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Ministering Resources

TEST DOCX Abuse (Help for the Offender)

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**When you become aware of any abuse, call the abuse help line and your stake president:**

Abuse Help Line Phone numbers:

* North America: 1-800-453-3860 ext. 2-1911
* United Kingdom: +44 (0) 800-970-6757
* France: +33 (0) 805-710-531
* New Zealand: +64 (0) 9-488-5592
* Australia: +61 (0) 2-9841-5454

**If the abuse help line is not available in your country, contact your stake president, who will call the area legal counsel in your area office. Call for each report of abuse, even if you have previously called for other instances of abuse. The help line counselors or area legal counsel will explain your legal reporting obligations and can help you know how to protect the victim and others.**

Abuse can include spiritual, emotional, physical, or sexual mistreatment. The first responsibility of the Church in abuse cases is to help, in a kind and sensitive way, those who have been abused and to protect those who may be vulnerable to future abuse. While some types of abuse may cause physical harm, all forms of abuse affect the mind and spirit. Abuse often destroys faith and can cause confusion, doubt, mistrust, guilt, and fear in the victim.

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Often those who abuse have other serious unresolved sins or mental-health issues or may have been abused themselves. Some offenders feel remorse, a desire to confess their sins, and a willingness to begin the repentance process. Others may deny wrongdoing, minimize their behavior, or blame someone else. Assessing remorse and desire to change is the first step in helping the offender.

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Some abusers may be cunning, manipulative, and deceitful, so their version of the events may differ from that of the victim. In all cases, consider foremost the safety and protection of the victim.

Church leaders are neither expected nor encouraged to diagnose or provide treatment to members struggling with mental-health issues related to abuse. If needed, encourage the member to consider seeking professional help. LDS Family Services (where available) is able to provide consultation and offer information to leaders about resources in their communities.

Refer to Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops (2010) for direction regarding Church callings, temple recommends, and other related questions once the abuse has been investigated and a conclusion reached regarding its severity.

Refer to the introduction to [Ministering Resources](file:///ministering-resources/ministering-resources.html) as you invite members to seek spiritual help and healing through the power of Jesus Christ and His Atonement.

Understand the Situation

Prayerfully consider asking questions like these to help you better understand the member’s problem and his or her readiness and motivation for change.

* Can you help me understand the situation?
* How important is it for you to change?
* What have you done to stop the abusive behavior?
* How have you used gospel principles to overcome abusive tendencies and behaviors?
* What are you willing to do to change?
* How can I help you make the change?
* Is there anything else about this abuse that I should know?

Help the Individual

As you counsel with the member, consider using some of the following suggestions:

Discuss with the member the consequences of abusive behavior on self and family, including the doctrine and Church policies related to abuse. (Review the resources in Church Policy and Teachings for more information).

Help the member find hope and healing through the enabling and [redeeming power](file:///general-conference/2013/04/the-savior-wants-to-forgive.html) of the Atonement.

In cases such as physical or verbal abuse, help the member identify healthy, non-abusive ways to respond to difficult situations or feelings, such as the following:

* Taking enough time to let emotions subside and to allow a conscious response by, for example, going for a walk, breathing deeply, counting to 100, or working on a project.
* Sharing concerns calmly without criticism.
* Taking time to consider the thoughts and feelings of others.

Support the Family

Abuse impacts family members as well as the individual. Determine the impact on the member's spouse or family and address those issues.

Use community resources or professional help for family members who may need counseling or support.

Help family members understand how the Savior can help them personally heal (see Alma 7:11 and Matthew 11:28–30).

Provide continuing support to others in the family who may be affected.

Use Ward and Stake Resources

Request the individual’s permission before discussing the situation with others. Consult with the abuse help line to learn how to balance respect for confidentiality with your duty to protect other ward members.

Determine if someone in the ward or stake has background or training to help.

* If appropriate, consider supporting family members by inviting them to attend one of the following courses in the ward: Strengthening the Family, Strengthening Marriage, or Marriage and Family Relations. In doing so, be sure to make it clear to family members that the abuser alone is responsible for his or her behavior. If these courses are not being taught locally, family members (with help from ward or stake mentors) could study the course materials, available through [store.lds.org](http://store.lds.org/), the Gospel Library, or in distribution centers.

Help the member identify a trusted and competent person of the same gender who will support him or her in making changes. Encourage them to meet regularly to discuss progress.

Help the member seek and obtain professional help, as necessary.

* Use local resources that provide services in harmony with gospel principles.
* Contact the local LDS Family Services or area offices for more resources or counseling options.

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| Church Policy and Teachings  Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops (2010), 7.2–7.5, “Counseling”  Handbook 1, 17.1.26, “Legal Matters”  Handbook 1, 17.3.2, “Abuse and Cruelty”  Handbook 2: Administering the Church (2010), 13.6.18, “Reports of Abuse”  Handbook 2, 21.4.2, “Abuse and Cruelty”  Matthew 18:1–6  Doctrine and Covenants 121:36–46  Thomas S. Monson, [“School Thy Feelings, O My Brother,”](file:///general-conference/2009/10/school-thy-feelings-o-my-brother.html) Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2009, 62–69  Dallin H. Oaks, [“Protect the Children,”](file:///general-conference/2012/10/protect-the-children.html) Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2012, 43–46  Jeffrey R. Holland, [“The Tongue of Angels,”](file:///general-conference/2007/04/the-tongue-of-angels.html) Ensign or Liahona, May 2007, 16–18 |

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| Additional Resources  [“Abuse,”](file:///gospel-topics/abuse.html) Gospel Topics, lds.org/topics  *Responding to Abuse: Helps for Ecclesiastical Leaders* (booklet, 2012)  *Protect the Child: Responding to Child Abuse* (DVD, 2008)  *Preventing and Responding to Child Abuse* (pamphlet, 2005)  *[Preventing and Responding to Spouse Abuse](http://store.lds.org/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/Product3_715839595_10557_21044_-1__195736)* [(pamphlet, 1998)](http://store.lds.org/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/Product3_715839595_10557_21044_-1__195736)  True to the Faith (2004), 6–7 |