

SOS CENTER
4620 W. North Avenue
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53208
414-449-9964

Molestation, Abuse, & Sexual Misconduct Policy

The SOS Center is committed to maintaining a workplace and ministry environment that is free from sexual harassment or misconduct and child abuse. We will actively screen our volunteers and staff to prevent persons with previous criminal charges or convictions, in this regard, from employment. Subsequent knowledge of the same, after employment, becomes and necessitates immediate grounds for termination.

This policy will be publicly posted on our website and all staff and volunteers will be made aware of it. The goal of this policy is to assure proper response to all allegations or incidents, that reporting is done causing minimal disruption to the ministry of the SOS Center and that such reporting is accomplished within the authority structure of the ministry.

Reporting Procedure

Program Participants: Incidents involving program participants or guests are to be reported to a staff member. If a program participant reports an incident to a volunteer, or it is discovered by a volunteer, the volunteer must immediately report it to a staff member. The staff member is to document details and what is said and file a written incident report with the Executive Director. If urgency response is mandated a verbal report to the Executive Director will suffice, with the written account to follow. All relevant video footage from SOS Center cameras will be archived and retained.

Volunteers or Staff: Incidents involving volunteers or staff are to be reported to the Executive Director. The Executive Director will require a written incident report from the volunteer or staff member. All relevant video footage from SOS Center cameras will be archived and retained.

Executive Director: Any allegation against the Executive Director must be documented and reported to the chairman of the board of directors. For all further mandates of this policy, the board or its designate will fulfill the role normally assigned to the Executive Director.

Media and Public: All media contact or public inquiry will be directed to the Executive Director or his/her designate. Volunteers and staff are expressly prohibited from making public statements.

Specific Reportable Incidents or Allegations

All volunteers, staff, and guests on SOS Center premises have a responsibility to report any of the following.

1. Any threat of physical harm to self or another
2. Distribution or dissemination of any materials which incite, encourage or advocate pedophilia, the abuse of children in any way, or the act of rape.
3. Distribution or dissemination of any materials which encourages or instructs others on how to engage in destructive behavior including self-injury, self-mutilation, anorexia, drug or alcohol abuse, or suicide.
4. Sexual harassment or sexual misconduct, whether directed towards men, women or children.
5. Child abuse or molestation
6. Knowledge that a volunteer, staff member, or participant has an unreported or previous charge or conviction for abuse, molestation, or any offense concerning children.

Supporting Definitions

Sexual harassment/Sexual misconduct: Sexual harassment/misconduct is unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors or verbal or physical conduct of sexual nature when:

1. Such comments, advances or other conduct are made a condition of employment, or are used as the basis for employment decisions affecting the individual.
2. The conduct unreasonably interferes with the person's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.
3. Sexual advances or other conduct directed towards a child or underage individual.

Sexual harassment/misconduct includes, but is not limited to;

1. Verbal harassment, such as; sexual innuendo; demands or requests for sexual favors; comments or jokes of a sexual nature; threats of slurs; remarks about an individual's physical anatomy; derogatory comments about gender; or sexually explicit communication, including in-person, telephone, written or electronic mail.
2. Physical harassment, such as sexual advance, touching (or threat to touch) in a sexual manner, physical interference with normal work or movement, or otherwise invading the personal privacy of another person.
3. Unwelcome social advances, such as repeated requests for social dates or any other non-business related activity where the invitee has already indicated that she/he is not willing to accept any such invitations.
4. Distribution or display of written or graphically sexual material, such as sexually oriented magazines or posters, nude pictures or sexually explicit writing.

Child Abuse/Molestation: Abuse of a child can be grouped under four main categories. For the purpose of reporting in all categories, the abuse or neglect is known to have happened or there is deemed to be substantial risk that it may occur.

1. **Physical Abuse:** A deliberate non-accidental physical assault on a child that results in physical harm. This may result from excessive or inappropriate discipline. The injuries sustained by the child may vary in severity and range from minor bruising, burns, welts, bite marks, or major fractures of bones or skull. In extreme form it could result in the death of the child.
2. **Sexual Abuse:** A generic term used to describe a range of sexual activity or behavior perpetrated towards a child (under the age of 16)—with or without the child’s consent—for the sexual gratification of the other person. The abuse can occur within the family (intra familial) or outside the family (extra familial) and may be homosexual or heterosexual in nature. Examples include instances where a child is encouraged, coerced, forced. Or even enticed into acts such as sexual molestation, fondling, sexual intercourse, fellatio, cunnilingus, exhibitionism, or any sexual exploitation including pornography.
3. **Emotional Abuse:** The most difficult type of abuse to define and identify. It may range from habitual humiliation of the child to withholding life-sustaining nurturing. If a child is told often enough that he or she is no good and will come to a bad end, he or she may come to believe it and act accordingly. Similarly, lack of nurturing (holding, cuddling, and warm verbal communication) in the early years can be very damaging. Combined with verbal abuse, it can cause a child great suffering. Emotional abuse is considered when this is persistent or chronic on the part of the caregiver and results in some degree of emotional damage to the child, evidenced by severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, or self-destructive or aggressive forms of behavior. This form of abuse may occur separate from, or along with, other forms of abuse or neglect. Children with emotionally abusive parents may exhibit behaviors similar to children who have been physically or sexually abused.
4. **Child Neglect:** A chronic and serious omission on the part of the parent/guardian that results in physical harm to the child. It does not include emotional harm. The term “chronic” demands that the neglect constitutes a pattern of conduct over a period of time. The term “serious” conveys a marked and substantial departure from the standard of care expected of a reasonable parent.

If any of these abuses are known (by testimony of the child, through direct examination, or witness testimony) they must be reported to social services.

Investigation and Outcomes

All investigations will be carried out promptly, with any examination being open to hearing from all parties involved. Allegations of sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, abuse, or child molestation by a volunteer or staff member may require suspension of the individual during an investigation. The welfare of our program participants, especially the children, will remain at the forefront of any investigation and outcome.

Proven misconduct is grounds for immediate dismissal. As required by law, any reportable incidents requiring legal/criminal intervention will be forwarded to the appropriate authorities.

A child may only be withheld from their parent/guardian if the child is in direct or imminent danger of bodily harm, or if directly instructed by social services. Second hand instruction (i.e. via the school, etc.) is not sufficient grounds.