



## Child, Disabled Adult, or Person age 65 Years or Older Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation Reporting Guidelines and Procedures

### **Purposes of This Policy**

- To provide guidance for identifying and reporting suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation involving any child between the ages of birth to 18 years of age, an adult who was a victim as a child\*, disabled adults or anyone 65 years of age or older.
  - if the alleged abuser holds a position of trust or authority related to children –or-
  - if other children has been or may be abused.

*\*A report must be made if an adult reports abuse that took place as a child and the disclosure of the abuse is necessary to protect another child.*

- To comply with State and Federal laws requiring mandatory reporting of actual and reasonably suspected cases of child, disabled adult or senior adult abuse, neglect or exploitation.

### **Policy**

All staff members, pastors and volunteers acting on behalf of Radius Church are required to report both actual and suspected cases of abuse, neglect or exploitation of children, the disabled or those ages 65 or older to the proper authorities as required by law. Texas Law does not provide an abuse reporting confidentiality privilege for Clergy, nor will Radius Church honor such a privilege. We require church pastors to report any potential abuse, neglect or exploitation situations disclosed to them.

Staff members should be familiar with reporting requirements that are required by the State of Texas. Abuse includes harm already caused or harm that has been threatened to the child, the disabled, or the adult aged 65 or older.

- **Physical** - a physical act directed at a child, disabled adult or person age 65 or older that causes injury;
- **Sexual** – contact or interactions between a child and an adult, or another child, when the child is being used for sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or another person. This includes exploitation through photographs, videos, or other communication methods;
- **Emotional** – acts or omissions by the parent or other caregivers that have caused, or could cause, serious behavioral, cognitive, emotional, or mental disorders;
- **Neglect** – failure to provide for the child, disabled adult, or person’s age 65 or older basic needs. This includes adequate adult supervision, medical attention housing, food, and clothing. Most cases of physical neglect involve inadequate adult supervision that has caused harm to the child or vulnerable adult, or places them in danger of such harm.
- **Exploitation** – More common for those disabled or who are age 65 or older. Examples of exploitation are identity theft, misuse of funds by a caregiver, scams, signature forgery, etc.

The following are some warning signs that abuse may have occurred:

- Unexplained injury, a patch of hair missing, a burn or bruises on strange places (back of arms, stomach, back, etc.);
- Drawings in conjunction with statements from a child or vulnerable adult;
- Prayer requests of protection from pain or injury from specific individuals;
- Statements from the child or vulnerable adult;
- Complaints about numerous beatings;
- Consistent poor hygiene;
- Age-inappropriate comments regarding sex or violence.

Failure to report actual or suspected cases of child abuse can result in criminal and civil liability for the church, staff member, or volunteer who failed to report it. It is the staff member or volunteer’s responsibility to report suspected abuse. It is not his or her responsibility to investigate and draw a conclusion as to whether or not abuse has occurred.

It is helpful to have the following information when reporting child abuse:

- Name of child;
- Age of child;
- Address of child;
- Parents or guardian of child;
- Alleged abuser’s name and address;
- Nature of suspected abuse.

## **Suspected Abuse Reporting Procedures:**

All suspected cases of child abuse must be handled confidentially. Communication of the suspected abuse should only be made to a senior staff member and any authorities that are involved. Any disclosure to a volunteer or staff member that takes place on church property or during a church-sponsored event, regardless of location of possible offense, necessitates an incident report. Church pastors may provide pastoral support and care to the family throughout the entire process.

*“Texas law says anyone who thinks a child, or person 65 years or older, or an adult with disabilities is being abused, neglected, or exploited must report it to DFPS. A person who reports abuse in good faith is immune from civil or criminal liability. DFPS keeps the name of the person making the report confidential. Anyone who does not report suspected abuse can be held liable for a misdemeanor or felony. Time frames for investigating reports are based on the severity of the allegations. Reporting suspected abuse makes it possible for a family to get help.”* – Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)  
How to contact the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS):

- If child, disabled adult or person 65 years of age or older are in immediate danger, please call 911.
- Emergency reporting (for situations that need response within 24 hours): DFPS Hotline Phone: 1-800-252-5400 (toll-free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)
- Non-emergency reporting (may take up to 24 hours to process): DFPS Hotlines - Phone: 1-800-252-5400 or Online at: [www.txabusehotline.org](http://www.txabusehotline.org)

**Should a Pastor, Staff Member or church member suspect abuse, neglect or exploitation that may have occurred or revealed on church property, during or at a church event, or to a church staff member or ministry leader, in addition to any mandatory state reporting, the Lead Pastor’s office should be notified immediately and written documentation provided via Incident Report located at [www.myradiuschurch.org/admin](http://www.myradiuschurch.org/admin).**