

CHILD AND YOUTH
ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY
Faith Lutheran Church
Clay, Alabama

Adopted September 18, 2018

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Introduction

To help protect children, **Faith Lutheran Church**, as defined by the Constitution of Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church, has adopted the following Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Policy. It is important that all **Faith Lutheran Church** paid staff and volunteers understand and implement these guidelines to help prevent sexual and/or physical abuse against children and youth. Groups or organizations not affiliated with **Faith Lutheran Church**, but using our facilities are expected to adhere to this policy. **Faith Lutheran Church** ensures compliance with this policy through the Education Committee, the Preschool Advisory Board, and the Church Council. The following include the Purpose and Definitions for these guidelines, the outlines of Protection and Prevention, and an Acknowledgement to be signed by those people working with children and youth.

Purpose

These procedures are designed to reduce the risk of child sexual and/or physical abuse in order to:

1. Provide a Christian environment where children, youth members, and visitors will be safe from physical and sexual abuse and will feel safe, secure and valued.
2. Assist **Faith Lutheran Church** in evaluating a person's suitability to supervise, oversee, and/or exert control over the activities of children and youth.
3. Satisfy the concerns of parents and staff members with a screening process for paid staff and volunteers.
4. Provide a system to respond to alleged victims of sexual and/or physical abuse and their families, as well as the alleged perpetrator when the abuse occurs at a **Faith Lutheran Church** event.
5. Reduce the possibility of false accusations of sexual and/or physical abuse made against volunteers and paid staff.

Definitions

The following terms used herein and are defined as follows:

1. *Paid Staff*: Any pastor, minister, preacher, cleric, or employee who is paid.
2. *Children/Youth/Minor*: Any person who has not reached his/her 18th birthday or the age of majority as defined by state law.
3. *Adult*: Any person who has reached his/her 18th birthday or age of majority as defined by state law.

4. *Volunteer*: Means any unpaid person engaged in or involved in activities and who is entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors.
5. *Volunteer Age*: The use of adult volunteers is recommended; however, volunteers twelve and older (at the discretion of the Education Committee) may assist with childcare under supervision of an adult.
6. *Sexual Abuse*: The employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any minor to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of such conduct or rape, and in cases of caretaker or inter-familial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of minor, or incest with a minor, or as defined by federal and state law. This includes and is not limited to unwelcome sexual remarks, jokes, advances, leering, whistling, or sexual gestures; sexual touching, fondling, molestation, assault, or other intimate physical contact; compelling another person to engage in a sexual act by threats or fear or undue influence; and providing or displaying pornographic materials to another person.
7. *Child Emotional Abuse*: Verbal or nonverbal conduct including mental exploitation, degrading communication, or humiliating or threatening conduct that may or may not include bullying or as defined by state law.
8. *Member*: A person who has declared and maintains their membership in accordance with the provisions of sections C8.01 and C8.02 of the **Faith Lutheran Church** Constitution and its bylaws.
9. *Officers of Faith Lutheran Church include*: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Financial Secretary as defined in section C11.01 of the church Constitution.

Protection and Prevention

Volunteer and Employee Screening Procedures

The following screening procedures are to be used with paid staff and adults who are entrusted with the care and supervision of minors, a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors, and for minor volunteers. All information collected should be maintained in confidence.

1. *Employment Application and Volunteer Application:* Any paid staff and adult volunteers who will work with a minor must complete the Employment Application and/or the Adult Volunteer Application. The release statement attached to the Application must be signed by the individual completing the Application to apply for and qualify for service.

Our **Employment Application** includes the following items required for the online background check:

- Current and previous residence addresses.
- Current and previous employment, including addresses, dates, duties, titles, and reasons for leaving.
- Names and addresses of schools attended.
- References from previous employers and organizations that serve children.
- Pending criminal charges (where not prohibited by state law).
- Criminal history information.
- Date of Birth
- Social Security Number
- Copy of Driver's License

Our **Adult Volunteer Application** includes the following items required for the online background check:

- Current address.
- Volunteer experience.
- Criminal history information.
- Personal references.
- Date of Birth
- Social Security Number
- Copy of Driver's License

Our **Minor Volunteer Application** includes the following items:

- Current address.
- Volunteer experience
- Date of Birth

Applications include a statement, which the applicant should acknowledge in writing, certifying that statements provided in the application are true and complete, and any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of the applicant or for dismissal if he or she is employed. This statement authorizes **Faith Lutheran Church** to contact any individual or organization listed in the application.

2. For paid staff and adult volunteer applications, **Faith Lutheran Church** will review all statements made in the application, paying specific attention to any gaps in time and irregular employment patterns or unexplained absence. Pursue these gaps with employers listed and in a subsequent interview.
3. For paid staff and adult volunteer applications, **Faith Lutheran Church** will conduct interviews with qualified applicants.

If detrimental information is uncovered but the applicant remains desirable, discuss this information with the applicant. In the event the applicant is ultimately hired or accepted as a volunteer, document the reasons for overriding the prior information.

Whenever possible, **Faith Lutheran Church** will have a second individual participate in the interview.

4. All listed references and employers for paid staff positions and references for adult volunteers are contacted as part of the ELCA-recommended safegatherings.com online background check process. This will help determine the applicant's suitability for the position. In addition, references may be contacted by **Faith Lutheran Church** as part of the interview process for paid staff.
5. *Criminal Background Check:* **Faith Lutheran Church** will conduct a criminal background check on all paid staff and adult volunteers who are entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors. This will be done through the ELCA-recommended safegatherings.com online background check process. If background checks other than safegatherings.com have been completed, then approval by Council is required. All criminal background checks will be updated every three years.
6. *Six-Month Rule:* All volunteers will be required to have been a member of **Faith Lutheran Church** for six months and have reviewed and signed the Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Policy. New members and non-members may assist but not be responsible for children and youth.

7. All paid staff and volunteers will be provided a copy of this Child And Youth Abuse Prevention Policy document. They must also sign the acknowledgement in Appendix A.

Confidentiality

Information obtained through the screening, application, reference check, interview, and criminal background check will be kept in confidence, unless otherwise required by law. All information discovered or obtained through the above-referenced means will be kept in a secure location and access to it will be restricted if possible. These materials will be archived.

Supervision Procedures

Unless an extenuating situation exists, **Faith Lutheran Church**:

1. Will have adequate number of screened and trained paid staff or volunteers present at events involving minors. Supervision will increase in proportion to the risk of the activity. Recommended Teacher Student Ratios*:
 - One caregiver for every three infants
 - One caregiver for every 6 to 8 toddlers or preschoolers
 - One caregiver for every eight to ten elementary-age children
2. Will monitor facilities during activities involving children and youth.
3. Will release minors only to a parent or guardian and utilize sign-in and sign-out sheets.
4. Will obtain written parental permission, including a signed medical treatment form and emergency contacts, before taking minors on trips and should provide information regarding the trip.
5. When responsible for transporting minors to youth activities off site, will use one paid staff or one adult volunteer driver with no less than two minors in the vehicle. Adult drivers must have a valid Alabama Driver's License and proof of automobile insurance.
6. Will require that young children be accompanied to the restroom and the paid staff or volunteer wait outside the facility to escort the child back to the activity. Whenever possible, the escort will be the same sex as the minor.
7. Will encourage minors to use a "buddy system" whenever minors go on trips off of **Faith Lutheran Church** property.
8. Will screen all paid staff and volunteers and approve those individuals in advance for any overnight activities.
9. Will designate a "confidential counselor" to whom any minor can go at any time, without special permission, to discuss any problems he or she is having.

* Faith Preschool will follow class size guidelines set by the state of Alabama. See the Faith Preschool Handbook for current student/teacher ratios.

Behavioral Guidelines for Religious Organization Paid Staff and Volunteers

All volunteers and paid staff will observe the following guidelines:

1. Do not provide alcoholic beverages, tobacco, drugs, contraband, over-the-counter medications (without written parental consent), or anything that is prohibited by law to minors.
2. Do not consume alcoholic beverages, tobacco, drugs, contraband, or anything that is prohibited by law while responsible for children or youth.
3. **Faith Lutheran Church** prohibits employees, teachers, and volunteers who work with children and youth from having weapons of any type on the church premises, any buildings owned by the church, or rented premises, and at any church sponsored events. This general prohibition includes visible or concealed weapons, even those for which the owner has a valid permit. Prohibited items include any form of weapon, as well as any explosive that is illegal under federal, state, or local laws or ordinances.
4. To the extent possible, **Faith Lutheran Church** events that are co-educational will have both male and female chaperones.

5. TWO ADULT RULE AND HOSPITALITY POLICY

There will always be two adult supervisors, 21 years of age, or older, (when supervising youth ages 17-18, volunteers shall be a minimum of 5 years older) present when caring for minor children/youth (ages 0-18 years of age) under the auspices of **Faith Lutheran Church**. If two adults are not present, every effort should be made to find another adult trained in the **Faith Lutheran Church** Youth and Child Safety Policy. If not, all doors should be left open and a floating volunteer should be used to help supervise the area. A husband and wife team may not independently lead youth activities unless another adult is present.

6. APPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

Faith Lutheran Church seeks to provide a Christian environment where minors will be safe from physical, emotional, and sexual abuse and will feel safe, secure and valued. Adult caretakers are to be models of Christ's love as they relate to minors. Everyone is a child of God and as such, should treat each other with respect.

The following are appropriate behaviors for adults to use in relating to minors when working or volunteering for the church:

- a. Listen carefully to children and youth and show interest in what they have to say.
- b. Pray that our children and youth may grow in faith in God and respect for each other and creation.
- c. Be fair and consistent.
- d. Have a sense of humor, be flexible and giving, enjoy the children, and smile often.
- e. Focus on positive behaviors and praise him/her for that behavior.
- f. Set clear limits that can be managed by adults and understood by children.

- g. Use appropriate, positive, steps when discipline is needed and focus on the behavior, not the child.

7. **PROHIBITED BEHAVIOR**

The following behaviors, particularly those defined by the law of the State of Alabama, are prohibited for all paid employees and volunteers of **Faith Lutheran Church**:

- a. Corporal Punishment, which is use of physical force to discipline a child.
 - b. Isolation Punishment, which is placing a child in an enclosed area alone for the primary purpose of disciplining the child.
 - c. Physical abuse, which is any physical injury inflicted by an adult on a child by other than accidental means.
 - d. Sexual abuse, which is a person's employing, persuading, inducing, enticing, or coercing any minor to engage in any sexual act as defined by the Law of the State of Alabama.
 - e. Sexual exploitation, which is conduct by a child's parent or caretaker that allows, permits, encourages or requires that a child engage in prostitution or child pornography.
 - f. Inappropriate touching or fondling of a sexual nature by any adult of a minor. Avoid all inappropriate touching with minors. All touching shall be based on the needs of the individual being touched, not on the needs of the volunteer or paid staff. In the event a minor initiates physical contact and/or inappropriate touching, it is appropriate to inform the minor that such touching is inappropriate.
 - g. Bullying behaviors in any form are prohibited between youth, between children, between youth and children, and between adults and youth and adults and children.
 - h. Physical/Verbal/Mental/Emotional Abuse. Volunteers and paid staff shall not abuse minors in any way, including but not limited to, physical abuse, verbal/mental abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse of any kind. Volunteers and paid staff shall not engage in physical discipline of a minor.
8. If an inappropriate relationship is recognized between a minor and adult, maintain clear professional boundaries and refer the minor to another individual with supervisory authority.
9. If one-on-one pastoral care is necessary, avoid meeting in isolated environments.
10. Anyone who observes sexual and/or physical abuse of a minor will take appropriate steps to immediately intervene, provide assistance, and report any inappropriate conduct to the proper authorities and officials of **Faith Lutheran Church** (e.g., Pastor, Council Members, Leader of the event) for handling.

Disqualification

No person may be entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or may directly oversee and/or exert control or oversight over minors who has been convicted of the offenses outlined below, been on a probated sentence or received deferred adjudication for any offense outlined below, or has presently pending any criminal charges for any offense outlined below until a determination of guilt or innocence has been made, including any person who is presently on deferred adjudication. Offenses include:

1. Any offense against minors as defined by state law.
2. A misdemeanor or felony offense as defined by state law that is classified as sexual assault, indecency with a minor or adult, assault of a minor or adult, injury to a minor or adult, abandoning or endangering a minor, sexual performance with a minor or adult, possession or promoting child pornography, enticing a minor, bigamy, incest, drug-related offenses, or family violence.
3. A prior criminal history of an offense against minors.

Sexual Offender at Faith Lutheran Church

Faith Lutheran Church may allow a person known to be a sexual offender to remain or become a member of the congregation but they must adhere to specific guidelines. However, first check with the offender's probation/parole officer for any restrictions regarding attending services or other functions where children and youth are present. Ask the probation/parole officer to put any restrictions in writing. If restrictions don't prohibit general participation, implement the following four guidelines:

1. A known sexual offender cannot participate in any of the child or youth programs in any way.
2. A known sexual offender can only participate in a predetermined service each week.
3. A known sexual offender must report in and be assigned to an escort who will accompany him or her at all times.
4. The identity of the sexual offender will be disclosed to the congregation.

Response to Sexual and/or Physical Abuse

Faith Lutheran Church will respond promptly to investigate any accusation of sexual and/or physical abuse. All accusations of sexual and/or physical abuse will be taken seriously. It is important to be appropriately respectful to the needs and feelings of those who allege sexual and/or physical abuse and those who have been accused of sexual and/or physical abuse.

When an allegation is made involving sexual and/or physical abuse, the person reporting the complaint is to be told about the guidelines and the procedures to be followed. The pastor or the Council President will begin investigating the allegations and may use the assistance of legal counsel or other consultants. If the pastor is the individual accused of sexual abuse, then the council president will conduct the investigation. The investigation will be conducted as follows:

1. Report the incident to appropriate authorities in accordance with the state mandatory reporting laws.
2. If the pastor is the accused individual, then the incident must be reported to the presiding bishop of the ELCA Southeastern Synod.
3. Report the matter to **Faith Lutheran Church's** insurance carrier.
4. Cooperate with authorities and the insurance carrier.
5. **Faith Lutheran Church** may suspend (with pay for paid staff) the alleged offender while a confidential investigation is being conducted.
6. Officials of **Faith Lutheran Church** (and legal counsel or other consultants as needed) will then meet with the governing body of **Faith Lutheran Church** and present a report on their investigation, which will include findings and recommendations of actions.
7. Officials of **Faith Lutheran Church** will meet with the alleged perpetrator and notify him/her of the results of the investigation and recommendations for actions.
8. Officials of **Faith Lutheran Church** will meet with the alleged victim, along with his/her parents or guardians, and notify them of the results of the investigation and recommendations for actions.
9. During the investigation, an official of **Faith Lutheran Church** shall maintain contact with the alleged victim and his/her parents or legal guardian, and inform them of the actions taken and assist them in their process of healing.
10. Officials of **Faith Lutheran Church** (and legal counsel or other consultants as needed) may meet with the alleged perpetrator, the alleged victim, and any others with knowledge of relevant facts.
11. Communicate with criminal and civil legal counsel of **Faith Lutheran Church** as needed.
12. Communicate with those affected by the ministry of the alleged perpetrator.
13. Hire a consultant or assign a spokesperson to respond to media or prepare a statement for the media if the need shall arise, subject to the approval of **Faith Lutheran Church's** attorney.

Reporting Requirements

1. Mandated Reporters

The law of the State of Alabama requires that certain categories of persons who have reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused shall report or cause reports of that abuse to be made as provided by law. **Faith Lutheran Church** directs all mandated reporters to comply with the requirements of the law.

- REF: http://dhr.alabama.gov/services/Child_Protective_Services/FAQs_CA.aspx

2. Non-mandated Reporters

Faith Lutheran Church directs all of its paid personnel and volunteers, whether mandatory reporters or not, to report to the Pastor (or if the Pastor is accused, to the **Faith Lutheran Church** Council President) their knowledge or belief of the abuse of minors when that knowledge is obtained while engaging in the ministries of **Faith Lutheran Church**.

- REF: http://dhr.alabama.gov/services/Child_Protective_Services/FAQs_CA.aspx

3. Reporting Alleged Violations

All paid personnel and volunteers of **Faith Lutheran Church** are to report alleged violations of prohibited behaviors to the staff person associated with their ministry. That staff person shall report to the Pastor (or if the Pastor is accused, to the Council President). All such reports shall be made within twenty-four (24) hours of being notified of the incident and in compliance with the laws of the State of Alabama.

4. Reporting Alleged Violations to the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America)

The Pastor or her/his designate shall report all alleged violations to the Southeastern Synod office of the ELCA when the alleged violator is a member of the clergy or associate in ministry.

Training Guidelines

1. All paid staff members and all volunteers in children/youth work shall receive a training session as part of the ELCA-recommended safegatherings.com training/background check service. The safegatherings.com certification expires after 3 years.
2. It shall be the responsibility of the Pastor and Council to make sure that each new staff member has completed the safegatherings.com training before engaging in any activity with the children or youth, and that each staff member annually participates in refresher training as outlined in #5 below. It is the responsibility of the Preschool Advisory Board to make sure that Preschool staff have completed the training.
3. It shall be the responsibility of the committee chair in charge of each area of children's and youth ministry to make sure that all volunteers have completed training before engaging in any activity with the children or youth. If there is any question regarding the status of a volunteer candidate, the pastor should be consulted.
4. Results from background checks and volunteer training completion will be kept by the Pastor in a secure place in the Pastor's office.
5. Ideally, **Faith Lutheran Church's** Child And Youth Abuse Prevention Policy should be discussed as part of **Faith Lutheran Church's** New Member class, and be the topic of an adult Sunday School hour annually.
6. Annual local refresher training resources should include, but not be limited to, utilizing the child safety quiz (see Appendix D) and viewing the DVD entitled "Safety Tips on a Sensitive Subject: Child Sexual Abuse", or a similar DVD as chosen by the Education Committee.

Child Safety Guidelines When Faith Lutheran Church Facilities Are Used By Third Parties

- A. If a third party is leasing any **Faith Lutheran Church** facility for activities specifically involving children/youth or for activities where the third party is providing childcare, the third party must agree to abide by **Faith Lutheran Church's** Child And Youth Abuse Prevention Policy.
- B. If background checks other than safegatherings.com have been completed by third parties, then approval by Council is required.
- C. The third party shall provide **Faith Lutheran Church** with a certificate of insurance no later than (5) days prior to the activity, and shall name **Faith Lutheran Church** as an additional insured.

No Grandfather Clause

There is no grandfather clause in the event the **Faith Lutheran Church's** Child And Youth Abuse Prevention Policy is amended.

Appendix A

Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Policy Acknowledgment

These guidelines have been designed to guide and assist you when working with minors. The information establishes general practices and guidelines and should not be construed in any way as a contract of employment or continued employment. **Faith Lutheran Church** reserves the right to make changes in the content or application of this Policy and to implement those changes with or without notice.

The terms defined herein are defined for the purposes of the Policy and do not suppose or establish a legal relationship. These terms are not defined for the purposes of creating a legal relationship with the **Faith Lutheran Church** or any related or associated entity and instead are to be used with this document.

I have received a copy of **Faith Lutheran Church's** Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Policy. I understand it is my responsibility to become familiar with and adhere to the information contained herein. I understand that these policies are the property of the **Faith Lutheran Church**.

Print Name

Signature

Date

Appendix B

Faith Lutheran Church Background Investigation Consent for Paid Staff and Adult Volunteers Who Will Be Responsible For Children and Youth

I, _____ (applicant complete name), hereby authorize **Faith Lutheran Church** and/or its agents to make an independent investigation of my background, references, character, past employment, criminal, and/or police records, including those maintained by both public and private organizations and all public records for the purpose of confirming the information contained on my Application and/or obtaining other information, which may be material to my qualifications for employment or volunteer work now, and if applicable, during the tenure of my employment or volunteer work with **Faith Lutheran Church**.

I release **Faith Lutheran Church** and/or its agents and any person or entity which provides information pursuant to this authorization, from any and all liabilities, claims, or lawsuits in regard to the information obtained from any and all of the above referenced sources used.

The following is my true and complete legal name, and all information provided online through the ELCA-recommended safegatherings.com background check process is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Full name (printed) _____

Signature

Date

Appendix C

Screening Form For Youth Volunteers

This form is to be completed for any position involving the supervision or care of children or youth by Youth Volunteers (ages 12-17) in order to provide a safe and secure environment for the activities or programs of the church.

Name _____
Last First Middle

Date of Birth _____

Present Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ Email _____

School _____ Grade _____

I understand that in serving as a Youth Volunteer for **Faith Lutheran Church** that I am willing to abide by the policies and procedures set forth in the Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Policy to reduce the risk of child abuse in this church. I understand that child abuse is a serious matter and will do my part in the prevention of child abuse while serving at **Faith Lutheran Church**.

Signature of Youth Volunteer Date

I do not know of any reason why my child should not serve as a Youth Volunteer.

Signature of Parent/Guardian Date

Appendix D

Recognizing, Reporting and Preventing Child Abuse Quiz

Mark each statement “T” for True or “F” for False

- ___ 1. Neglect is the most commonly reported form of child abuse.
- ___ 2. Child abuse and neglect is preventable.
- ___ 3. Some physical discipline is child abuse.
- ___ 4. Abuse may be directed toward only one child in the family.
- ___ 5. Bruises on the elbows, knees, shins or forehead are likely to be accidental in a toddler.
- ___ 6. Abused children usually will discuss the abuse.
- ___ 7. You must be certain that abuse or neglect has occurred before you report it.
- ___ 8. Building protective factors in children and families increases the likelihood of preventing child abuse and neglect.
- ___ 9. If you report abuse or neglect and your suspicions are unfounded, you are liable for a civil or criminal suit.
- ___ 10. An anonymous report of abuse and neglect will not be investigated.
- ___ 11. A child *never* will enjoy sexual touch.
- ___ 12. To prevent child abuse we must hire more child protection workers and build more treatment facilities for children who have been abused.
- ___ 13. By educating a child about sexual abuse, you may cause the child to become sexually active.
- ___ 14. Emotional abuse can be an isolated incident.
- ___ 15. Early reporting is encouraged so that the child may be removed from the home of an abusive parent or caretaker.
- ___ 16. Abusive parents do not love their children.
- ___ 17. The work of preventing child abuse is best accomplished by the professionals.

Appendix E

Answer Key: Recognizing, Reporting and Preventing Child Abuse

1. True

Each year, neglect represents 80% of all substantiated child abuse cases.

2. True

With individual family and community support, child abuse and neglect can be prevented.

3. False

Physical discipline becomes child abuse when a parent / caregiver inflicts injuries to a child ranging from cuts, bruises, broken bones, burns, bites and in some cases death. Child Protective Services policies do not restrict a parent / caregiver from disciplining a child. These policies define “discipline” as “teaching and training a child to follow rules.” It further recognizes limit-setting that is developmentally appropriate, in addition to structured and positive reinforcements that help children develop self-control, self-reliance and respect for others as important goals of discipline.

4. True

In some instances, one child in a family will be seen as "special" by the parent / caregiver. This child may require extra care because of a disability or may be labeled as “different” or “difficult.” Such children can be singled out for abuse by a parent / caregiver. On the other hand, neglectful situations tend to involve all children in a family.

5. True

The presence of bruises or cuts on a child does not necessarily mean that a child has been abused. Preschoolers are at an age where they constantly explore their environments. This type of exploration is critical to healthy brain development and learning. Bumps and bruises on the elbows, knees, shins or forehead are common injuries as these children learn balance and coordination. Explanation of injuries should always be noted in light of the child's ability to cause such an injury. Bruises on the back, thigh, buttocks, face or back of the legs are less likely to be accidental. Injuries to an infant are suspect.

6. False

To an abused child, the fear of the unknown may be much more frightening than the abuse itself. Children who are abused may still be extremely loyal to the abuser and will try to hide their injuries in an attempt to protect their parent / caretaker. The child also may feel that the punishment was deserved or be fearful that the parent / caretaker will be punished and removed from the home if the abuse is discovered. Fear of severe punishment or breakup of the family unit may also prevent the reporting of abuse. Many children simply do not believe that anyone will listen to or believe them if they tell.

7. False

Alabama Law states that a report should be made if you have "reasonable cause to believe" that abuse or neglect is occurring - this means if you suspect abuse or neglect. Physical proof or other evidence is not required. Determining whether abuse or neglect is actually occurring is the legally mandated responsibility of child protective services.

REF: http://dhr.alabama.gov/services/Child_Protective_Services/FAQs_CA.aspx

8. True

Risk factors increase the likelihood of negative outcomes occurring. Protective factors are those characteristics that "buffer" individuals or families from stress or other negative influences and increase the likelihood of positive outcomes occurring. It is best to focus simultaneously on reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors.

9. False

Although no statute can forbid the filing of civil or criminal charges, Alabama law protects the reporter of suspected child abuse or neglect from any decision or award that might be sought. Under Alabama code, any person participating in the making of a "*good faith*" report of suspected child abuse or neglect is immune from civil or criminal liability. Further, the identity of those who report child abuse is confidential.

REF: http://dhr.alabama.gov/services/Child_Protective_Services/FAQs_CA.aspx

10. False

The child protective services agency is required by law to investigate every report of suspected child abuse and neglect that it receives. Although anonymous reports are permitted, they are not encouraged. People who report are asked to give their names so that they may be contacted at a later date if additional information is needed. Under Alabama Law the identity of the reporter is confidential and will not be used or divulged during the investigation. The circumstances and details of the abuse may lead an abuser to guess the source of the report.

REF: http://dhr.alabama.gov/services/Child_Protective_Services/FAQs_CA.aspx

11. False

Many people find it difficult to comprehend that a child may feel pleasurable sensations from sexual touch. Children are physiological beings and may respond to sexual stimulation. Sexuality, which is different from sex, is an inherent characteristic of the human body that is present at birth. Sexual abuse often starts out as appropriate expressions of affection (hugs, kisses etc.) and overtime progresses to sexual exploitation. The child may feel special in the early stages of this "grooming" process, only to become increasingly uncomfortable, anxious or scared by the attention. Many children who are being sexually abused may blame themselves, have feelings of guilt, and believe that no one would believe if they told. Also, the perpetrator may have threatened harm to the child, a parent, or something or someone the child cares about to assure the child's silence and secrecy of the sexual abuse.

12. False

It is too late to prevent a child from being abused once the abuse has already happened. Therapeutic services can be helpful to the child in resolving the abuse issues and teaching skills to prevent future victimization. However, to truly protect children from child abuse and neglect in the first place, we must teach them a range of personal safety skills appropriate for their age, including the ability to identify supportive adults inside and outside of the family that they can turn to for help.

13. False

While it is the responsibility of adults to protect children from abuse and neglect, it is important to arm children with information and teach them skills to keep safe. Just as we teach our children how to cross a street or respond in emergencies, we must teach them to protect themselves from unwanted touches and other personal safety dangers. It is very important that the information we share with children be developmentally appropriate and understandable to the child.

14. False

Emotional abuse is caused by a pattern of negative parental behaviors and interactions with a child over time and is not usually caused by a single incident. It is important to know that there are underlying emotional implications inherent to all other forms of abuse.

15. False

Early reporting to child protective services is encouraged to prevent or minimize injury or harm to a child. If abuse or neglect is occurring, child protective services may work with the family to alleviate or correct those factors contributing to its occurrence. Children are removed from the home only when sufficient protection cannot be provided to guarantee their continued safety within the home environment.

16. False

Many parents abuse their children because they do not understand stages of child development, may act in anger, or may have poor coping skills. This does not mean they do

not love their children, but that they need to learn appropriate behaviors to show love and properly discipline their children.

17. False

The prevention of child abuse is everybody's job. Professionals, parents and concerned citizens in the private and public sector must all play a role in stopping child abuse before it happens. Your local child abuse prevention agency can provide concrete information for child abuse prevention at the community and individual level.