

Abuse Awareness – Quick Reference Guide

There are four forms of abuse that affect children:

1. **Emotional Abuse** – controlling a child through words, threats, and fear, or destroying a child's self-worth through harassment, threats, and deprivation. Emotional abuse weakens a child's mental and physical ability to resist, cuts off his or her contacts with others, and causes a gradual loss of self esteem - all of which reinforce a sense of helplessness and dependence on the abuser.
2. **Physical Abuse** - Any non-accidental human act that results in physical pain or injury to a child - whether or not it leaves a cut or wound, or a mark or a bruise. Physically abusive behavior ranges from slapping, pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, and biting to more severe forms like choking, severe spanking, beating, hitting with an object, burning, stabbing, and shooting.
3. **Sexual Abuse** - The exploitation of a child or any sexual intimacy forced on a child for the sexual stimulation or gratification of another person. Child sexual abuse includes exploiting a child who is not capable of consent nor resisting coercive threats or bribes. Sexual abuse may or may not involve physical contact. Examples include exposing genitals, displaying pornographic materials, making obscene phone calls, requesting sexual activity, fondling breasts - buttocks - or genitals; sexual intercourse; oral and anal sex.
4. **Physical Neglect** - Not doing what one is supposed to be doing to meet the physical needs of someone in his or her care. Neglect interferes with or prevents a child's normal development.

Neglect is the most frequently reported form of abuse in nearly every province. It's also the form of abuse most often substantiated by civil authorities.

Why?

- Neglect is visible
- Neglect occurs most often in impoverished families who are noticed by government agencies
- Neglect is easier to report because of our concern for hungry and homeless children

- Offenders and victims of neglect are not as stigmatized
- Neglect results in fewer and less harsh consequences
- Programs are available to prevent neglect

Sexual abuse is the form of abuse least likely to be reported.

Why?

- Shameful and humiliating to the victim
- Sexual offender is known to the child and probably to the reporter too
- Fear that the offender will be prosecuted and face severe consequences
- Denial that the offender could commit abuse
- Difficult to prove with witnesses

Which form of abuse most often occurs at church?

- Sexual Abuse

How does a child become a victim at church?

- A predator grooms the child to prepare him or her for abuse.

What does the grooming process look like?

Steps in the Grooming Process:

1. Selects a youth
2. Shows favoritism
3. Gains confidence of the parents
4. Drives a wedge between the youth & parents
5. Becomes an ally of the child/teenager
6. Slowly initiates abuse or inappropriateness
- 7) Confusion, distrust, betrayal solidify the abuse

Generally a relationship between the victim and the perpetrator is established prior to the initiation of sexual advances. The sexual initiation phase is a key turning point in the relationship. Perpetrators typically gamble on the likelihood that the relationship between them and the client immobilizes the client's natural defense system. Grooming is complete when the relationship progresses to a stage of entrapment where the child experiences themselves as having no choice but to participate in the sexual act.

The following may be signs of abuse in a school-age child:

1. Exhibiting adult-pleasing behaviors, striving for perfection, acting miserable if

- he or she fails
2. Hostility and distrust of adults, mood swings and irritability, violent disruptions
 3. Acting out by hoarding food and toys, lying, stealing, assaulting
 4. Hyper-vigilance; excessively and suspiciously watching other people; easily startled

The following may be signs of abuse in a teenager:

1. Sexually provocative or asexual behavior; denial of body changes and sexual development; for females, seeking affection from older adult males
2. Experimentation with drugs and alcohol
3. Cruelty to animals, bullying younger children
1. Disturbed eating and sleeping habits
1. Truancy or declining school performance
2. Depression, self-isolation, withdraw from peers

The following may be signs of child abuse in a person now an adult:

1. Inability to trust other adults
2. Difficulty experiencing intimacy with a spouse
3. Acting out by having affairs
4. Use of drugs or alcohol
5. Flashbacks and nightmares
6. Refusing to have contact with family members or not allowing children contact with family members
7. Depression, suicidal gestures

What role does alcohol play in abuse incidents?

- Alcohol does not cause a person to become abusive
- Alcohol does reduce a person's ability to form good judgment; it reduces a person's ability to delay impulsive behavior
- Alcohol also blocks out internal prohibitions that might prevent abusive behavior
- Alcohol causes black outs during which the abuser does not recall his or her actions

What role does pornography play in abuse incidents?

- Pornography encourages the offender to view the victim as an object and thereby de-personalizes the experience so it seems less harmful

- Pornography conditions the victim to view sexual activity as normal and pleasant – leading the victim to believe sexual activity should not be feared

How can we protect children at church?

- Maintain a child safety policy
- Train volunteers and staff who work with youth to become aware of abuse
- Teach children to discern harmful behavior and to encourage reporting of abuse

We protect youth by screening workers. The recommended steps of screening are:

- Application
- References
- Possible Interview
- Criminal background check (can require fingerprinting)

Abuse reporting law in Nova Scotia:

"Everyone has the duty to immediately report to a child welfare agency even a suspicion that a child under 16 may be in need of protective services. Reports may be made anonymously."

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/coms/families/abuse/>

Included in our Guidelines for Creating a Safe Church:

- Philosophy of preventing abuse
- Definitions of abuse
- Education policies
- General policies
- Discipline policies
- Supervision policies
- Screening policies
- Reporting policies

If a child reports to a reasonable suspicion of abuse, what should I do first?

- Refer to Guidelines for Creating a Safe Church and report what you have learned to the experts at the Child Welfare Division of the Department of Community Services, or RCMP (16 and older).
Your Safe Church Team is here to support you through this process.

Department of Community Services

Child Welfare

Colchester East Hants

Phone: Nova Scotia Community Services – regular hours:
1-888-919-4236. Holidays and weekends: 1-866-922-2434 or
the RCMP as required.

What do I do if a child or youth tells me they have been sexually abused?

- Listen and believe!
- Pray
- Acknowledge how brave the child/youth is for telling you
- Document
- Report

What tools do you still need to move forward and feel confident?

- Talk with any member of your Safe Church Team for support, or if you feel more attention is needed in any area to maintain a Safe Church.

Safe Church Committee of Faith Community Church:

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