

Personal Dignity

**A Policy for
Prevention, Intervention, and Healing
of Those Affected by Abuse**

Inc.

**1380 Spaulding Ave SE
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616-949-0344**

**Prepared by the Committee for Personal Dignity
MOSES Inc.
May, 2001**

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Making OurSelves Equipped Servants

PERSONAL DIGNITY POLICY

Preface

The purpose of this document is to provide a vehicle enabling the Inc. organization to establish policies and guidelines to accomplish the following goals:

- To make the Inc. organization a safe environment for young people to grow in their faith through Bible studies, service trips, and fellowship activities.
- To ensure intervention and healing for those affected by abuse.
- To protect the Inc. organization's volunteers.

Abuse of any kind within the Inc. organization would have devastating ramifications and consequences to the alleged victims, perpetrators and family members, as well as to the MOSES Inc. organization's volunteers.

It is the responsibility of Inc., recognizing God's love for his people, to do all that is reasonably possible to protect all participants from being physically, verbally, or sexually abused while they are under our care. It is also the responsibility of the organization to guard its leaders from being falsely accused of wrongful behavior. The best way to provide this protection is to have a clear and consistently applied policies and procedures to prevent and/or deal with actual or alleged offenses.

These policies and procedures will send a clear message to potential offenders, potential or former victims, and to parents who are concerned about the safety of their children.

DEFINITION OF SEXUAL ABUSE

Criminal and civil laws define sexual abuse as any sexual activity between an adult and a minor or as the sexual exploitation of a minor for the gratification or profit of an adult. Sexual abuse of minors includes behavior that involves touching and non-touching aspects. Children or minors who have been sexually abused often display physical, behavioral or verbal signs.

Child sexual abuse is any exploitation of a child, (any person under the age of 18) for sexual gratification of another person who is four or more years older than the victim, even if the child seems to consent.

GENERAL POLICIES

1. All MOSES leaders, whether student or adult, must:
 - a) complete the appropriate leadership application
 - b) be approved by the board of directors of MOSES Inc.
2. MOSES requires adult leaders to be at least 21 years of age, as well as to meet other requirements listed on the adult leader job description.

3. All MOSES leaders will be asked to review the MOSES Personal Dignity Policy annually and indicate, in writing, their agreement to uphold this policy.
4. All MOSES leaders, but especially those over the age of 18, need to be aware of potential legal implications that may result when any aspect of the MOSES Personal Dignity Policy is violated.
5. All programs of MOSES Inc. that involve minors are required to have age- and activity-appropriate policies that will protect minors from possible abuse.
6. While it is natural to show love and concern for one another within the context of the Christian community, leaders must always behave in ways that are appropriate, so that no one may ever have reason to accuse them of wrongful motivation.
7. To achieve the goal of preventing any forms of abuse or potential false allegations to occur, MOSES forbids its leaders to engage in any of the following conducts:
 - Child abuse, including, but not limited to sexual abuse.
 - Sexual exploitation, harassment, or molestation.
 - Disseminating, exhibiting or displaying sexual material to participants.
 - Hitting, kicking, slapping or shoving a participant.
 - Selling, giving or furnishing any participant with any tobacco substance, alcohol or any controlled substance.
 - Swearing, use of obscene, foul or sexually explicit language in the presence of any participant.
 - Removing of any clothing of any participant, except when appropriately necessary in a medical emergency.
 - Wearing of anything other than appropriate attire in the presence of other participants.
 - Kissing or touching of any participant on the lips or in any intimate area, unless that participant is the leader's spouse.
 - PDA - Public Display of Affection – any form of hugging, touching or hand-holding with another participant that would cause suspicion as to intent.
 - Sleeping in the same bed or bedding with any minor, if leader is over 18.

NOTE: This list is not to be considered all-inclusive. There may be other behaviors not listed, which would also be considered inappropriate. The list is intended as a guideline.

WARNING SIGNS OF ABUSE

There are signs, which often, but not always, are exhibited by a person who has been abused. There may be burn marks, bruises or blisters on the body, particularly on the arms, legs, back, face or buttocks. A minor may tell you that someone is or has been hurting him or her, but often this is not the case. Repeated rubbing or scratching of a private area or frequent use of the bathroom may be indications of sexual abuse. An abused minor may seem edgy, easily startled by sudden movements or noises. Other possible signs of abuse may be, but are not limited to: soiled, stained clothing worn regularly, a distinct and sudden change in personality or a seemingly unwarranted fear of certain people. If you, as a leader, observe any of these warning signs, you are asked to report them to your Trip Coordinator or Adult Leader immediately.

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GUIDELINES FOR PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS AND/OR COUNSELING

The opportunity for a minor to confidentially share his or her private and personal concerns and joys with an adult can contribute significantly to a minor's spiritual, emotional and physical wellbeing. Indeed, this may be the only time when a minor may be able or willing to disclose any abuse he or she may be suffering. Such private and confidential conversations are very much an integral part of a caring and loving Christian community environment, from which minors should not be excluded.

On the other hand, such private conversations create a very high-risk environment for the abuse-of-minors issues to arise. They create an ideal opportunity for (1) abuse of minors to occur, (2) a false appearance that abuse of a minor may be occurring, and (3) a false but difficult-to-refute allegation by a minor that an incident of abuse did occur.

Thus, there is a collision between two valuable objectives designed to reach a common goal. A proper balance is difficult to achieve with any set of policies or guidelines, especially given the variety of circumstances and relationships that may exist.

Therefore, in light of all the above, before engaging in a private conversation with a minor, a MOSES volunteer/staff should take into account all the following considerations:

- **Location:** Private conversations can be conducted in very public and populated locations. All conversations should be conducted in a public place, easily accessible by others.
- **Necessity:** There is no conversation that cannot be handled in a public viewing place (a room with clear glass windows or doors is a public area if other people are present).
- **Relationship:** Be sure you have a good, healthy relationship with the minor. Have a loyalty built before you get into heavy counseling. Keep it very public. Private conversations should be avoided if any romantic interests start to develop.
- **Frequency:** Frequent private conversations can cause difficulties in the minor's development as well as increase problems with issues involving abuse. Remember, suspicion comes quickly when we are meeting often with someone.
- **Ability:** If minors' spiritual or emotional needs are significant, consider referring them to a pastor or professional counselor. Don't over estimate your own counseling abilities.
- **Appearance:** Maintain an appropriate appearance around minors at all times. Do not wear provocative or revealing or inappropriate clothing. Also, your gestures and body language speak volumes.
- **Substance of conversation:** Remember, words and conduct that you may consider to be appropriate and innocent at the time can subsequently be made to appear very inappropriate or sinister. The substance of your conversation should remain appropriate at all times. For example, a male adult should not be discussing sexual matters with a female minor.
- **Touching:** Although hugging a minor in a public location when several others are present may be appropriate, physical contact, such as hugging, embracing, or holding the minor in a private, isolated location creates a very high risk of being misconstrued and must be avoided.
- **Safeguards**, as precaution:
 - a) Have someone else present during a conversation with a minor.
 - b) Keep notes of the conversation.
 - c) Let some other adult know that the conversations are occurring, as well as the reasons for the conversations.

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REQUIREMENTS FOR ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS BETWEEN LEADERS AND MINORS

- A one-on-one meeting between a MOSES leader, over 18 years of age, and a minor-aged participant, may occur only in an open and public place.
- Transportation of any single minor must be provided by two leaders, over age 18, unless a leader has written permission, on file in the MOSES office, from the minor's parent to provide transportation one-on-one.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO ABUSE ALLEGATIONS

- Violations of any section of this policy shall be submitted in written form, by the leader who witnessed the violation, to the Committee for Personal Dignity, for the purpose of review and determination of action.
- Allegations must be taken seriously.
- Allegations must be held in strict confidence.
- Any leader who receives a report of abuse, or who suspects abuse, shall not attempt any investigation, but shall report the incident/suspicion to his/her Trip Coordinator and/or a member of the Committee for Personal Dignity.
- The Committee for Personal Dignity will determine whether further action is warranted.

Committee for Personal Dignity

Members: The committee will consist of four members: President of the Board, Secretary of the Board, the Program Director, and a board member at large.

Training: Each new committee member will be required to attend an initial training sponsored by the existing committee, in order to gain current knowledge of child sexual abuse prevention. The committee will obtain information from the local child protection agencies.

Meetings: The Committee for Personal Dignity shall meet on a yearly basis to address the issues of adherence to policies, violations, any open incident reports, and to review the Personal Dignity Policy.

Accountability: The elected chair of this committee shall be responsible to the entire Board of Directors of MOSES Inc.

2001 Members of the MOSES Personal Dignity Committee

Chair: Paul Vander Nat, Treasurer:
Home: 616-457-1734
Work: 616-248-7461

Les Holwerda, Secretary:
Home: 616-662-0910
Work: 616-698-3830

Craig Scholtens, President:
Home: 616-662-6961
Work: 616-786-2290

Judy Vander Ark, Program Director:
Home: 616-949-0344
Cell: 616-540-8521

Guidelines for the Committee for Personal Dignity

- The committee will elect a chairperson.
- All actions will be approved by a majority vote
- The committee will receive all incident reports, review and make a determination of action
- The committee will contact insurance carrier as needed
- The committee will work in conjunction with appropriate civil authorities
- The committee will contact parent(s) as the state statutes allow
- The committee will receive all requests for changes to the Personal Dignity Policy, review them and make a recommendation to the entire Board of Directors
- The committee is responsible to report to the entire Board of Directors of MOSES Inc. concerning the status on the investigation of reported incidents, as the law allows
- The committee is responsible for any statements that are to be released on any public matter concerning child abuse
- The committee will issue all suspensions and reinstatements
- The committee is responsible for maintaining and securing all records concerning the Personal Dignity Policy
- The retention period of all incident reports will be seven years after final disposition.

Incident Procedure

How to Report Concerns or Allegations

- A. Please use discretion when involving other parties. Confidentiality for all parties is of the utmost importance. Enter as much information as possible on the Incident Report Form.
- B. While on MOSES Services trips, the Trip Coordinator will inform a member of the Committee for Personal Dignity of MOSES Inc. that an incident report has been filed.
- C. The Trip Coordinator and/or a member of the Committee for Personal dignity will contact the required legal authorities.
 1. City/County Child Protection Services
 2. County Sheriff, call – 911
- D. If you directly contact a protection or law enforcement agency, the Committee for Personal Dignity must be notified within 24 hours.
- E. Report directly to the Committee for Personal Dignity any other concerns.
- F. Public announcement are to be made only as required by law.

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INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Report of Actual or Suspected Child Abuse

MOSES Inc.
1380 Spaulding Ave SE
Grand Rapids MI 49546
Ph: 616-949-0344
Fax: 616-949-1920

1. Name and title of person filing Report

2. Date of alleged abuse / suspicion

3. Date of report to the Committee for Personal Dignity

4. Date of determination of action:

Name of Minor

Age / Birth Date

Gender

Name of parent / guardian _____

Address _____ City / State _____ Zip _____

Phone: work () _____ home () _____

Verbal Disclosure – describe the allegation

Describe injury, condition or behavior and reason of concern or suspicion of abuse

() Reported to Child Protective Services: Name of agency and contact person, date

() Name of other MOSES parties, phone number, title, date

Determination of Action to be taken by the Committee for Personal Dignity,

() The accused released from service (explain), date

() Continue to observe the accused (explain), date

() Continue to observe the minor, date

() Minor's parent / guardian contacted by the Committee for Personal Dignity, date

Signature of filer: _____ Date: _____

Chair of the Committee for Personal Dignity -Signature: _____

Date: _____

Final Disposition: _____

Date: _____

Chair of the Committee for Personal Dignity -Signature: _____

Date: _____

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