

# Youth Protection

## ***DeMOLAY YOUTH PROTECTION PROGRAM***

*All material in this manual concerning Youth Protection is intended to supplement, not to replace, the material in the DeMolay Youth Protection Program provided by DeMolay International. All Advisors must review the Youth Protection Program completely and thoroughly.*

As adult workers in DeMolay, we have a tremendous opportunity as well as an awesome responsibility to provide a safe program consistent with the traditional values of DeMolay. We are taking the problems of child abuse and drug and alcohol abuse very seriously. To help educate everyone involved with DeMolay about these issues, DeMolay International provides the Youth Protection Program. **If we do not protect our young men, who will?**



The purpose of the Youth Protection Program is to inform and alert all support groups of the dangers for which most teens are ill prepared. Our intent is not to frighten anyone, but we do want all groups to know about those abuses that impact greatest on young people. DeMolay's Youth Protection Program includes print and video material, toll-free telephone numbers, and a comprehensive screening and training program for adult volunteers.

## ***CHILD ABUSE***

***Definition:*** *In general, child abuse is defined as, "Any act toward a child under 21 years of age that impairs physical, and/or mental health immediately or over time."*

There are four basic categories of child abuse:

1. ***Child neglect*** occurs when a child's basic needs for physical and emotional well-being go unmet.
2. ***Emotional abuse*** occurs when a child is given the message through word and actions that attack and/or harm the child's self-esteem or self-worth.
3. ***Physical abuse*** involves the injury of a child when the parent/caretaker is under stress or has little impulse control. Hazing and unofficial initiations can result in physical abuse.
4. ***Sexual abuse*** involves any sexual act between a child and an adult or a child and a significantly older child. Such acts may range from fondling to sexual intercourse. Sexual abuse is always the responsibility of the offender.

## ***CHILD ABUSERS***

There is no single profile for all molesters. All ages, all economic groups, all levels of intelligence, all races, and all religions are represented in the backgrounds of people who have molested children. The majority of people who sexually abuse children know their victims. The abuser is most often someone who is trusted by the youth.

People who molest young people often appear to be "normal." They often have families and jobs. Molesters have come from all professions: physicians, police officers, choir directors, letter carriers, ministers, youth group leaders, teachers, coaches, lawyers, businessmen, construction workers, etc.

## ***ADULT RECRUITMENT***

The key to conducting a safe program is in the quality of the adult leadership team. Child Molesters

unfortunately seek out youth organizations, among them DeMolay, to gain access to young people. This is why it is necessary during adult recruitment to avoid taking shortcuts. To protect our DeMolays, advisors should:

- Adhere to the guidelines provided by DeMolay International for selecting adult workers.
- Check past references of adult applicants.
- Establish external obstacles to discourage the child abuser. All adult volunteers must complete the *Adult Worker Profile* form, which will be properly executed at the jurisdictional level, and then submitted to DeMolay International.

## ***ABUSE PREVENTION POLICIES***

DeMolay International has established policies that serve the dual purpose of protecting DeMolays as well as providing adult volunteers protection from unfounded allegations of abuse:

- At least two members of the adult leadership team should accompany DeMolays on all trips, outings, and DeMolay Chapter activities. Additional leadership is required based on the size of the group. The minimum acceptable ratio is one adult to every five youth.
- Chapters should make an effort to implement the “safety rule of four” which requires that no fewer than four individuals go on trips and outing. If an accident occurs, one person can stay with the injured and two go for help.
- “Secret” activities, unofficial organizations, and unofficial ceremonies outside of DeMolay are not authorized by DeMolay International and are not permitted as part of a Chapter’s activity.
- Activities of organizations such as the Court of Chevaliers, LOH Preceptories, Representative DeMolay clubs and the like must meet the same standards of conduct as a DeMolay Chapter.
- Adult volunteers should respect the privacy of DeMolays in situations such as changing into swimming suits or taking showers at camp and intrude only to the extent that health and safety requires. They also need to protect their own privacy in similar situations. Adult volunteers should sleep in separate quarters except in extreme emergencies when the health or well-being of the DeMolay may be at risk. Do not house DeMolays with adult volunteers or house younger DeMolays with significantly older DeMolays. Adult volunteers should always shower separately from DeMolays.
- Adult volunteers will avoid unnecessary physical contact with DeMolays, such as placing hands on legs and patting backsides/buttocks.
- Adult volunteers must not permit activities involving group nudity, such as “skinny dipping”, etc.
- Adult volunteers should hold conferences with DeMolays in open settings, not alone or behind closed doors.

## ***REPORTING REQUIREMENTS***

If a DeMolay or other youth complains or comments about an experience with an adult that may suggest or infer abuse, take him/her seriously. Remember, a youth is not likely to articulate a complaint in an adult manner. It may take the form of declining to associate with a particular adult for no apparent reason or abruptly leaving an activity.

If anyone has any reason to suspect, or directly knows that an abuse occurred, it should be immediately reported to the Jurisdictional Executive Officer. He, in turn, will notify the proper authorities.

Reporting requirements vary from state to state. No state requires that a person making the report have proof that the abuse occurred, only that it is suspected. The only requirement is that the report be **made in good faith**.