

The following is the Watchtower response to elders on the child abuse issue raised by silentlambs. The first response was instructions at the 2002 Elder School that was held in November/December of 2001. The following is a transcript:

Kingdom Ministry School for Congregation Elders for the 2002 Service Year

Giving Attention to Needs in Our Field--Part 2; Section 1; Text

So these are the four points:

One: As directed in the July first, 1989 letter to all bodies of elders, all of you should have that in your congregation files; you should immediately call the Legal Department for direction if you learn of a case of child abuse. Child abuse would include sexual abuse, self-evident physical abuse, and extreme neglect involving a minor. Now highlight, once again, you should call the Legal Department for direction, if you learn of a case of child abuse. So that's the first point.

Second: If the alleged victim is now an adult, but was a minor at the time of the abuse, please call the Legal Department. If the alleged victim is now an adult but was a minor at the time of the abuse, please call the Legal Department.

Three: If you become aware of a past case of child abuse, and you are not certain whether the elders involved at the time called the Legal Department for direction, please call the Legal Department for assistance as soon as possible.

Four: Child abuse is a crime. Never -- and we'll emphasize that -- Never suggest to anyone that they should not report an allegation of child abuse to the police or other authorities. If asked, make it clear that whether to report the matter to the authorities, is a personal decision for each individual to make, and there are no congregation sanctions for either decision. That is, no elder will criticize or punish anyone who reports such an allegation to the authorities.

So those are the four points that we are asked to follow in our dealings with this aspect of matters. I have not gone beyond anything that is written here, in what you have been told. These are for all elders in the various congregations to keep in mind, and of course we would recommend that you read again the July first, 1989 letter.

At the supplementary elders School held in the fall of 2002, this letter was read out to all elders in attendance:

Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses

2528 Route 22 Patterson NY 12563-2237 Phone (845) 306 1100

October 15, 2002

Re: Child Molestation.

Elders Supplementary Course

Dear brothers,

We are reminded of the scriptural view of Child Molestation and the explanation in 1/1/97w in the article *Abhor What is Wicked*. On pages 26-29 it was clearly emphasized our serious view of child molestation. The admonition at Rom 12:9 reminds us we must abhor wickedness. Therefore let this serve as a reminder that child molestation is a sin, something viewed as abhorrent. It is a heinous crime according to Caesar's law.

We recognize that it is primarily the parent's responsibility to protect their own children. The congregation too, must protect children. Children are much easier to deceive, confuse, or terrorize. The Bible speaks of a child's lack of wisdom. The apostle Paul spoke of when he was a babe he used to think as a babe. Jesus used children as an example of humble innocence at Matt 18:4 he urged his listeners to humble themselves like little children. The 1/1/97w states: *The innocence of a child includes a complete lack of experience. Most children are open, eager to please, and thus vulnerable to abuse by a scheming adult whom they know and trust.* Hence, a child molester is subject to severe congregational discipline and restrictions.

Every accusation is investigated. It is not taken lightly even if there is only one accuser. If there is only one accuser and the accused denies the charge, no further congregational action can be taken, we cannot go beyond the scriptures. (1 Tim 5:19) It is different if there are two accusers to separate incidents, their testimony may be taken into consideration for establishing a judicial hearing.

How should we view the victim? Often they are damaged for years. They may feel worthless, unlovable. We need to reassure them of Jehovah's love and of ours. (Ezek 34:15,16; Ps 34:18) Jehovah really cares and we should strive to imitate him. When we meet and speak with victims we need to clothe ourselves with love. (Col 3:12) Let them feel our genuine love. (1 Th 5:14) As elders we should always be alert to show loving concern for children.

Certain restrictions are applicable to former known molesters. They are not to be alone in the company of minor children. They may continue under certain restrictions and do not qualify for privileges which may be many years if ever. When they work in the Field Service they are not to work alone. They should always be accompanied by an adult. These factors are in the best interests of children and the former abuser.

Regarding News Reports:

Over the years there have been many favorable reports of our work. Conventions, Kingdom Hall constructions etc.. that have been quite helpful to God's organization. On the other hand at times news reports may quote apostate or unreliable sources. We encourage you to review 12/1/98w pp15-18 pars 10-19, *Defending Our Faith* for helpful information. We need to always be discerning. There is a time to keep quiet and a time to speak. We need to be cautious as serpents and innocent as doves. Jesus' example at Mark 15:4,5 showed how fruitless it was to get into pointless arguments. Rom 16:17 says to avoid those who cause divisions. When Jesus was accused of false charges at Mark 3:20-30, he chose not to let them stand and offered a defense. What defense will we make? We will follow the admonition in the 11/15/76w 701-703, *To Christians such misrepresentations is one evidence that they are indeed walking in harmony with God's truth.* (Matt 5:11,12) *Were Jehovah's Witnesses to immerse themselves in refuting all false charges made against them, they could also fall into a trap of the great accuser Satan the Devil, How so? Well, Satan would certainly be pleased to see a slowing down in the work of aiding honest-hearted persons to learn the truth. Yet that is exactly what would happen. By letting themselves become sidetracked, Jehovah's servants would lose valuable time that might otherwise have been used beneficially to help sincere persons to learn about God's will and purposes respecting mankind.*

Therefore we will ignore the lying misrepresentation by opposers as we are assured by Jehovah that we are walking well. We wait on Jehovah to provide a way out. (2 Cor. 4:6-8) As we live in this wicked system we

know who it is that truly tries to live in harmony with God's righteous standards. Those who attack us with false accusations will fail as Jehovah protects His righteous people. (Isa 54:17; Jer 1:19)

Please be assured of our continual prayers in your behalf as you carry out your weighty responsibility to shepherd the flock of God entrusted to your care.-(1 Peter 5:2, 3)

Your brothers,

Christian Congregation
of Jehovah's Witnesses

Note to the instructor: Read the following announcement;

The instructors have been directed to take no questions regarding the comments in this letter, no copy will be provided for the congregation file.

At Elder Schools in other countries various attempts were made to address the child abuse policy without making any meaningful changes. In Australia the following addendum was added to their elder book:

k.s. p143 addendum

Child Abuse. Ref: A.B.E Aug 29 th 1989 pg 3.

Legal ramifications.

In cases of either accusation or allegations of child abuse, **immediately** contact the society. Do **Not** talk to **anyone** else.

If a brother or a sister confesses to child abuse, ask **them not** to speak to anyone else till you get back to them, and **contact** the society **immediately**.

In contacting the society simply state 'Matter involving Child Abuse' and the switchboard will put you through.

*If interviewed by the police, tell them you are **not** prepared to make a statement **until** you have sought **legal advice** . **Contact society immediately** or a local barrister if necessary.

*If presented with a search warrant or a subpoena, the last resort is to hand over any material. (Cong file) Find out exactly what is wanted and hand over **only** that. Preferably seek legal advice first. (stall)

Read the warrant. Write on envelope 'Ecclesiastical privilege claimed, not to be opened until matter is determined by court.'

In the United Kingdom the following Direction were given at their Elder Supplementary School:

2003 Service Year

Supplementary Course for Congregation Elders

Sat Morn

Session 1 Personal and Family spirituality

These were the usual counsel of the importance of reading the bible daily and family study, as normal model elders from the circuit were used as examples as ones who get up at 6.00am just to read the bible and study (Yeah right)

Also was included was an item on Presiding on your family in a fine Manner

The elder was warning of the dangers of letting your child use the internet, and then he tried to explain how you can use the history page on your internet browser to check what sites they have visited, This technical info went over the heads of 95% of the elders.

Also was included the usual items on not missing meetings, be a good example on the field ministry etc etc, (by now I was getting very tired)

Sat Aft

Congregation Book Study Overseer.

General reminders on why the name change took place i.e more emphasis on shepherding, field service. Elders were encouraged to have an elders meeting in the next month to re-evaluate all the CBSO to see if they qualify, Do not be afraid to upset fellow elders with your comments urged the CO (should be fun in our hall)

Lots of demos of a model group, how to shepherd etc etc

Announcement

The society are putting into place a program to contact all inactive ones in Jan, Feb, Mar 2003. The secretary goes through all the inactive Publisher cards even if 20 or 30 years old, which the Service Committee will then review and then assign a CSBO to contact inactive ones and offer a study if possible.

It all then gets fed back as info to the Branch .

Sun Morn

Handling serious matters.

The society admits that to many serious problems are mishandled

Urges all elders to be balanced, not to be like Eli

Always follow the societys direction.

The big item of the day was the 1 hour 15 min Exercising discernment and insight as elders by the CO.

We were urged to have a siege mentality against Satans propaganda.

Ever in doubt call the service department.

Society admit that judicial cases are more complicated these days

Spent time reviewing the old chestnut of identifying weakness and wickedness

A couple of changes for the KS91 p 93 para 8 had to add the phrase **must have lude intent** to the paragraph on pornea

Told to never have more than 1 committee meeting with the accused.

Reminded in cases of rape ring the service desk for further direction.

Explanations and examples of uncleanness, loose conduct and pornea

Then came the 8 page child molestation letter reviewed by messenger, his summary was pretty accurate considering that this letters are read fairly quickly.

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After this came a second letter that the CO only received last Wednesday

Titled **How to handle cases of child molestation in Britain**

Any allegation Contact the legal department immediately, who will explain all of the legal implications and current laws,

You will then be put through to the service department, who will advise you how to handle problem from a congregational point of view,

You must follow up telephone conversation with a comprehensive letter.

With regard to reporting the matter to the Authorities Gal 6:5 own load etc

The responsibility to decide to report must be taken by the victims family

We can not override their decision not to report unless the Law demands it.

The family has a right not to report if they so wish

The part that I found very creepy was the next section.

What to do if a child is very young? Interviewing young children

Statement. If there is one allegation by a young Childs parents and the accused denies it, then there is no need to interview the young child. (*shiver* what qualifications do elders have to interview young children anyway)

Final reminder

If we receive even 1 allegation of child abuse contact the Legal desk immediately.

No copies of either letter allowed for the cong file, however on his next visit the CO will let us read them and take notes as long as he is in the vicinity