

STATE OF UTAH
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL



MARK L. SHURTLEFF
ATTORNEY GENERAL

RAYMOND A. HINTZE
Chief Deputy

KIRK TORGENSEN
Chief Deputy

March 4, 2003

Chaplain [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear Chaplain [REDACTED]

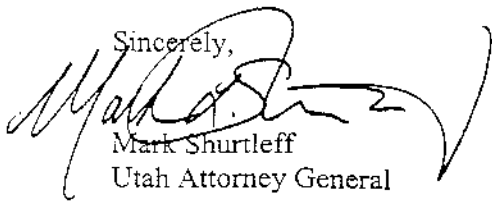
With all the recent publicity surrounding child abuse and churches, I think this is a good time to offer a friendly reminder to churches and religious leaders of the requirements of state law with respect to reporting child abuse, including child sexual abuse.

Utah law requires anyone who has reason to believe a child is being subjected to abuse, molestation or neglect to immediately report that to the nearest law enforcement office or to the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS). It is not a requirement that the person can prove the abuse to law enforcement, only that the person has "reason to believe" that the abuse or neglect is occurring or has occurred. While there is an exception for "confession" from the perpetrators, the law states that "*when a clergyman or priest receives information about abuse or neglect from any source other than confession of the perpetrator, he is required to give notification on the basis of that information even though he may have also received a report of abuse or neglect from the confession of the perpetrator.*" A copy of the applicable laws is enclosed for your reference.

While some churches provide toll free reporting hotlines, I must advise that the hotline does not alleviate the obligation of the caller from reporting to local law enforcement or DCFS.

Thank you for all you do to serve the spiritual, temporal and emotional needs of Utahns. We are all committed to protecting our children. Crucial to that end, is timely reporting cases of child abuse and neglect that come to our attention. I hope that you will disseminate this information to your clergy and congregations. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,


Mark Shurtleff
Utah Attorney General

MLS/hfp
encl.