

**DAKOTAS CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
BOARD OF CAMP AND RETREAT MINISTRIES  
CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT POLICY STATEMENT**

**I. Introduction**

The purpose of this child abuse and neglect policy statement is to provide a philosophy of practice and a set of procedures that will govern the prevention, identification and reporting of child abuse and neglect in Dakotas Conference camp programs.

Under North Dakota law, an abused child is an individual under the age of 18 years who is suffering from serious physical harm or traumatic abuse caused by other and accidental means by a person responsible for the child's welfare, or is suffering from or was subjected to any act involving that individual in violation of §§ 12.1-20-01 through 12.1-20-08 which are the sex offenses for the state of North Dakota.

Under North Dakota law, a neglected child is a deprived child which is defined as follows: A child who is: (a) without proper parental care or control, subsistence, education as required by law or other care or control necessary for the child's physical, mental, or emotional health, or morals, and the deprivation is not due primarily to the lack of financial means of the child's parents, guardian, or other custodian; (b) has been placed for care or adoption in violation of law; (c) has been abandoned by the child's parents, guardian, or other custodian; (d) is without proper parental care, control or education as required by law, or other care and control necessary for the child's well being because of the physical, mental, emotional, or other illness or disability of the child's parent or parents, and that such lack of care is not due to a willful act of commission or act of omission by the child's parents, and care is requested by a parent; or (e) is in need of treatment and whose parents, guardian, or other custodian have refused to participate in treatment as ordered by a juvenile court.

By South Dakota statute 26-8A-2, Abused or neglected child defined. In this chapter and chapter 26-7, a: the term abused or neglected child, means a child:

1. Whose parent, guardian, or custodian has abandoned him/her or has subjected him/her to mistreatment or abuse;
2. Who lacks proper parental care through the actions or omissions of the parent, guardian, or custodian;
3. Whose environment is injurious to his welfare;
4. Whose parent, guardian, or custodian fails or refuses to provide proper or necessary subsistence, supervision, education, medical care or any other care necessary for his health, guidance, or well being; or
5. Who is homeless, without proper care, or not domiciled with his parent, guardian, or custodian through no fault of his parent, guardian or custodian.

6. Who is threatened with substantial harm.
7. Who has sustained emotional harm or mental injury as indicated by an injury to his intellectual or psychological capacity evidenced by an observable and substantial impairment in his ability to function within his normal range of performance and behavior, with due regard to his culture.
8. Who is subject to sexual abuse, sexual molestation or sexual exploitation by his parent, guardian, custodian or any other person responsible for his care.
9. Who was Subject to prenatal exposure to abusive use of alcohol or any controlled drug or substance not lawfully prescribed by a practitioner as authorized by chapter 22-24 and 34-20B.

## **II. Philosophy Statement**

The Dakotas Conference Board of Camp and Retreat Ministries recognize the problem of child abuse and neglect. The Board is aware the problem does not confine itself to any one special economic or religious group. Since the child abuse and neglect usually occurs in the privacy of the home, the extent and scope of this problem is unknown. Our commitment is to encourage our paid staff and volunteers to watch for signs of abuse and report those instances to the camp dean, Site Director and Executive Director of Camping.

The Board of Camp and Retreat Ministries will strive to serve as a model of support to abused and neglected children. Every effort will be made to maintain a close working relationship with the local Department of Social Services/Child Protection Services in reporting abused and neglected children. The Department of Social Services/Child Protection Services will be recognized as the key organization in the community child protective system.

The purpose of this child abuse and neglect policy is threefold:

1. To aid in the prevention and elimination of child abuse and neglect;
2. To establish a close working relationship with the Department of Social Services/Child Protection Services;
3. To encourage camp leaders to handle properly suspected cases of child abuse.

## **III. Procedures for Reporting Suspected Abuse and Neglect**

All paid staff and volunteers of Dakotas Conference camp programs are encouraged to watch for signs of child abuse and neglect. However, the designated employee responsible to implement any reporting procedures is the Executive Director and the Site Director.

The following procedures are to be used:

1. The child abuse and neglect policy adopted by the Board will be made available to parents and pastors upon request. A copy of this policy and procedure statement will be filed at each camp site and at the Dakotas Conference Office.
2. If behavioral or physical observations create the suspicion of abuse or neglect:
  - a. The Camp Dean and Site Director will contact the Executive Director and report the observation.
  - b. The Executive Director will follow through by contacting the Department of Social Services/Child Protection Services.
  - c. Camp employees and volunteers SHALL NOT contact the child's family or any other persons to determine the cause of the suspected abuse or neglect. It is NOT the responsibility of camp personnel to prove that the child has been abused or neglected, or to determine whether the child is in need of protection.
  - d. The Site Director and the Camp Dean will contact the Executive Director. The Executive Director will contact the Department of Social Services/Child Protection Services; they will decide appropriate action to be taken in relation to the camper.
4. In the event that a Dakotas Conference employee or volunteer staff person is suspected of an act of abuse or neglect, the Camp Dean, Site Director and Executive Director will determine appropriate action to be taken in the camp setting. For the good of the campers, the situation will be minimized, but every necessary action will be taken to protect the camper involved. This may include dismissing a staff person/volunteer or removing that person from the situation. The parents or guardian of the camper involved will be contacted by the Executive Director.
5. If there is a specific reason to do so, the pastor and district superintendent related to the camper and the suspected abuser should be contacted by the Executive Director.
6. Records related to suspected child abuse or neglect will be kept in confidential files at the office of the Executive Director.

1 **APPENDIX A**

2 **The Dakotas United Methodist Conference**  
3 **Board of Camp and Retreat Ministries**  
4 **CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT POLICY STATEMENT**  
5 **ABUSE AND NEGLECT POLICY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**  
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7

8 I, \_\_\_\_\_ acknowledge that I have received the Board of Camp and  
9 Retreat Ministries Child Abuse and Neglect Policy Statement and that I have read its contents.  
10 I will contact the Executive Director of Camping if I have any questions.

11  
12 I further acknowledge that if behavior or physical observations create the knowledge or  
13 reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect I will contact the Camp Dean or Event Coordinator who  
14 will contact the Site Director and/or Executive Director of Camping and Youth Ministries. I will  
15 cooperate to complete a written report.

16  
17 All written reports will be forwarded to the Executive Director of Camping & Youth Ministries  
18 who may then contact the Department of Social Services/Child Protection Services. If for any  
19 reason there is concern about contacting one of the individuals designated in III-2 one of their  
20 supervisors shall be contacted.

21  
22 I acknowledge that confidentiality and respect for all parties will be maintained.  
23  
24

25 \_\_\_\_\_  
26 Paid Staff/Volunteer Staff Signature

27 \_\_\_\_\_  
28  
29 Address

30 \_\_\_\_\_  
31  
32 City, State, Zip Code

33 \_\_\_\_\_  
34  
35 Phone number

36 \_\_\_\_\_  
37  
38 Date