

**Statement**  
**November 27, 2023**

**View of Jehovah's Witnesses about Sexual Child Abuse**

1. Jehovah's Witnesses do not tolerate any form of child abuse. Child protection experts have confirmed that Jehovah's Witnesses are a "child safe" organization and that their child protection policy and practices "reflect a strong commitment to the protection of children."<sup>1</sup> The child protection policy of Jehovah's Witnesses meets or exceeds all legal requirements:

- Elders will report an allegation of child abuse to the authorities whenever it appears that any child might be in danger of abuse. They will do so based on the allegation of one person only and regardless of whether the allegation involves a parent, a guardian, or anyone else.<sup>2</sup>
- Elders clearly inform the person making the allegation of their absolute right to also report the allegation to the authorities.
- Victims and their families are offered pastoral support from the elders.
- Parents of minor children are also warned by elders of anyone associated with the congregation who has sexually abused a child.

2. Unlike most other religions, Jehovah's Witnesses do not provide services that separate children from their parents and, accordingly, child protection experts have confirmed that the risk of sexual abuse in the congregational life of Jehovah's Witnesses is "very low."<sup>3</sup>

3. Jehovah's Witnesses ensure that all congregants, not just elders, are aware of their child protection policy. For example:

- In the summer of 2017, all congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan (and worldwide) attended a three-day convention, which included a talk "Safeguard Your Children From 'What is Evil'" that reminded parents of the importance of taking steps to protect their children from potential dangers including sexual abuse. It included a three-minute video on steps parents are taking to protect their children from abuse.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example:

The August 2021 expert opinion of Professor Patrick Parkinson (Australia), paragraph 93, available at <https://www.childsafety.gov.au/resources/jehovahs-witnesses-2021-progress-report>.

The 16 June 2021 expert opinion of child protection expert Ian Elliott (United Kingdom), paragraphs 10-14, <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20221215025025/https://www.iicsa.org.uk/key-documents/26619/view/CJW000126.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> By way of comparison, Articles 2 and 6(1) of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act requires only that child abuse committed by "a custodian," defined as a parent or guardian, be reported to social services.

<sup>3</sup> Expert opinion of Professor Parkinson, paragraphs 5(c), 31, 34, 45, 89, and 93.

<sup>4</sup> Available at [https://www.jw.org/en/library/videos/#en/mediaitems/FamilyChallenges/pub-jwbcov\\_201705\\_7\\_VIDEO](https://www.jw.org/en/library/videos/#en/mediaitems/FamilyChallenges/pub-jwbcov_201705_7_VIDEO)

- In July 2019, all congregations of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Japan (and worldwide) devoted three one-hour religious services to discussing the child protection policy of Jehovah’s Witnesses as summarized in the May 2019 issue of *The Watchtower*.<sup>5</sup>
- In 2020<sup>6</sup> and 2021<sup>7</sup>, key parts of the May 2019 issue of *The Watchtower* were featured in dozens of daily text discussions in the booklet *Examining the Scriptures Daily*, a booklet used by Jehovah’s Witnesses worldwide for personal and family worship.
- This is not a new development. For more than 40 years, Jehovah’s Witnesses have published dozens of articles and videos, in hundreds of languages, providing parents and their children with clear, practical, and age-appropriate advice on how to protect children from abuse<sup>8</sup> (for example, see the two-minute video [Protect Your Children](#).)

4. Child protection experts have commended Jehovah’s Witnesses for the clarity and frankness of the material they have published on this important subject, noting that the publications of Jehovah’s Witnesses “demonstrate a strong commitment to education about the problem of child sexual abuse, both to adults in their congregations and to the children themselves ... [Jehovah’s Witnesses] do more to educate all their members about child sexual abuse than most mainline [religious] denominations.”<sup>9</sup>

Public Information Department of Jehovah’s Witnesses

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<sup>5</sup> Study Articles 18-20, pages 2-20, available at <https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/watchtower-study-may-2019/love-justice-face-of-wickedness/>.

<sup>6</sup> Available at <https://www.jw.org/en/library/books/Examining-the-Scriptures-Daily-2020/>

<sup>7</sup> Available at <https://www.jw.org/en/library/books/Examining-the-Scriptures-Daily-2021/>

<sup>8</sup> For a list of some of that educative material, see the box “Educate Yourself and Your Children” found on page 12 of the May 2019 issue of *The Watchtower*, (<https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/watchtower-study-may-2019/love-justice-face-of-wickedness/>).

<sup>9</sup> Expert opinion of Professor Patrick Parkinson, paragraphs 64 and 65 (<https://www.childsafety.gov.au/resources/jehovahs-witnesses-2021-progress-report>).