

Dove's Nest

Equipping and empowering faith communities to keep children and youth safe in their homes, churches, and communities.



What we do:

1. Empower and equip faith communities to prevent all types of child abuse and neglect: sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect.
2. Raise faith communities' awareness of child abuse and neglect.
3. Assist faith communities in developing and implementing child and youth protection policies.
4. Provide worship and educational resources to faith communities.
5. Offer the *Circle of Grace*, a Christian safe environment curriculum that helps to form and educate children and youth about the value of positive relationships with God and others.
6. Remind faith communities of their responsibility to report suspected child abuse and neglect to child protective services or law enforcement.
7. Connect faith communities' with professionals in their communities who can help.



Circle of Grace, a Christian safe environment curriculum that helps to form and educate children and youth about the value of positive relationships with God and others.

***Raise your hands above your head,
And then bring your arms slowly down.
Keeping them outstretched,
Extend your arms in front of you, then behind you.
Know that God is in this space with you.
Slowly reach down to your feet.
This is your Circle of Grace—
You are in it.***

Key points:

1. God is present with children and youth, and loves them very much.
2. Helps children and youth identify what does and do not belong in their “circle of grace.”
3. Children and youth identify trusted adults in their lives.
4. Children and youth develop safety plans, including how to ask for help from trusted adults.
5. Provides a common framework and language for parents and other adults in children and youth's lives.



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Guidelines for Safe Relationships at Camp



Christian camping is about providing a safe and nurturing place to experience God, nature, and others. **Strive to set a camp culture of safety** where affirmation, encouragement, and good touch happens, and community is built. There is no place for bullying, harassment, isolation, inappropriate touch, or hurtful teaching. Realize you are in a position of power over the campers because of your size, age, and position. Campers will look to you as models of appropriate behavior.

You will not likely know much about where campers come from. Campers may have current or past experiences with abuse or neglect, or bullying. Their home life may be fraught with violence or unhealthy boundaries. Campers may not have a healthy sense of personal space or boundaries, and may not be able to regulate appropriately. Remember that unhealthy interactions may be between individuals of the same or different genders.

1. **Model healthy boundaries:**

- a. Do not engage in intimate or flirtatious interactions with campers or other staff. Consider how your behaviors may be perceived or misconstrued by others.
- b. Be modest when changing clothes, in bathrooms, and in swimming areas.
- c. Be aware of when you are tired, thirsty, or need a break, and take care of yourself. Make sure the campers do too. Most kids are not able to self-regulate well and may lose control of themselves when they become exhausted or over-stimulated.

2. **Two staff shall be present** with any individual or group of campers at all times. This safeguards both the campers and the staff against inappropriate behavior and accusations.

3. **Touch campers with their best interests in mind and only with their permission.** Only touch when it is necessary. Ask before you touch. Understand good, bad, and confusing touch.

4. **Use language that is positive and builds up.** Do not use sexual innuendo or coarse slang or swearing. It is not ok to comment on a camper's body or their level of physical development. Limit self-disclosure about your own body or development, or intimate relationships.

5. **Think ahead, consult with others, and make a plan.** As best as you can, anticipate potentially compromising situations and make a plan for healthy alternatives. Problem solve with the camp director and other staff to come up with creative solutions. Talk to the camp director when a camper shows a pattern of inappropriate behavior that may put him or herself or others at risk.

6. **Report.** Tell the camp director if:

- a. You observe any inappropriate activity with staff and/or campers.
- b. You found yourself in a compromised situation. Report what led up to the situation and what you did.
- c. A camper tells you about abuse he or she has experienced at camp.
- d. A camper tells you about something that has happened in his or her life outside of camp that causes you to suspect child abuse or neglect.

Report suspected child abuse to child protective services or law enforcement.

Adapted from Marlene Bogard, Minister of Christian Formation
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Jeanette Harder, 3-24-2014