

# ABUSE RISK REDUCTION AND PREVENTION POLICY

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## Oregon-Idaho Conference Volunteers in Mission

### INTRODUCTION

As Oregon-Idaho Conference Volunteers in Mission, we partner with the least among us, walking our faith and shaping a better world as Christ has called us. We strive to do this with an attitude of safety that values all, equally. To that end, this policy sets minimum standards for abuse prevention required for all Oregon-Idaho Conference Volunteer in Mission programs and activities. We require the highest attention to prevention of abuse by our participants and our programs as we demonstrate our concern for and commitment to the safety of all children, youth, and vulnerable adults with whom we make contact in mission work.

### PURPOSE & SCOPE

As Christians we must take our responsibilities to our children, youth, and vulnerable adults very seriously. While policies alone may not be able to completely prevent all harm, sexual abuse can be prevented. We as the people of Oregon-Idaho Conference Volunteers in Mission are dedicated to preventing child abuse within our ministry and within our community.

### DEFINITIONS

**Abuse:** intentional, negligent, or reckless behavior by a volunteer or staff person that is harmful, injurious, or offensive. Abuse takes many forms and includes, but is not limited to: physical abuse, neglect, self-neglect, abandonment, verbal and emotional abuse, financial exploitation, sexual abuse, involuntary seclusion, and wrongful restraint.<sup>1</sup>

**Child Abuse:** an act committed by a stranger, a parent, a caregiver, or a person in a position of trust, which is not accidental and which harms or threatens a child's physical or mental health or a child's welfare.<sup>2</sup>

**Physical Abuse:** when an adult injures a child other than by accident; including, but not limited to: assault, battery, shaking, slapping, burning, scalding, kicking and strangling.

**Sexual Abuse:**<sup>3</sup>

1. any sexual contact or sexually explicit behavior initiated by an adult, youth or child toward a child;
2. any sexual contact or sexually explicit sexual behavior initiated by an adult toward a youth;
3. any nonconsensual sexual contact or nonconsensual sexually explicit behavior initiated by a youth toward another youth including, but not limited to sexual harassment and any sexual behavior by a youth toward another youth younger than 14 or where the initiating youth is three years older;
4. any sexual contact by anyone toward a vulnerable adult, or sexually explicit

# ABUSE RISK REDUCTION AND PREVENTION POLICY

---

behavior by anyone toward a vulnerable adult where the vulnerable adult is unable to provide meaningful consent.

**Emotional Abuse:** verbal assault or emotional cruelty.

**Adult:** a person 18 years old or older.

**Activities:** any activity or programs in which children, youth, or vulnerable adults are under supervision of staff persons or volunteers.

**Background Checks:** researching references and records for indications of past or potential abusive and/or criminal activity.

**Child:** person from birth until they turn 12 years old.

**Conference:** The Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

**Team Leader:** Volunteer or other person from within the Oregon-Idaho Conference who is the person responsible for the event, activity or trip. In some cases, this may be a paid pastor or other staff person from within the Oregon-Idaho Conference.

**Designated Safety Officer:** Volunteer or other person from within the Oregon-Idaho Conference who is given specific responsibility for abuse awareness and prevention during any event, activity or trip involving children or youth, whether team members or from the partner site. This individual is in addition to the Team Leader and, if at all possible, shall not be related to any youth on a mission team or to the Team Leader. In some cases, this may be a paid pastor or other staff person from within the Oregon-Idaho Conference.

**Prevention and Risk Reduction:** **Risk Reduction** are those actions taken to lessen opportunity for sexual assault.

**Sexual Contact:** means any touching of the sexual or other intimate parts of a person or causing such person to touch the sexual or other intimate parts of the actor for the purpose of arousing or gratifying the sexual desire of either party. Regarding children, youth, and vulnerable adults, **Sexual Contact** herein includes, but is not limited to kissing, hugging, massaging, rubbing, blowing on or breathing on, and other touching with any intent by anyone to sexually arouse any person. Oregon-Idaho Conference Volunteers in Mission reserves the right to evaluate such behaviors and provide guidelines to prevent abuse and protect persons.

**Sexually Explicit Behavior:** means actual or simulated behavior and remains a common form of harassment and abuse. It includes but is not limited to: words, gestures, sexting and media representations of sexual activity, jokes, nudity or partial nudity, and other behaviors.

**Staff person:** any person employed by or acting in support of Volunteers in Mission that is responsible for mission-related activities involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

**Volunteer:** a person who participates in mission-related activities under the supervision of the Team Leader.

**Vulnerable Adults:** any persons over the age of 18 who possesses a physical or mental disability or dysfunction that impairs the individual's ability to provide adequately for the individual's own care without assistance, including but not limited to: a) the inability to independently or effectively communicate, and/or b) the ability to independently remove oneself from a situation, location or another's presence, and/or c) the inability to comprehend initiation or perpetration of abusive sexual behavior or physical mistreatment upon the individual's person by another, and/or d) because of the dysfunction or infirmity, the individual has an impaired ability to protect the individual's self from maltreatment. Note that

# ABUSE RISK REDUCTION AND PREVENTION POLICY

---

all individuals in disaster settings are considered to be vulnerable.

**We:** Oregon-Idaho Volunteers in Mission.

**UMVIM:** United Methodist Volunteers in Mission.

**Youth:** any person 12 years old to his/her 18th birthday.

**Oregon-Idaho Board of Missions and Ministry:** consists of the Conference UMVIM Coordinator, Disaster Response Coordinator, Mission Secretary and Conference Coordinator for Global Ministries.

## PROHIBITION OF ABUSE

Oregon-Idaho Volunteers in Mission prohibits abuse in all forms by anyone who is:

1. at any and all events, including all mission trips locally, regionally and globally, sponsored by Oregon-Idaho Volunteers in Mission;
2. a staff member of Oregon-Idaho Volunteers in Mission;
3. a member of Oregon-Idaho Volunteers in Mission;
4. a contractor working on behalf of Oregon-Idaho Volunteers in Mission;

Oregon-Idaho Volunteers in Mission supports all persons connected to the ministry and the communities in which it serves in seeking to engage in healthy relationships, including healthy parent-child and healthy intimate partner relationships. Further, Oregon-Idaho Volunteers in Mission is committed to equipping all persons connected to the ministry to be aware of, to prevent, and to resist abusive behavior in all forms through prayer, spiritual growth, words, and action.

## ABUSE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION

1. Oregon-Idaho Volunteers in Mission will incorporate an appropriate abuse awareness and prevention education segment into all Team Leader training programs. All Team Leaders will be certified via a test on this material.
2. Oregon-Idaho Volunteers in Mission will provide all team leaders with appropriate abuse awareness and prevention education training material to incorporate into their team training and orientation.
3. Oregon-Idaho Volunteers in Mission will require that all team leaders incorporate an appropriate abuse awareness and prevention education segment into their team training and orientation.

## RISK REDUCTION: SCREENING PROCEDURES

1. All adults, volunteer or staff persons of Oregon-Idaho Volunteers in Mission who can reasonably be assumed to have direct contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults through their mission activities, who are members of Oregon-Idaho Volunteers in Mission that include youth in their membership, or who represent Oregon-Idaho Volunteers in Mission in an ongoing, official capacity<sup>4</sup> shall

# ABUSE RISK REDUCTION AND PREVENTION POLICY

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be required to:

- a. Complete a National criminal background check. A previous National background check, completed within 2 years of the end of any mission-related activity or trip and available for review by the Team Leader or Conference Coordinator meets this requirement.
- b. Be known to the sponsoring pastor or similar entity for a minimum of 6 months prior to commencing any activities with Oregon-Idaho Conference Volunteers in Mission.

At the team leader's discretion and in consultation with the Conference UMVIM Coordinator, potential volunteers may be asked to complete an application that includes a voluntary disclosure in addition to or instead of this 'familiarity' requirement. The voluntary disclosure shall include two unrelated references. It is the Team Leader's responsibility to verify the references.

2. All UMVIM Team Leaders, regardless of direct contact with children or other vulnerable persons, are required to meet the screening requirements laid out in section 1.
3. "Direct" contact with children and/or other vulnerable populations as referenced in section 1 and 2 above relates to the nature of the mission being undertaken. For example, missions that involve work specifically with children or families, medical and dental missions and disaster response missions are all presumed to include direct contact with children and/or vulnerable adults. A mission to one of the UMCOR depots or to rebuild a church in South America might include no contact or only incidental contact.
4. The Conference UMVIM Coordinator, working with the Conference Board of Global Ministries, is responsible for screening all Team Leaders.
5. Team Leaders, working with the Conference UMVIM Coordinator, are responsible for submitting names of all team members for screening.
6. Oregon-Idaho Volunteers in Mission will not knowingly hire or allow participation in any UMVIM event anyone with a history of committing sexual abuse on any child, youth, or vulnerable adult.
7. All records regarding screening are confidential and are to be maintained in a safe, secure place. Screening materials will held in long-term retention for a period of 50 years.
8. The screening procedure for each individual shall be repeated every two years at a minimum.
9. In the event Oregon-Idaho UMVIM policies and local site policies are in conflict regarding screening, the more restrictive of the policies will apply. Team leaders are responsible for inquiring about local site policies before any events are planned so that any additional requirements can be met in advance.

## RISK REDUCTION: TRAINING AND SUPERVISION

1. Oregon-Idaho Volunteers in Mission requires Abuse Awareness and Prevention

# ABUSE RISK REDUCTION AND PREVENTION POLICY

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training for all persons involved in mission activities, regardless of direct or expected contact with children or other vulnerable populations.

2. Training shall include a pre-mission or event orientation that includes information about the local ministry setting abuse prevention policy.
3. All Oregon-Idaho Volunteers in Mission must sign a covenant agreement, prior to or during orientation, for each mission event or activity in which they participate, indicating that they have received this orientation and that they will abide by it.
4. Our standard practice is that all children, youth, and vulnerable adults will be supervised by at least 2 unrelated adults and that no adult will be alone with children, youth, or vulnerable adult(s) out of sight of other adults. The minimum standard is an open space (open door, window, etc.) such that activities can be observed and an adult who is assigned to periodically observe the activities.
5. No person shall supervise any age group of children or youth unless he/she is AT LEAST 5 years older than the children or youth.
6. All Oregon-Idaho Volunteers in Mission working in direct contact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults shall wear identifying nametags and/or clothing (team hat, T-shirt, apron, etc.) at all times.
7. The Team Leader and Designated Safety Officer will be responsible for adherence to the Supervision requirements herein.

## REPORTING AND RESPONSE TO INCIDENT/ALLEGATION

1. Oregon-Idaho Volunteers in Mission requires immediate and specific response to allegations of abuse at any and all events, including all mission trips locally, regionally and globally, sponsored by Oregon-Idaho Volunteers in Mission; or
2. Any adult who observes or hears of alleged abuse which falls under conditions described above shall:<sup>5</sup>
  - a. Assure the safety of the victim.
    - i. Whatever the victim says is to be taken very seriously.
    - ii. Make sure that the victim is in a safe place and watched over.
    - iii. Do not confront the accused abuser with anger or hostility but immediately remove him/ her from further involvement with children and youth until the matter can be investigated.
  - b. Call the police at 911, if there is a situation of immediate risk.
  - c. Report the incident immediately to the Team Leader, Team Safety Officer, and/or site/host pastor (unless implicated in the allegation or unavailable). Contact the appropriate authorities (if the adult witness is designated as a “mandated or mandatory reporter” by state or federal law).<sup>6</sup>
3. The Team Leader, Safety Officer, Site Pastor or designee shall:
  - d. Ascertain the **general** details needed to make an accurate report.
  - e. Within 24 hours, write an incident report. The report should include the following information, if obtainable:<sup>7</sup>

# ABUSE RISK REDUCTION AND PREVENTION POLICY

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- i. The name, address, age and sex of the alleged victim;
  - ii. The name and address of the alleged victim's parents or other person responsible for his/her care;
  - iii. The nature and extent of the alleged abuse or neglect;
  - iv. Any evidence of previously known or suspected abuse or neglect of the alleged victim or their siblings;
  - v. The name, address and relationship, if known, of the person who is alleged to have perpetrated the abuse or neglect; and
  - vi. Any other information known to the person making the report that would be helpful to the investigation of the alleged abuse.
- f. Contact the appropriate State or law enforcement agency as soon as possible to file the abuse report and provide the aforementioned information and follow the instructions of the agency.
  - g. Report the suspected child abuse to the child's family (unless implicated in the allegation) and any agencies required by law.
  - h. Report the suspected abuse to the UMVIM Coordinator and the Conference Coordinator for Global Ministries and a District Superintendent of the team's sponsoring Annual Conference within 24 hours of the initial report.
4. The alleged perpetrators of the abuse are to be excluded from future events and teams involving children, youth and vulnerable adults until the incident report is resolved. In any removal of a person from any activities, care must be taken to handle this in a discreet manner, recognizing that an investigation is being conducted.

## POLICY REVIEW AND CONFERENCE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

This abuse prevention policy will be reviewed annually at a meeting of the Oregon-Idaho Board of Global Ministries. An electronic copy or written copy of the policy will be provided each year to the Conference office.

### Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Wrongful restraint means the use of physical (i.e. tying, holding) or chemical (i.e. sedation) means to limit the movement of an adult for the convenience or discipline of a caregiver.

<sup>2</sup> Harm includes taking a child into a dangerous place. In OR, for example, abuse is present when permitting a child to enter or remain in a place where methamphetamines are being manufactured. See ORS 163.537.

<sup>3</sup> Generally, in sexual abuse, a significantly older, more powerful person initiates the behavior. However, please note that prevention also includes preventing peer abuse, including behavior such as inappropriate words or gestures, taking or showing sexually explicit photos of or to a child or youth, or exposing a child or youth to pornography or adult sexual activity. Abuse also occurs in similar situations regarding vulnerable adults where meaningful consent is unlikely.

<sup>4</sup> Representation of Oregon-Idaho Volunteers in Mission includes speaking or writing on behalf of the ministry to media sources; it may also include serving as chairperson for some committees or projects.

# ABUSE RISK REDUCTION AND PREVENTION POLICY

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<sup>5</sup> Falsely filed, malicious reports are illegal. However, unless the report is known beyond any doubt to be false, the process of reporting is required by Oregon-Idaho Conference Volunteers in Mission.

**Idaho** law offers protection for good faith reporters of child abuse: “Any person who has reason to believe that a child has been abused, abandoned, or neglected and, acting upon that belief, makes a report of abuse, abandonment, or neglect as required by the reporting laws, shall have immunity from any liability, civil or criminal, that might otherwise be incurred or imposed. Any such participant shall have the same immunity with respect to participation in any judicial proceeding resulting from such report. Any person who reports in bad faith or with malice shall not be protected by this section.” Idaho Code § 16-1606

Similarly, **Oregon** Law states: “Anyone participating in good faith in making a report of child abuse and who has reasonable grounds for the making thereof shall have immunity from any civil or criminal liability that might otherwise be incurred or imposed with respect to the making or content of such report. Any such participant shall have the same immunity with respect to participating in any judicial proceeding resulting from such report.” Or. Rev. Stat. Ann. §419B.025

<sup>6</sup> Each state has a class of individuals who must report child abuse to the authorities if they are aware of it. Here, Oregon-Idaho Volunteers in Mission is reminding those responsible for reporting to follow state law. If you are unsure, please find your state requirements at <https://www.rainn.org/public-policy/laws-in-your-state>. This website is provided by RAINN, the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network.

At the time of this writing, **Oregon** law includes:

Medical personnel: Physicians, psychiatrists, surgeons, residents, interns, dentists, dentist hygienists, medical examiners, pathologists, osteopaths, coroners, Christian Science practitioners, chiropractors, podiatrists, optometrists, naturopathic physicians, registered and licensed practical nurses, emergency medical technicians, substance abuse treatment personnel, hospital administrators, physical, speech and occupational therapists, and other personnel involved in the examination, care or treatment of patients.

School and child care personnel: Teachers, school personnel, educational advocates assigned to a child pursuant to the School Code, truant officers, directors and staff assistants of day care centers and nursery schools.

Public employees: Members of the Legislative Assembly, employees of the State Commission on Children and Families, the Child Care Division of the Employment Department, the Oregon Youth Authority, a county health department, a community mental health and developmental disabilities program, a county juvenile department, and all DHS employees.

Law Enforcement: Truant officers, probation officers, law enforcement officers, and field personnel of the Department of Corrections.

Others: Psychologists, licensed clinical social workers, licensed professional counselors, licensed marriage and family therapists, members of the clergy, attorneys, firefighters, court appointed special advocates, registered or certified child care providers, and foster care providers and their employees. [http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/abuse/pages/mandatory\\_report.aspx](http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/abuse/pages/mandatory_report.aspx)

**Idaho** state law is broader and requires: “Idaho is one of many states which has mandatory reporting requirements, Idaho Code § 16-1619, when child abuse, abandonment or neglect is suspected. **This law applies to everyone.** Anyone who suspects child abuse, neglect, or abandonment should make a child protection report. A report should be made if you see evidence of physical abuse or neglect of a child.” <http://211.idaho.gov/elibrary/childabuse.html>

<sup>7</sup> Oregon-Idaho United Methodists Volunteers in Mission will file the appropriate report. However, under no circumstances will staff or volunteers will take it upon themselves to launch an investigation outside of the general inquiry needed to write an incident report. If facts or unobtainable or someone resists, the person filing the report should note these facts without making demands or confronting the person who refused to answer.