

Jehovah's Witnesses' Scripturally Based Position on Child Protection

Definitions as used in this document:

Child abuse: May include neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, or emotional abuse.

Child *sexual* abuse: Sexual abuse of children is a perversion. It generally includes one or more of the following acts with a child: sexual intercourse; oral or anal sex; fondling the genitals, breasts, or buttocks; voyeurism; indecent exposure; or soliciting a child for sexual conduct. It may include sexting with a minor or showing pornography to a minor.

Parents: References to parents apply equally to legal guardians or other persons who hold parental responsibility for a minor.

1. The Bible states that children are a sacred trust, “an inheritance from Jehovah.”—[Psalm 127:3](#).

2. The protection of children is of utmost concern and importance to all of Jehovah's Witnesses. This is in harmony with the long-standing and widely published Scripturally based position of Jehovah's Witnesses, as reflected in the references at the end of this document, which are all published on the official website of Jehovah's Witnesses, [jw.org](#).

3. Jehovah's Witnesses abhor child abuse and view it as a crime. ([Romans 12:9](#)) They recognize that the authorities are responsible for addressing such crimes. ([Romans 13:1-4](#)) Elders do not shield any perpetrator of child abuse from the authorities.—[Titus 3:1](#).

4. In all cases, victims, their parents, or any others are free to report an allegation of child abuse to the authorities. Elders clearly inform anyone who reports such an allegation to them that he or she is free to report the matter to the authorities.—[Galatians 6:5](#).

5. Elders comply with child abuse reporting laws. When elders learn of an allegation of child abuse, they immediately consult with the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses for legal advice on proper reporting procedure and for the protection of children. ([Romans 13:1](#)) Even in jurisdictions with no reporting requirements, the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses will instruct the elders to report the matter if the victim or another minor is in danger of abuse.

6. Elders ensure that the parents of a victim who is a minor are informed of anyone accused of abusing their child. If the alleged abuser is one of the victim's parents, the elders will inform the other parent.

7. Parents have the primary responsibility for the protection, safety, and instruction of their children. Therefore, parents within the congregation are encouraged to be vigilant in exercising their responsibility at all times and to do the following:

- Have direct and active involvement in their children's lives.
- Educate themselves and their children about child abuse.—[Proverbs 22:3](#).
- Encourage, promote, and maintain regular communication with their children, which includes being a good listener.—[Deuteronomy 6:6, 7](#).

Jehovah's Witnesses publish an abundance of Bible-based information to assist parents in fulfilling their responsibility to protect and instruct their children.—See the references at the end of this document.

8. Congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses do not separate children from their parents for the purpose of instruction or other activities. ([Ephesians 6:4](#)) For example, congregations do not provide or sponsor orphanages, Sunday schools, sports clubs, day-care centers, youth groups, or other activities that separate children from their parents.

9. As spiritual shepherds, elders strive to treat victims of child abuse with compassion, understanding, and kindness. ([Colossians 3:12](#)) They endeavor to listen carefully and empathetically to victims and to console them.—[Proverbs 21:13](#); [Isaiah 32:1, 2](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:14](#); [James 1:19](#).

10. Victims of child abuse and their families may decide to consult a mental-health professional. This is a personal decision. Others should not criticize or judge.—[Romans 14:4](#).

11. Jehovah's Witnesses also view child abuse as a serious sin. If an alleged abuser is one of Jehovah's Witnesses, the elders conduct an internal congregation investigation. This is a purely religious proceeding handled by elders according to Scriptural instructions and is limited to the issue of the alleged abuser's standing as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. The elders' handling of an allegation of child abuse is not a replacement for the authorities' handling of the matter.—[Romans 13:1-4](#).

12. Elders never require victims of child abuse to present their accusation in the presence of the alleged abuser. However, victims who are now adults may do so if they wish. In addition, victims can be accompanied by a confidant of either gender for moral support when presenting their allegation to the elders. If a victim prefers, the allegation can be submitted in the form of a written statement.

13. A congregant whom the elders determine to be an unrepentant child abuser is removed from the congregation and is no longer considered one of Jehovah's Witnesses. ([1 Corinthians 5:13](#)) If the elders determine that a congregant guilty of child sexual abuse is repentant, restrictions are imposed on the individual's congregation activities. The individual will be specifically admonished by elders not to be alone in the company of children, not to cultivate friendships with children, and not to display any affection for children. In addition, the elders may inform parents of minors within the congregation of the need to monitor their children's interaction with the individual.

14. A person who has engaged in child sexual abuse does not qualify to receive any congregation privileges or to serve in a position of responsibility in the congregation for decades, if ever.—[1 Timothy 3:1-7, 10](#); [5:22](#); [Titus 1:7](#).

15. This document is available to any person by using the official website of Jehovah's Witnesses, [jw.org](#). It is reviewed at least once every three years.

References available on jw.org:

- “Love and Justice in the Christian Congregation,” “Love and Justice in the Face of Wickedness,” and “Providing Comfort for Victims of Abuse,” *The Watchtower*, May 2019
- “Talk to Your Children About Sex,” *The Watchtower*, November 1, 2010
- “How to Be a Good Father,” *The Watchtower*, October 1, 2008
- “A Danger That Concerns Every Parent,” “How to Protect Your Children,” and “Make Your Family a Safe Haven,” *Awake!* October 2007
- “Jehovah’s Witnesses Educate Parents and Children to Protect Against Sexual Predators”
- *Answers to 10 Questions Young People Ask*, Question 8: “What Should I Know About Sexual Assault?”
- *Become Jehovah’s Friend—Protect Your Children*
- “How Can Parents Teach Their Children About Sex?”
- *We Protect Our Children*
- “Young People Ask—What Should I Know About Sexual Assault?—Part 1: Precautions”
- “Young People Ask—What Should I Know About Sexual Assault?—Part 2: Recovery”
- *What Your Peers Say—Sexual Harassment*
- “How Can I Protect Myself From Sexual Predators?” *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*, Volume 1, chapter 32
- *Learn From the Great Teacher*, chapters 10 and 32
- “Your Child Is in Danger!,” “How Can We Protect Our Children?,” and “Prevention in the Home,” *Awake!* October 8, 1993
- “The Innocent Victims of Child Abuse” and “The Secret Wounds of Child Abuse” *Awake!* October 8, 1991
- “Help for the Victims of Incest” *The Watchtower*, October 1, 1983