

Introduction: What is Youth Protection?



We think it's important for you to know something about what DeMolay calls **Youth Protection**.

Youth Protection is all about preventing situations where our members might experience *physical, emotional, or sexual abuse*, or be exposed to the use of *alcohol or illegal drugs*. Unfortunately, these problems seem to be almost everywhere today, and as much as we wish it weren't so, DeMolay is affected by them too.

The purpose of this program is to:

- Prevent abuse from occurring in our organization.
- Equip members and families to recognize risky situations.
- Protect adult volunteers from situations that could give rise to misunderstandings or false allegations.
- Teach adults and youth to spot warning signs of abuse, wherever they may be occurring.

What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse is defined as ***“any act toward a young person under eighteen years of age that impairs physical or mental health immediately, or over time.”***

Abuse may be *physical, emotional, or sexual*. Closely related to abuse is the idea of ***neglect***, which refers to adults failing to provide for the basic needs, health, and safety of a youth.

According to the U.S. Department of Human Services, reports of child maltreatment resulted in a finding of **879,000** children and youth thought to be victims of some form of abuse or neglect ***in the year 2000 alone***. (See the [National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information](#) for this and other data on abuse.)

It is notoriously difficult to estimate the actual prevalence of abuse and neglect, since it often goes unreported. One thing is sure: it is far too common, and no part of our society is unaffected.

Who Are Abusers?

The short answer: Anyone

Unfortunately, there is no reliable “profile” we can use to single out pedophiles or other abusers. Abusers come from all ages, races, professions, economic or social backgrounds. Criminal background checks can only identify those who have already been convicted of an abuse.

Abuse is **ALWAYS** the responsibility of the adult. Youth who are victims often feel guilty or responsible for the abuse. **They aren't!**

Many child abusers actively seek out involvement with youth. That means that all youth organizations have to be on the lookout for this problem.

DISCUSS: Do you know of any situations in your school or community where an adult was being abusive toward youth? Was the adult someone others trusted?

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse of a youth might include:

- Hitting, pushing, or kicking.
- Giving physical punishments, work that is physically too hard (clearly beyond the ability of the youth), or forcing extreme physical activity.
- Putting youth in unsafe conditions, like locking someone out in the cold, or in a closet, as punishment.
- Threatening violence or injury.

DISCUSS: How might you know if a friend was being physically abused?

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse happens when an adult makes a youth feel that he is no good, worthless, or hopeless. It might include things like constant or repeated:

- Insults, swearing, or negative name-calling. Racial, ethnic, or religious put-downs.
- Constant criticism, with no praise for what's done well.
- Humiliation, ridicule, teasing, or putting down, alone or in public.
- Statements like "You've always been a loser and you always will be."

THINK: Emotional abuse is very common, and sometimes the adult means to correct the youth or push them to be better. Does that make it any less serious?

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse may range from things that seem innocent to some that are obviously abusive:

- Unwanted physical affection or touching.
- Asking personal questions about a youth's sexual behavior, or telling a youth details of the adult's sexual behavior.
- Not letting youth have privacy when changing, showering, using the bathroom, etc.
- Giving youth pornography or other sexual material, like nude pictures or sexually descriptive stories.
- Any sexual touching of a youth by an adult.
- Asking youth to have sexual contact with each other, possibly for the adult to watch.
- A youth can't legally give consent (say "yes" or "no") to having sexual contact with an adult. Sex between an adult and a youth is always wrong, it's always abuse, and the adult is always to blame.

DISCUSS: Youth, especially boys, often won't report sexual abuse. What do you think might be some reasons for this?

Preventing Abuse in DeMolay

DeMolay takes the problem of abuse very seriously. That's why we're doing things to keep our members safe from abuse:

- All potential DeMolay Advisors must be trained before serving. This training includes instruction on Youth Protection policies and issues surrounding abuse prevention.
- All DeMolay Advisors submit to a thorough criminal background check.
- Those with records indicating they might be a risk to youth are NOT permitted to serve in any capacity.
- All DeMolay Advisors are taught to use "two deep" leadership... that means that there should always be more than one approved DeMolay Advisor at any DeMolay function.



Unacceptable Situations

Because of our policies, and our desire to protect both our youth and adult volunteers, certain activities and situations simply aren't acceptable in our organization. In DeMolay, you should **NEVER**:

- Be at an activity alone with only one Advisor, or an activity not approved by the Chapter.
- Be expected to share a room, for changing or sleeping, with adults.
- Receive any kind of physical punishment, or be physically threatened in any way.
- Be asked to participate in "special initiations" outside of our approved formal ceremonies, or any kind of "secret" or "special" events not approved by the Chapter and the Advisory Council.
- Experience or participate in "hazing" of any kind.
- Be exposed to or asked to participate in activities like "skinny-dipping," "streaking," or any kind of group nudity.
- Be asked to mislead your parents, or not tell them where you are going or what you are doing.
- Be offered pornography, alcohol, drugs, or any illegal material.

- Receive obscene or threatening messages by e-mail, verbally, or in print from an adult.
- Be told obscene jokes, stories, or sexual practices by an Advisor.
- Have an adult tell you not to report an abuse, or try to convince you it didn't happen.

If any of these things ever happen to you or a friend (in DeMolay or somewhere else), you should tell an Advisor or another adult you trust immediately! DeMolay Advisors will take you **VERY SERIOUSLY**, and will make sure the problem is properly reported and dealt with.

No one who has abused youth, or refuses to follow our Youth Protection policies, will be allowed to be a DeMolay Advisor.

DISCUSS: What might be some "warning signs" that abuse was happening in a group or family?

What Do I Do About Abuse?

If you think a friend is being abused, or if an adult has been abusive to you, **DON'T KEEP IT A SECRET!** Remember, the adult is at fault, not you.

Don't talk to the abuser about it... that almost never helps. The abuser will often try to convince you not to tell, or threaten to harm you if you do.

If the abuse happened in DeMolay, **tell your Chapter Advisor or another Advisor about it right away.** He will help you report it to the right people, and see that the right action is taken. You can also [contact the Pennsylvania DeMolay office](#) for help.

If the abuse happened somewhere else, your Chapter Advisor and others in DeMolay will still be ready to help you. Or, you could talk to a parent, a teacher, a minister, a doctor, a nurse, or another trusted adult.

Whenever you suspect abuse is happening, you can call the police or the [PA Department of Children and Youth](#) at their 24-hour hotline: **(800) 932-0313**.

A national abuse reporting hotline, provided by [Childhelp USA](#), is **1-800-4-A-CHILD**. The Childhelp [website](#) also provides some excellent information and resources about child abuse prevention.

You don't have to have proof to report suspected abuse. Many hotlines will allow you to make a report without giving your name.

Drug and Alcohol Abuse



Drug and alcohol abuse among our nation's youth is a serious problem. Although recent statistics indicate that rates of drug use among teens is declining slightly, the numbers are still alarming. According to the [National Institute on Drug Abuse \(NIDA\)](#), in a 2002 survey:

By 8th grade **24.5%** of students have used illegal drugs, **44.1%** have used cigarettes, and **52.1%** have used alcohol.

By 10th grade **44.6%** have used illegal drugs, **57.7%** have used cigarettes, and **70.6%** have used alcohol.

By 12th grade **53%** have used illegal drugs, **64.6%** have used cigarettes, and fully **80%** have used alcohol.

For the complete details of this survey, [click here](#). (links to an article on the NIDA site. Use your browser's back button to return here)

Drug and Alcohol Abuse

Drug and alcohol abuse includes a wide variety of behavior. For example:

- A person under 21 having or drinking alcohol.
- Alcohol use that causes problems (health problems, trouble with police, fights with family, or others).
- A person under 18 having or using tobacco.
- Having or using illegal drugs or related equipment.
- Using prescription medicine that isn't prescribed for you, or using it differently than the doctor's directions.

Warning Signs

Some warning signs that a youth might be abusing drugs or alcohol include *(from the [National Youth Network](#))*:

- Sudden personality changes that include abrupt changes in work or school attendance, quality of work, work output, grades, discipline
- Unusual flare-ups or outbreaks of temper
- Withdrawal from responsibility
- General changes in overall attitude
- Loss of interest in what were once favorite hobbies and pursuits
- Changes in friends and reluctance to have friends visit or talk about them
- Difficulty in concentration, paying attention
- Sudden jitteriness, nervousness, or aggression
- Increased secretiveness
- Deterioration of physical appearance and grooming
- Wearing of sunglasses at inappropriate times
- Continual wearing of long-sleeved garments particularly in hot weather or reluctance to wear short-sleeved attire when appropriate
- Association with known substance abusers
- Unusual borrowing of money from friends, co-workers or parents
- Stealing small items from employer, home or school
- Secretive behavior regarding actions and possessions; poorly concealed attempts to avoid attention and suspicion such as frequent trips to storage rooms, restroom, basement, etc.

Of course, presence of any one of these signs doesn't necessarily mean there is a problem. The emphasis is on **CHANGES** in behavior.

Policy on Drugs and Alcohol

PA DeMolay's policy on drug and alcohol use is simple: **ZERO TOLERANCE.**

No one at any DeMolay function, including adult Advisors, may **EVER** have or use any kind of alcohol or illegal drugs. Tobacco may not be used by anyone under 18, or in the presence of anyone under 18. Breaking these rules may mean suspension or removal from DeMolay.

Getting Help



DeMolay is proud of the young men in our organization who have **chosen to avoid** using alcohol and illegal drugs. We are also proud of those who have **gotten help** to deal with a drug or alcohol-related problem, and are now living drug and alcohol free!

We hope that our young men will see that if they need help dealing with a drug or alcohol problem, a DeMolay Advisor would be a good person to ask for help.

They should be confident that ***they will not get in trouble by asking for help.***

Many people have found help from [Narcotics Anonymous](#) or [Alcoholics Anonymous](#), and you'll find local contact information for each in your local phone directory.

Your family doctor should also be able to help you find local treatment resources.

Who to Contact



***Thanks for helping to keep
DeMolay a safe place for
everyone!***

If you have any questions about these policies, or the Youth Protection program in general, you can contact the PA DeMolay Office at:

Pennsylvania DeMolay
1244 Bainbridge Road
Elizabethtown, PA 17022

800-266-8424 (in PA only) or 717-367-1536
Or e-mail the [Executive Secretary, David W. Berry](#)