

Below is a sample of a quick reference card that directors and administrators can give their leaders. It will assist them in knowing the action steps to take regarding sensitive situations. Additional information is located in the Administrator/Director's section in the Circle of Grace binder under "Key Steps When You Have a Sensitive/Concerning Situation".

Quick Reference Card for Leaders

- A** Be **Attentive** to comments and behaviors during class.
- C** **Contact** administrators/directors prior to the dismissal of class if comments or behaviors are concerning.
- T** **Team** approach is always best. Collaborate with your administrator/director/pastor to help clarify child's statement/behavior and to determine if there is a need to report to the authorities.
- I** **Initial Report** to the authorities maybe needed. The child abuse hotline number is 714-940-1000 or 800-207-4464 (24-hour hotline)
- O** **Other Resources** are available through the Diocese of Orange, Office of Child and Youth Protection, Norma Aguero, who can be reached by email: naguero@rcbo.org.
- N** **Note** all observations/statements and actions taken; make a file.

Key Steps For Administrators, Directors of Religious Education, Youth Ministry Directors, and Leaders When There is a Sensitive or Concerning Situation

If a child discloses clear information of abuse and immediate safety is a concern the following steps should occur:

- Assure the child that you will contact people who can help them be safe.
- Ask Director/Administrator for help reporting and with your further interaction with the child/family. (Refer to the packet for reporting Child Abuse Neglect and Child Protection Policy book.)
- Authorities will be responsible for interviewing the child so keep questions to a minimum.
- Ask authorities who will contact the parents and when this will occur.
- Assure the child that you will be there for them during the process as much as possible.

When a child discloses information that is concerning but not threatening immediate safety, the following steps should be considered:

- Always coordinate with your Director/Administrator when dealing with these situations.
- Decide when and if the parents should be notified depending on relationship with parents and issues around the concern (a parent is very sick in the hospital and you become aware that the young grade school child is left home alone).
- Keep written documentation of your concerns.
- Use your best judgment in sharing information with parents regarding your conversation with their child.
- Consider approaching parents to offer assistance.
- Consider report to the Authorities (refer to reporting packet).

There May Be Many Reasons That a Child Approaches You Upset or Discloses Potentially Concerning Information. Below are general guidelines when you find yourself in this type of situation.

Open-ended questions are best. These questions help you enter into the world of a child without coloring it with assumptions.

(Child starts crying in class.) Below are examples:

- If your tears had words, what would they say?

- I am here to listen.
- Tell me more.
- And then what?
- I want to understand your hurt.

Directed questions when there is more information:

(Child states they are upset with their Uncle/Aunt)

- Tell me more about your Uncle/Aunt.
- What are the things that are upsetting you?

Avoid Leading Questions:

- Did your Uncle hurt you?
- Did your Aunt touch you in your privates?
- Did they tell you not to tell?

Working with Parents in Sensitive Situations:

Talk in a confidential area and when asking questions remember to keep them open ended and non-accusatory.

When immediate safety is a concern and a report has been made:

- Seek advice from the authorities (CPS and Police) as to who will contact parents. (You may interfere with the investigation if you contact parents before authorities.)
- Always coordinate with your Director/Administrator when dealing with parents in these situations.
- If parents become aware of your report, reinforce that you are a mandatory reporter and need to defer to the authorities during the investigation.
- It is not your role to determine guilt but to report concerns per the law.

When immediate safety is not a concern and a report has NOT been made:

- Share the facts in a calm and nonjudgmental manner.
- Avoid assumptions. For example: Ted was crying in class, and told you someone is bothering him. He did not define bother or identify the person. (Important not to assume guilt of the parents.)
- Assume their support and concern unless they demonstrate otherwise.
- Offer supportive resources such as counseling.