powerlessness in which the abuser is fully responsible for the actions.

Child sexual abuse is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behaviors for which they are not personally, socially, and developmentally ready.

Child sexual abuse includes behaviors that involve touching and non-touching aspects.

Types of sexual abuse that involve touching include:

1. Fondling
2. Oral, genital, and anal penetration
3. Intercourse
4. Forcible rape

Types of sexual abuse that do not involve touching include:

1. Verbal comments
2. Pornographic materials
3. Obscene phone calls
4. Exhibitionism
5. Allowing children to witness sexual activity

Note: It is understood that the above lists serve to be representative, not exhaustive.

* A detailed description of felonious sexual assault and related offenses, according to the laws and statutes of the State of New Hampshire as of 2026, is on file in the church office and available to anyone who wishes to explore the law in detail.

The Profile of a Child Molester

Bob sat dejected before the church board. His broad shoulders slumped as he tearfully retold his story. Bob has been sexually molesting his thirteen-year-old daughter for the last two years. This activity might have gone undetected except that Bob tried to abuse one of his daughter's girlfriends while chaperoning a Sunday School activity. The young girl reported the incident to her parents and Bob was apprehended. The church leader who heard this confession sat in disbelief. How could Bob, a successful businessman, husband, father of three children and respected church worker commit such actions?

Who is the typical child molester?

Some church leaders assume that molesters are "strangers wearing trench coats" or "dirty old men". These stereotypes not only are inaccurate, but they dangerously contribute to a false sense of security. Researchers in the field of child abuse currently indicate that no one profile fits the various perpetrators of abuse. Church leaders can become preoccupied screening stereotypes, thereby not suspecting the real molester could be an active adult or teen in the church. Consider the following:

- * Ninety percent of the time, the abuser is someone known to the victim.
- * Most abuse takes place within the context of an ongoing relationship.
- * Over 90 percent of child abusers are men.
- * The usual offender is between the ages of 20-30 years.
- * 20 percent of sex offenders begin their activity before the age of 18.
- * Child abusers often are married and have children.
- * One out of three reported cases of child sexual abuse are peer-to-peer related.

(Reducing the Risk p.p. 16-18)



Know the Facts About Sexual Abuse & Sexual Abusers



*What system protects children at my church?
Does our system address the following facts?*

FACT

Sexual abusers will seek access to children where protective barriers are low

- Secular organizations tend to be ahead of the Church in implementing safety measures
- Protective barriers in the Church tend to be critically low, creating a target for predators
- Ongoing failure to address this issue results in increased risk to children in Church programs

FACT

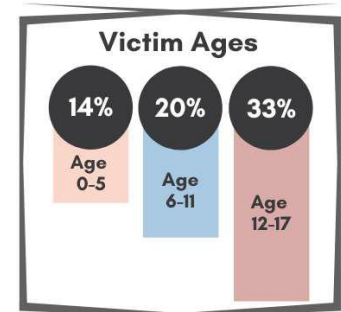
Less than 10% of sexual abusers will EVER encounter the criminal justice system

- A background check, even if working perfectly, will identify only a fraction of abusers
- Sexual abusers KNOW when there is no criminal history to be found
- Criminal background checks are vital, but they have limitations and are NOT a silver bullet
- A criminal background check alone is NOT an effective safety system

FACT

Sexual abuse is truly an issue of EPIDEMIC proportion

- Analysis of 22 American studies reveals 30-40% of girls and 13% of boys experience sexual abuse before age 18
- Law enforcement records and data reported by victims show over 90% of sexual offenders who abused minors were male
- 66% of abuse victims will not speak up until adulthood (if ever)



FACT

There is NO visual profile for molesters

- Most molesters appear helpful, trustworthy and responsible
- Abusers come from all segments of society and many are married, educated and have families

FACT

90% of victims are abused by someone they know and trust

- Most abduction offenses (the 'snatch and grab') are a fraction of sexual abuse occurrences
- 'Matching tags' for small children provide an inadequate safety system
- Sexual abusers groom children and gatekeepers prior to sexual behavior
- Staff members and volunteers are gatekeepers and they all MUST understand and be able to recognize the abuser's 'grooming process'

Recognizing the Symptoms of Sexual Molestation

Physical signs in a victim may include:

1. Lacerations and bruises
2. Nightmares
3. Irritation, pain, or injury to the genital area
4. Difficulty with urination
5. Discomfort when sitting
6. Torn or bloody clothing
7. Venereal disease

Behavioral signs in a victim may include:

1. Anxiety when approaching church or nursery
2. Nervous or hostile behavior toward adults
3. Sexual self-consciousness
4. "Acting-out" of sexual behavior
5. Withdrawal from church activities and friends

Verbal signs in a victim may include:

1. A (church worker) does things to me when we are alone
2. I don't like to be alone with (church worker)
3. A (church worker) fooled around with me

(Reducing the Risk p. 20)

Please note, some of these behaviors can be normal for children, but if something seems out of the ordinary or has caused a drastic attitude change in the child, then this may be a warning sign.

Why Churches are Susceptible

Churches have unique features that can make them susceptible to incidents of child molestation.

- **Trust:** Churches tend to be trusting and unsuspecting institutions. Even when questions are raised about a worker's conduct, church leaders may ignore the evidence rather than question the worker's character or motives.
- **Lack of Screening:** Some churches do nothing to "screen" youth workers. Complete strangers may be accepted to work with children without any investigation whatsoever.
- **Opportunity:** Churches provide ample opportunities for unsupervised close personal contact between adults and children. This risk increases dramatically for overnight activities.
- **Access:** The Boy Scouts, Big Brothers, and similar organizations have instituted comprehensive programs to reduce the risk of child molestation. Child molesters are attracted to an institution in which they have immediate access to potential victims in an atmosphere of complete trust – like the church.
- **Need:** More churches struggle to get adequate help for children and youth programs. Recruiting nursery workers, for example, can become a never-ending effort. Turnover among volunteer workers is high. A willing volunteer worker provides welcome relief.

(Reducing the Risk p. 20)

Why Churches and Church Leaders are Sued

Most of the lawsuits filed against churches for acts of child molestation have alleged that the church was legally accountable either because of negligent hiring or negligent supervision. Both theories of liability are pivotal issues. The term negligence generally refers to conduct that creates an unreasonable risk of foreseeable harm to others. It connotes carelessness, heedlessness, inattention, or inadvertence. Negligent hiring simply means that the church failed to act responsibly and with due care in the selection of workers (both volunteer and compensated) for positions involving the supervision or custody of minors. A church may exercise sufficient care in the hiring of an individual but still be legally accountable for acts of molestation because of negligent supervision. Negligent supervision means that a church did not exercise sufficient care in supervising a worker.

Churches need to understand the extent of their liability. Churches are not "guarantors" of the safety and well-being of children. They are not liable for every instance of injury that occurs on their premises or during their activities. Generally, they are responsible only for those injuries that result from their negligence. Victims of molestation who have sued a church often allege that the church was negligent in not adequately screening applicants or for not providing adequate supervision. As noted above, some churches are willing to use just about anyone who expresses an interest in working in a volunteer capacity with the youth in the church (e.g., boys or girls' programs, Sunday School, children's choir, nursery, teenagers, camp...). Applicants for positions may not be extensively screened or closely supervised.

Assume that an incident of abuse occurs at your church, and that the minister is asked to testify during the trial. The victim's lawyer asks, "What did you or your staff do to prevent this tragedy from occurring—what procedures did you utilize to check the molester's background and supervise his/her work with children?" What would your minister say? If the answer is "nothing," you can well imagine the jury's reaction. The only question in the jurors' minds at this point is the size of the verdict.

(Reducing the Risk p. 23)

Why Litigation Is on the Increase

In the past, few victims of sexual molestation sued the perpetrator or the church. This reluctance has changed dramatically. The following factors provide a partial explanation of this new trend:

- **Media attention:**

The media has focused attention on child molestation cases, and especially on those cases involving church workers. Often, front page publicity is given to these cases, and to the astronomical jury verdicts that sometimes are awarded. The possibility of a huge verdict lures some victims into the courtroom.

- **Statute of limitations:**

Many states have greatly liberalized the period of time ("statute of limitations") during which molestation victims must file a lawsuit. This has enabled victims to sue churches many years after an incident of molestation.

- **Theories of liability:**

Innovative theories of liability have been introduced by plaintiffs' attorneys that have assisted molestation victims in recovering money damages.

- **Injury:**

The extent of the psychological and emotional injury experienced by victims of sexual molestation has only recently been fully appreciated.

- **Number of victims:**

Recent studies suggest that the number of adults who were sexually molested or abused as children is staggering. Some studies suggest that as many as 27 percent of adult females and 16 percent of males were victims of molestation as minors.

- **Report requirements:**

All 50 states require certain individuals (mandatory reporters) to report known or reasonably suspected incidents of child abuse to state officials. This has exposed many cases of child abuse and made victims less willing to remain anonymous.

- **Support for litigation:**

An increasing number of attorneys and victim advocacy groups are encouraging sex abuse victims to utilize litigation to secure justice and promote personal healing.

(Reducing the Risk p. 21)

The Problem of False Allegations

It is essential that workers who minister to minors carefully abide by the policies and procedures of the program because of the potential for false allegations. There are at least two situations where staff could be vulnerable to false allegations if they are not in compliance with the policies and procedures.

- First, children are being trained by parents and educators to protect themselves regarding sexual abuse. It is possible that children who are well informed about the potential for sexual abuse could use this information against a teacher or worker in a false allegation attempting to get that adult in trouble.
- Secondly, unfortunately, there are those parents who may try to take advantage of a church by coaching their children into making false allegations and then bringing suit against the person and the church.

As much as is possible, Children and Youth Ministry workers will have the benefit of another adult present as a protection against false accusations.

Specific procedures will be worked out by the individual departments related to the needs of the particular age group and the facility capabilities.

One last important thing to note is that while false allegations can occur, statistics show that ninety-eight percent of children professing to have been sexually abused are not lying, even if the child recants this statement later.¹ Therefore, verification is necessary and good for ensuring the veracity of an abuse claim, but it should not be immediately assumed that the alleged abuse party is falsely testifying.

¹MinistrySafe, 2024.

What Can our Church Do to Reduce the Risk?

Selection of Children's and Youth Ministry Workers Screening Process

1. Evaluation of the Applicant:

All applicants will be evaluated by authorized personnel and appropriate action will be taken according to processing guidelines.

2. Criminal Records Check:

Through the service provided by the New Hampshire State Police, a criminal records check will be completed. The cost associated with the Criminal Records Check will be met by the church.

3. Personal Interview:

A personal interview will be conducted when authorized personnel feel it is necessary or for those applicants whose information suggests a need.

4. Records Maintenance:

All related materials and information will be maintained in appropriate confidential and secure files available only to authorized personnel.

Policy Statement

A. Supervision

Supervision standards and methods are reflected in the policy and procedures that address these concerns as an important component of the "Kid Care" program. Specific policies and procedures address the following areas: Adult/team supervision of children, scheduling of ministry activities and programs, parental permission for participation in programs, inappropriate conduct or suspicious behavior, guidelines for adequate personnel, guidelines for overnight activities, and the nursery/young children identification process.

1. **Adult/Team Supervision:**

When possible, at least two adults, or one adult and one worker 16 years of age or older, will be present supervising any Children's or Youth Ministry activity or program. When in the care of approved workers, a child will never be left unsupervised, regardless of circumstance.

2. **Scheduling of Ministry Activities and Programs:**

Sufficient notice should be provided to the church leaders and the Church Administrator for all activities other than regularly scheduled programs. These activities should be placed on the church calendar in the church office.

3. **Parental Permission:**

When possible, written consent from each child's parent or legal guardian on an approved form is required for all activities and programs off campus. In youth ministry situations where an adult has a legitimate reason to be alone with a youth of the opposite sex, said adult should, if possible, obtain consent from the student's guardian or parent before going out with that student or spending time with the student in an unsupervised setting.

4. **Overnight Activities:**

Special attention will be given to the planning of overnight activities to ensure the safety of all participants. Rules and expectations for behavior will be clearly communicated to all participants prior to the beginning of the activity. All adult leaders and chaperones must meet all qualifications and standards to participate in the activity.

5. **Nursery/Young Children Identification:**

The Toddler Room classes (0–3 years old) will maintain a process whereby a child in VBC's supervised care will be given a number 0–10 corresponding with a pager given to the parent/guardian at drop-off. When the child is picked up, the guardian and pager are matched with the child to identify and release the child to the appropriate individual.

6. **Bathroom Assistance:**

Early Childhood (2–3-year-olds) – When possible, women only should assist children in the bathroom. Extreme caution should be used in determining to fully close a bathroom door. It is better to leave the door slightly open. Fortunately, we have a toileting area in our toddler room.

Childhood (5–7-years-olds) Adult worker should remain outside of the bathroom.

If there is a behavioral problem or if they require assistance, prop the bathroom door partially open and deal with the situation.

B. Inappropriate Sexual Conduct and Appropriate Conduct

1. Observed Inappropriate Sexual Conduct, Suspicious Behavior, or Symptoms of Molestation.

- A) Observed inappropriate sexual conduct or suspicious behavior must be immediately confronted.
 - 1) *Stop the offense.* The accused will not be confronted until the safety of the child or young person is secured. Verbally report the incident to the appropriate supervisor immediately, per page 16, number one.
 - 2) A “Witness to Incident Statement” form, which can be found in the church office, must be completed immediately and given to the Senior Pastor.
 - 3) Do not prejudge the situation but take all allegations seriously. Showing care and support helps prevent further hurt. When churches fail to show support or evidence a negative attitude toward an alleged victim, not only does the anger of the victim and his family often intensify, but future reconciliation is hindered.
 - 4) Treat any accused worker 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. If the person is a paid employee of the church, arrangements should be made to maintain his or her income until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.
 - 5) In the event of an incident, an attorney will prepare a written public statement that is to be used to answer the press and to convey news to any in the congregation. Be careful to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of everyone involved.
- B) Observed suspicious symptoms of molestation, as described on page 7 under “Recognizing Symptoms of Sexual Molestation,” have occurred.
 - 1) A “Witness to Incident Statement” form, which can be found in the church office, must be completed immediately and given to the Senior Pastor.

2. Appropriate physical contact and demonstration of affection:

- A) It is recommended that adult workers do not initiate hugs or physical contact. If the child offers affection, such as a hug, exercise wisdom in your response.
- B) Both hands should be visible to other workers at all times, when possible.

C. Tornado

- 1. In the event of a tornado in imminent proximity to the building, workers are to move children to the designated shelter location, which is in the basement underneath the foyer steps. Worker(s) are to remain with their children until the tornado has passed the facility, at which point they are to be reunited with their parent/guardian.

D. Fire Evacuation

1. If a fire occurs inside the building, the two priorities for any worker is (1) keeping the children safe, and (2) reuniting the child with their parent/guardian. With this in mind, in the event of a fire the worker will:
 - a. Pull the fire alarm lever if the smoke alarm and/or fire alarm has not been activated.
 - b. Gather the children under supervision and immediately exit out of rear exterior door, unless blocked due to fire. If blocked, exit out of the next closest available door/window.
 - c. Take children to the back of the church property line as indicated in the diagram below. Different youth groups should be arranged as follows to allow parents for ease of reunification (from playground to fence line): Toddler Room, VBC Sandlot, Gravel Group.
 - d. Wait and release children into the custody of an appropriate parent/guardian.

In the event that fire reaches to the trees surrounding the church property, workers are to take children under their supervision to Buchanan Field 450 feet northward on Middle St for reunification with their parent/guardian.



Steps for Reporting an Incident or Responding to an Allegation

If an allegation of abuse occurs or if you observe abuse:

- 1) Verbally report the incident to appropriate supervisor and document, on the “Witness to Incident Statement” form, what you have observed. Specify in detail your efforts at handling the incident.
- 2) Give the completed “Witness to Incident Statement” form to the Senior Pastor, or in his absence, to one of the Elders.
- 3) The Senior Pastor and the Elders shall make initial inquiries and determine if the actions in step 4 are warranted.
- 4) The Senior Pastor, or in his absence, one of the Elders shall*:
 - Complete an “Incident Report Form” after receiving the “Witness to Incident Statement”.
 - Notify the parents.
 - Contact the proper civil authorities.
 - Initiate the process of reporting the incident to the church insurance company and church attorney(s).
 - Notify the Director of Family Ministries.
 - Notify the Trustee Board.

**Note: This does not designate sequence in which events occur nor complete scope. Only activities that may occur given the specific details surrounding the incident.*

**Village Bible Church of Amherst
WITNESS TO INCIDENT STATEMENT**

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Title /Position (if applicable) _____

Describe knowledge of alleged incident (times, locations, use exact wording whenever possible).

Identify observations regarding the physical or emotional condition of the possible child victim, (use specific body parts and locations, provide estimates as to size, color and age of any injury).

Provide names of anyone whom you believe has additional information about the matter, and detail why you listed each person.

Describe any physical evidence that you believe would tend to confirm or eliminate the possibility that abuse has occurred. Include any information that might show that someone other than the accused may have been involved.

Additional information you believe needs to be known about the situation or those said to have been involved.

Use additional sheets, if necessary, for a complete response.

Signature of Witness

Signature of person receiving Statement

**Village Bible Church of Amherst
INCIDENT REPORT FORM
Possible Child Abuse**

Date of Report: _____

Report Prepared By: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Position held in Church: _____

Identification of possible child victim: _____

Parent/Guardian of victim: _____

Address: _____

Child's date of birth: _____

Identification of suspected Abuser: _____

Nature of injury or condition reported or observed:

Physical:

Behavioral:

Other indications:

How Reporter learned of information: _____

Witness to incident: _____

Date written statement received by victim or guardian: _____

Other persons believed to have relevant information: _____

Detail the circumstances leading to the suspicion that the child is a victim of abuse or neglect. Include dates, times, names, specific acts, language used by child, location of event, and report as many other details as possible.

Reporter's signature _____

**“KID CARE”
PROTECTION PROGRAM**

**TRAINING ACTIVITY
PARTICIPANT’S COMPLETION FORM**

I have read the materials that present the “Kid Care” policies and procedures provided me by the church and agree to abide by all the guidelines.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Please return this form to the Church Administrator and/or Director of Family Ministries upon completion.