

# **YWAM Sexual Abuse Guidelines**

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## **Introduction**

These guidelines are intended to assist Youth With A Mission (YWAM) leaders and staff in addressing incidents of sexual abuse and sexual harassment within YWAM ministries, locations, and teams. Given the variations in local laws, cultural contexts, and various other factors, it is not feasible to implement a uniform set of guidelines on an international scale. Therefore, each nation must adapt and further refine these guidelines to suit their specific circumstances.

## **1. Statement of Commitment**

YWAM is an international, inter-denominational Christian movement dedicated to personally presenting Jesus to both current and future generations. Our goal is to mobilize as many individuals as possible to support this mission and to train and equip believers for their roles in fulfilling the Great Commission. In our commitment to sharing and proclaiming the gospel, we are also dedicated to responsibly addressing any allegations of sexual abuse or harassment.

The following is our statement of commitment regarding this matter.

1.1. YWAM is deeply committed to the well-being of our staff. We expect our leaders and staff to cultivate positive, supportive relationships in every aspect of our mission, and we vehemently oppose all forms of sexual abuse.

1.2. We are dedicated to upholding the laws of the countries in which we operate, and we will promptly report any instances of sexual abuse within the YWAM community.

1.3. We firmly believe that every individual holds immeasurable value, worth, and dignity as they are created in the image of God. Therefore, it is our conviction that all our staff members should be treated with respect and care that honors God.

1.4 We firmly believe that every individual holds immeasurable value. They have the right to protection from abuse, regardless of race, social background, age, gender, skin color, disability, religion, nationality, or beliefs.

1.5 YWAM condemns all forms of abuse and exploitation as fundamentally wrong. Additionally, it is essential to recognize that remaining silent in the

face of known abuse or exploitation is equally wrong and enables such behavior to continue.

## **2. Definition of Sexual abuse and Sexual Harassment**

### 2.1 Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse encompasses physical, verbal, and emotional harm and can involve sexual touching, fondling, and exposure to adult sexual activity or pornography for children. It may also include coercing children to pose, undress, or participate in sexual acts on film or in person. For adults, sexual abuse includes physical, verbal, or emotional harm. Peeping into bathrooms or bedrooms to spy on a child or an individual, as well as attempted or actual rape, are also forms of sexual abuse. It is a serious violation of an individual's rights and well-being.

### 2.2 Sexual harassments

Sexual harassment encompasses any unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature, whether expressed directly or indirectly. This includes physical contact, advances, and requests for sexual favors. Such actions are not only inappropriate but also create a hostile, intimidating, or offensive environment. It's imperative to recognize and address sexual harassment, as it undermines the safety and dignity of individuals in any setting.

It may include sexually colored remarks or behavior, such as

- a. Unwelcome sexual advances, verbal, non-verbal, or physical conduct loaded comments slander, remarks or jokes, letters, phone calls or e-mails, gestures of a sexual nature, showing of pornography, lurid stares, physical contact or molestation, stalking, sounds or display of a derogatory nature which creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.
- b. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature are made in exchange for work-related benefits such as employment, promotion, incentives, or evaluation of a person's performance.

## **3. In the event of sexual abuse or harassment allegations, taking immediate and appropriate action is crucial to create a supportive environment and ensure thorough investigations. The following recommendations outline the necessary steps to address these allegations.**

3.1. YWAM staff, students, short-term volunteers, friends, and donors are encouraged to engage in open discussions about the potential for abuse within the organization.

3.2. Designated Area Circle Team (ACT)/elders will be responsible for addressing issues of sexual abuse within the organization.

3.3 In the event of an allegation of abuse involving a YWAM leader, staff member, student, or short-term volunteer, YWAM will take necessary steps to address the situation. It is important to facilitate open discussions and provide education about abuse. The YWAM base is encouraged to seek support from qualified and trained specialists to assist with trauma care for affected staff members, friends, and family members of the victim.

3.4 YWAM is obligated to report suspected abuse to the location leader, and all alleged abuse reports will be thoroughly investigated. The investigation process will be documented, and a written report of findings will be completed within 30 days of the allegation. External expertise or legal authorities may be involved if necessary. The ACT will be notified of any abuse allegations within 3 days of the allegation.

3.5. Upon conclusion of the investigation: If abuse is confirmed, the relevant legal authorities will be notified if they were not previously involved. If a YWAM leader, staff member, student, or short-term volunteer is found to be involved in abuse, they will be immediately terminated and subject to criminal prosecution. In cases where no evidence of abuse is found, the informant, alleged victim, and alleged perpetrator will be informed.

3.6 The allegation will be kept confidential, with only those directly involved accessing the necessary information.

3.7. YWAM staff, students, or short-term volunteers who breach confidentiality regarding allegations will receive a written warning.

3.8. Both the victim and the perpetrator must be treated with respect throughout the investigation. Providing emotional and moral support to both parties is essential for fostering a constructive environment.

3.9. YWAM will thoroughly investigate any staff accusations of abuse, regardless of the alleged perpetrator's identity.

3.10. The alleged perpetrator will be treated impartially.

3.11. The YWAM ACT/location area will document and securely file all information related to the investigation and accusation.

3.12. YWAM will appoint a specific individual to handle interactions with the media and law enforcement. The ACT team will carefully consider how to involve the police and media before initiating an investigation.

#### **4. Guidelines for Handling Communications**

YWAM is committed to addressing sexual allegations in a manner that respects the value, dignity, and self-worth of all individuals involved.

Maintaining confidentiality is a top priority. When communicating about a sexual allegation case, the following guidelines are to be followed:

4.1. YWAM will meticulously protect the identities and specific locations of victims in public relations materials.

4.2. Those representing YWAM will unequivocally convey the message that all individuals are created in the image of God, deserving of love and respect, and that all forms of abuse are unequivocally wrong.

4.3. Information about past or present abuse will only be disclosed to those with a genuine need to know.

4.4 Handle with care the usage of any images, ensuring they are respectful and not exploitative.

## **5. How can we best support the victim?**

Supporting victims of sexual abuse or harassment requires a sensitive and respectful approach to ensure they feel safe throughout the process.

Key steps include:

5.1. Affirm and reassure the victim, carers, and community that we will continue to be there whenever needed.

5.2. A medical examination will be arranged to check for STDs or even pregnancy. Input from healthcare professionals is needed to explain about injury and consequences of the abuse.

5.3. Get help. Arrange for competent professional counseling, even if it's only for a short time.

5.4. Not to confront the offender in the victim's presence. The stress may be harmful. This is a job for the authorities.

5.5. Not to blame the victim. Sexual abuse is never the victim's fault.

## **6. Ways to support the recovery process**

The recovery process from sexual abuse or harassment is often personal and requires time for healing and restoration. We can assist individuals through this journey by:

6.1. Support and love the survivor during their recovery. Dedicate time and effort to assist in their healing process.

6.2. Prioritize creating a safe and supportive environment for the survivor to share their experience and seek support from trusted individuals.

6.3. Encourage participation in support groups to prevent feelings of isolation.

6.4. Assist them in managing feelings of guilt and shame.

6.5. Demonstrate empathy and patience as they navigate their recovery journey.

6.6. It is important for family, friends, and, the community to express love and support for the victim and extend forgiveness to the perpetrator in the recovery process.

## **7. Handling the Perpetrator**

Managing perpetrators of sexual abuse and harassment requires a balanced and responsible approach. This methodology aims not only to address immediate concerns of justice and safety but also to promote healing and restoration for both the individual involved and, where applicable, their family. This approach highlights the importance of rehabilitation alongside accountability, allowing for a comprehensive response that recognizes the complexities of these offenses and the broader impact on all affected parties.

7.1. Restitution alone cannot heal the wound; true healing requires embracing brokenness.

7.2. It is essential to be open to undergoing the process of discipline, seeking counseling, and engaging with other individuals who have perpetrated abuse.

7.3. Additionally, addressing any personal history of abuse and current relationship challenges is crucial.

7.4. In cases where the perpetrator holds a leadership position, they must be promptly removed from their role. It should not be assumed that they will automatically be reinstated once the disciplinary period is completed.

7.5. It is essential to prioritize both personal restoration and the well-being of the family, especially when married. This commitment strengthens relationships and nurtures a supportive environment for all family members.

7.6. During the restoration process, it is essential for elders and close friends to consistently support the recovery of the perpetrator and their family, especially if married. This ongoing support plays a vital role in facilitating healing and fostering positive outcomes for all parties involved.

## **8. Handling False Allegations**

If a false complaint is submitted, the findings will be submitted to the base leadership team or the ACT, who will respond following Biblical principles and the laws of the land. The complainant has the right to withdraw their complaint in writing at any point during the complaints reception or inquiry process. The withdrawal must be affirmed as voluntary and without any coercion or threats.

## **In conclusion**

Taking prompt action and reporting suspected abuse is crucial for ending the abuse and protecting our staff from further harm. Our top priority is the health and well-being of our community.

Abuse is addressed differently across various cultures and countries. As Youth With A Mission (YWAM), we must uphold the Bible as our primary guide and adhere to our YWAM values as we seek restoration and healing for the victim, the perpetrator, their families, and our YWAM community.

If you have any further contributions regarding the guidelines, we encourage you to contact us. We are committed to regularly updating the guidelines to reflect new information and insights.

For further information on Child Abuse, please refer to:

Hinder Not <https://www.hindernot.org/>

YWAM Child Protection Guidelines

YWAM England Induction Training Video (YWAM Safeguarding): [Safeguard Video You Must Watch](#)

Family Strengthening Handbook: A Guide for Practitioners Empowering Families Across Thailand: <https://alternativecarethailand.com/>