



Child Protection Policy

A. Introduction

El Camino Academy values boys and girls of all ages and races. The Bible teaches that children are gifts from the Lord and that all adults have the solemn God-given responsibility to care for them properly. Scripture calls for the highest standard of moral behavior and relationships in the presence of children. Their emotional and physical vulnerability should never be violated. They are to be lovingly trained within the context of proper parental authority in order to help them develop maturity in their relationship with both God and others.

ECA believes that children have the right to protection from harm and abuse within the limits of the school's jurisdiction. The purpose of this policy is to highlight this right and to enable those in positions of responsibility to take appropriate corrective action when necessary.

ECA expects proper moral and ethical conduct toward all children. All personnel are required to adhere to the standards and procedures prescribed in this child protection policy. The policy outlines behavioral standards as well as guidelines for the proper flow of information and action in the event of an offense.

B. Definitions

Normal, healthy human relationships between adults and children include expressions of proper care and affection. Adults working with children are encouraged to provide a warm supportive nurturing environment. In their physical contact with children, adults will seek to meet the child's normal physical and emotional needs. Supportive nurture is always to be guided by biblical standards of morality, ethics, and prudence.

Child abuse is a general term to describe inappropriate, immoral, and/or unethical behavior by an adult toward a minor under 18 years of age, or of one child toward another child where there is a difference in power based on age or physical, intellectual or emotional capacity. Child abuse is recognized under four categories: Physical Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Sexual Abuse, and Neglect. Child abuse can be perpetrated with or without the consent of the victim. It can occur in a one-on-one encounter or in a group setting.

1. **Physical Abuse:** The inflicting of physical trauma either by direct contact or indirect contact, such as through the use of an instrument, with the conscious or subconscious intention of hurting, controlling, or subduing a person(s) for purposes other than prescribed medical needs or commonly accepted social discipline.
2. **Emotional Abuse:** The use of threats, intimidation, acts of injustice or indignity by verbal and/or physical means (contact or non-contact) against a person(s). **Sexual Abuse:** The employment of physical and/or emotional sexual stimuli or acts in the presence (visual, auditory, or physical) of an individual or upon an individual, with or without consent, when that person is considered to be outside the limits of normal sexual rapport. There are two categories of sexual abuse: touching and non-touching.

- a. **Touching** offenses include repeated touching; fondling; oral, genital or anal stimulation; violent and nonviolent intercourse; incest; rape; assault.
 - b. **Non-touching** offenses include verbal sexual stimulation; indecent exposure; peeping; causing or allowing a child to witness adult sexual relations; reading or showing explicit pornographic material.
3. **Neglect:** The failure, refusal, or inability of a parent, guardian, legal custodian, or another person exercising temporary or permanent control over a child, for reasons other than poverty or war, to provide care, instruction, food, clothing, basic medical service, and shelter so as to seriously endanger the well-being of the individual.

C. Procedures for Policy Implementation

All ECA adults are responsible not only to adhere personally to the standards of this policy, but also to protect potential and actual victims from abuse. All ECA administered ministries and personnel are responsible to follow these procedures for the discovery and reporting of violations.

D. Prevention

All personnel will read and sign a copy of this policy as part of the application process.

1. ECA will conduct background checks using personal references, mission screening and/or legal channels.
2. Leaders will regularly give information and instruction about child abuse to ECA personnel (both adults and children).
3. All leaders in all ECA-related ministries will foster a climate of “belief” (i.e., it is possible that child abuse could take place) and “freedom to tell.”

E. Discovery

1. Any adult receiving a report, witnessing, or having reason to suspect child abuse must report it to an administrator without delay (see “Reporting” below). If the immediate teacher or administrator is implicated, or if the case warrants special handling, the report should go to a Board member.
2. Anyone who receives a report or allegation of child abuse by a child or an adult must treat the reporter with an attitude of “respect and belief.”
3. Even if there is reason to doubt a report, the person receiving the report must communicate the information accurately, completely, and immediately to his/her supervisor.

F. Reporting

1. All reports of allegations or discovery of abuse must be made to the Director within 24 hours and documented in writing. The Director must communicate with the Board President.
2. Reports should include the following information:

- a. Name of person reporting
- b. Alleged victim's name and parent's name(s)
- c. Alleged perpetrator's name
- d. How the information was obtained
- e. Details of what was reported or suspected (dates, times, places, specifics of what happened). Quote exactly the spoken words (as much as possible).
- f. Date
- g. Who has been contacted and when
- h. During this reporting process, care must be exercised to protect both the victim and the alleged perpetrator by restricting information access to those who need and have the authority to know.

G. Investigation

1. The Board President will appoint an investigation team that may include a teacher, a parent, and a Board member to assure an objective inquiry. The team should include at least one man and one woman.
2. The investigation team will immediately look into all allegations, reports, acts, and/or suspicions in consultation with the Director.
3. The investigation team will submit its findings to the Director.
4. The Director, in consultation with legal counsel, and the ECA Board, will decide what information needs to be submitted to appropriate authorities.

H. Remedial Action

The Director, in cooperation with the investigation team and in consultation with the ECA Board, will:

1. Possibly suspend the ministry activities or involvement with children of any person who is the subject of an allegation of child abuse.
2. Immediately protect the victim(s) and reporting persons.
3. Notify the victim's parents as soon as possible about the allegations and the investigation process.
4. Work with the Board to provide appropriate public information to the mission and/or home church regarding the allegations, investigation, and results.
5. See that programs of counseling and care are provided for victims, "near victims," and the perpetrator.
6. Decide on appropriate action or discipline.

I. Action Steps to Prevent Child Abuse

1. The ECA Board will require background checks on all personnel applying to serve with ECA. They will also see that all new personnel sign this policy.
2. The Director is responsible for the implementation of the Child Protection Policy.
3. ECA Board will see that the policy is regularly reviewed by the personnel.

J. Action Steps When Child Abuse Is Reported

1. Action Steps for Everyone

- a. **Report** the allegations as soon as possible after hearing them to the most appropriate and objective supervisor. Do not attempt to handle the case by yourself.
- b. **Document** all allegations, reports, or discovery of child abuse. Document all investigation procedure: date, location(s), names of reporting or discovered persons, description of the circumstances, factual report of the allegation, report or discovery, etc. It is not advisable to act alone in receiving a report. Ask the child to select a person of his or her choosing to witness the story jointly.
- c. **Protect** the person and reputation of the victim and the accused offender (particularly when working with allegations only). A victim should be removed from a dangerous or questionable situation as soon as possible by the person receiving the report in collaboration with the Director.

2. Action Steps for ECA staff

- a. **Contact** the Director for guidance in investigating the case. The Director will work with the Board in setting up an investigation team.
- b. **Inform** the accused person of the allegations or report. Tell the reported facts as accurately as possible to the accused without belying confidences of who reported. This should be done by a person in leadership with authority over the accused person.
- c. **Remove** the alleged offender from contact with children while confidential investigation proceeds.
- d. **Notify** parents or guardians of the **allegations** and the investigation process.

3. Actions Steps with the Victim

- a. **Listen**—Don't panic or overreact to a story of abuse. Give the child permission to talk about the circumstances of the abuse. Listen carefully to every detail and note the child's behavior. Don't fill in words. Don't ask leading questions.
- b. **Believe**—Never criticize the child or claim that the child has misunderstood what happened. Support the child for disclosing. It is not your responsibility to determine whether the allegations are true. Children seldom lie about abuse.
- c. **Protect**—Take the child to a location where freedom to talk is felt. If possible, ask the child for permission to involve another adult of the child's choice to hear the story. Avoid repeated questions during the disclosure. Do not promise what you will or will not do as a result of listening but reassure the child that you will do all you can to make things right. Make sure the child is removed from an abusive situation.
- d. **Affirm**—Accept and understand the child's feelings. Praise him or her for courage and honesty. Emphasize that the child is not to blame for what has happened. Avoid telling the child how he or she "should feel." Children who are victimized may feel sad, angry, fearful, anxious, and depressed. Assure the child that you will do all in your power to resolve this problem. Do not promise what might or might not happen to the offender.

4. Actions Steps with the Accused

- a. **Confront with the allegation**—This should be done only with a trained counselor and ECA Director and/or Board President present. Speed is of essence for the victim, the

alleged perpetrator, and the mission community. The same leaders should inform the accused person's spouse (if applicable) of the allegations and provide emotional support and information about the investigation process.

- b. **Present the facts** – Present the allegation to the accused with as many details as you have and ask directly if they are true. Document this meeting.
- c. **Admission of fault** – If he or she admits to the allegation (they may also admit to part of the allegation):
 - Listen carefully to what the person says happened.
 - Clarify the details from the person's perspective.
 - Inform the person that he or she may be immediately relieved of duty and returned to the homeland or be released from his/her contract with ECA.
- d. **Denial of fault** – If he or she denies the allegation (An alleged perpetrator may acknowledge what was done, but deny it was child abuse):
 - Inform the person that there will be a confidential investigation.
 - Relieve the person of his or her duties with pay while the investigation is going on.
 - Inform the person of the outcome of the investigation.

5. Action Steps When Child Abuse is Proven/Confessed

- a. **With the Victim:** In consultation with the ECA Board, the Director will
 - Inform the victim and his or her family of the outcome of the investigation/confession
 - Help find the resources necessary for a healing process for the victim and family. (This may include a return to the homeland and a counseling program.)
- b. **With the Perpetrator:** In **consultation** with the ECA Board, the Director will
 - Inform the perpetrator of the procedure for moral failure.
 - Inform the perpetrator's spouse (if applicable) of the investigation results and resulting discipline.
 - Report the outcome of the investigation to the person's home church and/or mission and work with the church/mission to provide an appropriate care/counseling/ restoration program for the perpetrator and his family.
 - Discreetly but honestly inform the ECA community of the outcome of the investigation and confession. With qualified staff, begin a healing process for all concerned.

6. Action Steps if Child Abuse is Not Confirmed

- a. If, during the investigation, it is found that the accusation was false or that the accused is not guilty, the Director, in consultation with the ECA Board, will discreetly and honestly communicate this information to all those who know of the allegations and investigation.
- b. In consultation with the ECA Board, the Director will see that appropriate action is taken to provide healing and support for the wrongly accused. Help (and possibly discipline) will also be provided for the person making false accusation.

See next page for a flow chart of the process.

K. Implementation of the Child Protection Policy

