

## **A Statement on the Protection of Children from Sexual Abuse**

*This statement is a result of a discussion paper by the National Executive Presbytery and is circularised for your interest.*

The Scripture gives us the responsibility to minister to children and ensure their safety and care at all times. It is vital that we adopt a policy that will help us protect our children against abuse. We recommend that the following matters be adhered to at all times:

1. In response to our biblical responsibility we will endeavour to provide a quality ministry to all our children.
2. Workers are responsible for the health and safety of the children while under their care. We will do all in our power to protect the children in our care from abuse or molestation.
3. All children's workers must have references from people within the assembly testifying to their trustworthiness to work with children.
4. Children's workers must complete an application form that identifies prior experience with children's work and why they want to work with children. These forms and references must be submitted to the senior minister for his approval and he will then take them to the church board for ratification.
5. All workers must have the endorsement of the senior minister and the eldership before being appointed or used in children's ministry.
6. Any problems, difficulties or suspicions concerning a worker's relationship and behaviour with any child must be brought to the attention of the senior minister immediately.
7. There will be no unauthorised activities with the children. Children's workers should not arrange activities with the children or any child off the church property except when there are two workers present. These two workers should not be related to each other and not of the same household. The departmental leader must be notified and his or her agreement obtained before any activity is arranged. Parents should be notified of the arrangements and the names of the workers who will care for their children.
8. Children's workers should not visit children alone at home or any other place. The workers should ensure that their time with children is in public view. There will be no secretive or unauthorised clubs.
9. Workers must not give children gifts without the departmental leader's knowledge.
10. Workers should be careful of their conduct with children at all times. Behaviour that may be wrongly perceived should be eliminated. Workers should not show

excessive affection for children, they should not touch them frequently nor should they ever express inappropriate feelings towards the children.

11. Parents are always permitted to visit any activity and should be encouraged to participate in activities with children. Elders, leaders and pastors are also encouraged to attend activities.
12. Leaders should ensure that children who wish to use toilets at the church or during any activity away from the church are adequately supervised by adult leaders or parents.
13. Staff should wear name tags and persons without official name tags should not be permitted to minister to children.
14. The senior minister should be contacted immediately in the event where sexual abuse by a leader or children's worker is suspected. The matter must be kept confidential to protect the child and his or her family. The senior minister will advise the victim's parents of any suspected abuse as soon as reasonably practicable. The senior minister and the elders will handle the reporting of any alleged act to the appropriate authorities; however this decision does not override any right or responsibility a parent feels he or she may have in reporting such matters.
15. Any leader or children's worker who is suspected of child abuse shall be relieved of his or her position in children's ministry until any investigation by the senior minister and the elders has been completed, or, in the event where an appropriate authority has been notified, the completion of its investigation.