

Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses

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January 1, 2017

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Re: Handling Matters Relating to Alleged Child Abuse

Dear Brothers:

This letter replaces the letter dated February 1, 2011, to all bodies of elders regarding handling matters relating to alleged child abuse and has been added to the list of policy letters cited in *Index to Letters for Bodies of Elders* (S-22).

From time to time, organizations and others ask to see our Policy for handling matters relating to child abuse. Of course, our comprehensive and long-standing policy has been set out in various publications over the years. However, to help answer such enquiries, we have a *Child Safeguarding Policy*. The policy has been recently revised.

The *Child Safeguarding Policy* summarizes key Scriptural and theocratic principles for the protection of children. The policy includes the articles listed on page 6. Once you have entered the telephone numbers on page 6 of the *Child Safeguarding Policy* document, it should be printed. The articles listed in the "Notes" section are part of this document and should also be printed. Place the policy and the articles in a folder of its own, and then keep it in the congregation file. As stated on page 5: "This Policy will be made available upon request to members of the congregation."

The protection of children is of the utmost importance to us. (Ps. 127:3; Matt. 18:4-6) Jehovah's Witnesses abhor child abuse and we do not shield those committing offences of this nature. (Rom. 12:9) Child abuse may include physical, sexual and emotional abuse, or neglect. This policy serves as a guide and, as set out in point 10 of the policy, includes the direction to contact the branch office as soon as possible when elders learn of alleged child abuse. **In such a case, two elders should contact the Legal Department at the branch office.** This should be done even if the report is unsupported and regardless of the age of the alleged victim or perpetrator now or at the time of the alleged abuse. Spiritual and legal advice given by the branch office is situation-specific. Therefore, in every case it is important that you contact the branch office immediately. Do not rely on past advice that may have been given regarding some other situation. Review carefully the revised *Child Safeguarding Policy*.

Parents are responsible for the welfare and safety of their children. But elders do all that they reasonably can as spiritual and confidential counsellors to safeguard the cleanness of the congregation and to protect children and other vulnerable ones. (1 Cor. 16:13) We trust that the information in this letter and the *Child Safeguarding Policy* will help you carry this load. The branch office is here to assist. Remember to contact the branch office promptly when faced with issues such as those outlined above.

Please be assured of our love and prayers. May Jehovah continue to bless you as you shepherd his flock.—1 Pet. 5:1-3.

Your brothers,

*Christian Congregation
of Jehovah's Witnesses*