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Sent: Wednesday, April 2, 2014 8:00 AM
To: Adventist Heritage Center
Subject: The Greatest Privilege Protecting Those in Our Care

THE GREATEST PRIVILEGE OF PROTECTING THOSE IN OUR CARE
Adventist Risk Management, Inc. | Weekly Newsletter

Providing Risk Management Solutions for the Seventh-day Adventist® Church
Every 10 seconds a report of a child being abused in the United States is made. In 2010 more than 3.3 million reports of child abuse were filed in the United States involving nearly 6 million children. It is estimated that more than 40 million children are abused worldwide each year. Sadly the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its children’s ministry programs are not immune from claims of child abuse.
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- Actions to take before, during and after a storm
- Where to find additional resources you can use to prepare your church or school for a storm.

Title: The Road to Oshkosh - Pathfinder Safety
Date: Sunday, April 27, 2014
Time: 2:30 PM - 3:00 PM ET
Our mailing address is:
Adventist Risk Management, Inc
12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, MD 20904

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The Greatest Privilege of Protecting Those in Our Care

Posted by Arthur F. Blinci

Jesus said: "Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me" (Matthew 18:5, NKJV).

As a worker in children’s ministries you have the opportunity and privilege to receive these little ones each week and lead them into a greater understanding of their love of Jesus. It’s called child evangelism. Along with this privilege comes great responsibility, the responsibility to protect these same children from the tragic harm of child abuse. Every 10 seconds a report of a child being abused in the United States is made. In 2010 more than 3.3 million reports of child abuse were filed in the United States involving nearly 6 million children. It is estimated that more than 40 million children are abused worldwide each year. Sadly the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its children’s ministry programs are not immune from claims of child abuse. For this reason, every adult who works with children has a moral duty to protect these precious children from harm and report suspected cases of child abuse to authorities in keeping with the laws of your country. Likewise, the church has a duty to train its employees and volunteers in appropriate means of interacting with children on an age-appropriate basis to prevent allegations of abuse.

Scripture teaches us to be diligent because our “adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8, NKJV).

CHILD ABUSE CAN OCCUR IN SEVERAL WAYS.

The leading cause of abuse is neglect, followed by physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. Approximately 10 percent of all reported child-abuse cases are sexual in nature, which unfortunately is the most common form of abuse within a church ministry environment. In the United States national statistics indicated one in three girls and one in five boys will be sexually abused before the age of 18. Children are most vulnerable to sexual abuse between the ages of 7 to 13 years old, with the average victim being just 9 to 10 years old. In more than 90 percent of reported child sexual-abuse cases, the child knows or has a family relationship with the adult involved in the abuse. Oftentimes when child abuse occurs within the church setting the abuser will be a trusted adult who holds a leadership position within the congregation.

In children’s ministries you are teaching the lessons that will lead these children to know and make their lifelong decision to follow Jesus. In the Adventist faith most of our children make their decision to follow Jesus and be baptized during their primary and junior years of Sabbath School. Is it any wonder that Satan would most often target this same age group to be victimized by child sexual abuse? He knows if he can be successful in destroying the life of a child at this vulnerable age, he has an excellent possibility of securing their allegiance for the rest of their life. What a tragedy to think that a child’s eternal salvation could be jeopardized by the inappropriate acts of a children’s ministries teacher or leader.

“Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly - not for what you get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God... And when the Great Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of never-ending glory and honor.”
One of the most effective means to prevent child abuse from occurring within your children’s ministries programs is to have a proactive child-protection plan that is understood by all adult staff members and volunteers. Children’s ministries leaders must set the example of making the protection and safety of children their highest priority. Your congregation and community need to know that no form of child abuse will be tolerated at any time by anyone and that those who violate this trust will be reported immediately to the authorities. To accomplish this requires vigilance and appropriate training of all adults who work with children.

There are also measures the local church can take to make their facilities a safer place and minimize the risk of child abuse. Having a window or vision panel into all areas where children’s ministries are held is your best prevention measure. Child abusers often seek areas where others cannot easily observe what is taking place inside the room. All Sabbath School classrooms should have a vision panel where other adults can easily observe the activities taking place within the room at all times. Children’s ministries leaders should never be allowed to cover over these vision panels with shades or decorations. If the classroom does not have a window or cannot have a vision panel installed, then the door should remain open whenever child-related activities are taking place.

Adults also need to be trained in the appropriate supervision of children and age appropriate behaviors. One of the most troubling trends in the area of child abuse is the increase of incidents involving inappropriate “child on child” abuse. This inappropriate conduct can occur through types of bullying, hazing, or sexual behavior between children. Adults must be on guard to prevent these types of acts from occurring during your ministry programs. Not only are such acts inappropriate and capable of causing serious emotional or physical harm to children—failure to prevent these types of situations can lead to liability actions against the church for negligent supervision. Adults have a duty to be constantly vigilant whenever they supervise children. It is wise to have one or two adults who circulate around the perimeter of the hallways or churchyard to be sure all children remain with their group at all times.

Adventist Risk Management has developed a series of child-protection resources that can assist the church in establishing a strong child abuse prevention plan. Visit the following Web site, www.adventistrisk.org/Prevention/ChildProtection.aspx, to learn more and download these resources. It is critical for church leaders to work together in developing and implementing these types of child protection measures. Adventist Risk Management believes child protection is a vital ministry. For this reason, our ministry is to help protect your ministry.

Remember, as a children’s ministries leader, teacher, or adult volunteer you have a sacred duty to protect the children entrusted to your care from harm. You have the privilege of leading these precious ones to know and love Jesus. We will never be able to prevent or eliminate the evil of child abuse from our world. Scripture outlines our responsibility to protect the life of a child 

\[\begin{align*}
\text{Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly - not for what you get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God... And when the Great Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of never-ending glory and honor} \end{align*}\] (1 Peter 5:2-4, NLT)

With the Lord’s help and guidance you can protect your precious flock from harm. You can make a difference in the life of a child - THIS IS YOUR GREATEST PRIVILEGE!

References:

5 Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Foundation, Inc., Carol S.

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