

No. 7 Needs in the Field

Source material: October 1, 2012, letter to all bodies of elders

Overview: Question-and-answer discussion

Objective: To better equip elders to protect children and help victims of child abuse

Special instructions: Please adhere closely to the outlined material. The numbers in parentheses correspond with the numbered paragraphs in the letter. These paragraph numbers are interspersed throughout the outline so that you can help the elders follow along. When presenting the questions, allow the brothers to comment. Then read the printed answer in the outline only if you feel the answer(s) given was not clear to the audience. If questions arise regarding the material in this letter, please direct the brothers to contact the branch office

GIVING ATTENTION TO THE NEEDS IN THE FIELD (2 min.)

[Instruct brothers to take out October 1, 2012, letter to all bodies of elders regarding child abuse]

This letter replaces the letters mentioned in paragraph 1

Those letters should be removed from the congregation permanent file of policy letters and be destroyed

No one should keep originals or copies of any of those letters
When handling matters involving child abuse, be sure to review the *Shepherding* textbook, chapter 12, paragraphs 18-21, along with the material presented in the October 1, 2012, letter (Php 1:9-11)

As we review this letter, please note that paragraphs 3-7 present legal concerns regarding accusations of child abuse, and paragraphs 8-20 present congregational concerns regarding accusations of child sexual abuse

When you call the Legal Department regarding an accusation of child abuse, you will be provided with legal advice based on the facts and the applicable law

This direction may vary according to the province or state from which you are calling

When speaking with the Service Department, you will be directed according to the Scriptures and the Bible-based direction contained in this letter and other publications of the Society

It is important to be familiar with both the legal and congregational procedures

Following closely the direction from Jehovah's organization in these serious matters will serve to protect children

It will also assist us to help victims of child abuse (Isa 32:1, 2)
Time will not allow us to review this letter in its entirety today
Therefore, if you have not already done so, you should carefully and prayerfully read this letter

As we review this material, there will be several occasions where you will be asked to comment

Please be sure that your answers are based on the material in this letter and not on personal experience
If you have questions about any of the information in this letter, it is best to contact the branch office for direction

LEGAL CONCERNS REGARDING ACCUSATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE (3 min.)

Note the bold heading in paragraph 3: **"What is child abuse from a legal standpoint?"**

Keep in mind that what might be considered child abuse from a legal standpoint may not be child abuse from a congregational standpoint
From a legal standpoint, child abuse would include the following (¶3):

- Sexual or physical abuse of a minor (a person less than 18 years of age)
- Extreme neglect of a minor by his parent or guardian
- Sexual intercourse with a minor
- Oral or anal sex with a minor
- Fondling the genitals, breasts, or buttocks of a minor
- Voyeurism of a minor
- Indecent exposure to a minor
- Soliciting a minor for sexual conduct
- Any kind of involvement with child pornography

Depending on the circumstances of the case, child abuse may also include "sexting" with a minor

"Sexting" describes the sending of nude photos, seminude photos, or sexually explicit text messages electronically, such as by phone

REPORTING ACCUSATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE (4 min.)

Question: What should elders do when they learn of an accusation of child abuse? (¶4)

Answer: Two elders from their congregation should *immediately* call the Legal Department for legal advice

Question: What should be done if the individuals involved are in different congregations? (¶4)

Answer: Each body of elders should arrange for two of their elders to call the Legal Department

A call should be made even when both persons involved in sexual misconduct are minors

The elders should *not* ask an alleged victim, the accused person, or relatives of the victim or accused to call the Legal Department

Question: The elders should call the Legal Department even in what situations? (¶4)

Answer: [Review nine bullet points in paragraph 4]

If you become aware of minors associated with a congregation "sexting" with other minors or of adults "sexting" with minors, the Legal Department should be called *immediately* (¶7)

Additionally, two elders should call the Legal Department when you learn of an adult who has been viewing child pornography (§14)

CONGREGATIONAL CONCERNS REGARDING ACCUSATIONS OF CHILD *SEXUAL* ABUSE (2 min.)

Question: What is child molestation from a congregational standpoint? (§8)

Answer: [Select a brother to read paragraph 8. He should not read parenthetical comments]

Note that we are discussing sexual perversion in which children are the object of sexual abuse, including fondling, by an **adult**.

BE A "PLACE OF CONCEALMENT" (8 min.)

Isaiah prophesied that overseers should be "a place of concealment from the rainstorm" (Isa 32:2)

Paragraphs 9-12 emphasize that, as spiritual shepherds, elders should continue to be diligent in protecting all in the congregation, especially our dear young ones

Regardless of whether the law requires the elders to report an accusation to the authorities, steps need to be taken to protect children

Elders should help parents of the children involved to understand that they have the primary responsibility to protect their children (§10)

Notice the cited references at the end of paragraph 10

They each contain helpful information on how parents can protect their children

Elders should take practical steps to help protect young ones in the congregation by investigating every allegation of child abuse

Question: When evaluating evidence, what Bible principle must elders bear in mind? (§11)

Answer: [Select brothers to read Deuteronomy 19:15 and Matthew 18:16]

Therefore, although you investigate every allegation of child abuse, elders are not authorized by the Scriptures to take congregational action unless there is a confession or there are two credible witnesses

Regardless, the elders should remain vigilant with regard to the conduct and activity of the accused

Any unrepentant wrongdoer guilty of child abuse should be disfellowshipped

If the decision is to reprove, the reproof should be announced (ks10 7:20, second bullet)

This serves to protect the congregation

Question: What should be done with information on an individual accused of child abuse, proved or otherwise? (§11)

Answer: Information concerning an individual accused of child molestation, proved or otherwise, should be placed in the

congregation confidential file and marked "Do Not Destroy" and kept indefinitely

This would include *Notification of Disfellowshipping or Disassociation* (S-77) forms on individuals who have been disfellowshipped for child abuse and then later reinstated

Paragraph 11 outlines a procedural adjustment when handling judicial cases involving child abuse

When handling a judicial case where an adult sexually abuses a child, please contact your circuit overseer (§11)

Because of the delicate nature of handling such cases, he will designate an experienced elder from your circuit to serve as chairman of the judicial committee

The experienced elder selected by the circuit overseer will serve on the committee along with two elders from the local congregation

This procedure will enable local elders to gain experience by observing how the experienced elder handles matters

Also, the two local elders will be able to shepherd the victim, the victim's family, the family of the accused, and any others who require assistance

Question: What cautions should be given to those who may have abused a child in the past? (§12)

Answer: It would be appropriate for elders to talk kindly but very frankly to individuals who have manifested a weakness in this regard, strongly cautioning them to refrain from displaying affection for children, to avoid hugging or holding children on their lap, never to be alone with a child (other than their own), not to allow children to spend the night in their home, not to work alone in field service (hence, they should always be accompanied by another adult), and not to cultivate friendships with children

If the individual does not follow this direction from the elders, the elders should immediately call the Service Department for assistance (§13)

It may be determined that this individual is a "predator," but it will be the branch office, not the local body of elders, that makes this determination

If the branch office determines that an individual will be considered a "predator," parents with minor children will need to be warned of the danger that exists so that they can protect their children

However, this would be done only after receiving direction and instructions from the Service Department

Elders should be particularly mindful of the activity of any who are known to have sexually abused a child in the past

They should also ensure that newly-appointed elders are made aware of this caution (§12)

WHO IS CONSIDERED A KNOWN CHILD MOLESTER? (3 min.)

Question: What does the expression "known to have been a child molester" have reference to? (¶15)

Answer: The expression "known to have been a child molester" has reference to how such a man is considered in the community and in the Christian congregation

A person "known to have been a child molester" does not qualify for privileges in the congregation

In the eyes of the congregation, an adult "known" to be a former child molester is not "free from accusation" or "irreprehensible," nor does he have "a fine testimony from people on the outside" (1Ti 3:1-7, 10; 5:22; Tit 1:7)

Those in the community would not respect him, and congregation members might be stumbled over his appointment

Keep in mind that the branch office, not the local body of elders, determines whether one who has sexually abused a child is considered a known child molester

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT INVOLVING ONLY MINORS (2 min.)

Paragraph 18 is an important paragraph in this letter

[Select an elder to read paragraph 18 in its entirety]

Minors (persons less than 18 years of age) who have sexual contact with one another are generally not considered as child molesters by the congregation

However, regardless of the ages of those involved, such misconduct is serious

Therefore, even when both persons are minors, two elders should still call the Legal Department

RESTRICTIONS AND PRIVILEGES (4 min.)

Would a former child molester ever qualify for privileges in the congregation? (¶22)

It cannot be said in every case that one who has sexually abused a child could never qualify for privileges of service in the congregation

Elders will certainly want to be very cautious, especially when dealing with one who had repeatedly engaged in this kind of wrongdoing or who had been disfellowshipped for such an offense

Question: What cautions were given in the January 1, 1997, *Watchtower* article "Let Us Abhor What Is Wicked"? (¶22)

Answer: [Select an elder to read the portion of the *Watchtower* article quoted in paragraph 22]

Hence, privileges of service should never be extended hastily

Considerable time should always pass before one who has sexually abused a child is recommended, if ever (¶23)

If the body of elders concludes that one who has sexually abused a child in the distant past may now qualify for privileges, they should assign two elders to call the Service Department
In view of the foregoing, each elder should have made the following notation next to chapter 3, paragraph 20; chapter 5, paragraph 10, second bullet; chapter 7, paragraph 20, second bullet; and chapter 12, paragraph 18, of the *Shepherding* textbook: "See letter dated October 1, 2012, to all bodies of elders"

JEHOVAH BLESSES UNITED, CLEAN WORSHIP (1 min.)

Isaiah prophesied concerning the spiritual paradise we now enjoy: "My people must dwell in a peaceful abiding place and in residences of full confidence and in undisturbed resting places" (Isa 32:18)

Elders must work hard to maintain this atmosphere in the congregation so that it flourishes

Be diligent in protecting all in the congregation, especially children, from harmful influences

Follow closely the organization's instructions in the October 1, 2012, letter and in the *Shepherding* textbook when handling matters involving child abuse

Be assured of Jehovah's blessing and direction as you "shepherd the flock of God in your care" (1Pe 5:2)

INTRODUCE NEXT PART ON PROGRAM

TO BE COVERED IN 29 MINUTES

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