



10 KEY ELEMENTS OF A CHILD ABUSE PROTECTION POLICY

The care and protection of children at any public, private, religious, or secular organization or institution that supports children or vulnerable adults should be, one of, if not their highest priority. Accordingly, these organizations and institutions must ensure that their child abuse protection policies and procedures are comprehensive and current. Here are 10 key elements to consider when determining whether your [institution or organization](#) is child abuse protection ready.

1. **Formal Written Policies:** A written and comprehensive child abuse prevention policy that is regularly reviewed and updated, must be in place. A thorough child protection policy protects not only the children but will also serve to safeguard the adults who work or volunteer for the organization.
2. **On-Boarding Guidelines:** Ensuring the right people are hired is a crucial step to protecting children. In addition to an in-person interview, a complete criminal background check, sex offender database search, reference check, civil litigation and credit background check, a DMV motor vehicle records check, and an identity, employment history and education verification are essential to a complete child protection policy.
3. **Two Adult Rule:** An adult should never be alone with a child. [Classroom](#), [bathroom](#), [fieldtrip](#), overnight and transportation policies should all be formulated with a the "Two Adult Rule" in place.
4. **Physical Contact:** A policy which sets detailed parameters regarding what is and is not appropriate or allowable physical contact with children will provide needed guidance for staff and volunteers who interact with children.
5. **Mandatory Reporting:** A policy must explain the mandatory child abuse reporting laws applicable to the organization or institution. While who is a mandatory reporter, what the standard of proof to report is, and how to report varies by state, criminal liability for failure to report attaches in every state. The mandatory reporting policy must be tailored to the state law.
6. **Training:** A policy requiring onboarding and annual training for employees and volunteers is vital to a healthy organization. Training topics should include a plethora of child abuse topics including, among others, grooming, power

differentials, and mandatory reporting. The policy should mandate documentation of completed training as a condition of employment or volunteering. The policy should also require age-appropriate annual training for children, youth, and vulnerable adults on similar topics.

7. **Social Media:** A strong policy for the appropriate use of social media and digital communications with minors is a necessary ingredient for a comprehensive child protection policy. Appropriate social media sites, private communications, documentation, preservation of communications and the inclusion of the Two Adult Rule are the basics for a comprehensive policy.
8. **Investigations:** Before an abuse crisis occurs, a formal policy documenting the process for conducting internal investigations, notifying and/or cooperating with law enforcement, determining interim employment measures and guidelines for engaging an independent third-party investigation team will allow for transparency and enhance community support when needed.
9. **Advisory Board:** An organization's leader should not be the primary decision maker on prevention and response to allegations of child abuse. A policy that incorporates an independent advisory board to assist leadership in their decision making by conducting internal investigations, identifying interim measures, and recommending a way forward. Advisory boards may also review and revise policies, assist in hiring and much more. Policies that establish specific duties delegated to the advisory boards serve to establish consistency, community trust and transparency.
10. **Communication:** Failure to communicate with parents and the organizational community when a crisis occurs can be devastating to the ability of an organization to resolve a crisis and care well for survivors. Implementing a policy that identifies roles, responsibilities and sets requirements for information sharing will enhance community trust and transparency.

In addition to these 10 key elements, a comprehensive child abuse protection policy will also include a number of other important policies and procedures. With the variety of issues to consider when constructing a complete and detailed child abuse protection policy, it may benefit your organization to engage a compliance or child abuse subject matter expert or compliance professional to help create or revise your current policy. These same experts may also serve as compliance consultants on an as needed basis for advising leadership and advisory committees on policy, communications, and crisis response. The emotional, psychological, and physical toll on survivors of sexual abuse is immeasurable. Investing in a strong and comprehensive child abuse prevention policy can help reduce the occurrence of sexual abuse and is far less costly than the alternative.



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