



A ministry dedicated to  
sexual abuse recovery.

Apostolic Lutheran Church of America  
**Balm of Gilead**

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## General Information Packet

5 Steps to Protecting Our Children  
Common Myths About Child Sexual Abuse  
The Grooming Process  
The Process of Abuse  
Dysfunctional vs. Nurturing Families  
Abuse Disclosure-Finding A Safe Person

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*“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”*

*2 Corinthians 1:3-4*

# 5 Steps to Protecting Our Children

## What is child sexual abuse?

- A betrayal of innocence.
- Any sexual act between an adult and a minor, or between two minors, when one exerts power over the other.
- Forcing, coercing or persuading a child to engage in any type of sexual act. This includes non-contact acts such as exhibitionism, exposure to pornography, voyeurism and communicating in a sexual manner by phone or Internet.
- A traumatic experience for children and teens.
- A crime punishable by law.

## Step 1 – Learn the Facts

It is likely that you know a child who has been or is being abused.

- Experts estimate that 1 in 10 children are sexually abused before their 18th birthday.
- 9% of 10-17 year olds receive a sexual request while on the Internet.
- Sexually abused children are at greater risk for psychological, emotional, social and physical problems often lasting into adulthood.

## Most child victims never report sexual abuse.

It is also likely that you know an abuser. The greatest risk to children doesn't come from strangers, but from people we know and trust.

- 90% of children who are sexually abused know their abuser.
- 30% are abused by family members.
- 60% are abused by people the family trusts. Those who abuse gain access to the child in a school, church, sports club, etc. and often move into a position of trust within the family.

*People who sexually abuse children often go out of their way to appear trustworthy.*

## Step 2 – Minimize Opportunity

Eliminate or reduce isolated, one-on-one situations to decrease risk for abuse.

More than 80% of sexual abuse incidents happen in isolated, one-on-one situations with a child.

- Choose group situations and have multiple adults supervise children.
- Scan the physical environment for hidden areas and correct dangers.
- Check to see that your church, school has a sexual abuse policy and that background checks are completed on all employees and volunteers.

## Step 3 – Talk About It

Have open conversations with children about our bodies, sex and boundaries.

Understand why children are afraid to tell.

- The abuser sometimes threatens the child or a family member.
- The abuser may try to confuse the child about right or wrong.
- Many abusers tell children the abuse is “okay” or “a game.”
- The abuser may shame the child, blame the child, or tell the child that his/her parents will be angry.
- Children are afraid of disrupting or hurting the family.
- Some children who did not initially disclose are afraid to tell when it happens again.
- Some children are too young to understand.

Know how children communicate.

- Children may ask questions about bodies, interactions,

- or sex, rather than talk directly about something they've experienced.
- Children may tell parts of what happened, or pretend it happened to someone else, to check your reaction.
- Children who disclose sexual abuse often tell a trusted adult other than a parent.
- Children will often shut down and refuse to tell more if you respond emotionally or negatively.

*One of the BEST protections is our relationship with children.*

Talk openly with children.

Talking about boundaries and sex forges a protective bond between parent and child, and instills knowledge that makes children and teens less vulnerable.

- Talk with children when they are young and use proper names for body parts.
- Tell children what sexual abuse is, and when age appropriate, about sex. (Good resources are: "Passport 2 Purity" by Family Life Today and "Love Lessons: Purity is Possible" by Pam Stenzel.)
- Tell children what parts of the body others should not touch. Use examples with situations and people in their lives.
- Teach children that they have the right to tell any person "NO" to unwanted or uncomfortable touch.
- Tell children it is NOT okay for adults or older youth to use sexual words with them, or to act in sexual way.
- Explain that secrets may be harmful, and if someone asks you to keep a secret, they should tell you about it.
- Teach children not to give out email or home addresses, phone numbers or other personal information while using the Internet or handheld devices.
- Ask children about their online experiences and learn about the sites and services they use. (Keep computers in public place in your home— where you can monitor the

monitor. Consider installing "Covenant Eyes" or other accountability and filtering software on your computer.)

- Explore with children who their trusted adults are in various settings they frequent. (i.e. – teacher, Sunday School teacher, police officer, etc.)
- Speak and listen quietly and calmly. It's important that children feel safe and loved in these discussions.
- Speak in straightforward manner. If you are embarrassed, they will be too.

*"No one should touch you where a bathing suit covers."*

*Note: The exception may be a doctor or nurse, only if they have Mom or Dad's approval.*

#### **Step 4 – Recognize the Signs**

Know the signs of abuse to protect children from further harm

Learn the signs in children and teens.

Physical signs are not common, but a professional should examine the following:

- Bruising, bleeding, redness, rashes, bumps or scabs especially around the genitals
- Urinary tract infections
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Abnormal discharge
- Chronic stomach pain, headaches or other ailments that can't be explained medically

Emotional and behavioral signs are more common:

- Withdrawal
- Depression
- Anger, rebellion, defiance
- Agitation or inability to concentrate
- Fear of situations or people

- Sexual behavior & language that is not age-appropriate
- Falling grades
- Use of alcohol or drugs, especially at a young age
- A change in behavior

Call Child Protective Services or the Police in your area.

*Signs don't always mean sexual abuse, but signs can be a reason to take more interest in the child.*

### **Step 5 – React Responsibly**

Understand how to respond to risky behavior and suspicions or reports of abuse.

There are three reasons why we need to react to sexual abuse.

1. A child discloses it to us.
2. We discover it ourselves.
3. We have reason to suspect it.

### **Disclosure**

A child has broken through secrecy, fear and shame and has chosen you as the person he or she trusts to tell. Honor that with attention, compassion and belief.

- Listen calmly and openly.
- Don't fill in the gaps, or rush "to get to the bottom of it."
- Don't ask leading questions about details.
- Ask only open-ended questions like, "What happened next?" Or say, "It's okay to tell me more."
- Believe the child.
- Tell the child he/she has done nothing wrong.
- Affirm the child's courage.
- Seek the help of a professional who is trained to talk with the child about sexual abuse.

*Few reported incidents are false.*

*Adapted from "Darkness to Light's- 5 Steps to Protecting Our Children: A Guide for Responsible Adults" ([www.D2L.org](http://www.D2L.org))*

## **Common Myths About Child Sexual Abuse**

**Myth: Child sexual abuse is rare.**

**Fact:** Recent research indicates that 1 in 3-4 girls and 1 in 6-10 boys will be sexually abused by age 18.

**Myth: Children under the age of 10 are safe.**

**Fact:** More than 1/3 of reports are children five years or younger. Age six is the average age of onset, with an average duration of 1-4 years for the abuse to continue.

**Myth: If children are taught to avoid "dangerous strangers" they will not be sexually abused.**

**Fact:** 85-90 percent of offenders are known to the child. Children have been molested by mothers, fathers, siblings, grandparents, adoptive and step-relatives, babysitters, neighbors, aunts, uncles, teachers, clergy, and coaches. Any adult or older child may molest a child.

**Myth: Sex offenders are weird, pathetic, violent older men who are alcoholic and can't keep a job.**

**Molesters are sexually depraved or homosexual and retarded or crazy.**

**Fact:** Molesters usually appear normal in most ways. Sex crimes have been committed in all racial, religious, and ethnic groups and at all socioeconomic levels. Children are abused in rural, urban, and suburban settings. The majority of sex offenders are heterosexual males and have access to sexual relationships with adults.

**Myth: If a child "consents" they must have liked it; if they don't say "no" it is not abuse.**

**Fact:** Sexual abuse is never the fault or responsibility of the child. The offender bears the entire responsibility for the crime, whatever form it takes. Most sexual abuse

occurs not by force but by trickery, bribery, manipulation, and misuse of authority.

**Myth: Child sexual abuse is usually a one-time violent act that involves intercourse.**

**Fact:** Child sexual abuse is the exploitation of a child for the sexual stimulation of an adult or any significantly older person. It may include obscene phone calls, exposure of genitals or breasts, showing child pornographic materials, fondling, masturbation, oral/anal/vaginal intercourse or attempts, and the exploitation of children through prostitution and/or production of pornography.

**Myth: If a molester is caught and he/she promises to stop, he/she generally will.**

**Fact:** Offenders almost never seek treatment to stop the abuse voluntarily. They may stop abusing the child with whom they were caught, but often another child is sought out. Abuse almost always continues in some form unless a report is made and the offender is in treatment with an agency or therapist who have expertise in working with molesters and issues of victimization.

**Myth: Most children will forget the abuse if adults don't remind them.**

**Fact:** Children usually do not forget. They may try to hide their hurt, confusion, and anger because they believe the adults in their lives don't want to hear about it or it will hurt their feelings. They may interpret adult silence as blame and anger. Often very young children feel responsible and guilty about the abuse. It is very important that the victims, offender and non-abusive parent or parents be given the opportunity for therapy and support from a qualified agency or therapist.

**Myth: Children keep the "secret" only if they have been threatened with violence.**

**Fact:** Children may not tell because of fear or violence to themselves or someone they love. They also don't tell because they fear blame and the possible breakup of a family. Children may feel embarrassed, guilty and responsible because they were unable to say "no" or tell earlier. They feel that this

tremendous hurt and betrayal is "something they just have to live with". A sexually abused child may have a difficult time trusting any of the adults in their lives. Telling is a very major and scary step for a child and they should be given support and consideration if they choose to do so.

**Myth: Talking about "touching" and sexual abuse will make parents and children uncomfortable with normal affection.**

**Fact:** All people need physical contact. Child sexual abuse should not be confused with contacts between an adult and child that are fond, nurturing or playful expressions of love. Sexually abusive contacts are for the benefit of the molester, not the child. Healthy, warm and nurturing touching respects and recognizes the needs and feelings of the child.

**Myth: Children make up stories about sexual abuse.**

**Fact:** Children very rarely make up stories of exploitation. Children speak from their own experience and cannot make up information unless they are exposed to it. If the child indicates either through direct disclosure or you have "reasonable cause" to believe that abuse has occurred, it is always best to resolve doubt in favor of the child. Seek professional help and discuss your suspicion. Seek out agencies in the community with expertise in working with abused children and their families.

# The Grooming Process

Sexually assaultive adults manipulate potential child victims and their parents by a variety of means:

## Victims

- Asks child questions about his or her parents
- Spends time alone with children
- Shows child extra affection, touching or comments on “special relationship”
- Takes pictures of or shows pictures to children
- Asks child to keep secrets
- Asks child to model clothes
- Talks to child about sex education
- Makes comments about child's physical development
- Does special favors or gives gifts
- Changes work or recreation schedule to be with children
- Tells children about his own problems
- Lets child break rules
- Talks to child about love or other adult emotions
- Asks child about friends
- Plays the authority figure in games (like policeman)
- Shows interest in child's hygiene, personal care or bathroom habits
- Tucks child into bed alone
- Plays games which involve physical touch
- Has keen interest in watching children play
- Has conversations with the child while in the bathroom
- Shows pornography
- Offers alcohol, drugs, cigarettes
- Shares his own secrets with the child
- Gets child to feel sorry for him
- Acts the same age as the child when with the child
- Moody or overly emotional with the child
- Shames the child
- Helps child do things the child knows how to do

## Parents

- Offers to help parents with babysitting/housework
- Gives parents advice on child rearing
- Encourages parents to go out more
- Spends lots of time with family
- Talks about “open-mindedness” in relation to sexuality
- Presents self as extra sensitive to parent/child problems
- Does not account for how he spends his time
- Tells parents how special the child is
- Offers to help single mom with bills
- Discourages parent(s) from getting counseling or outside advice
- Asks parent(s) for special outing with children
- More interested in children than parents
- Convinces parents how good he is with children
- Offers to talk alone with upset child
- Goes out of his way to be with child
- Parents begin to feel they need his child care assistance and advice
- Parent(s) has uncomfortable feelings about the individual

## The Process of Abuse

Abuse is rarely an impulsive, one-time act. Rather, it is a PROCESS that begins some time before the actual abusive event. The following timeline illustrates this process which may take from hours to months.

### The Process of Sexual Abuse

Environmental Stress > Fantasy > Self-Grooming  
> Victim Grooming > Event

## Phase One: Environmental Stress

This stressor causes the perpetrator to feel inadequate or powerless in some way and moves him toward fantasy and/or victimization to give himself feelings of power and control.

## Phase Two: Fantasy

Power and control fantasies give the perpetrator a means of feeling good about himself without any risk. Reality doesn't usually give us much control. Fantasy gives us total control.

## Phase Three: Self-Grooming

The perpetrator begins to distort his thinking to justify his actions and to minimize his feelings of potential guilt. This includes seeing the victim as a sexual object, believing the victim will enjoy the event, and believing that he can get away with the abuse.

## Phase Four: Victim Grooming

Slowly the perpetrator sets the victim up for the abuse. He will begin to develop a close relationship with the victim and then, little by little, will introduce increasingly sexual content into the relationship. This content will typically include non-sexual touching, sexual talk and pictures. The perpetrator frequently will also insist on an open attitude toward sexuality at home such as leaving bedroom and bathroom doors open, dressing in the presence of others, and talking of sex.

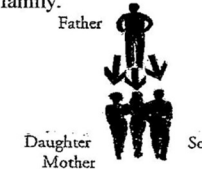
## Phase Five: Abuse Event

The perpetrator now moves into the actively sexual contact that often will continue to become even more sexual. The line between phase four and phase five is vague and hard to define. Hence, phase four is often as damaging as phase five.

## Dysfunctional vs Functional Families

### Dysfunctional Family

1. Use of authoritarian control that violates personal space of a family.



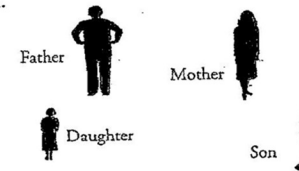
2. Triangulated relationships where one child is included in an exclusive two party relationship.



3. Isolation that inhibits any communication with outside world.

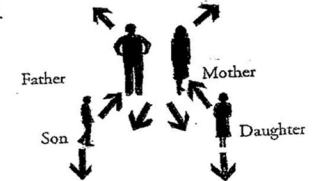


4. Family members do not honestly communicate their feelings about what's going on.

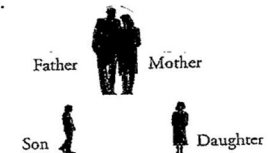


### Functional Family

1. Freedom and autonomy that fosters personal control and does not violate family rules.



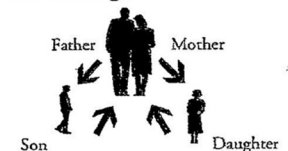
2. Strong parental unit that does not inappropriately include children in the middle.



3. An atmosphere that welcomes and encourages interrelationship and stimulation from outside world.



4. Expression of feelings between family members is encouraged and supported. It often leads to change.



## Abuse Disclosure - Finding A Safe Person

### Families

Nurturing	Dysfunctional
People feel free to talk about inside feelings	People compulsively protect inside feelings
All feelings are okay	Only “certain” feelings are okay
Person is more important than the performance	Performance is more important than the person
All subjects are open to discussion	Many taboo subjects, lots of secrets
Individual differences are accepted	Everyone must conform to the strongest person's ideas, values
Each person is responsible for their own actions	Lots of control, criticism
Respectful criticisms and appropriate consequences for actions	Punishment and shaming
Few shoulds/should nots	Lots of shoulds/should nots
Clear, flexible rules	Unclear, inconsistent and rigid rules
Atmosphere is relaxed	Atmosphere is tense
Joyous	Lots of anger and fear
Faces and works through stress	Avoids stress
People have energy	People feel tired
People feel loving	People feel hurt, disappointed
Growth is celebrated	Growth is discouraged
People have high self-worth	People have low self-worth
Strong parental coalition	Coalitions across generations
Parents serve children	Children serve parents' needs

### Unsafe People – Personal Traits & Interpersonal or Relationship Traits

#### Personal Traits

- Unsafe people think they “have it all together” instead of admitting their weaknesses
- Are religious instead of spiritual and faithful
- Are defensive instead of open to feedback
- Are self-righteous instead of humble
- Only apologize instead of changing their behavior
- Avoid working on their problems instead of dealing with them
- Demand trust, instead of earning it
- Believe they are perfect instead of admitting their faults
- Blame others instead of taking responsibility
- Lie instead of telling the truth
- Are stagnant instead of growing

#### Interpersonal or Relationship Traits

- Unsafe people avoid closeness instead of connecting
- Are only concerned with “I” instead of “we”
- Resist freedom instead of encouraging it
- Flatter us instead of confronting us
- Condemn us instead of forgiving us
- Stay in parent/child roles instead of relating as equals
- Are unstable over time instead of being consistent
- Are a negative influence, rather than a positive one
- Gossip instead of keeping confidences



In a general sense, these are immature traits and are the mark of someone that needs more time to grow and be mentored personally and relationally.

## **Safe Relationships & Safe People**

### Safe Relationships

- Safe relationships draw us closer to God
- Draw us closer to others
- Help us become the person God intended us to be
- Do not demand trust, they earn it
- Are empathetic and act with compassion
- Internalize grace and therefore receive love and can give love

### Safe People

- Safe people admit their weaknesses
- Own where they are wrong
- Are open to confrontation
- Are trustworthy
- Are humble
- Know they don't have it "all together"
- Recognize they are not perfect
- Recognize that perfectionism is not nourishing
- Are not dangerous to others
- Are not self-righteous
- Are spiritual and not religious
- Do not demand trust, they earn it
- Are open to feedback
- Are more interested in doing what is right than doing what is right in their own eyes
- Identify with others as fellow sinners and the struggles and are not "above" all that
- Change behavior not just apologize

- Do not avoid working on their problems, but deal with them
- Confess
- Are forgiving
- Face relationship problems
- Are empathetic and act on empathy
- Are in the process of learning and growing
- Take responsibility for their lives
- Don't blame others for their problems
- Share their problems with others to help others grow
- Knows acting without conscious hurts and seeks to avoid hurting others
- Are open to an "audit" personally from those they care about
- Are more concerned about their relationship(s) than their image
- Internalize grace and therefore feels love and can give love
- Are accountable to God
- Don't externalize their problems
- Do not withdraw
- Seek growth and maturity
- Tell the truth
- Connect with others instead of avoiding closeness, are not isolated
- Encourage freedom, do not dominate
- Respect boundaries
- Seek the approval of God not men
- Are not enmeshed
- Are not manipulative
- Value and nurture separateness
- Confront instead of flatter