

## Crisis Response Policy

### TRAINING

Minors can experience very serious issues, and sometimes they'll share heavy news with you. Even though you'd like to respect their privacy, you can't always promise a minor you won't tell anyone.

There are three specific situations in which you'll need to tell Ministry staff, parents and possibly the authorities the content of what a minor has shared with you. Each situation includes the word **"harm."** After a minor has divulged something, if you think there's a possibility they're being **harmed by others, harming themselves or intending to harm others**, you need to gather all the information you can and call a Ministry staff member ASAP.

### FAQ

**Q:** If a minor shares this information in front of other minors, what should I do?

**A:** We recommend thanking the minor while other minors are around and then asking him or her if you can move someplace where you can talk more in depth. You don't want to be alone with the minor, but you could go to the side of the room or into an open space. Every situation is different. Do your best to read the situation and know God put you there for a reason. Ask Him to guide you.

**Q:** What if I'm not sure they're telling the truth?

**A:** It's best to assume up front they are telling the truth. We want to err on the side of caution, showing too much concern as opposed to too little.

**Q:** What if they're threatening to commit suicide in the moment:

**A:** In this case, getting the minor immediate help is your first priority. If they're home, try getting their parents or guardians on the phone and tell them what's happening ASAP. If you can't reach them, call 911 yourself. If you're on the phone with the minor at the time, text Ministry staff, asking them to call the parents and/or 911 (yes, you can text during a call on most phones). Once help is sent for the minor, call Ministry staff.

## YOUR FIRST STEPS:

- First, **Thank the minor** for trusting you enough to share and having the courage to speak up.
- Second, **Gather more information**. Ask the minor questions to learn more and make sure you have contact information for them and a guardian. Top question to ask: "What do you mean when you say?"
- Third, **Inform the minor** that because you care for their safety and well-being, this is something you need to share with Ministry staff. Informing the minor that you will let them know beforehand anytime you have to share this information with others builds trust.
- Fourth, **Bring Ministry staff in the conversation ASAP**. Find a staff member onsite and walk with the minor to pull them aside OR if a staff member is not present, call them immediately. That staff member can then walk alongside you and the minor through next steps.

\*Once you call Ministry staff, we will help walk you through the next steps.

## Safety Guidelines

These guidelines are to protect both the minor and the leader. **We want to ensure our minors and our leaders are physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually safe**, both inside and outside of Ministry events. To reach this goal, we have some guidelines for leaders.

**Remember the rule of three.** When you are with minors, there should always be three or more people. Never be alone with a minor.

- 1 Even if they ask for a ride to church, let them know you need another person in the car with you (can they invite a friend?). If they want to meet to talk about something personal one-on-one, ask to meet in a coffee shop or somewhere you will be publicly visible the whole time you're together.
- 2 **Make sure you have written parent permission anytime you drive or meet with a minor outside of Ministry.** This can be as easy as texting the minor's mom or dad, "Hey, Chloe wanted to talk with me. Is it ok if we meet at Starbucks today at 4 p.m.?" and take a screenshot of their reply.
- 3 **No pranks, bullying or hazing is allowed in Ministry.** If your minors talk about these things, let them know they're not acceptable. If your minors participate in these, let Ministry staff know ASAP.
- 4 **Review the "During a Crisis" materials** and reach out to a staff member ASAP, even if you think something MIGHT qualify.

## DURING A CRISIS

These questions are for you to immediately and directly ask a minor when they share sensitive information with you. The answers to these questions will help you and Ministry staff to assess what actions, if any, need to be taken.

### Abuse (Being harmed by others) “WHAT DO YOU MEAN WHEN YOU SAY?”

- “Who has done this?”
- “What specifically did they do?”
- “When did this happen?”
- “Do you **still feel threatened?**”
- “Are you **still in contact** with this person?”
- “Do your **parents** know? Have you told anyone?”

### Harm to Self (Big Four) “WHAT DO YOU MEAN WHEN YOU SAY?”

- “When was the **last time** you \_\_\_\_\_ ?”
- “Do you **still** \_\_\_\_\_ ?”
- “Are you having thoughts/temptations to \_\_\_\_\_ ?”
- “Do your **parents** know? Have you told anyone?”

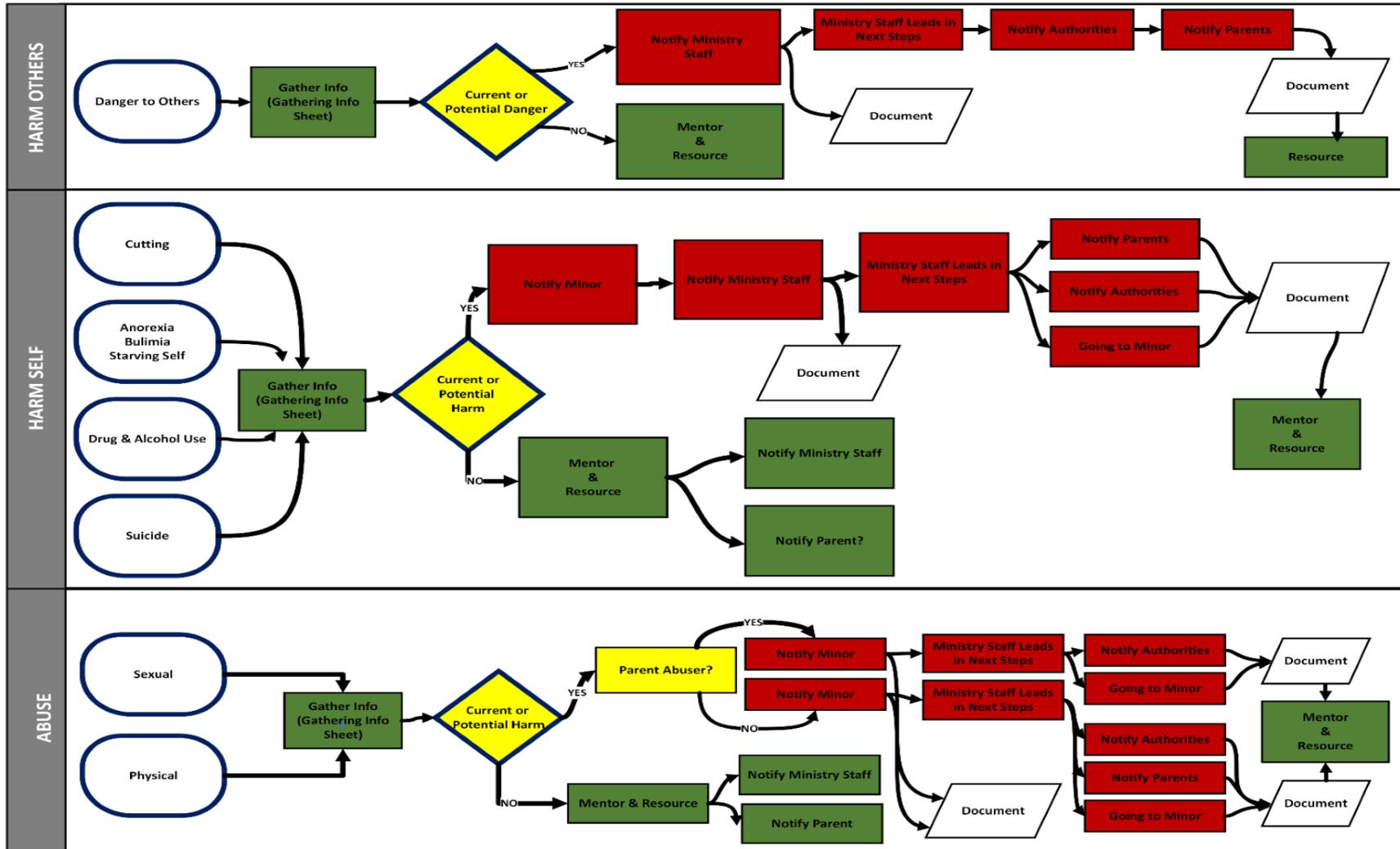
### Harm to Others (includes intentions to harm others as well as driving under the influence) “WHAT DO YOU MEAN WHEN YOU SAY?”

- “Do you have a **specific plan** on how to \_\_\_\_\_ ?”
- “When will you be around this person? When will you see them next?”

### IF THERE IS **CURRENT OR POTENTIAL DANGER OR HARM**, THEN **IMMEDIATELY**:

1. **Thank the minor** for trusting you enough to share and having the courage to speak up.
2. **Gather more information.** Ask the minor questions to learn more and make sure you have contact information for them and a guardian. Top question to ask: “What do you mean when you say \_\_\_\_\_ ?”
3. **Inform the minor** that because you care for their safety and well-being, this is something you need to share with Ministry staff. Informing the minor that you will let them know beforehand anytime you have to share this information with others builds trust.
4. **Bring Ministry staff in the conversation ASAP.** Find a staff member onsite and walk with the minor to pull them aside OR if a staff member is not present, call them immediately. That staff member can then walk alongside you and the minor through next steps.

**Safe Zone Procedure** - The following flow chart guides you through the process of what to do when a minor shares something that leads you to believe that they're being harmed, harming themselves or possibly harming others.



The following is important information regarding definitions of types of abuse and the zero-tolerance policy we follow at Hope for both the care of participants in our programs and the understanding of all volunteers and staff that serve minors.

### **General Definitions of Types of Abuse**

The following are general definitions of abuse:

- **Physical abuse** is an injury that is intentionally inflicted upon a minor.
- **Verbal abuse** is a range of words or behaviors used to manipulate, intimidate, and maintain power and control over kids, students, and individuals impacted by special needs.
- **Sexual abuse** is any contact of a sexual nature that occurs between a minor and an adult or between two minors. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult or the other minor.
- **Emotional abuse** is mental or emotional injury to a minor that results in an observable and material impairment in the minor's growth, development, or psychological functioning.
- **Neglect** is the failure to provide for a minor's basic needs or the failure to protect a minor from harm.

### **Zero Tolerance Policy**

There is zero tolerance for abuse, and we will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of minors in our programs. Any mistreatment or abuse by any volunteer or staff will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or volunteer service and cooperation with law enforcement.

### **Mandatory Reporting (North Carolina is a mandatory reporting state)**

As required by mandated reporting laws, staff and volunteers must report any suspected abuse or neglect of a minor—whether on or off organization property or whether perpetrated by staff, volunteers, or others—to state authorities.

Reports may be made confidentially or anonymously. A person who mistakenly reports suspected abuse is immune from civil or criminal liability as long as the report was made in good faith and without malice.

In addition to reporting to state authorities and directly to Ministry Staff so that immediate and proper steps may be taken to ensure the safety of alleged victims and others who may be at risk.

**Crisis Response Report Form – Currently working on eForm. Link to form will be place here once the process is completed.**