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Safer Sanctuaries Training Handout

This handout equips staff and volunteers to:

* Understand child protection principles
* Recognize signs of abuse, neglect, and grooming
* Respond appropriately to concerns
* Follow clear reporting procedures
* Promote a safe and respectful culture

🧠 **Why Child Protection Matters**

* Children deserve safety, dignity, and care
* Staff and Volunteers are often the first to notice concerns
* Legal and ethical responsibilities apply to everyone
* A safe environment builds trust with families and the community

🚦 **Types of Abuse & Warning Signs**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Type** | **Possible Indicators** |
| Physical | Bruises, burns, fearfulness, flinching |
| Emotional | Withdrawal, low self-esteem, excessive crying |
| Sexual | Inappropriate knowledge, secrecy, physical signs |
| Neglect | Poor hygiene, malnutrition, unattended medical needs |
| Grooming | Excessive attention, gift-giving, secret communication |

🧠 **Understanding Grooming**

**Grooming** is a manipulative process used by abusers to gain a child’s trust and gradually violate boundaries. It often includes:

* Giving gifts or special privileges
* Isolating the child from others
* Creating secrets (“Don’t tell anyone”)
* Flattering or making the child feel “chosen”
* Testing boundaries with touch or personal questions

**Red Flags for Grooming Behavior**:

* An adult consistently seeks one-on-one time with a child
* Excessive texting, messaging, or social media contact
* Attempts to bypass rules or supervision
* Child becomes unusually attached or secretive

📋 **Volunteer Code of Conduct**

**Always:**  
✔ Maintain appropriate boundaries  
✔ Interact in open, observable spaces

✔ Remember the rule of 3

✔ Report concerns immediately

**Never:**  
✘ Be alone with a child behind closed doors   
✘ Use physical discipline  
✘ Share personal contact info or social media  
✘ Give gifts or favors without guardian approval

📝 Reporting Procedures

* **Who to report to**: Beth Posey, Family Ministries Director; Pastor Amy Beth Coleman, Lead Pastor, Pastor Jan Phillips, Associate Pastor
* **How to report**: Verbally and in writing; include date, time, and details
* **When to report**: Immediately upon suspicion or disclosure
* **Legal obligations**: Volunteers and staff are mandated reporters under state law

🧩 **Responding to a Disclosure**

**Do:**  
✔ Stay calm and listen  
✔ Reassure the child they did the right thing  
✔ Record exact words used

**Don’t:**  
✘ Promise confidentiality  
✘ Ask leading questions  
✘ Confront the alleged abuser

✅ **Commitment & Accountability**

* Sign the **Safer Sanctuaries Policy Agreement** to confirm understanding of these policies
* Participating in **refresher training**
* Help foster a **culture of safety and openness**

For questions or to report a concern, contact:  
**Name**: Beth Posey, Director, Family Ministries  
**Phone**: 703-892-4112  
**Email**: family@calmeth.org

*Thank you for your vigilance and care. Protecting children is a shared responsibility—and your role matters.*