

Steps from A Plan To Protect God's Children™



1

KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS OF ADULTS


Knowing the behavioral warning signs of adults means we can recognize inappropriate and concerning actions adults exhibit—which may also be part of the grooming process.

Step 1—Warning signs of adults:

- Discourages other adults from participating or monitoring
- Always attempts to be alone with, or isolates, children
- Seems more excited to be with children than adults
- Gives gifts, without permission
- Goes overboard touching, wrestling, tickling, etc.
- Uses bad language or inappropriate jokes to children
- Behaves or speaks as if the rules do not apply to them (ignores policy, bends rules)
- Allows young people to engage in activities parents would not allow
- Tells children to keep secrets from others
- Takes, posts or shares photos without the parent's or the organization's approval
- Shows young people sexual content or pornography (*which is also sexual abuse*)

Step 2—Screening measures:

- Create procedures to determine who has access to children
- Regularly review and distribute guidelines and policies for adults working with minors
- Use standard employment/volunteer applications




2

SCREEN AND SELECT EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

Adopting proactive screening procedures makes it more difficult for people with bad intentions—or problematic behavior—to have access to youth.

- Identify any history or known conduct that could create future harm
- Obtain previous experience with youth-serving organizations
- Complete face-to-face interviews
- Require criminal background checks (initial and refresher)
- Check personal employment references
- Attend safe environment training
- Ensure compliance with the rules and policies
- Communicate the organization's commitment to keeping children safe
- Apply all of these measures consistently



3

MONITOR ALL ENVIRONMENTS, INCLUDING ACTIVITIES INVOLVING TECHNOLOGY

We closely supervise the entire environment with careful oversight, whether it is on-site or online.

Step 3—Monitoring all environments:

- Maintain a healthy caution about any environment in which children are entrusted
- Identify secluded areas; lock empty rooms
- Develop and follow policies regarding the use of any area (open, secluded, off-site, etc.)
- Don't permit children to enter staff-only areas
- Only meet with children where other adults have open access

- Perform consistent and random status checks
- Make sure enough adults are involved in programs
- Don't start new programs without the appropriate approval
- Encourage parental involvement, allowing parents to have proper access to all programs to evaluate safety



4

BE ATTENTIVE TO CHILDREN AND YOUTH

We need to be attentive to concerning behavioral cues that children might exhibit when experiencing abuse.

And, as protectors, we need to teach them how to partner with us for their safety.

Step 4—Being attentive to youth includes:

Recognizing the concerning behavioral cues children and youth may exhibit when experiencing abuse, such as:

- Sudden change in behavior relating to likes/dislikes, health, eating habits
- Appear increasingly moody or aggressive, withdrawn or depressed
- Lose interest in school, or have sudden shift in grades/school activities
- Become secretive or defensive (including with technology or online activities)
- Become fearful, anxious, or uncomfortable around certain people
- Bathe excessively or stop taking care of personal hygiene
- Show regressive behavior, such as bed-wetting, thumb-sucking, etc.

And, we can teach children and youth the following when advocating for their safety and boundaries:

- The Personal Boundary Safety Rules: Say “no,” try to get away, and tell a safe adult right away
- What to do when they feel uncomfortable, violated, unsafe, or if someone tries to force

them, or their friends, to see, touch, or show their private parts

- That youth have a right to be safe, and that it's OK to speak up
- That being abused or victimized is never the youth's fault
- That youth always have safe adults who will advocate for their safety and protection
- That when it comes to their safety, we will believe them and work to protect them



Step 5—Ways to communicate concerns:

- If you see or of a potential warning sign of inappropriate behavior, do not hesitate—speak to a supervisor right away
- If you continue to see inappropriate behavior after communicating a concern, take the concern to the supervisor again, or to another supervisor
- If a child discloses abuse to you, a thoughtful, calm response is essential
- If abuse has been disclosed to you, or you suspect that a child is being, or has been, abused, contact the child protection agency in your state
- If the suspected abuse involves a church volunteer, employee or member of the clergy, first contact civil authorities, and then also notify a church official
- If you are aware a child is in danger of imminent abuse, call emergency services right away (dial 911 immediately)
- When youth are being sexually exploited online, make a report to www.CyberTipline.org, or you can also contact law enforcement

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To report abuse in Indiana

If you suspect a child is in imminent danger from abuse, please call **911** immediately.

To report *known* or *suspected* child abuse, contact:

Indiana Child Protective Services

1-800-800-5556

For more information:

Kelly Venegas – Bishop's Delegate for Sexual Misconduct Cases

219.769.9292 x224

Cheryl Sopo- Victim Assistance Coordinator

219.588.9089



Protecting God's Children®

4.0 Program for Adults



Quick Reference Guide

VIRTUS Online™
www.virtus.org