

18. You **should immediately call the branch office** for direction if you learn of an accusation of child abuse, regardless of the age of the victim now or at the time of the alleged abuse, even if it occurred before the alleged perpetrator's baptism. The branch office will then give direction based on the circumstances involved in each situation.

19. Child abuse is a crime. **Never suggest to anyone that they should not report an allegation of child abuse to the police or other authorities.** If you are asked, make it clear that whether to report the matter to the authorities or not is a personal decision for each individual to make and that there are no congregation sanctions for either decision. Elders will not criticize anyone who reports such an allegation to the authorities. If the victim wishes to make a report, it is his or her absolute right to do so. - Gal. 6:5.

20. When a known child molester moves to another congregation, the Congregation Service Committee should send a letter of introduction with full and complete information about his background and current situation. Any letter from the branch office concerning the child molester should not be photocopied or sent to the new congregation. However, the new congregation should be clearly informed of any restrictions imposed by the branch office. A copy of the letter of introduction should be sent to the branch office.

21. In a case in which a brother denies an allegation of child abuse and he has been accused by only one witness, the following direction is given if he moves to another congregation. The elders should consult the branch office before sending any information regarding the accusation to the elders in the new congregation. It would be helpful if your letter to the branch office provided a detailed summary of the matter and explained the spiritual condition and personal circumstances of the accused and the accuser. With regard to the accused, the following questions should be answered: (1) What is his interaction with children? (2) Does he admit to any activity with the accuser that could have been misinterpreted by the accuser as sexual abuse, or does he claim to have a poor memory of the accusation? (3) What is his response to why the accuser has made the allegation? (4) Has he had to be counseled for any other matters of a sexual nature, such as inappropriate conduct with adult sisters or pornography? (5) What is the level of his spirituality? (6) Do all the elders on the body believe that he can be trusted with children?

The following questions should be answered with regard to the accuser: (1) What is the level of maturity of the child or youth? (2) Is he (or she) describing conduct that one his age would not normally know about? (3) Is the child or his parents known to be serious, mature? (4) Is his memory consistent, or is it intermittent, or does it involve repressed memories? (w95 11/1 pp. 25-26) (5) What is the reputation of the parents? (6) Are they spiritually and emotionally mature? After carefully considering the matter, the branch office will then give you direction as to what information about the allegation should be shared, if any, with the elders of the new congregation.”

(Bold is as appears in the original publication.)