

SUPPLEMENT 08

Helpful Definitions

HELPFUL DEFINITIONS:

"Church Leadership" is the term used in this document to refer to the intended audience for these materials and instructions. "Church Leadership," depending on your church's structure, could apply to the following: pastors, directors of various ministries (children's ministry, youth ministry, women's ministry, discipleship ministry, etc.), elders, deacons, or other governing bodies. **THE RECOMMENDATION IS TO SHARE THIS MATERIAL WITH ANYONE WITHIN YOUR CONGREGATION THAT MAY RECEIVE A DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE FROM A VICTIM.**

"Disclosure" is a term used to describe the action of making a fact known, especially a secret. When an adult or child reports his or her abuse, it is called a disclosure. A disclosure may be intentional, when the victim makes the decision to tell someone about their abuse, or, in the case of children, the disclosure may be accidental. Accidental or unintentional disclosures can manifest through role play, drawings, or a display of sexual behaviors that is inappropriate for the child's developmental age or stage.

"Minor" is the term used to refer to any child, age birth to 18-years old.

"Vulnerable adult" is the term used to refer to any disabled adult, elderly person with limited or impaired decision-making abilities, or adult under the custodial responsibility of another adult.

"Sexual abuse" is an umbrella term that is used to cover the following:

- **Sexual assault:** illegal sexual contact that usually involves force upon a person without consent or is inflicted upon a person who is incapable of giving consent (Merriam-Webster).
 - Sexual assault involving a minor or vulnerable adult includes any sexual activity between an adult and a child/vulnerable adult for the purpose of sexually stimulating the adult, the child or others.
 - Sexual assault may also be committed by/to a person under the age of 18 when that person is either significantly older than the victim or is in a position of power or control over the child.
- **Sexual harassment:** uninvited and unwelcome verbal or physical behavior of a sexual nature especially by a person in authority toward a subordinate.

- **Sexual abuse of power:** when a church leader is abusive *in their role as a pastor or ministry leader*, the power differential between that church member and the church leader makes the consent language of “having an affair” inaccurate in most cases. The more accurate language is “sexualized abuse of power” (Hambrick, 153).

“Domestic abuse” is a term used to describe abuse that occurs in a marriage or intimate relationship when one spouse or partner pursues their own self-interests by seeking to control and dominate the other through a pattern of coercive, controlling, and punishing behaviors.

“Child abuse” is a term defined by Oklahoma statutes as harm or threatened harm to a child’s health or welfare by a person responsible for the child, which includes non-accidental physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or neglect.

PHYSICAL ABUSE is non-accidental physical injury to a child.

MENTAL INJURY is an injury to a child’s psychological growth and development. It is caused by a chronic pattern of behaviors, such as belittling, humiliating and ridiculing a child.

SEXUAL ABUSE, in general terms, includes any sexual activity between an adult and a child for the purpose of sexually stimulating the adult, the child or others. Sexual abuse may also be committed by/ to a person under the age of 18 when that person is either significantly older than the victim or is in a position of power or control over the child.

NEGLECT is the failure of the parent or caretaker to provide a child with the basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care, protection and supervision.

THREATENED HARM means a substantial risk of harm to the child. It may include acts that express the intention to inflict actual harm presently or in the future.

“Forensic Interviewing” is a term used to describe the means of gathering information from a victim or witness for use in a legal setting, such as a court hearing. It is a key component of many child protective services investigations. The purpose of these interviews is to gather factual information in a legally defensible and developmentally appropriate manner about whether a child (or other person) has been abused. Forensic interviews are conducted by trained professionals, including child welfare caseworkers, law enforcement, and specialized forensic interviewers at children’s advocacy centers (CACs).

If you suspect abuse or neglect, take the following action:

Contact the Oklahoma
Child Abuse Hotline.
1-800-522-3511

If the child is in imminent
danger, contact **911** or local
law enforcement.

If reporting in good faith, the
reporter will not be held liable.

"Stalking" is the term that refers to the action of willfully, maliciously, and repeatedly following the victim, which causes her to feel frightened, intimidated, threatened, harassed, or molested.

"Harassment" is an action that causes another person distress. This can include following a victim, sending or leaving things at her home or workplace, or calling her in order to cause distress.

"Oklahoma Baptists Abuse Response Team" is a team of professional counselors, social workers, legal advisors, and child-development experts selected from members of the Oklahoma Baptists affiliated churches throughout the state. These professionals are appointed and have volunteered to serve on this team for a period of two years. The response team will assist church leadership in caring for the victim(s), providing advice and resources as necessary.