

CPO

Protecting the Children of Srila Prabhupada's Movement

ISKCON Child Protection Office



Newsletter

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Child Abuse – A World-Wide Problem

It is common knowledge that in Western countries, sexual abuse of children is common. **Research indicates that 1 out of 3 girls are sexually molested by age 18. For boys, it is approximately 1 in 7.**

Current figures also show that the problem of child sexual abuse is international. **For instance, within India, four different surveys have found at least 39% and some as high as 73% of girls reported that they had been sexually abused as children.** The numbers were equally high for both upper /middle class girls as with lower class girls. A study of boys found that about 1 in 7 had been abused – identical figures for those in North America.

ISKCON CPO Increases Emphasis on Training and Education

For years, the ISKCON Central Office of Child Protection (CPO) has been immersed in adjudicating past and current cases of child abuse. While this is vital work that must continue, many of us have felt that the real answer to the problems of child abuse in ISKCON lies in prevention.

This means that we must thoroughly educate all devotees in all aspects of child protection. In this way, we will be able to prevent abuse from occurring by recognizing and understanding the nature of abuse, knowing how to report and deal swiftly with abuse cases, and knowing how to support and protect the victims.

Our training efforts must be four-fold:

1. **We need to train judges** who deeply understand child abuse and know the procedures and policies to fairly hear abuse cases.
2. **We need to train Child Protection Teams** to be the first line of defense at every temple, school, and community
3. **We need to present basic child protection information at the community level** – for managers, teachers, parents and all devotees.

4. **We need to educate our children** about child abuse, so that they may help protect themselves from abuse, and know what to do if it occurs.

In recent months the Office has increased its educational and training efforts. We have provided the following trainings:

- Judge's Training in Alachua, Florida
- Judge's Training in Prabhupadadesha, Italy
- Judge's Training in Peru (in Spanish)
- Meeting with and working with Child Protection teams in Potomac, Hillsborough, North Carolina, and Alachua, Florida
- Community training sessions in Hillsborough, NC; Alachua, FL; Italy, and Peru.
- Child Protection training for an older girls gurukula ashrama in Alachua, Florida

Future trainings in the next few months will include Vrndavana, Mayapur, Canada, and Mexico. We are eager to come anywhere in the world to help train devotees and conduct courses and seminar in child protection. For more information contact Tamohara das, at tamohara@yahoo.com

Grass Roots Prevention – Child Protection Teams

In 1991, the ISKCON GBC passed a resolution that requires every temple and school to have a local Child Protection Team (CPT) – a group of dedicated devotees from the community who serve as the “first line of defense” in the effort for child protection. These devotees learn the basics about child abuse, know where and how to report cases of abuse, know how to help victims and families, and work closely with the Central Office of Child Protection.

Recently North America, under the guidance of His Holiness Romapada Swami and the North American Executive Committee, made a complete commitment to establishing and rejuvenating child protection teams at every temple. We now have functioning and enthusiastic teams at almost 100% of the temples throughout the United States and Canada. The CPO has worked closely with these teams to furnish guidance, resources, and materials.

This is an excellent example for the rest of the world. We would like to see the establishment of Child Protection Teams at every one of the 400+ temples throughout the world. For help in developing teams, contact Tamohara das. Another excellent resource for downloading child protection information/materials is the CPO website: www.ChildProtectionOffice.org.

Our sincere appreciation goes to all our supporters who donated in 2005 to assist us in protecting ISKCON's children.



Thank You to Our 2005 Supporters

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Financial records for the 2005 year are available upon request. Please contact Tamohara das at tamohara@yahoo.com.

Upcoming Events

Feb. 2006 - Meet with teachers in Vrindavana, India

March 2006 - One-day Basic Child Protection Training and four-day Judges Training in Mayapur, India

April 2006 Basic Child Protection and Judges Training in Canada (details to come)

Spring 2006 Basic Child Protection and Judges Training in Argentina (details to come)

May 2006 - *Festival of Inspiration* in New Vrindavana, U.S., Basic Child Abuse and Prevention Workshop

Contact the CPO to arrange a training in your community!

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Child Protection Office Expands World-wide Efforts

In September 2004, the ISKCON Child Protection Office opened its first European Office. The European Regional Director is Hanuman das, who is located in Spain. As well as coordinating child protection efforts throughout Europe, Hanuman is also working with Latin American and Spanish-speaking devotees. He is working with devotee communities to establish and build child protection teams at every center, as well as providing training and education to devotees.

In December 2005, Hanuman das and Tamohara das presented a four-day CPO Judges Training seminar in Italy, creating 15 new judges in Europe. As well as serving as judges in abuse cases, they have also returned to their local countries enthusiastically promoting child protection. For instance, Bhaktin Helen and Jaggannidhi das has been appointed child protection representatives in Germany and Austria, respectively.

This January 2006, Hanuman das traveled to Peru to present another four-day Judge's Training. This is a milestone for the CPO - this being the first child protection course to be presented in Spanish. We now have eight new judges in South America, along with increased awareness of child protection issues in that part of the world.