

Homeschoolers of Maine Training Information and Policy Concerning Child Protection

Introduction

Homeschooling continues to grow around the nation and in Maine. As it grows, Homeschoolers of Maine (and the services that we offer) broadens its scope and reach. Homeschoolers of Maine (HOME) takes the issue of protecting children seriously. Therefore, it is vital for us to consider how best to keep children safe while under our care. In order to serve families responsibly, HOME has a child protection policy in place: a plan for preventing the abuse of children under our care and for responding correctly if sexual abuse or other mistreatment occurs within the context of HOME activities.

All HOME Leadership Team members must agree and adhere to the policy and conditions set forth below.

Required HOME Ministry Child Protection Training for HOME Leadership Team Members

Upon acceptance of a leadership role within HOME, the following requirements must be met:

Training Video – Boy Scouts of America has a 30 minute, interactive, online training video, which can be found here: <http://www.scouting.org/Training/YouthProtection.aspx>. All HOME Leadership Team members are expected to watch the video independently.

Child Protection Resource Packets – The following documents must be completed or reviewed independently.

1. Application – All HOME Leadership Team members must have completed a two-page application form.
2. HOME Child Protection Policy – A brief document explaining HOME's policy regarding the protection of children from abuse, which can be found below, and is also posted on our website and in our Ministry Manual for reference
3. HSLDA's Child Abuse Resource Pages (which can be found at the end of this document)
4. Mandatory Reporting – Links to Maine's mandatory reporting statute and training information (which can be found at the end of this document)

HOME Child Protection Policy

Over the years, Homeschoolers of Maine has had the privilege of serving and supporting thousands of homeschooling parents in Maine. Protecting and nurturing their children comes naturally to these parents. Dedicated and loving parents also want that same protection for all children.

All parents, as well as homeschooling parents and leaders, must be alert to any abuse or neglect in order to protect those who cannot protect themselves. Child abuse can include bullying, cyberstalking, sexual abuse, as well as physical abuse.

Our Purpose

HOME is a non-profit, volunteer based ministry founded in 1990. We are *Families Helping Families!* The mission of HOME is to support homeschooling families in their God-given and constitutional right and responsibility to oversee the education of their children. Under no circumstances would HOME want homeschool freedoms to be used to shield child abuse and domestic violence. However, we have **no civil authority to act**, as an organization, regarding allegations of child abuse or neglect.

Our Policy

HOME's goal in child protection is to educate and support ministry leaders who work or come into contact with children in the homeschooling community. Established policies are to prevent the occurrence of child abuse and neglect within the ministry of HOME and avoid any unfounded allegations against leaders.

All HOME Leadership Team members must complete a Leadership application that provides essential information and agree to a background check. New leaders will be interviewed by HOME's Operations Manager and/or a Board Member. Personal references listed on the application will be checked to determine the suitability and character of the applicant.

All HOME Leadership Team members must complete the *HOME Ministry Child Protection Training* program upon acceptance of a leadership role, and sign an agreement confirming that the requirements of the training have been met.

Everyone involved in HOME's ministry must comply with the following policies to ensure a safe and secure environment for children and leaders at all HOME events.

1. Each group of children, not under the direct supervision of their parents, shall have a minimum of two leaders present at all times.
2. One-on-one contact and interaction is to be avoided at all times.
3. All leaders must be familiar with the definition of child abuse below (as defined by The National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse):
 - a. Physical Abuse: A non-accidental injury, which may include beatings, violent shaking, human bites, strangulations, suffocation, poisoning or burns. The results may be bruises and welts, broken bones, scars, permanent disfigurement, long lasting psychological damage, serious internal injuries, brain damage or death
 - b. Neglect: The failure to provide a child with basic needs, including food, clothing, education, shelter, and medical care; also abandonment or inadequate supervision.
 - c. Sexual Abuse: The sexual exploitation of a child by an older person, as in rape, incest, fondling the genital, exhibitionism or pornography. It may be done for the sexual gratification of the older person or need for power, or for economic reasons.
4. Successful completion of the HOME Ministry Child Protection Training

Our Practice

Laws that address child abuse and neglect, as well as domestic violence, are in place. First-hand information regarding child abuse or neglect should be reported immediately to the appropriate civil authorities.

If you believe a child is being sexually abused, call the police. If you believe a child is at risk of imminent harm, call 911.

Resources

It is with much appreciation that HOME includes the following links provided by Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA). These resources will help identify child abuse and neglect and offer helpful information and hope.

Child Abuse

<https://hslda.org/LandingPages/ChildAbuse/default.asp>

What is considered child abuse according to the Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, and how can you prevent it?

Sexual Abuse

<https://hslda.org/LandingPages/ChildAbuse/protect-from-child-abuse.asp>

How can you identify sexual abuse, and what age-appropriate information should you share with your children?

Safety Principles

https://hslda.org/LandingPages/ChildAbuse/Safety_Principles_7-31-2014.asp

How can you pro-actively prevent sexual abuse? How can you protect someone who has experienced abuse?

If You Suspect Abuse

<https://hslda.org/LandingPages/ChildAbuse/addressing-child-abuse-in-community.asp>

Take appropriate steps to address concerns when you suspect abuse.

Additional Resources

<https://hslda.org/LandingPages/ChildAbuse/resourcelist.aspx>

Learn how to protect your child from abuse. What can you do if you find yourself, your child or another family's child in an abusive situation?

Focus on the Family

<http://www.focusonthefamily.com/>

Focus on the Family offers valuable resources for families in crisis. Visit Focus on the Family or call their Help Center counselors at 1-855-771-HELP (4357), Monday through Friday, 8am – 10pm Eastern Time.

Maine Mandatory Reporting Statutes

Visit the following website for a description of child abuse and domestic violence with additional information on mandatory reporter, confidential records, and false reporting.

<http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/22/title22sec4011-a.html>

http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mandated_reporters.shtml

<http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/mandated-reporters.shtml>

Agreement Statement

I, _____, have accepted a role within the
(print name clearly)

HOME Leadership Team. I have completed the Boy Scouts of America's online training video, and submitted and/or reviewed all required documents.

I agree to abide by the policy set forth by Homeschoolers of Maine regarding the protection of children from child abuse.

Signature

Date