

Definitions of Abuse

- **Verbal Abuse**- Any verbal act that humiliates, degrades or threatens any child or youth.
- **Physical Abuse** – Any act of omission or an act that endangers a person's physical or mental health. In the case of child or youth physical abuse, this definition includes any intentional physical injury caused by the individual's caretaker. Physical abuse may result from punishment that is overly punitive or inappropriate to the individual's age or condition. In addition, physical abuse may result from purposeful acts that pose serious danger to physical health of a child or youth.
- **Sexual Abuse** – Child or youth sexual abuse is the sexual exploitation or use of same for satisfaction of sexual drives. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Incest
 - Rape
 - Prostitution
 - Romantic involvement with any participant
 - Any sexual intercourse, or sexual conduct with, or fondling of an individual enrolled as a child or youth in sponsored activities of Gethsemane UMC
 - Sexualized behavior that communicates sexual interest and/or content.Examples are not limited to: displaying sexually suggestive visual materials, making sexual comments or innuendo about one's own or another person's body, touching another person's body, hair or clothing, touching or rubbing oneself in the presence of another person, kissing, and sexual intercourse.

Physical Indicators

If you observe signs of physical injury on a child you need to consider several factors before you decide whether or not they indicate possible physical abuse. The following physical indicators should raise concern:

The location, nature or extent of the injury do not fit with the explanation given.

The child's age or developmental stage is not consistent with the type of injury. The severity or type of the injury itself is of concern.

Physical indicators include the following:

- **Bruises and welts.** These may appear on the face, back, bottom, genitals and arms. Bruises or welts in unusual configurations may pattern the instrument used to inflict them, for example: hand or fingerprints or the linear marks of a cane. Clusters bruises and bruises of various colors may indicate repeated abuse, although it is difficult to date a bruise according to its color. Bruising on babies and young children is of significant concern.
- **Fractures.** Any fracture in a child under the age of two years is a serious concern. Fractures are not often detected without x-ray, although the child may have a swollen joint and appear to be in pain or irritable.
- **Burns and Scalds.** These may show the shapes of the item used to inflict them. For example, iron, grill, cigarette burns. Other types of burns include boiling water, oil or flame burns.
- **Abdominal injuries.** Torn liver or spleen or ruptured intestines may be present without any outward signs of bruising on the abdominal wall. The signs are pain, vomiting, restlessness and fever.
- **Head or brain injuries.** There may be no outward signs that these injuries are present. They are usually observed by health professionals and include subdural hematoma and other brain injuries which may lead to permanent brain damage; eye damage caused by shaking; and absence of hair, which may indicate that hair has been pulled out.
- **Lacerations and abrasions** to the head, face and mouth. The shape may indicate the implement used, for example, fingernail scratches leave parallel linear marks.
- **Human bite marks.**
- **Multiple injuries.** These may be both old and new.
- **A history** of repeated injuries.
- **Any injury to a very young baby.**

Important: When a protective worker from Human Services investigates a case of alleged physical abuse and any of the above physical indicators are present, they will arrange a medical examination by a forensic physician or specialist medical practitioner.

Behavioral Indicators

Sometimes a child's behavior can be an indication that something is wrong. Behavioral indicators must be interpreted with regard to the individual child's level of functioning and developmental stage. The following are some of the behavioral indicators which may suggest possible physical abuse:

- The child is unusually wary of physical contact with adults.
- The child seems to be unduly frightened of a parent or another adult.
- The child does not show emotion when hurt.
- The child offers unlikely, implausible explanations of injuries.
- The child is habitually absent from school without an explanation. The parent/ caregiver may be keeping the child at home until physical evidence of abuse has disappeared.
- The child wears inappropriate long sleeved clothing on hot days (to hide bruising or other injuries).
- The child may be overly compliant, shy, withdrawn, passive and uncommunicative.
- The child may be hyperactive, aggressive, disruptive and destructive towards themselves and others.
- The child displays regressed behavior, such as bedwetting or soiling.

Other behavioral indicators, which may be more common to adolescents than younger children, include:

- running away;
- criminal behavior;
- drug abuse; and
- acting out behavior.

The adolescent may appear as if they completely reject or lack trust in the world.

Parents may try to deny or conceal physical abuse. For example, they may:

- accuse the child or adolescent of lying about the abuse;
- provide an explanation for the injury which is unbelievable, inadequate, or illogical. For example, the parent may say 'He bruises easily', 'Her brother hits her all the time and causes bruising', 'He is so clumsy and prone to accidents';
- change their explanation for the injury over time;
- appear unconcerned about the child's condition;
- delay seeking medical assistance;
- attempt to conceal the child's injury;
- take the child to several different doctors and hospitals, or to out of region services for treatment; or
- fail to attend school or health center appointments.

Appropriate Discipline

Children and youth should be made aware that appropriate behavior is expected at all events. Gentle reminders are always necessary when dealing with children and youth. When these reminders don't work, then discipline needs to move to the next step. In cases where behavior has to be addressed, designated event adults should handle it. In no case is physical discipline an appropriate measure to deal with problems except in the rare situation of having to gently restrain a child who is threatening harm to him/herself or to others. A reasonable response might include a period of "time out" for the child or youth. This should be done with necessary supervision keeping safe sanctuary guidelines in mind. Keeping parents involved is important. They need to be kept up to date on their child's behavior. For serious offenses, the appropriate response will be to send the child or youth home immediately. Parents and the Leaders will help make proper arrangements.

Appropriate Physical Boundaries

Physical boundaries are most important in dealing with children and youth. Persons working with children and youth have to understand and respect those boundaries. Obviously these boundaries change as children grow older. A young child sitting in the lap of a caregiver is most appropriate, whereas an older child or youth sitting in a adult's lap would not be acceptable. Hugs and kisses from a toddler to an adult are entirely different than the same from a youth.

Touching to comfort or affirm in an age-appropriate manner is permitted. Side-by-side hugs are suggested (rather than full body contact). Appropriate touching need not be completely avoided, but is acceptable only in public. All persons should be aware of how it looks, how the person being contacted may interpret the contact, and even of how onlookers may interpret it.

Appropriate Emotional Boundaries

Emotional boundaries are also important. As a child grows older it is important for the adult to maintain appropriate boundaries in relationships. It is important for those working with children and youth to not step outside of those lines and allow the younger person to become too attached to them. It is important for the older person to be careful where conversations might lead and to steer clear of inappropriate talk. When an adult recognizes that there might be an issue with these boundaries, great space should be allowed to come between them and the child or youth in question. If that does not solve the problem, then the event leadership should address the issue.

Spiritual Boundaries for Safe Sanctuary

As we seek to lead young people in the development of their faith story, it is essential that we guide them and do not manipulate their emotions. This is especially true at longer youth/children's events. The attendees may be exhausted by longer and more active days than they are accustomed to and thereby more susceptible to emotional manipulation. It is therefore necessary that, as we present the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the opportunity to follow Jesus in a life-long journey, we present the invitation with "no-strings-attached." We must allow each person involved to make their own decisions without stigma, coercion, or pressure in any form. As we do this faithfully, we will see more fruitful commitments in the lives of all our participants.

Prohibited Behaviors

Possession of, or engaging in the use of the following is prohibited on the Gethsemane UMC grounds and at any time or place when persons are gathered representing Gethsemane UMC:

- Tobacco
- Alcohol
- Illegal drugs
- Firearms or other weapons
- Foul or offensive language

All persons on the Gethsemane UMC grounds and at any time or place when persons are gathered representing Gethsemane UMC are prohibited from:

- Threatening or intentionally inflicting emotional or physical injury against another person
- Committing any sexual offense or engaging in any sexual contact
- Making any kind of sexual advance or making a request for sexual favors
- Engaging in verbal, visual or physical conduct of abusive behavior, whether it is physical, emotional, spiritual or sexual
- Physical

Leader Misconduct

It is a privilege to work with children, youth and vulnerable adults. Great responsibility is required. Those who violate this policy shall immediately be removed from these protect groups and appropriate authorities shall be notified immediately.