

Response Continuum

Choosing the Response the Situation Requires

PAGE 1 - UNDERSTAND THE CONTINUUM

PURPOSE

Help ministry leaders, volunteers, and safety teams recognize the response a situation requires, act within their assigned responsibilities, and obtain appropriate help.

Presence → Engagement → De-Escalation (L.O.V.E.) → Intervention (Ministry Involvement) → Emergency Response (PROTEct)

USE THE RESPONSE THE SITUATION REQUIRES

These levels are not steps you must complete in order. Begin at the level warranted by the circumstances. The arrows show increasing response intensity—not a requirement to attempt each earlier level.

Increase or reduce the response as conditions change. Activities may overlap, such as continuing calm communication while requesting ministry involvement.

PRESENCE

Stay attentive, available, and ready to assist. Notice activity and changing conditions in your assigned area. Direct involvement may not be needed.

Being present does not mean ignoring a concern.

ENGAGEMENT

Make contact, clarify a concern, or offer ordinary assistance. A respectful greeting or simple question may help you understand what someone needs.

Seek understanding without assuming intent.

DE-ESCALATION (L.O.V.E.)

When tension or agitation develops and circumstances reasonably allow, use L.O.V.E. to reduce pressure and seek an appropriate resolution.

Extend grace without compromising boundaries.

Do not continue a conversation when doing so creates unnecessary danger or delays needed emergency action.

INTERVENTION (MINISTRY INVOLVEMENT)

Bring in the appropriate ministry representative or authorized decision-maker when the concern requires support, authority, or a decision beyond your assignment.

Intervention here means Ministry Involvement. It does not authorize physical intervention.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE (PROTEct)

Take appropriate immediate protective action and summon emergency help.

Apply PROTEct within your role and training, using the options appropriate to the situation. Follow the applicable emergency procedures.

An emergency does not require conflict or escalating behavior. Earlier response levels are not prerequisites.



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PAGE 2 - CHOOSE AND ADJUST THE RESPONSE

BASE THE RESPONSE ON THE SITUATION

Base your response on observable behavior and conditions. Identify immediate danger, the help needed, and the limits of your assignment. Reassess as circumstances change.

Do not delay necessary protective action to gather a complete explanation.

WHEN ADDITIONAL RESPONSE IS NEEDED

Increase the response when:

- A concern remains unresolved and requires additional support or an authorized decision.
- Behavior or conditions create a greater safety concern.
- The situation exceeds your ability to manage it safely.
- An emergency requires immediate assistance or protective action.

A stronger response may mean obtaining appropriate help rather than personally taking stronger action.

WHEN THE RESPONSE CAN STEP DOWN

Reduce the response when tension eases, a concern is resolved, or additional involvement is no longer needed.

Check what remains necessary. A calmer exchange may still require a ministry decision, reporting, or follow-up.

Allow ordinary ministry to resume when appropriate.

YOUR AUTHORITY DOES NOT CHANGE WITH THE RESPONSE LEVEL

Act within your role, training, and authority. Obtain appropriate help when the situation exceeds them.

Communicate established expectations within your assignment. Refer decisions about exceptions, removal, exclusion, or other formal restrictions to the authorized decision-maker.

Perform specialized response tasks only within your designated training and authorization.

THREE PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

An unresolved check-in concern

A parent becomes frustrated about an established check-in requirement. Explain the requirement within your role and use L.O.V.E. when safe. If the concern remains unresolved or an exception is requested, involve the appropriate ministry representative.

Calm communication may continue during the handoff. Once the concern is addressed, reduce the response and complete any required follow-up.

A medical emergency

A person collapses during service. Begin the applicable medical emergency response immediately. Summon emergency assistance and provide aid within your training. Earlier response levels are not prerequisites.

An act of violence

Take appropriate emergency action immediately. Apply PROTEct according to the circumstances, your role, and your training. Do not attempt ordinary conflict resolution as a required first step.



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PAGE 3 - GET HELP AND COMPLETE THE HANDOFF

KNOW YOUR CONTACTS BEFORE YOU SERVE

Know your primary contact, alternate contact, and emergency communication method.

If those arrangements are unclear, ask Leadership to establish them before an incident occurs.

MAKE THE REQUEST CLEAR

State your location, what you observed, any immediate danger, what help is needed, and actions already taken.

COMPLETE THE HANDOFF

Explain what remains unresolved. Confirm that the appropriate person received the concern and understands who will address what remains unresolved.

Follow directions within your role. Do not assume that sending a message alone completes the handoff.

IF HELP DOES NOT RESPOND

Contact the designated alternate or use the church's established escalation procedure.

While awaiting help, maintain a safe position and continue appropriate actions within your role, training, and authority. Reassess if conditions change.

An unanswered request does not resolve the concern or authorize you to exceed your assignment.

IF IMMEDIATE EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE IS NEEDED

Call 911 and take appropriate protective action without waiting for an internal response or Leadership approval.

Use the applicable emergency procedures. Notify internal contacts as circumstances permit without delaying necessary emergency action.

RECORD AND FOLLOW THROUGH

Complete required reporting, including relevant actions, notifications, unsuccessful contact attempts, and unresolved concerns.

Leadership or the authorized decision-maker determines follow-up and closure under the church's procedures.

A situation becoming quiet does not, by itself, establish that all responsibilities are complete.

Use this reference alongside the church's approved procedures and applicable training.

