

The Unitarian Church in Westport, Sexual Abuse Prevention Handout

Definition of child abuse

Child sexual abuse is any "sexual act imposed upon a child who lacks emotional, maturational, and cognitive development. Authority and power enable the perpetrator, implicitly or directly, to coerce the child into sexual compliance. The ability to lure a child into a sexual relationship is based upon the all-powerful and dominant position of the adult or older adolescent perpetrator, which is in sharp contrast to the child's age, dependency, and subordinate position."ⁱ The abuse can be intrafamilial - between a child and a family member or person in the role of a family member - or extrafamilial - between a child and someone outside the family. Incest is a specific term for sexual contacts between persons who are prohibited to marry by virtue of their familial relationship.

Sexual abusive behaviors range from nudity, disrobing, exhibitionism, to oral, anal, or vaginal sex. Child sexual abuse can include:

- Touching a child's breasts, genitals, and anus.
- Having any type of intercourse with a child.
- Encouraging a child to watch or hear adult sexual acts.
- Using an object, instrument, or body part to penetrate a child's genitals or anus
- Having a child touch another's genitals.
- Using a child in erotica.
- Showing erotic or pornographic materials to a child.
- Photographing a child in sexual poses.

Sexual and physical abuse symptoms

- A child with an unusual discharge from the penis or vagina
- A child who compulsively masturbates in public, after being told repeatedly that this is private behavior
- A child who tries to get other children or adults to touch his or her genitals
- A child who is more interested in sex play than playing with friends, going to school or other activities
- A child who manually stimulates or has oral or genital contact with pets
- A child who repeatedly draws pictures with the genitals as a primary focus
- A child who engages in sex play with a child more than 3 years apart in age
- A child who engages in penetrative behaviors during sex play

Possible Signs of an Adult Being an Abuser

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Do you know an adult or older child who:

- Refuses to let a child set any of his or her own limits?
- Insists on hugging, touching, kissing, tickling, wrestling with or holding a child even when the child does not want this affection?
- Is overly interested in the sexuality of a particular child or teen (e.g., talks repeatedly about the child's developing body or interferes with normal teen dating)?
- Manages to get time alone or insists on time alone with a child with no interruptions?
- Spends most of his/her spare time with children and has little interest in spending time with someone their own age?
- Regularly offers to baby-sit many different children for free or takes children on overnight outings alone?
- Buys children expensive gifts or gives them money for no apparent reason?
- Frequently walks in on children/teens in the bathroom?
- Allows children or teens to consistently get away with inappropriate behaviors?

TUCW Policies:

- 2 adults in each Lifespan Faith Development room, within visual range of each other – may be parent in addition to teacher
- Lifespan Faith Development Volunteers sign ethics policy annually and submit screening form (see our Safer Congregation Policy for more details)
- **Notify Director of Lifespan Faith Development immediately in case of accusation of abuse.**
- **Notify Director of Lifespan Faith Development or one of the ministers immediately if abuse of child in congregation is suspected.**

FOR SUSPECTED CASES OF ABUSE OUTSIDE OF CONGREGATION LIFE

- The Department of Children and Families (DCF) Children aged 17 or under
800-842-2288
- STOP IT NOW! has a confidential toll free hotline, online chat, or email for assistance on what to do if you are concerned about potential abuse but are unsure how to proceed: **1-888-PREVENT**. Stop It Now!' hotline staff will walk you through the options that are available and what might be done to get help for everyone involved.

Written by Reverend Debra W. Haffner,
updated by Mary Collins, Dir. of Lifespan Faith Development , April 2017