

CREATING SAFE SANCTUARIES

REDUCING THE RISK OF ABUSE
IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

1

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

Safe Sanctuaries is the standard to which each congregation pledges to care for those with whom they are in ministry and those who offer themselves as leaders in ministry

2

WHO IS THIS POLICY FOR?

Children and Youth – Birth through age 18

Vulnerable Adults

Persons age 18 or older who are mentally, physically or psychologically challenged and unable to make responsible legal decisions about his/her own welfare

Elderly, defined as age 65 and older

All those who interact with our participants or facilities whether on site or off.

3

WHY IS THE CHURCH AT RISK?

- We are a trusting institution.
- Faith groups host programs for children, youth, and vulnerable adults.
- Faith institutions have not historically screened workers effectively.
- The Church's stance on hospitality encourage close relationships with others, requiring training concerning appropriate interpersonal boundaries.

4

POTENTIAL RISK FACTORS:

- Many insurance companies no longer issue coverage to churches who do not have an abuse reduction policy.
- Legal liability and lawsuits
- Your church can be considered negligent, if an incident should occur and no plan is in place
- Your church can lose members, unity of its membership, its reputation and money.

5

OUR CHILDREN AND YOUTH ARE AT RISK:

- Only 1 in 10 tell someone
- 93% are abused by someone they know, trust, and love.
- More than 70% of the children who died as a result of abuse or neglect were two years of age or younger.
- As many as two-thirds of the people in treatment for drug abuse reported being abused or neglected as children.
- A report of abuse is made every 10 seconds
- An average of 5 children die each day from abuse and neglect.
- Every year more than 3.6 million referrals are made to child protection agencies involving more than 6.6 million children (a referral can include multiple children).

6

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND

Screen	Screen paid and volunteer workers.
Implement	Implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events.
Train	Train paid and volunteer workers regarding policies and procedures.
Report	Report suspected incidents of child abuse according to Georgia state law; respond appropriately to both victim and the accused as well as to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

7

WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ABUSE

8

TYPES OF ABUSE

- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional
- Neglect and Abandonment
- Ritual/Spiritual
- Financial Abuse or Exploitation

9

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Possible Indicators:

- Hostility and aggression toward others
- Destructive behavior toward self, others and/or property
- Unexplainable fractures or bruises
- Fearfulness of parents and/or other adults
- Burns, facial injuries, repeated bruises
- Extreme changes in behavior

10

SEXUAL ABUSE

Possible Indicators:

- Advanced sexual knowledge and/or behavior
- Depression
- Promiscuous behavior
- Difficulty sitting or walking
- Bruising/bleeding in vaginal or anal areas
- Frequent headaches, extreme fatigue
- Sexually transmitted diseases

11

EMOTIONAL ABUSE:

Possible Indicators

- Depression and/or withdrawal
- Lack of self esteem
- Threatens or attempts suicide
- Speech and/or eating disorders
- Extreme passive/aggressive behavior
- Excessively seeks adult approval

12

**NEGLECT &
ABANDONMENT:**

Possible Indicators

- Failure to thrive, malnutrition
- Inappropriate dress for climate
- Chronic hunger
- Depression
- Untreated medical conditions
- Poor hygiene, soiled clothing
- Signs of being over or under medicated
- In children, indication that education is being neglected

13

**RITUAL OR
SPIRITUAL ABUSE:**

THE REGULAR,
INTENTIONAL PHYSICAL,
SEXUAL OR
PSYCHOLOGICAL
VIOLATION OF AN
INDIVIDUAL TO APPEAL TO A
HIGHER AUTHORITY OR
POWER.

Possible Indicators:

- Disruptions of memory
- Unexplained mistrust and mood swings
- Flashbacks
- Fear of dark
- Nightmares or sleep disorders
- Any of the sexual abuse symptoms

14

**FINANCIAL ABUSE
OR
EXPLOITATION**

Possible Indicators

- Home furnishings disappear
- Little or no food in the house
- Complains about things disappearing
- Can't find money or valuables, important possessions
- Checkbook is missing or does not balance

15

BASIC SAFETY PROCEDURES

- Two Adult Rule – not the same family
- Five Year Older Rule
- 6-month hospitality rule.
- No Paid Workers under the age of 18 without supervision
- Windows in all Classroom Doors
- Open Door policies
- Appropriate Equipment and Supervision
- Adequate Insurance
- Appropriate Sleeping Arrangements
- Regular Orientation for all paid and volunteer workers
- Background checks for certain ministry areas
- Digital permissions

16

CYBER SECURITY

Everything on the internet is public information.

17

DIGITAL PERMISSIONS

Receiving permissions from the legal guardian is necessary for the following:

- Use of photos, videos, or quotes of participants.
- Emailing, Direct Messaging (DM'ing), calling, texting, or sending data to a child, youth, or vulnerable adult.
- Sharing of any contact information.

18

NEVER POST EASILY IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION ONLINE.

If you communicate by email, use the "Bcc" option (blind carbon copy)

Be cautious when transmitting event dates, times, locations, or participants.

Limit what is communicated in electronic prayer requests.

19

LIMIT INDIVIDUAL COMMUNICATIONS WITH CHILDREN, YOUTH AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

Conduct any communications in a professional manner.

Save all communications you have with children, youth, and vulnerable adults

If you are uneasy about any topic addressed in an email or an email in general, send a blind carbon copy to a parent/guardian (if appropriate) or another trusted adult. Honor privacy, but not secrecy.

If abuse is divulged, follow standard reporting procedures.

20

SAFETY MEASURES FOR SHARING PHOTOS ELECTRONICALLY

Consider copyrights for any photo posted or shared electronically. Keep in mind that copyright laws are not necessarily universal and can get rather complicated.

When posting photos, refrain from using names and never use last names or identifiable information.

Check photos for vulnerable/compromising situations and to make sure they uphold your mission.

Use low-resolution photos whenever possible and slightly blur/pixelate photos.

Block "save photo as" options on websites (ask a web savvy person for assistance)

Limit access to photos by employing the use of a password.

Obtain additional permission to use photos elsewhere (i.e. a journal or website, local paper, etc.)

Consider or prefer using stock or purchased photos.

21

SAFETY MEASURE FOR USING SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES.

Set appropriate privacy settings.

Restrict who can be your "friend."

Use higher level security features even if you have a restricted profile (such as requiring your approval of all comments posted to your site.)

Do not post anything to your social networking site that you would not want attached to your resume or printed in the church newsletter.

Remove or do not post inappropriate comments, photos, etc.

Encourage children, youth and vulnerable adults to follow these same guidelines.

22

REPORTING PROCEDURES

23

WHAT DO WE REPORT?

Accidents

An accident is an unintentional act which occurs and an individual is hurt.

Incidents

An incident is when an action is observed that does not require reporting to DFCS, but does require attention by staff or clergy.

Suspected Abuse

Suspected abuse is when a volunteer or staff person sees, has been told of, or suspects a child, youth or vulnerable adult has been abused in some way.

24

REPORTING ABUSE: GEORGIA LAW

- In the state of Georgia, church staff, ministry supervisors and volunteers are mandatory reporters for suspected abuse
- Report may be given to the ministry supervisor.
- The ministry supervisor will make the call reporting the suspected abuse to the state authorities.
- A report is required within twenty-four hours of receipt of the information.

25

HOW TO REPORT

- Record details of the accident, incident, or suspected abuse on selected forms and report to appropriate church staff as outlined in local church policy and procedures.
- Incidents are handled by church staff who offer alternatives to person in question, and records follow-up.
- For suspected abuse, DFCS needs to investigate. The appropriate local church mandated reporter places the call with knowledge and support of Senior Minister (or SPR Chair). Insurance Company is notified. Attorney is contacted.
- Keep information confidential. Talk only with appropriate authorities. Only one designated person is to speak to the media.

26



QUESTIONS

27