



**BROTHERHOOD
MUTUAL®**

CHILD PROTECTION IN A MINISTRY ENVIRONMENT

GUIDELINES FOR MINISTRY WORKERS

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

The information in this publication is intended to help ministry leaders better understand issues of child abuse and assist them in developing a child protection program for their churches and related ministries. No portion of this publication should be used without prior legal review, revision, and approval by an attorney licensed to practice law in your state.

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INTRODUCTION

Safeguarding the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of young people and other vulnerable individuals may be one of the most important responsibilities of any ministry organization.

PROTECTING THE VULNERABLE

The issue of abuse, particularly sexual abuse, is not an easy topic to discuss. But by being aware of its existence and developing plans for preventing it, churches can take an important step toward protecting their children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

CHILD ABUSE CAN HAPPEN IN YOUR CHURCH

Although allegations of abuse are often in the news, many churches and ministries believe that the potential for child abuse within their organizations is remote. A culture of trust, a characteristic embedded in most ministries, too often keeps them from developing an abuse prevention program, or enforcing it effectively.

Most Christians find it very difficult to talk about child abuse. They think it couldn't happen in their church or be committed by someone they know and trust. This mindset, paired with the presence of many children supervised by few workers or untrained volunteer staff, makes churches and ministries targets for sexual predators.

A quick scan of the daily news demonstrates the prevalence of child abuse and the devastation it can cause children and youth. The problem is nationwide. Any church or ministry that works with children and youth is vulnerable to incidents of abuse. Abuse has no regard for the size of the ministry, its denomination, or its location.

PREVENTION PROGRAMS HELP REDUCE THE RISK OF ABUSE

First, churches and ministries should acknowledge the potential for child abuse.



Churches and ministries should acknowledge the potential for child sexual abuse. Then they should act.

REALITY CHECK

Many people in the community knew and respected a long-time high school coach. He often patted female players on their rears during practices and games, but no one gave it a second thought. A concerned parent attended a school board meeting to discuss the coach's behavior.

The coach claimed it was typical and enhanced team work. Not satisfied with the response, a board member approached a player who revealed that the coach had been meeting with her privately and touching her inappropriately. The school immediately reported the incident and local police investigated.

Many were shocked when the coach was arrested and plead guilty to several misdemeanor charges involving current and former players. Without the parent and board member's concern and follow up, this behavior would have continued.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Do you have procedures in place for handling reports or suspicion of abuse? See page 35 for sample procedures on responding to suspicion of child abuse or neglect.

Then, they should develop a child abuse prevention program, including robust employee and volunteer screening procedures. This helps defend the ministry's reputation, and it is key to maximizing the safety of children, youth, and vulnerable adults in any ministry organization.

This guide can help you develop such a program. Background information and sample documents provide a starting point for you, your attorney, and other ministry leaders. Use these documents as you develop or update a child abuse prevention program specific to your church or ministry.

CHAPTER 1

IDENTIFYING ABUSE: DISRUPTING THE CULTURE OF TRUST

People view the church as a safe place, especially for children, youth, and vulnerable adults. That's why incidents of abuse in any ministry are shocking and are disruptive to the organization's culture of trust.

While it may be tempting to jump right in and start developing policies and procedures, it's important to understand the three common forms of abuse, dispel myths about who abuses a child, and understand techniques abusers generally use. While there are several forms of abuse, this guidebook will primarily focus on sexual abuse.

WHAT IS ABUSE?

Generally, abuse occurs in several forms, all of which could be happening at the same time. The definition of criminal abuse varies by state. Please refer to your state statutes for its definition of abuse.

Emotional abuse conveys a message that the child is worthless and undeserving of love and care. It can take the form of threats, critical words, demeaning terms or names, deprivation of affection, or similar emotional cruelty. It can be spoken or unspoken.

Sexual abuse can be defined by any form of sexual contact between a child and an adult or older youth. This could include showing or talking about sexually explicit material.

Physical abuse is intentional, deliberate behavior that causes bodily harm to a child. It can take several forms, including assault, shaking, kicking, or choking. In general, it includes all non-accidental physical injuries.

Neglect is failing to meet a child's needs, such as nutritional, physical, emotional, educational, and safety. Signs of neglect can include lack of basic needs like weather-appropriate clothing, lack of food that results in a child being extremely underweight for their age, or lack of running water for bathing or cleaning clothes.

WHO ARE THE ABUSERS?

For child abuse or neglect, about 77 percent of perpetrators are a parent to the victim.¹ Family members account for about 30 percent of the perpetrators of sexual abuse.² Additionally, sixty percent of sexual abuse is committed by someone known to the child but is not a family member, such as a babysitter or other child care provider.² Only about 10 percent of abusers are strangers.² While more often than not the perpetrators of sexual abuse are men, 53.7 percent of perpetrators of all child abuse or neglect are women.¹

THE REALITY OF ABUSE

- On average, 70 allegations of child abuse are reported in churches each week, according to studies reported by Christianity Today.³
- 57,329 cases of child sexual abuse were reported in 2016.⁴

Victims of Sexual Abuse

- Research conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that approximately 1 in 6 boys and 1 in 4 girls are sexually abused before the age of 18.²
- 35.8% of sexual assaults occur when the victim is between the ages of 12 and 17.²
- 82% of all juvenile victims are female.⁵

Perpetrators of Sexual Abuse

- An estimated 90% of perpetrators of sexual abuse are known to the child.²
- Not all perpetrators are adults—an estimated 23% of reported cases of child sexual abuse are perpetrated by individuals under the age of 18.²

REALITY CHECK

A recently hired youth pastor concealed his criminal record for providing alcohol to minors. His family were long-time members at the church and everyone knew them.

The church did not perform a background check before hiring him, missing his criminal record. He became the subject of a sexual misconduct claim after an incident where he provided alcohol to minors.

DO YOU ALWAYS FOLLOW YOUR POLICY?

Don't be tempted to skip critical screening steps, even for volunteers you know well. This keeps a level playing field and ensures you are following your written policies.

Sexual predators do not generally stand out in any particular way. They generally match societal norms regarding education, employment, and social status. Most are male, but females also commit sexual offenses. One study indicated that 93 percent of child molesters identify themselves as being religious.⁶ This is one of the reasons that accusations of abuse can be difficult to acknowledge. Church members might ask, "how can someone we know and trust be capable of abuse?"

HOW DOES CHILD ABUSE HAPPEN?

Ministries, particularly churches, are viewed as easy targets by sexual predators. Child abusers and molesters exploit the following characteristics found in most religious organizations:

- Churches and many related organizations rely heavily on volunteer help in children and youth ministries.
- Churches often have large numbers of children, weak abuse prevention policies, a shortage of willing workers, and a culture that sees the good in people.
- Ministries tend to have lax screening procedures and policies. Learn more about screening employees and volunteers in chapter three.

SEXUAL PREDATORS' SECRET TECHNIQUES

Sexual abuse can be difficult to detect. However, awareness of pre-abuse behaviors, often called **grooming**, can help detect the potential for abuse. It's important to note that predators will use grooming techniques not only on their victims but also on the gatekeepers (e.g., victim's parents, volunteers, and church employees).

Grooming behaviors typically include:

- Selecting the victim.
- Gaining trust by cultivating friendships with the gatekeepers.
- Offering gifts (jewelry, money), compliments, and lavish attention.
- Gaining access by finding or creating situations to be alone with the victim.

PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO ACCUSATIONS

It's imperative that ministry workers and leaders pay special attention to accusations of child abuse. Always take the accusation seriously to determine if a report to the authorities is required and/or warranted.

- It might be tempting to assume children often report false allegations of abuse. Current research does not support this.²
- Get help from your church's legal counsel and local law enforcement representatives if you're uncertain whether a report to authorities is warranted. Then, take the appropriate steps.
- You may be required to report reasonable suspicion of child abuse, not just hard evidence. See page 19 for more information about mandatory reporting.

When a child confides in you:

- Listen seriously to the child; do not criticize.
- Let the child use his or her own words.
- Remain calm; reassure the child that he/she has done the right thing by telling.
- Be a good listener and don't make promises to "fix this."
- Don't make suggestions or attempt to alter the child's story.
- Document what you were told and immediately alert designated ministry staff and the appropriate authorities.

- Creating opportunities to slowly establish an increasingly physical connection (touches, tickles, hugs).
- Encouraging or threatening a child to “keep their special secret” by using shame and blame.

These techniques are slowly introduced and can cause abuse to remain a secret for some time—whether it is committed within a ministry setting or outside it.

Remember, grooming behaviors are very difficult to spot, but if something seems out of place, bring it to the attention of ministry leadership. Hold each other accountable and strictly follow policies (see Chapter 2 for developing effective policies and procedures).

DISCLOSURE AND INDICATORS OF ABUSE

Regardless of where abuse takes place, many times ministry leaders and workers don’t readily detect and respond to incidents of child abuse because they are unaware of the behavioral and emotional signals that accompany abuse. Additionally, some estimate that up to 40 percent of sexually abused children don’t show any signs.²

Victims of abuse often gradually disclose what has happened. Children are especially slow to disclose abuse. They are afraid of negative reactions of adults or of “getting into trouble” with the abuser. Always listen to children if they disclose abuse. And remember, disclosure can take many forms: verbal, non-verbal, behavioral, and emotional.

ABUSE HAS DEVASTATING, LIFE-LONG EFFECTS FOR EVERYONE

Any form of abuse, particularly sexual abuse, within a ministry demoralizes everyone involved—the victim, the victim’s family, the ministry and its leaders, the family of the abuser, and the community.

Of course, the child who has been sexually abused feels the greatest devastation.

For more information about protecting children from sexual abuse, read “5 Steps to Protecting Our Children” at www.d2l.org/education/5-steps

DON'T OVERLOOK ONLINE ABUSE

- **1 in 7 youth internet users** receive unwanted sexual solicitation²
- **76 percent of first encounters** of a predator with an “internet-initiated sex crimes victim” begin in online chat rooms²
- **Predators** are generally more open with their intent when befriending online victims¹

To protect youth in ministry settings, do not allow employees or volunteers to communicate one-to-one with youth via text message or email. All communication should be done through ministry-approved channels.

Abuse steals a child’s innocence. It can cause depression, fear, and lack of self-esteem—scars that often affect a child’s experiences throughout life.

Besides causing physical and emotional harm, abuse that occurs within a church or ministry setting often creates overwhelming obstacles to the child’s faith development. Trust is broken and questions such as, “How could God let this happen to me?” are common.

Ministries also can be affected. Abuse, particularly child sexual abuse, often leads to a variety of emotional responses among members—surprise, fear, anger, humiliation—that consequently make addressing all the potential problems created by the abusive incident difficult.

Legal and emotional fallout can severely damage ministries. Litigation resulting from allegations of abuse is often costly, even if the allegations are withdrawn or proven untrue. Additionally, the damage to a ministry's reputation can have far-reaching negative consequences.

Given the seriousness of child abuse, leaders should be attentive to indicators within their church or related ministry. Churches and related ministries should create an environment in which child abuse is not tolerated.

¹ U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. (2018). Child maltreatment 2016. Available from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/research-data-technology/statistics-research/child-maltreatment>.

² "Facts and Statistics." United States Department of Justice National Sex Offender Public Website, www.nsopw.gov/en-US/Education/FactsStatistics. Accessed March 8, 2018.

³ Olsen, Ted. "70 Child Abuse Accusations Against Churches Each Week—and Most Are Protestants." Christianity Today, April 1, 2002, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2002/aprilweb-only/4-1-51.0.html>.

⁴ U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. "Child Maltreatment 2016." www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/research-data-technology/statistics-research/child-maltreatment. Last reviewed February 1, 2018.

⁵ Snyder, Howard N., PhD. "Sexual Assault of Young Children as Reported to Law Enforcement: Victim, Incident, and Offender Characteristics," U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, July 2000.

⁶ Abel, Gene G., M.D., and Harlow, Nora. "The Abel and Harlow Child Molestation Prevention Study." Excerpt from *The Stop Child Molestation Book*, Xlibris, 2001.

CHAPTER 2

PREVENTING ABUSE: POLICIES SET SAFE BOUNDARIES FOR CHILDREN

Providing a safe, secure ministry environment requires policies and procedures specially developed to screen, educate, and monitor employee and volunteer workers. It involves congregational awareness of the potential risks of child abuse and a commitment to minimizing the risk.

WHY DEVELOP A POLICY?

A formal written policies and procedures document establishes a culture of safety and accountability. It provides a written record of ministry practices designed to protect children, youth, and vulnerable adults. A written policy establishes the guidelines and procedures that staff and volunteers must follow.

As you begin developing policies and procedures to protect the children and youth in your church or ministry, keep in mind these key underlying principles:

- Child abuse is always wrong and a grievous criminal matter in every state. Every state has some form of mandatory reporting laws. Become familiar with the reporting laws in your state (see Chapter 4).
- Children are never responsible for causing the abuse. They are not legally or morally capable of consenting to abusive behavior.

Ministries can demonstrate their commitment to providing a safe environment for children by establishing standards that govern the behavior of those working in their ministry programs. Once established, the document should be made readily available to parents or guardians.

DEVELOPING A WRITTEN CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY

Before you begin writing your child abuse prevention policy, research the issue in both



Consult with your attorney as you develop and implement a child abuse prevention program. An attorney can help you align your program with specific state and local requirements.

REALITY CHECK

A youth camp run by a church has policies that require anyone, other than a camp worker, to sign in and be escorted at all times. Eyewitnesses and records showed that one camp worker wasn't following policy by allowing delivery vehicles into the camp without an escort. After verbal and written warnings, the volunteer was asked to step down.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Policies clearly state how situations should be handled. When they aren't followed, it puts everyone at risk. Sometimes it's difficult to ask volunteers to relinquish a role, but sometimes it's the right thing to do.

secular and church situations. This information will be helpful as you assess the needs of your organization and address the potential concerns and objections of employees, volunteers, and the congregation.

Assess your situation, considering the specific needs of your church or ministry (for help developing a child protection policy, see the sample child protection policy on pages 32–37). Ensure that you cover all the elements needed to make your policy and screening process as complete and effective as possible.

At a minimum, ministry organizations should develop a policy that includes the following elements:

- **Screening.** Robust screening policies are essential for minimizing the risk of a sexual predator gaining access to children, youth,

and vulnerable adults. Chapter 3 discusses screening in greater detail, but its importance cannot be overstated. Simply put, screen everyone who will have contact with children or youth and all employees. Do your research. Interview your staff and volunteers. Check their background. Pay close attention to who gets the privilege of teaching your ministry's children and youth.

- **Statement of restriction.** Your written policy should state specifically that any person who may pose a threat to children, youth, or vulnerable adults will be prohibited from working in any ministry involving these groups. A restriction statement clearly communicates your commitment to identify potential predators or other unsuitable volunteers and prevent them from accessing ministries involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
- **Waiting period.** Your policies should establish the minimum amount of time that volunteers must be associated with the ministry before they can serve in your children's or youth ministries. A waiting period of six months is typical.
- **Supervision.** Supervision is another critical component of minimizing the risk of abuse in your ministry. Develop supervision policies for both on and off-site activities. See Chapter 5 for more information about finding the right volunteers, guidelines for providing an adequate number of volunteers, and establishing a restroom policy.
- **Worker/Volunteer restrictions.** Your policies should clearly identify what behavior is appropriate and what behavior is inappropriate. The restrictions portion of your policies should include rules for restroom use, avoiding the appearance of impropriety, and safety check procedures when releasing children to parents and/or guardians. See



Your church should have a policy prohibiting anyone with a history of sex offenses from interacting with the congregation's children and youth.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Policies and procedures that include strong guidelines for eliminating unsupervised one-on-one interaction can be extremely helpful in reducing the potential for abuse. Additionally, policies may include areas that are off-limits (no-go zones). These could be supply closets, mechanical rooms, backstage areas, etc. Whenever possible, access to these areas should be restricted.

pages 56–57 for more information about developing a check-in/check-out procedure.

- **Discipline of children.** Your policies should clearly indicate what, if any, discipline is appropriate. They should also clarify how to report discipline issues. See Chapter 5 for more information.
- **Abuse notification and reporting procedures.** There should be a clear process for how abuse is reported and recorded. All states have mandatory reporting laws (Chapter 4). To help your ministry implement a standardized approach, see the sample "Suspected Abuse or Neglect Report" on Page 50.
- **Communicating with youth in the digital age.** Communicating with youth through text message, email, communication apps, and social media is common among youth pastors and other staff that work with children and youth. If your ministry is going to allow its adult staff members and volunteers to communicate with youth through email, text messaging, or social media, you'll want to develop a written policy. The policy will help set boundaries for both the adults and minors involved. See the sample youth ministry communication policy on page 39. For additional information, please visit brotherhoodmutual.com/resources/child-safety.
- **Communication plan.** How will you communicate your new guidelines? Who is your audience? Chapter 6 offers details on why effective and targeted communications are the key to a successful abuse prevention plan.

GUIDELINES FOR FACILITIES USE

If you rent or loan your facility to outside groups, ask them to provide appropriate supervision of the children and youth in their care while they're in your building. Some ministries seek to apply their child protection policies to outside groups and organizations that use ministry facilities. However, it is often very difficult for outside group volunteers to meet many of the requirements in a ministry's policy.

Ministries likely do not intend to assume all the additional obligations that may arise from implementing such requirements. Such a connection between outside groups and the church could cause the ministry to be held legally responsible (or liable) for the acts of outside groups' personnel and volunteers. An injured party might argue that the ministry was responsible to screen, train, and supervise outside group personnel and volunteers since it included requirements for outside groups in its policy.

Instead of requiring outside groups to follow the church's policy, some ministries choose to detail the specific responsibilities of each party in a facilities use agreement (see sample agreement, page 46). The agreement should clarify that it is the responsibility of the outside group to screen their child care personnel and to provide for the safety of individuals attending their function.

However, as indicated previously, taking on a greater role with the outside group's child care operations (e.g., assisting with or requiring specific screening procedures) could cause the ministry to be liable for the acts of the outside group's personnel and volunteers.

RESPONDING TO MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

- **Keep emergency and contact information handy.** In the event of an accident or sudden illness, you should contact the child's parents or other emergency contact.

Download a sample facilities use agreement at brotherhoodmutual.com/resources/safety-library/risk-management-forms/facilities-use-agreement/

BALANCING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AND CHILD CARE POLICIES

Protecting your most vulnerable children and youth takes additional care. Children with special needs can be particularly vulnerable to sexual predators.¹ In addition to your child abuse prevention policies, your ministry should consider incorporating additional procedures for children with special needs.

- **Seek immediate medical attention if a child becomes seriously ill.** When in doubt, err on the side of caution and seek medical services. Contact the child's parents as soon as possible.
- **Activity participation agreement.** Make the completed form a condition of participation, especially for off-site events. Make careful note of any known medical conditions or allergies before allowing children and youth to participate in ministry activities (see sample form, page 45). Remember, before you use any type of activity participation agreement or other liability release, be sure to have your attorney review it.

UPDATE YOUR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

No plan is current forever. Review it regularly, updating it whenever necessary. Providing a safe ministry environment requires constant leadership and vigilance to ensure that policies and procedures reflect all ministry operations and are enforced.



Policies and procedures define what you're going to do, not what you say you're going to do.

¹ "State School Health Policy Database." The National Association of State Boards of Education, http://www.nasbe.org/healthy_schools/hs/bytopics.php?topicid=4110. Accessed March 7, 2018.

CHAPTER 3

SCREENING GUIDELINES: PREVENTING ACCESS

Carefully screening anyone who will have contact with children or youth and all employees before allowing them to work in your church is one of the best ways to protect your church from incidents of child abuse.

Typically, screening involves following four key elements.

1. Require a written application. A sample form on page 41 for volunteers can help you begin.

- **Personal information** — name, address, phone number, driver's license number if driving is involved
- **Background** — criminal convictions or guilty/no contest pleas (other than minor traffic offenses)*, commission or allegation of abuse/sexual misconduct, prior church membership, prior work or service involving children or youth, residence history, employment history, education
- **References** — personal and professional
- **Verification and release** — signed by the applicant

2. Check references. The best references come from places where the applicant has worked with children and youth. Character references also are important. Ensure that the applicant signs a release before the reference check is conducted. The release should enable you to interview anyone you believe can provide



When screening teenagers or minor volunteers, it's important to follow the same procedures as adult volunteers. The exception typically is that no formal background screening is available for anyone under the age of 18. You will need to rely on applications, reference checks (e.g., teachers, employers, ministry staff), and personal interviews. Don't be tempted to skip screening for minors. It is estimated that minors account for 20 percent of arrests for sexual assault.¹

*Some states do not allow inquiries into criminal history to be conducted on employment applicants until either an interview has been conducted or a conditional offer of employment has been made. Check with a local attorney to ensure your policies follow state and local laws.

REALITY CHECK

A large church had a roster of screened and approved volunteers scheduled to work in the nursery. One Sunday a woman claimed that she was scheduled to work in the nursery. She was not on the list of approved workers. The nursery director asked a few questions and it became clear the "volunteer" didn't know anyone at the church and couldn't name or describe who she met with to volunteer in the nursery. The woman left quickly. The nursery volunteers recognized the woman when she was later arrested for attempted kidnapping.

COULD IT HAPPEN TO YOU?

In addition to having a policy, train volunteers to follow procedures. Regular reminders and training keeps procedures top of mind for your volunteers. Consider making regular training part of your written policies.

valuable information about the applicant, even if those individuals are not listed on the application. Make sure you check at least two references, including ministries where the applicant has worked.

3. Perform background checks for employees and volunteers. Criminal records checks have become common elements in employee hiring. Regardless of the position, all employees should undergo a background check as a part of your policy. To provide a safe environment, you also should conduct a criminal background check for volunteers who will have access to children, youth, and vulnerable adults. A criminal records check, while very important, is only one of the recommended screening tools—most sexual predators have no criminal history and would not show up on a background check.

4. Conduct personal interviews. Information learned through the application, references, and background check may help you develop questions and discussion points for the personal interview with the applicant.* Interviews may be conducted by one or more pastors or staff, such as a children's ministry director.

*Some states do not allow inquiries into criminal history to be conducted on employment applicants until either an interview has been conducted or a conditional offer of employment has been made. Check with a local attorney to ensure your policies follow state and local laws.

DON'T BE INTIMIDATED

HIRE A SCREENING PROVIDER TO MANAGE BACKGROUND CHECKS

Because of the constant turnover in volunteer help, some churches may see screening as an unmanageable task. However, many organizations that work with children, including churches, have been able to solve this problem by establishing an account with a background screening provider.

Once your church has an account with a screening provider, it takes only seconds to type in the name and Social Security number of each person you want screened. Most background check results are available in two to three business days. Some database searches provide immediate results.

Under the federal Fair Credit Reporting Act, you must have a person's written permission to perform a background check. If you use information from the background check to deny someone, the law may require you to provide adverse action notification. A screening provider can help you comply with this law.

From a risk management perspective, it is good for ministries to renew their criminal background checks for volunteers and employees at least every three to five years. Annually, we recommend that ministries require employees and volunteers to complete a "worker renewal application." You can download a sample at brotherhoodmutual.com. The renewal application can serve as an annual inquiry that will help uncover any potentially serious situations involving existing employees and volunteers. Information provided on a worker renewal application or other circumstances that arise may give reason for your ministry to conduct an updated background check sooner than three to five years.

Use the interview to gain further information on topics that arose out of the application, reference checks, and background check. It also is an opportunity to address any inconsistencies in responses or information gathered. During the interview, watch for evasive answers or questions as answers. These are signs of defensive behavior and could indicate deception.

Sometimes, church leaders fear they may scare off potential volunteers if they ask workers to answer personal questions and undergo a background check. But parents expect churches to be safe places where they can send their children. If your church communicates that it is committed to making itself safe for children, screening actually could attract, not repel, volunteer workers and new members. Conversely, a robust screening process can deter predators from volunteering for children's ministry activities.

SCREEN ALL EMPLOYEES REGARDLESS OF POSITION AND ALL VOLUNTEERS WHO WILL WORK WITH CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND VULNERABLE ADULTS—NO EXCEPTIONS

Screen all employees and everyone involved with children, youth, or vulnerable adults in your church. This can turn away potential wrongdoers and show that your church has taken reasonable care to safeguard the children, youth, and vulnerable adults in its care.

When starting a screening program, you should screen all existing workers, not just new ones. This provides a level playing field. Also, new workers might object less to background screening if they know that everyone is treated equally.

PEER-ON-PEER ABUSE

Peer-on-peer abuse is a tough topic. Children who have been sexually abused often repeat the behavior they have seen or experienced from others. Those who were molested at a young age start molesting at a younger age and tend to have more victims.³

Restroom use and overnight activities represent a high risk of peer-to-peer abuse. A good set of policies surrounding these topics provide some protection (see "Supervision" in the sample

policy form, page 33). Incorporate educating your workers about the risk of peer-on-peer abuse during training.

Juvenile abusers applying for work in your ministry are harder to catch in the screening process, too. Because performing a criminal background check on a minor presents legal challenges in most states, the best way to protect against peer-on-peer abuse is to use other screening tools for minors who apply to serve in positions involving the supervision of other minors and ensure your procedures include adequate supervision. See the sample children/youth ministry volunteer application on page 41.

YOUR DILIGENCE CAN PREVENT ABUSE

Can worker screening protect a church from every instance of child sexual abuse? No. A potential offender can hide in plain sight, often appearing to be a trustworthy individual.

If your screening uncovers something in a person's past, such as an accusation (but no charges filed), an acquittal of criminal charges, or even a prior conviction, it may not automatically disqualify that person from ministry. Gather information from all four screening tools, then make a decision on the individual once you have all the facts.

By implementing a screening program, you can significantly decrease the likelihood that misconduct will occur. It also will demonstrate that your church has acted with reasonable care to select appropriate workers. In the unfortunate event that sexual abuse or other crimes do occur in a church program, churches that have screened the alleged perpetrator will be in a better position to defend themselves in court—and protect their reputations— than churches that have not.

Many practical suggestions for creating and maintaining a successful screening program are found in a resource kit published by Church Law & Tax Resources, titled, *Reducing the Risk II: Making Your Church Safe from Child Sexual Abuse*. Contact your Brotherhood Mutual representative to purchase a copy of this resource kit.

SEX OFFENDERS FACE A HARD ROAD TOWARD RECOVERY AND REHABILITATION

Recidivism, or repeat-offending, rates tell the story. During a three-year period, researchers found that 38 percent of convicted offenders were returned to prison within three years of their initial release² due to the commission of a new crime or technical violation of their release conditions.

You can find a sample "Sex Offender Attendance Policy" and "Contingent Participation Agreement" on brotherhoodmutual.com.

SEX OFFENDERS IN THE CHURCH

Do Your Homework and Ask the Tough

Questions. Churches can play a role in helping sex offenders return to society, overcome behaviors, and deepen their faith commitment. However, your ministry's priority is to protect all who attend and participate in ministry activities, especially children.

Studies indicate that sex offenders need a combination of treatment, counseling, support, and accountability to help them manage feelings that led them to commit sex crimes. However, your ministry should evaluate each situation individually. Seek help in assessing the likelihood that the individual will re-offend. Collaborate with local agencies and professionals experienced in helping offenders re-enter the community.

DEVELOP A POLICY—BEFORE YOU NEED ONE

While a registered sex offender may request permission to attend church, it also may be that an offender's background is discovered after years of attendance. Your church should act now to:

- **Decide whether to allow** a repentant sex offender to participate in your ministry.
- **Decide the parameters of attendance and involvement** (location/activity restrictions, etc.)

- **Enlist a locally licensed attorney to help with legal issues.** Many cities bar offenders from living within a certain distance of schools, playgrounds, and other places where children gather. Privacy issues and other legal requirements may come into play for your state.
- **Check liability coverage with your insurance agent.** If your ministry decides to allow sex offenders to participate in ministry activities, knowing what your coverage includes, or excludes, is helpful when creating a child protection plan. Many policies specifically exclude or limit sexual misconduct claims committed by repeat offenders known to the ministry.
- **Create a plan** that offers accountability for the sex offender and protection for the ministry and its members. Your plan for convicted sex offenders should include:

- A written agreement designed to prevent opportunities for further offense.
- Details on permissible activities that set clear boundaries.
- A “Needs to Know” list that permits ministry leaders to inform others about the offender’s conviction if they believe it is necessary to do so.
- An outline of other stipulations that clarifies additional steps (e.g., counseling, speaking with probation officers, etc.) the offender must meet for continued inclusion in your ministry.
- An accountability partner that shields the offender from temptation. Several people can share this responsibility, provided the offender is constantly supervised.
- The consequences of breaking the covenant that include revoking attendance privileges and access to church property.

Meeting the spiritual needs of the offender, while overcoming congregants’ objections and protecting vulnerable people is a tall order. What works for your ministry may not work for another. Whatever your ministry decides, it is important to create a policy and develop procedures.

¹ “Fact sheet: What You Need to Know About Sex Offenders.” Center for Sex Offender Management, www.csom.org/pubs/needtoknow_fs.pdf. Accessed March 8, 2018.

² Przybylski, Roger. “Adult Sex Offender Recidivism.” Sex Offender Management Assessment and Planning Initiative, www.smart.gov/SOMAPI/sec1/ch5_recidivism.html. Accessed March 8, 2018.

³ Abel, Gene G., M.D., and Harlow, Nora. “The Abel and Harlow Child Molestation Prevention Study.” Excerpt from *The Stop Child Molestation Book*, Xlibris, 2001.

CHAPTER 4

MANDATORY REPORTING: WHO, WHAT, HOW, AND WHEN

Reporting abuse or neglect may be uncharted territory for most. However, the consequences of “looking the other way” far outweigh the awkwardness. If abuse goes unreported, a child may endure more abuse, suffer lifelong physical and emotional scars, and may become an abuser later in life.

Your ministry can help staff and volunteers understand their moral and legal responsibilities associated with this serious issue. A clear policy, supported by leadership, explains how to recognize abuse, respond to allegations of abuse, and what steps to follow if an individual admits to abuse.

WHO REPORTS

- **Know mandatory reporting laws in your state.** Abuse reporting laws can vary widely state to state. Ask your attorney about mandatory procedures, including who in your ministry is required to report. In more than half the states, laws name clergy members as mandatory reporters¹—this may include

“privileged” communications. Your state also may have mandatory reporting laws regarding threats of suicide or harm to others. You can search for your state statutes at www.childwelfare.gov. Some states have criminal penalties for not complying with mandatory reporting requirements.

WHAT TO REPORT

- **Train employees and volunteers to identify abuse.** Abuse takes many forms. When it comes to warning signs, employees and volunteers may be concerned that they are not qualified to recognize warning signs. Education is the key. Start by including behavioral cues in your plan (Chapter 1).

BARRIERS AND CONCERNS	POINTS TO CONSIDER
Our ministry doesn't have the expertise to deal with a victim or accused.	You don't have to be an expert. The victim or accused should be referred to professional help.
Our staff and volunteers are afraid they'll make a false accusation.	Education is the key to alleviating fear. Make sure you're training and retraining staff. See "good faith" reporting, page 20.
The suspected perpetrator will take it out on the ministry if we report suspected abuse.	States protect the anonymity of those making a report. You don't have to inform others that you're reporting suspected abuse.
Our governing body doesn't want employees to get involved in private family matters.	It is your legal and moral responsibility to protect the vulnerable in your care.
Our ministry will lose credibility or be scandalized.	An effective protection policy shows your commitment to protecting children, youth, and vulnerable adults, and reflects the heart of your ministry. If the abuser is a ministry employee, then use that experience as an opportunity to strengthen your abuse prevention plan and your moral and legal commitments to the community.
I know a church leader is an abuser. I'm afraid of what will happen to me if I tell.	Do the right thing, even when those with greater authority discourage you from reporting.

HOW TO REPORT

- **Create a document that outlines internal procedures.** Who is the first person to hear of suspected abuse? Who alerts authorities? What should the worker or volunteer do if the first person on the list is the one suspected of abuse? A locally licensed attorney can help organize a chain-of-command policy that complies with the laws in your area (see our sample policy, page 32).
- **Train workers how to report abuse.** Once you have a written plan, thoroughly train workers on your reporting procedures. Workers should have clear guidance and step-by-step instructions. Set an annual date for retraining and evaluating your plan. Inform the congregation of any new policies so parents understand the care their children are receiving.

WHAT DOES “GOOD FAITH” REPORTING MEAN?

Every state provides protection against liability when the individual reports suspected abuse in “good faith,” meaning the person has a reasonable belief that abuse has occurred or is ongoing.

- **Create a need-to-know chain of command.** Keep the number of people who hear of an allegation or suspicion to a minimum prior to contacting authorities. This helps streamline the process, preserve the integrity of the information, and protect the privacy of those involved.
- **Document everything.** Know what documentation you’ll need and where to find required forms. From a risk management perspective, it is good practice to document everything, including conversations, dates, and circumstances in which the individual learned of, suspected, suffered, or was accused of abuse. To help develop a formalized procedure, see our sample form, page 50.
- **Leave the investigation to authorities.** Your ministry does not have to confirm an allegation prior to reporting. Investigations are best left to highly skilled professionals in law enforcement and social services. Interviewing the suspected individual or the child exhibiting possible warning signs of abuse can do more harm than good. You could unintentionally

tamper with an investigation by divulging critical details to the accused or damage a reputation with unfounded accusations. Stick to a few clarifying questions necessary to make an accurate report.

WHEN TO REPORT

- **Know when to break with procedure.** Regardless of whether a worker is required to report, most states permit you to report if you have a reasonable suspicion that abuse has occurred or someone is in danger. If you suspect someone is in danger or presents an immediate threat to someone else, call the police.

REALITY CHECK

A child confides in a day care worker that he is being abused by a neighbor. The worker, feeling that it’s a private family matter, decides it’s not her place to submit a report to local authorities. The child continues to suffer abuse until a parent notices bruises and contacts police. Later, the day care is sued for failure to report the abuse.

DO YOUR WORKERS UNDERSTAND YOUR POLICY?

It’s important that staff and volunteers fully understand your reporting policy, which should explain your ministry’s moral obligations and your state’s legal requirements. How to make a report should be clear to all.

BARRIERS TO REPORTING

Protecting the most vulnerable should be your ministry’s top priority. Unfortunately, some may feel that’s in conflict with serving all members of your ministry, or safeguarding the reputation of staff and the organization. It’s important to address this concern among leaders and workers. Keeping a secret or not disclosing a confidence may perpetuate more abuse, and do more harm to a ministry’s community standing.

Pastors may wrestle with the consequences of reporting abuse. Fear can be a powerful deterrent—police involvement can lead to a family’s break up, or job loss and incarceration for the accused. Public reports can damage the ministry’s reputation. The chart on page 19 addresses common barriers to reporting.

¹ “Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect.” Child Information Welfare Gateway, 2016, www.childwelfare.gov/pubpdfs/clergymandated.pdf.

CHAPTER 5

A SAFE SPACE: SUPERIOR SUPERVISION

Screening provides the base for good child protection policies. But it's more than just finding caring individuals. Proper supervision at church-sponsored activities is key to protecting the safety of the children and limiting potential problems. Good supervision not only helps deter abuse but helps avoid false allegations of abuse. The goal is to prevent situations that leave one employee or volunteer alone with minors and vulnerable adults in rooms, vehicles, changing areas, or restrooms.

The following guidelines can help your church or ministry continue to offer rewarding activities while protecting all participants. Superior supervision starts with creating effective policies that offer supervision and guidance for any activity, discipline issue, or emergency.

FOCUS ON...

Ministries who consistently follow these rules increase accountability, deter misconduct, and reduce the chance of false accusation. Focus on:

- **Code of conduct.** Require that all employees and volunteers commit to protecting the children, youth, and vulnerable adults in their care. A local attorney can help with language specific to your state's laws (see sample form, page 38).
- **Screening processes.** Apply your organization's screening process to all current workers and new applicants. No exceptions. In this way, you will help all ministry workers and members or your organization understand that screening applies to everyone working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults (Chapter 3).
- **The six-month rule.** Consider a requirement that individuals applying for volunteer work attend your church for at least six months. Sexual predators often volunteer for ministries in which they can have easy access to children. Normally, the individual won't wait that long to gain access.
- **Maturity and good judgment.** Although teenagers in your church can be a good resource, they often lack the experience needed to deal with crisis situations. Look for employees and volunteers who have demonstrated maturity and good judgment.

RULES BY THE NUMBERS

- **GUIDELINES FOR ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTION.** Any adult employee or volunteer generally should avoid being alone with a child or youth. If your counseling/mentoring practices necessitate one-on-one interaction, put into place the following precautions:
 - Obtain prior written consent from the youth's parents/guardians.
 - Set a limit for the duration and frequency of any continuing one-on-one contact, like three 30-minute sessions.
 - Meet only in public locations where the adult and the youth are visible by others.
- **IMPLEMENT THE TWO-ADULT RULE.** We recommend the two-adult rule. This rule creates accountability that helps prevent and deter misconduct. It also helps reduce the ability for anyone to make a false accusation. The rule requires that two screened and unrelated adults be present at every function and in each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area during all activities involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults. The level of accountability is diminished if the two adults are husband and wife, or otherwise related. There is a presumption that family members would be biased if required to provide an account of each other's actions and, in many states, an individual cannot be compelled to testify against his or her spouse.

OR
- **APPLY THE RULE OF THREE.** When the two-adult rule cannot be supported, the rule of three requires at least three individuals be present, with at least one being an adult employee or volunteer. The age and capacity of the children being supervised should be taken into consideration when using this rule. For the rule of three, it's about accountability. It is not appropriate for one screened adult to be with two toddlers as there would be no accountability regarding the adult's actions. Similarly, one screened adult should not be alone with a teen volunteer and a very young child because there's no accountability regarding the interactions between the adult and the teen volunteer. The two-adult rule is preferred for children under at least five years of age.

- **Enlist workers who have special training.** Look for employees or volunteers with first aid and CPR training, or experience related to the activity. An experienced outdoor enthusiast, for example, would be a great asset on a weekend camping trip.
- **Appoint workers who can maintain control of the group.** The ability to exert the appropriate amount of authority is essential to maintaining a safe environment. Young people often test the limits of authority. A good staff member or volunteer won't give in to pressure.

ACTIVITY PLANNING IN ADVANCE

- **Provide an adequate number of supervisors.** For their safety, group participants by numbers and developmental stages. This allows you to give all participants the attention they need. Events involving greater risk or younger participants require more supervision. Most states also require that state-licensed day care, preschool, and elementary school facilities meet a particular supervisor-to-child ratio. Your attorney can advise you about your state's requirements and whether they apply to your ministry.
- **Reduce temptation.** Separate sleeping quarters by gender and age during overnight events. Don't allow any worker, regardless of age, to be alone with minors.

CHILD CUSTODY BATTLES

One of the best gifts you can give parents is the assurance that their children will return to them safely when church services end. There are many ways to check children in and out of classrooms, but all share the same goal: Allow no child to leave a classroom with the wrong person.

A child custody situation has the potential to erupt at church, just as it might at any school or day care. If a volunteer releases a child to an individual who doesn't have custody, the ministry could be legally responsible. It's easy to see why well-followed check-in/check-out procedures are an essential part of your child protection policies.

HAVE ENOUGH HELP?

In addition to following the two-adult rule or the rule of three, consider the following child/teacher ratios for day care, preschool, and elementary school programs:¹

INFANTS (0-6 MONTHS)

Two babies to one adult



CRAWLERS (6-12 MONTHS)

Three crawlers to one adult



TODDLERS (12-18 MONTHS)

Four toddlers to one adult



WALKERS (18-36 MONTHS)

Five or six walkers to one adult



DAY CARE (3-4 YEARS OLD)

Six to nine students to one adult



PRESCHOOL (4-5 YEARS OLD)

Eight to 10 students to one adult



KINDERGARTEN (5-6 YEARS OLD)

10-12 students to one adult



AGES 7-12

Ideally 15 students to one adult



Check with a locally licensed attorney for your state's specific requirements.

- **Handle all disciplinary problems professionally.** Prior to an event, ensure that each worker understands procedures for consistently handling discipline problems and dealing with emergencies. It should be clearly established that physical restraint should only be used when there is no other reasonable means to prevent participants from harming themselves or others.
- **Require workers to report all injuries** and disciplinary actions to the event leader. Notify parents as soon as possible (see sample form, page 49).

INCORPORATE PREMISES MONITORS

Another way to provide additional supervision is to have premises monitors. A premises monitor is a screened volunteer or employee who patrols hallways and common areas when children, youth, or vulnerable adult activities are taking place. Premises monitors may also observe classrooms and activity areas through windows or open doors on a roving basis and can help fulfill the two-adult rule or rule of three when necessary.



Don't be tempted to use an unscreened volunteer to fill a last-minute vacancy. Keep a list of screened emergency volunteers who can help in a pinch.

ESTABLISH A RESTROOM POLICY

Restroom procedures are particularly sensitive because of the necessary exposure of small children to a worker. Many ministries only allow female volunteers or staff to assist small children in the restroom simply because of the statistical correlation between males and child molestation.

Another problem area involves supervising children during restroom visits where no assistance is needed. This lack of supervision exposes children and youth to potential abuse by peers, as well as contact with adults in halls, common areas, and restrooms.

REALITY CHECK

A Sunday School program has an informal policy that only female workers accompany children, regardless of gender, to the women's restroom for bathroom breaks. Since the rule was unwritten, a new worker allows a five-year-old boy to use the men's restroom, unsupervised. She also does not check the restroom before the child enters. The child later reports that he was molested. The family sues the church for negligent supervision.

ARE ALL OF YOUR PROCEDURES IN WRITING?

Written policies ensure consistent training and follow-through. Staff and volunteers that work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults should all be working from the same playbook designed to protect children.

To properly supervise bathroom visits:

- Screened adults should accompany all children, youth, and vulnerable adults to and from the restroom.
- The adult should check the restroom to make sure that it is safe before any child, youth, or vulnerable adult enters.
- Avoid allowing a worker to be alone with a child inside the restroom.
- If assistance is required, two screened adults should be present. Prop open the door so that a second adult can visually monitor the assisting adult.

Good supervision is essential to providing a safe and secure ministry environment. A well-crafted supervision plan protects the children in your care, maintains trust, and helps organize and monitor children's activities.

¹ Deborah Lowe Vandell and Barbara Wolfe. "Child Care Quality: Does It Matter and Does It Need to Be Improved?" Institute for Research on Poverty, November 2000, www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/sr/pdfs/sr78.pdf.

SAFELY MINISTERING TO YOUTH

REALITY CHECK

A church's policy prohibits youth pastors from one-on-one meetings with minors. When a youth pastor violates the policy, he receives a warning from the board. The board learns that the pastor is continuing the practice once a parent comes forward, claiming the pastor has been privately meeting with her child. The church fires the pastor for repeated rules violations. Satisfied with the board's decision, the parent does not pursue further legal action.

DO YOU HAVE A SIMILAR POLICY?

As you learned in Chapter 1, a key component of grooming is to isolate the youth. A policy that prohibits situations where an adult is alone with a youth helps hinder the progression of predatory behavior.

Youth pastors, in particular, may develop strong bonds with your ministry's young people. That trust and care opens ears to hear your ministry's message and opens hearts to feel the love of Christ. Another upside of this bond may be that a youth pastor is the first to hear of abuse. The downside is that those same beneficial bonds may also contribute to forming unhealthy relationships. The issue can be complex.

You should be aware that there's an increased risk of an unhealthy relationship forming between a youth leader and a minor. Here's why:

- **Minimal age difference** may lead to infatuation and boundary-pushing relationships. Youth activities revolve around having fun, but they can also be intense and involve personal sharing.
- **The superhero complex.** Minors may see a youth leader as someone who "understands" them. A pastor may feel compelled to fix a teen's problems. This can lead to offering misguided counseling advice, undermining a parent's authority, and meeting away from ministry supervision.
- **Youth ministry attracts predators.** Predators look for easy access to minors—situations where they easily can mask their intent with a persona of caring for children. Ministries are trusting by nature and often in short supply of volunteers. An enthusiastic, charismatic leader may convince a ministry to take a hands-off approach with its youth programs, saying the

teens would feel more comfortable without oversight from senior leadership.

- **Ample grooming opportunities.** The key to successful grooming (discussed in Chapter 1) is to separate a youth from other adults, peers, and siblings. One-on-one opportunities are more likely to arise in situations that are naturally a part of youth programs: riding in vehicles, overnight retreats, or intensely personal conversations.

Well-written policies that include oversight can help prevent harmful relationships from forming. In addition to other best practices when crafting a child protection plan—like following the supervision rules described in this chapter—consider the following accountability and training guidelines for your youth pastors:

- **Set expectations for biblical behavior.** Include a morals clause in your youth worker volunteer application. The sample on page 38 includes example language.
- **Caution against private texting.** Prohibit youth ministry workers from electronically communicating with youth one-on-one. To reduce the risk of misconduct, parents, staff, and other youth should be included on any text message, email, or social media communication. Even simple texts, such as youth activity reminders should include others.
- **Arrange regular meetings** between youth pastors and senior pastors. Ensure that your youth pastors are supported with proper

guidance. Provide a venue to discuss concerns, successes, or potential issues with a senior pastor or other leadership member. Review procedures, legal risk management practices, and ethical issues just as you would for day care and nursery workers. Consider requiring youth pastors to maintain a calendar of all activities and meetings with minors. Provide a leadership member access to their calendar as an accountability procedure.

- **Teach youth pastors about your state's mandatory reporting laws.** Children in your program may trust a youth pastor enough to confide in him or her about abuse they are suffering. It's important that your youth pastor knows the required course of action.

YOUTH PASTORS AND MINISTERING TO MINORS

It's possible to strike a successful balance between ministering to youth and minimizing the risk of liability for your ministry and staff. The following steps can help shield your young people from abuse and protect staff and volunteers from false allegations of abuse.

- **Develop a youth ministry communication policy.** It is not uncommon for volunteers and staff who work with youth to communicate electronically through text messaging or social media, as this is often the primary way in which teens communicate. However, it is important to outline expectations for staff, volunteers, and youth to follow when using electronic communication for youth ministry purposes (see page 39).
- **Consider requiring consent forms** from volunteers, staff, youth participants, and parents/guardians. A consent form helps ensure that youth and workers understand and will abide by the youth ministry communication policy. Create a separate consent form for parents/guardians to complete that gives youth pastors and other workers permission to communicate electronically with youth. Download sample youth ministry consent forms at www.brotherhoodmutual.com.

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

The following can be early-warning signs that your youth pastor is involved in an inappropriate relationship with a youth:

- **Refusing** to follow child-protection policies.
 - **Conducting** off-site or late-evening meetings.
 - **Exhibiting** signs of stress, or drug or alcohol use.
 - **Rationalizing** "extra" time with a child or insisting on one-on-one meetings.
 - **Focusing** an unusual amount of attention on a youth, or giving gifts.
- **Work alongside parents/guardians whenever possible.** There should be no expectation that information a minor shares with a youth pastor will be kept confidential.
 - **Know your reporting laws.** A youth pastor may be the first to learn of abuse or neglect that a youth has experienced, self-harming behavior, or suicidal thoughts. There should be no expectation that this information will be kept between the youth pastor and the youth, and mandatory reporting should be followed.

PROTECT YOUR PASTORS

While pastors, adult volunteers, and staff should generally be discouraged from interacting with youth one-on-one, there are many benefits to spiritual counseling or mentoring. To protect the pastor and the youth, consider having another adult or family member present and limit the duration and frequency of one-on-one meetings. This practice shields the pastor from false accusations. You may also consider having pastors or youth leaders of both genders available.

Of course, it is impossible to eliminate the threat of child abuse from any institution. By establishing boundaries and enforcing guidelines, you send a message to your staff, volunteers, and congregation that the care of your ministry's most vulnerable is of primary importance.

CHAPTER 6

KEY TO SUCCESS: COMMUNICATING YOUR PLAN

Once you have educated church leaders about the importance of an abuse prevention program, it's time to develop a communication plan. Use the following outline to help your ministry customize a communication plan.

CREATING A PLAN: IDENTIFY YOUR AUDIENCE

Identify potential groups and the level of information they will need about your program. Be specific. Consider all people who have access to your facilities. Look at how those groups may interact with or have access to your children's and youth program.

Potential audiences include:

- Church leaders (elders, church board, trustees, administrators)
- Ministerial staff
- Support staff (office workers, janitorial, volunteers)
- Children and youth ministers
- Church, school, day care, and preschool teachers and staff members
- Paid and volunteer children's ministry, program coordinators and workers
- Parents, guardians
- Members and regularly attending non-members
- Outside vendors and independent contractors (janitorial, cafeteria, security)

TAKE THE LEAD

The pastor's voice is singularly important within your church. Openly discuss your church's abuse prevention program during services and religious education classes. Newsletters and bulletins are a good way to reach all segments of your ministry. An annual "message from the pastor" shows your congregation that leaders take abuse prevention seriously.

- Non-affiliated groups that lease or borrow your facilities for their programs

DETERMINE LEVELS OF INFORMATION

Once you've identified your ministry's groups, think about the level of information each group needs to know. Most of your communications will include the same information, but what you emphasize or provide in detail will depend on the audience. Those who will be working with children and youth need specific, detailed information. The congregation needs information about the program, its benefits, and procedures. Your leaders need risk management assessments and implementation plans.

Provide general information to all groups, including:

- Background information about child abuse (e.g., general examples of abuse in a ministry setting, how even an allegation of abuse can affect a ministry); visit www.childwelfare.gov for resources, tools, and more.
- The purpose and benefits of your program.
- Your risk management assessment and how that creates vulnerability within your ministry.
- How the program provides protection for children, ministry workers, and the church.
- Background screening procedures.
- Bathroom and diaper-changing procedures.
- How to report suspected abuse.
- Policies for including sex offenders in your ministry.

Provide details for these specific audiences:



Educating everyone in your ministry is one of the most important components of your child abuse prevention program.

- **Leaders** — why the program needs to be implemented, the protection it will provide for children and youth, what benefits it will have for ministry workers and the church.
- **Staff** — why the program needs to be implemented, the protection it will provide for children and youth, what benefits it will have for ministry workers and the church, screening procedures, ongoing program monitoring.
- **Volunteers** — value of the program, protection the program gives children and ministry workers, benefits to the volunteers and the church, screening procedures, supervision, training, ongoing program monitoring.
- **Parents** — value of the program in providing a safe environment for their children, security procedures (especially those that will affect them, like nursery pagers, check-in/check-out policy, etc.), how to recognize and report suspected abuse, ongoing program monitoring.
- **Members** — general information about why the program needs to be implemented, the protection it will provide for children and youth, what benefits it will have for ministry workers and the church, annual reminders about the program.

HOW DO I TELL THEM?

Each church or related ministry usually has several established avenues of communicating with its organization about ministry programs. Use as many of these avenues as possible to inform your congregation, leadership, staff, and ministry workers about the importance of this program and how it will be implemented and maintained in your church. Develop other communication methods, as needed.

Consider these communication methods:

- In-person, small group presentations to church leadership, staff, ministry workers, parents

REALITY CHECK

A parent discovers that a teacher has been privately texting her 12-year-old daughter, even though the texts appeared innocent. The mother understood that school policy only allowed for group texting, and expressed concern to the school principal that this might be grooming behavior. Other parents came forward with examples of similar behavior. The teacher was dismissed.

DO YOUR PARENTS KNOW YOUR POLICY?

Parents can be a valuable advocate for your child care procedures. If parents understand the reasonings behind a policy or procedure, they're better able to spot troubling behavior early on.

- Letter to members of the congregation, ministry workers, parents (see a sample letter, page 52)
- Special meetings with parents and ministry workers
- Pulpit announcement or presentation
- Congregational meetings
- Specially developed brochure or flyer
- Church bulletin or newsletter
- Church website
- Posters in common or well-trafficked areas; develop your own poster using our sample ideas on pages 53–54

OVERCOMING OBJECTIONS THROUGH EDUCATION

Educating everyone in your ministry is one of the most important components of your child abuse prevention program. Implementing the program is difficult without first obtaining support. Longtime volunteers, staff, or clergy may feel hurt or angry to learn they will be subject to background screenings. It's important to clearly state program objectives and maintain a fair and even-handed approach.

COMMUNICATION INFORMS AND PROTECTS

Open communication is critical to the successful adoption, implementation, and administration

of your program. To gather the support you need, initiate an education process directed to all members of the ministry, regardless of their level of participation. This effort must be deliberate and well planned, comprehensive in scope, and ongoing in nature. Consider these factors:

- **Educate leaders.** Provide them with information that helps them understand the issues. Encourage leaders' support when developing your child abuse plan and communicating the plan to staff, volunteers, and your members.
- **Offer resources.** Give leadership the appropriate tools and resources needed to train ministry workers and keep others in the organization sensitive to child abuse.
- **Tell the heartbreaking truth.** Most people think, "It can't happen here." The truth is that no organization is immune, and without precautions, your ministry is vulnerable. In addition, it's important to note that the impact of abuse in church—upon both the individuals involved and the church body as a whole—can be truly devastating. Rebuilding your membership's trust, and restoring your reputation within the community, can take years.
- **Show how prevention decreases the risk.** Review your abuse prevention program with church leaders and your membership. Emphasize how new processes also may protect ministry workers from unwarranted child abuse accusations.
- **Keep your plan current.** Like other parts of your child abuse prevention program, periodically reassessing your education efforts is essential. It's important to review your communication plan annually. Solicit feedback from workers and make necessary changes to keep it relevant to your situations.



Your ministry's people consistently need to hear your commitment to keeping their children and youth safe.

RESPONDING TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AND THE MEDIA

Responding to law enforcement or the media during a crisis can be challenging. A communication plan is key to help those involved remain calm and guide a clear-thinking response. Your plan should include:

- **A pledge for full cooperation.** All ministry leaders, employees, and volunteers should cooperate fully with law enforcement or investigating agencies.
 - **A procedure to contact your legal counsel.** The leadership should seek legal counsel as soon as possible after the ministry receives a notice of possible abuse or molestation. Advice from legal counsel should be the basis for your response.
 - **A designated spokesperson.** A single spokesperson should handle all inquiries from the news media. Offer training on how to convey information in a way that avoids compromising an ongoing investigation.
- **Train and retrain.** Write into your plan steps for an annual staff and volunteer retraining. Train and retrain ministry employees and volunteer workers, incorporating new people as soon as possible. Do not depend on current ministry workers to transfer information and procedures to others on your ministry team. Ministry leaders should shoulder this responsibility.
 - **Schedule multiple communications.** One is not enough. Keep all members of your organization updated with changes in the program. Regular communication will help to maintain their sensitivity to child abuse issues—and may help prevent future child abuse in your ministry.

Leaders and members alike must fully understand that your child abuse prevention program is designed to protect the most valuable part of your ministry: its children. It also protects your ministry, employees, and the volunteers who are committed to serving your organization.

COMMUNICATION SHOULD BE ONGOING

Your ministry's people consistently need to hear your commitment to keeping their children and youth safe. Develop a schedule for ongoing, or annual, communication. Keep the members of your organization updated with any changes in the program—even if they are not involved in working with young people.

Regular communication also will help you maintain a high level of sensitivity to child abuse issues within your organization. That awareness can be a catalyst in making your child abuse prevention program successful—success characterized by a safe and secure environment for children, young people, and vulnerable adults.

SAMPLE POLICIES AND FORMS

- Worker Selection and Child Protection Policy pg. 32
- Morals Clause Policy pg. 38
- Youth Ministry Communication Policy pg. 39
- Children/Youth Ministry Volunteer Application..... pg. 41
- Reference Response Information pg. 44
- Activity Participation Agreement pg. 45
- Sample Facilities Use Agreement..... pg. 46
- Child Nursery Health Information Form pg. 48
- Notice of Injury Form pg. 49
- Suspected Abuse or Neglect Report Form pg. 50
- Letter to Congregation pg. 52
- Sample Poster Language pg. 53
- Background Screening Checklist pg. 55
- Children’s Ministry Procedures Checklist pg. 56
- Creating Your Program, Policies, and Procedures Checklist pg. 58
- Eliminate Secluded Areas Checklist pg. 59

SAMPLE WORKER SELECTION AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

This ministry is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for those participating in our ministry activities—children, youth, and vulnerable adults. We also seek to minimize any vulnerability to unwarranted accusations of improper behavior that our organization, volunteers, and employees may experience as they fulfill their ministerial duties. To fulfill these commitments as fully as possible, our leadership team has adopted the following procedures to be used, without exception, when selecting ministry volunteers and new employees and supervising children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

DEFINITIONS

Minor—Any person between the ages of 0 and 18. A minor may include any 18-year-old still enrolled in high school.

Child or children—Any minor from birth through fifth grade.

Youth—Any minor from sixth through 12th grade. A youth may include any 18-year-old still enrolled in high school.

Vulnerable adult—Any person 18 years of age or older who is unable to legally consent, unable to comprehend the nature of certain actions, or susceptible to coercion or abuse. This may include individuals who are mentally or physically disabled and the elderly.

Volunteer—A person performing services or donating time or effort without compensation who is authorized to work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

Employee— A paid staff member of the ministry.

Worker—A volunteer or employee authorized to work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

VOLUNTEER SCREENING PROCEDURES

1. Prior to consideration, all candidates seeking a volunteer position that involves working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults will complete and return an initial ministry application. *(see the sample Children/Youth Ministry Volunteer Application form on page 41)*
2. The ministry leader, or designee, will carefully review the application, ensuring that the candidate is an appropriate match for the ministry position. The ministry leader also will store all application materials—the application form, background checks, reference check, notes from interviews, etc.—in a locked file cabinet or other secure location.
3. If the individual appears to be an appropriate candidate for the ministry position, the ministry leader, or designee, will check at least two references to confirm the information that the candidate provided on the ministry application. The ministry leader also will conduct a criminal background check through a reputable security company. *(see the sample reference release included with the Children/Youth Ministry Volunteer Application form on page 41)*
4. After the ministry leader, or designee, contacts references and performs a background check, he or she will conduct an interview with the candidate.
5. When indicated by our screening procedures, volunteer candidates who pose a threat to children, youth, or vulnerable adults will be removed from consideration for any ministry position involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

SAMPLE WORKER SELECTION AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

EMPLOYEE SCREENING PROCEDURES

1. The same procedures required for volunteers also apply to all potential employees, regardless of the ministry position for which they are being considered. *(applicable state and/or local law may regulate at which time during the hiring process and to what extent an employee may ask about an employment applicant's criminal history)*
2. When indicated by our screening procedures, employment candidates who pose a threat to children, youth, or vulnerable adults will be removed immediately from consideration for employment anywhere within our organization.

WAITING PERIOD

All volunteer candidates must be regularly involved in our organization for six months or more before they will be considered for any ministry position involving contact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

SUPERVISION

1. **TWO ADULT RULE:** At least two screened adults must be present at every function or program involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults. This includes each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area. One or more of these adults must be 21 years of age or older. For large groups, the number of adult supervisors must be increased in accordance with state/teacher ratio requirements. *(check with your attorney or local authorities to determine the requirements in your state; add a specific written reference to those requirements in your policy procedures)*
2. **RULE OF THREE:** In limited circumstances when the Two Adult Rule cannot be implemented, at least three individuals must be present, with at least one being a screened adult employee or volunteer. The Two Adult Rule should be followed at all times for activities or events involving children under the age of five.
3. While adult workers should avoid being alone with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult, some limited exceptions may be permitted for spiritual counsel/mentoring of a youth. Any one-on-one interaction must take place in a location where the adult worker and the youth are both visible to others. Any planned one-on-one meetings must be approved by a ministry leader, and the adult worker must obtain prior written approval from parents/guardians. The duration and frequency of approved one-on-one meetings are to be limited to no more than three occasions for no more than 30 minutes at a time.
4. Adult employees and volunteers should avoid traveling in a vehicle one-on-one with a minor. If it is necessary, develop a communication strategy to notify parents/guardians or supervisors when leaving for and arriving at an event.
5. Identify no-go zones. To reduce or eliminate areas that are difficult to properly supervise, unused rooms, closets, and outdoor structures are to be kept locked with limited key access. *(review the Eliminate Secluded Areas Checklist on page 59 to help you identify areas of concern unique to your ministry)*
6. Workers should avoid the appearance of impropriety—such as sitting older children on their lap, kissing, or embracing others, etc.

SAMPLE WORKER SELECTION AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

BATHROOM PROCEDURES

1. For children age 6 or older, at least one adult should take children to the restroom. The adult should check to make sure the facility is safe and then wait outside the restroom for the children. If assistance is required, the presence of a second adult escort is also recommended.
2. Children age 5 or younger (boys and girls) should be assisted as needed in the restroom by an adult female. Leave the bathroom door ajar with a second screened worker nearby for additional accountability.
3. Never touch the private areas of a child, youth, or vulnerable adult except when necessary, as in the case of changing a diaper.

CHECK-IN/CHECK-OUT PROCEDURES

1. Workers should arrive at least 10 minutes before a scheduled activity. They must remain at their assigned post until all people in their care have been picked up by an authorized person. No children or youth should be released to find their parents or wait unattended for transportation.
2. Workers are to release children in their care only to parents, guardians, or persons specifically authorized to pick up the child. (insert your ministry's specific policies here; see page 56 for sample elements)

DISCIPLINE

1. Workers are never to spank, hit, grab, shake, or otherwise physically discipline anyone. Physical restraint should only be used in a situation where it is reasonably necessary to prevent an individual from physically harming himself or another individual.
2. Disciplinary problems should be reported to the ministry leader or to a parent or guardian.

INJURIES OR ILLNESS

1. Persons who are ill (with a fever, or a communicable disease that can be transmitted by cough or by touch) will not be permitted to participate in any ministry activity.
2. A suitable worker—one who has been previously approved through our ministry screening process—must be used to take the place of a worker who is ill.
3. Participants should be returned to their parent or guardian as soon as the illness is discovered. If immediate return is not possible, then the person who is ill should be isolated in a manner that allows an adult worker to monitor the participant until he/she can be returned to a parent or guardian.
4. Take reasonable steps to avoid contact with blood, saliva, or other bodily fluids.
5. Ministry coordinators and supervisors who become aware of an injury to a worker or participant will take steps to ensure that proper medical attention is given to the injured person and provide for continued monitoring of the remaining activity participants.
6. Persons who have received an injury that is obviously minor should be given first aid as needed at the time of injury. The individual's parents or guardians should be notified of the injury when they pick up the injured person.

SAMPLE WORKER SELECTION AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

7. Any injury that may require medical treatment beyond simple first aid should be given immediate attention. The parents or guardians of the injured person should be notified immediately, along with the ministry worker's coordinator or supervisor. If warranted by the injury, emergency medical personnel should be called.

RECORDKEEPING

1. All ministry functions involving children, youth, and vulnerable adults should maintain an attendance list for every function. Record the date of the function, along with the names of all participants, ministry coordinators, and supervisors.
2. Ministry workers should prepare a written Notice of Injury report whenever an injury occurs during a ministry function (*see sample form on page 49*). Promptly forward the incident report to the ministry coordinator or supervisor.

SUSPICION OF CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT AND MANDATORY REPORTING

1. All ministry leaders, employees, and volunteers subject to mandatory reporting guidelines are expected to fully comply and report any reasonable suspicion of abuse or signs of neglect to local authorities. (*Please note that mandatory reporting requirements and the standards for making a report vary by state*)
2. Volunteers and employees who become aware of or have reason to suspect that a child or youth has been abused or neglected must immediately inform their activity coordinator, supervisor, or ministry leader, unless the activity coordinator, supervisor, or ministry leader is the suspected perpetrator. The volunteer or employee may be required to complete a Suspected Abuse or Neglect Report form (*see sample form on page 50*).
3. Activity coordinators and supervisors who become aware of or have reason to suspect that a child or youth has been abused or neglected must immediately inform the ministry leader unless the ministry leader is the suspected perpetrator. If the volunteer or employee did not complete a Suspected Abuse or Neglect Report form, the activity coordinator or supervisor should then complete the form.
4. Ministry leaders who become aware of possible abuse or sexual misconduct involving a participant must ensure that the participant's parent or guardian is immediately informed that possible abuse or sexual misconduct has occurred. If the parent or guardian is the suspected perpetrator, the ministry leader will defer to local authorities on notifying the parent or guardian.
5. If there is any question as to whether or not a report should be made to the authorities and ministry leaders are considering not making a report, the ministry leader will ensure that an attorney is immediately contacted to provide a written opinion as to whether the organization should report the suspected abuse or neglect to authorities. The written opinion should be obtained within 24 hours after the ministry leader first becomes aware of the situation. The attorney's advice should be acted upon immediately, including reporting the incident to the authorities. An attorney should be contacted immediately if the ministry leader or activity monitor becomes aware of possible abuse or neglect of a participant by a parent or guardian and is unsure whether to make a report to the authorities.
6. Ministry leaders must promptly notify our ministry's insurance carrier (general or professional liability insurance) upon notice of abuse or sexual misconduct. They also will notify (name of denominational or headquarters contact person or office), to whom we also report such allegations.

SAMPLE WORKER SELECTION AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

VIOLATION OF POLICY OR PROCEDURES

1. Ministry workers must promptly notify their ministry coordinator or supervisor when they or others violate the procedures mandated by this policy.
2. Ministry coordinators, supervisors, and ministry leaders who become aware of a violation of the procedures set by this policy are required to take all necessary steps to ensure future compliance with them. In the process of ensuring compliance with this policy, it may become necessary to remove workers from their positions.

INTERNAL INVESTIGATION

1. This ministry organization considers any allegation of abuse or molestation a serious matter. Each situation will be fully investigated first through civil authorities, then by ministry leaders with the assistance of legal counsel. The ministry will not interfere with a pending law enforcement investigation.
2. Employees who are the subject of an investigation will be removed from their position pending completion of the investigation. Employees who admit to the abuse or molestation will be terminated consistent with the established employment practices of this ministry.
3. Volunteer subjects of any investigation will be removed from their positions pending completion of the investigation.
4. This ministry will permanently remove any employees or volunteers from their ministerial duties within the organization if they are found guilty of abuse or molestation. Whenever termination of employment is a factor, we also will consult with legal counsel.

DEALING WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT, NEWS MEDIA

1. All ministry leaders, employees, and volunteers of this organization will cooperate fully with law enforcement or governmental agencies investigating allegations of injury, abuse, or molestation.
2. The leadership of this ministry will seek legal counsel as soon as possible after we receive notice of possible abuse or molestation within the organization. Advice from legal counsel will be the basis for our response to the allegations.
3. One individual—a member of the leadership team, an employee, or our attorney will be the designated spokesperson to handle all inquiries from the news media. Our spokesperson will be the only person to convey information concerning the situation, doing so in a prudent manner to avoid compromising an ongoing investigation and to maintain the privacy of the individuals involved.

ANNUAL REVIEW

1. Each year, we will conduct a review meeting. At that time, the procedures mandated by this policy will be reviewed with all volunteers, employees, ministry coordinators and supervisors, and the leadership of the organization.
2. All employees and volunteers will complete a brief renewal application annually. (*see the sample worker renewal application at brotherhoodmutual.com*)
3. Should the renewal application indicate that any employees or volunteers have become unsuitable

SAMPLE WORKER SELECTION AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

for working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults, they will be removed immediately from their current position. They will not be considered for positions involving work with other similar groups.

REVISION OF POLICY AND PROCEDURES

The leadership of this ministry, with the assistance of legal counsel, will regularly review this policy and the procedures established within it. If necessary, the policies and procedures will be modified in accordance with the bylaws of the organization. When changes are made, ministry leaders will communicate them to all employees and volunteers affected by the policy changes.

SAMPLE MORALS CLAUSE POLICY

PERSONAL CONDUCT

The purpose of this policy is to state the lifestyle expectations for employees. You are strongly encouraged to modify this policy in accordance with the standards set by your organization.

One key to any personal conduct policy of a Christian ministry is referencing Scripture as a basis for any behavior that's prohibited or discouraged. From a legal standpoint, citing supporting Scripture will strengthen your ministry's First Amendment (freedom of religion) position in the event of litigation.

Consistency is important when applying this policy. For example, if you terminate an employee who has become pregnant out of wedlock because she's violated the policy against premarital sex, this is legally permissible so long as it is applied consistently. In other words, the same discipline should be taken against a male employee who engages in extramarital sexual relations.

SAMPLE POLICY

MINISTRY PURPOSE

(Name of ministry) is a non-profit religious organization and is substantially controlled and supported by a religious body, your denomination, or church. More importantly, our organization is a community of believers who have joined together to meet the spiritual and academic needs of the greater community.

Our organization promotes behavior consistent with the Holy Scriptures. Consequently, when joining (name of ministry's) staff, you freely and willingly agree to the standards of behavior outlined in this policy. The standards included in this policy are not exhaustive; rather, they provide a guideline of conduct we believe is in accordance with biblical standards.

As representatives of (name of ministry), it is imperative that our actions are above reproach in all things. Consequently, the following standards of conduct shall apply to all staff. Violations of these standards are regarded as a serious breach of integrity and could result in discipline, up to and including termination.

- God's Word teaches us that certain attributes are desired, including: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-24). I will strive to seek, encourage, and demonstrate this attributes in my relationships and in working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.
- Scripture further teaches us that every believer has a duty to protect the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of those most vulnerable among us. (Psalm 127:3, Proverbs 22:6, Mark 9:42, and James 1:27). I, therefore, commit to protect children, youth, and vulnerable adults entrusted to my care.

SAMPLE YOUTH MINISTRY COMMUNICATION POLICY

Texting and electronic communication can be a vital part of youth ministry work, but their improper use can produce serious consequences. To further strengthen your communications policy, incorporate the following forms (referenced below) found at brotherhoodmutual.com:

- Youth Worker Consent Form
- Parent/Guardian Consent Form
- Participant Consent Form

PROMOTING SAFETY

(Name of ministry) desires to promote safety and to create a healthy environment for texting and electronic communication between its youth workers and students who participate in youth ministry activities. As a result, (name of ministry) has developed the following guidelines:

1. Employee and volunteer youth workers who want to communicate with minors using text messaging, e-mail, social networking websites, or other forms of electronic media must first sign a consent form and attend a ministry training class. The class will outline the recommended practices, limitations, and legal parameters for texting and other forms of electronic communication within youth ministry.
2. Ministry youth workers may not transmit any content that is illicit, unsavory, abusive, pornographic, discriminatory, harassing, or disrespectful when communicating with each other or with minors involved in ministry activities.
3. Except in an emergency, youth workers may not transmit any personal information pertaining to a minor without the youth ministry participant and his or her parents or guardians signing consent forms. This applies to group texting, group e-mail, or any other public method of electronic communication. Personal information may include such things as a minor's name, phone number, email address, or photograph.
4. Youth workers will discourage students from using cell phones during ministry programs except in an emergency, to contact a parent or guardian, or to place calls specifically approved by a leader.
5. Youth workers will instruct youth occasionally about the Youth Ministry Communications Policy and the dangers of such conduct as "sexting."
6. Youth workers who become aware of possible child abuse through electronic media must immediately notify their supervisor. The ministry will consult with its attorney and report abuse as required by law.
7. All information, images, or videos shared electronically through public ministry communications channels aren't considered confidential.
8. To participate in ministry electronic communications, youths must sign a related consent form.
9. Youths who violate this policy may lose electronic communications privileges or be removed from the youth ministry program. The ministry's pastoral leadership will notify parents immediately of any violation.

SAMPLE YOUTH MINISTRY COMMUNICATION POLICY

10. Youth workers on ministry business may never use a cell phone while driving—even hands-free—unless it's an emergency.
11. Any texts or emails sent by ministry youth workers must go to a group rather than to individuals.

SAMPLE CHILDREN/YOUTH MINISTRY VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

Name: _____

Daytime telephone: _____

Address: _____

In which children's/youth program(s) do you want to become involved? _____

What skills would you bring to the children's/youth program? _____

WHAT OTHER CHILDREN'S/YOUTH WORK EXPERIENCE DO YOU HAVE? (Please list)

Organization	Program	Dates	Contact
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

HAVE YOU AT ANY TIME EVER:

- Been convicted of, or pleaded guilty or no contest to, any crime? Yes No
- Participated in, or been accused, convicted, or pleaded guilty or no contest to abuse or any sexual misconduct? Yes No

ARE YOU AWARE OF:

- Having any traits or tendencies that could pose any threat to children, youth, or others? Yes No
- Any reason why you should not work with children, youth, or others? Yes No

If the answer to any of these questions is "yes," please explain in detail: _____

(Please attach additional pages if more space is needed)

This sample form is not intended to be used for an employee or an applicant for employment, as you may not be able to ask some of the questions in your state. Check with your local attorney.

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(Page 1 of 3)

SAMPLE CHILDREN/YOUTH MINISTRY VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

CHURCH ACTIVITY

What church or churches have you attended in the past five years?

Church name: _____

Pastor's name: _____ Years attended: _____

Church name: _____

Pastor's name: _____ Years attended: _____

Church name: _____

Pastor's name: _____ Years attended: _____

SUPPLY AT LEAST TWO INDEPENDENT REFERENCES

(Not relatives. Past ministry leaders or former employees preferred.)

Name: _____

Relationship: _____ Address: _____

Phone: _____

Name: _____

Relationship: _____ Address: _____

Phone: _____

Name: _____

Relationship: _____ Address: _____

Phone: _____

CHILDREN'S/YOUTH WORK VERIFICATION AND RELEASE

I (Applicant's Name) _____ recognize that (name of organization) is relying on the accuracy of the information I provide on the Children/Youth Ministry Volunteer Application form. Accordingly, I attest and affirm that the information I have provided is absolutely true and correct.

I authorize the organization to contact any person or entity listed on the Children/Youth Ministry Volunteer Application form, and I further authorize any such person or entity to provide the organization with information, opinions, and impressions relating to my background or qualifications.

I voluntarily release the organization and any such person or entity listed on the Children/Youth Ministry Volunteer Application form from liability involving the communication of information relating to my background or qualifications.

I have carefully read the policy and procedures of the organization, and I agree to abide by them and to protect the health and safety of the children or youth assigned to my care or supervision at all times.

Printed name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

(Please read this document carefully before you sign it.)

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SAMPLE CHILDREN/YOUTH MINISTRY VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

MINOR APPLICANTS

Parental Affirmation and Consent

I, (print name) _____ affirm that I am the parent/legal guardian of the applicant. I recognize that (name of organization) is relying on the accuracy of the information provided. To the best of my knowledge, I affirm and attest that the information provided is true and correct. I further attest and affirm that I am aware of no traits or tendencies of (applicant's name) _____ that could pose any threat to children, youth, or others.

Printed name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

REFERENCE RESPONSE INFORMATION

To: _____
Name of Ministry

From: _____
Address

Subject: _____
Name of Worker Candidate

The individual named above has expressed an interest in working with children or youth in our ministry. The candidate has listed you as a reference. In order for our organization to properly evaluate the qualifications of this worker candidate, we are asking you to complete this form with your honest opinions and impressions of the candidate.

Please return the completed form to our organization in the enclosed envelope. Thank you for your assistance.

1. How long have you known the ministry worker candidate? _____

2. In what capacity have you come to know this individual? (i.e. coworker, neighbor, friend, etc.) _____

3. In your opinion, is the above worker candidate fully qualified to work with children and youth?

Yes No (If no, please explain) _____

4. What concerns, if any, would you have in allowing this individual to work with children or youth? _____

5. Are you aware of anything in the candidate's background, personality, or behavior that could in any way pose a threat to children or youth?

Yes No (If no, please explain) _____

Additional comments or explanations:

The above information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Signature: _____ Date: _____
Name of church, individual

Please return this form at your earliest convenience to: (name of church, individual)

Thank you.

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M131 (12/06)

SAMPLE ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT

ACTIVITY INFORMATION (To be completed by the activity sponsor)

Name of sponsoring organization: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Name of sponsor's coordinator: _____ Phone: _____

Description of activity: _____

Date(s) and location of activity: _____

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION (To be completed by participant or authorized guardian)

Name of participant: _____

Name of parents/guardians: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Name of emergency contact: _____

Phone (daytime): _____ Phone (evening): _____

List allergies or medical conditions: _____

Is sponsor authorized to approve medical treatment? Yes No

Is participant covered by personal/family medical insurance? Yes No

If yes, name of insurer: _____

Policy or group number: _____

PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT

I acknowledge that participation in the activity described above involves risk to the participant (and to the participant's parents or guardians, if the participant is a minor), and may result in various types of injury including, but not limited to, the following: sickness, bodily injury, death, emotional injury, personal injury, property damage, and financial damage.

In consideration for the opportunity to participate in the activity described above (the "activity"), the participant (or parent/guardian if the participant is a minor) acknowledges and accepts the risks of injury associated with participation in and transportation to and from the activity. The participant (or parent/guardian) accepts personal financial responsibility for any injury or other loss sustained during the activity or during transportation to and from the activity, as well as for any medical treatment rendered to the participant that is authorized by the sponsor or its agents, employees, volunteers, or any other representatives (collectively referred to as the "activity sponsor"). Further, the participant (or parent/guardian) releases and promises to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the activity sponsor for any injury arising directly or indirectly out of the described activity or transportation to and from the activity, whether such injury arises out of the negligence of the activity sponsor, the participant, or otherwise.

If a dispute over this agreement or any claim for damages arises, the participant (or parent/guardian) agrees to resolve the matter through a mutually acceptable alternative dispute resolution process. If the participant (or parent/guardian) and the activity sponsor cannot agree upon such a process, the dispute will be submitted to a three-member arbitration panel for resolution in accordance with the rules of the American Arbitration Association.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

(Participant and/or parent/guardians if participant is a minor)

SAMPLE FACILITIES USE AGREEMENT

This agreement by and between _____
Owner's name Owner's complete address
 ("Owner"), and _____ ("User"),
User's name User's complete address
 will take effect on the _____ day of _____ and will continue for a period of _____
Day Month Year Time period
 WHEREAS, Owner owns premises located at _____
Complete address
 which is normally used for _____, and
Type of use
 WHEREAS, User desires to use the _____ area of the facilities for the
Area of premises (e.g. church building)
 purpose of _____,
Purpose of use
 and WHEREAS, Owner has agreed to allow User to use the facilities provided that the following terms and conditions are met.

IT IS THEREFORE AGREED BY AND BETWEEN THE PARTIES:

1. Owner agrees to let User use the above described premises for the above described purpose on

Describe times and days of usage • Name and Owner's contact person

is the contact person for Owner and _____ is the contact person for User to
Name of User's contact person
 coordinate the details of usage.

2. Fee Agreement. User agrees to pay Owner _____ for the use of the premises.
Amount
- Non-Fee Agreement. In consideration for the benefit of using Owner's facilities, User agrees to abide by all the terms and conditions of use described in this agreement.
3. User agrees that it will not use the premises for any unlawful purposes, and will obey all laws, rules, and regulations of all governmental authorities while using the above described facilities.
4. User agrees that it will not use the premises for any purpose that is contrary to the mission, purpose or belief of the Owner, which is a biblically-based religious institution.
5. User agrees to abide by any rules or regulations for the use of the premises that are attached to this agreement.
6. User agrees that it is solely responsible to implement appropriate screening and supervision procedures to protect children, youth, and vulnerable adults attending user's function at the above described facilities.
7. Organizational Users. User promises and warrants that it carries liability insurance with a minimum liability occurrence limit of \$1,000,000. The User will provide a certificate of insurance to the Owner at least seven days prior to the date upon which the User begins to use the above described premises. The certificate of insurance will indicate that User has made Owner an "additional insured" on User's policy with respect to the use by User of the above described premises.
- Individual Users. User promises and warrants that User will obtain signed Activity Participation Agreements (either provided by or acceptable to Owner) from each participant in the activity. If the participants are minors, User will obtain the signature of at least one parent or legal guardian on each Activity Participation Agreement.

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SAMPLE FACILITIES USE AGREEMENT

8. User agrees to hold harmless, indemnify and defend Owner (including Owner's agents, employees, and representatives) from any and all liability for injury or damage including, but not limited to, bodily injury, personal injury, emotional injury, or property damage which may result from any person using the above described premises, its entrances and exits, and surrounding areas, for User's purposes, regardless of whether such injury or damage results from the negligence of the Owner (including Owner's agents, employees and representatives) or otherwise.
9. User agrees to be responsible for preparing for use and returning to the pre-use condition all areas of the premises which User will use, including entrances and exits.
10. User agrees to conduct a visual inspection of the premises, including entrances and exits, prior to each use, and warrants that the premises will be used only if it is in a safe condition.
11. This agreement may be cancelled unilaterally by either party with 14 days written notice to the other party.
- 11.5. In the event that Owner must cancel this agreement, User will be entitled to any deposit User has paid. However, in no event will Owner be liable to User for any lost profits or incidental, indirect, special, or consequential damages arising out of User's inability to use the above described premises, even if Owner has been advised of the possibility of such damages.
12. User agrees that it will not assign any of its rights under this agreement, and any such assignment will void this agreement at the sole option of the Owner.
13. Owner and User agree that any disputes arising under this agreement will be resolved via a mutually acceptable alternative dispute resolution process. If Owner and User cannot mutually agree upon such a process, the dispute will be submitted to a three-member arbitration panel of the American Arbitration Association for final resolution.
14. This document contains the entire agreement of the parties and supersedes all prior written or oral agreements relating to the subject matter.

Dated this _____ day of _____ .
day month year

OWNER

Signer's Name

Position with Owner (title)

USER

Signer's Name

Position with User (title)

SAMPLE CHILD/NURSERY HEALTH INFORMATION FORM

Child's name: _____ Birth date: _____

Parent/Guardian name: _____

Phone number—home: _____ Work: _____ Mobile: _____

Parent/Guardian name: _____

Phone number—home: _____ Work: _____ Mobile: _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT (if other than above parents/guardians):

Name #1: _____ Relationship: _____

Phone number—home: _____ Work: _____ Mobile: _____

Name #2: _____ Relationship: _____

Phone number—home: _____ Work: _____ Mobile: _____

MEDICAL CARE CONTACTS:

Physician's name: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Dentist's name: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Health insurance coverage for child: _____

Insurer's name: _____

Policy or group number: _____

Allergies or medical conditions: _____

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT AND AGREEMENT

In consideration of my child's (name listed above) opportunity to participate in ABC Church's activities and programs, I acknowledge and accept the risks of injury associated with participation and transportation to and from any and all activities and programs of ABC Church. I accept personal financial responsibility for any injury or other loss sustained during the activities or programs of ABC Church or during transportation to and from such activities and programs, as well as for medical treatment rendered to my child that is authorized by ABC Church, its leaders, employees, volunteers, or agents. I specifically consent to allowing my child to be transported to receive emergency care and to be responsible for all financial charges for such emergency care.

I release and promise to indemnify, defend and hold harmless ABC Church, its leaders, employees, volunteers, and agents from any and all injury or loss resulting directly or indirectly from the activities and programs of ABC Church or transportation to and from such activities and programs, whether such injury resulted from the negligence of ABC Church, my child, or otherwise.

Printed name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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M266 (4/18)

SAMPLE NOTICE OF INJURY

ORGANIZATION	Name: _____ Address: _____
TIME AND PLACE OF INJURY	Date of Injury: _____ Time: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> AM <input type="checkbox"/> PM Where did the injury occur? _____
PERSON INJURED	Name: _____ Age: _____ Address: _____ Phone: _____ Name of parents/guardians (if a minor): _____ Employer: _____ Injuries sustained: _____ Where was injured taken (hospital/doctor)? _____ Relationship to organization: <input type="checkbox"/> Member <input type="checkbox"/> Visitor <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer <input type="checkbox"/> Employee <input type="checkbox"/> Student/Camper <input type="checkbox"/> Tenant/Resident <input type="checkbox"/> Other If injury occurred on insured's premises, for what purpose was the injured on the premises? _____ Who was responsible for supervision at the time of injury? _____ If injury occurred elsewhere, what connection did it have with the insured's operations or activities? _____ Does the injured party have personal medical insurance that could apply? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Name of medical insurance company: _____ _____
FULL DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT	_____ _____ _____ _____
WITNESSES	Name: _____ Phone: _____ Address: _____ Name: _____ Phone: _____ Address: _____

Completed by: _____ Date: _____

SAMPLE SUSPECTED ABUSE OR NEGLECT REPORT FORM

PRIVACY DISCLAIMER: This form should not be shared with co-workers or other volunteers. Submit form to your immediate supervisor, law enforcement, or other reporting agency. Note that mandatory reporting laws may apply, and you may be required by law to report this information to local authorities.

YOUR INFORMATION	Name: _____ Title/Position: _____ Address: _____ Phone: _____ Supervisor: _____
INJURED PERSON	Name: _____ Age: _____ Address: _____ Phone: _____ Parents/guardians (if a minor): _____
SUSPECTED PERPETRATOR	Unknown <input type="checkbox"/> Known <input type="checkbox"/> Name: _____ Age: _____ Description: _____ Relationship to suspected victim: _____ Address or location of suspected abuse: _____ _____ _____
REASON FOR REPORT / DETAILS OF INCIDENT	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
WITNESSES	Name: _____ Phone: _____ Address: _____ Name: _____ Phone: _____ Address: _____

SAMPLE SUSPECTED ABUSE OR NEGLECT REPORT FORM

REPORT SUBMITTED TO	Name: _____ Phone: _____
	Address: _____
	Date: _____ Time: _____
Did you notify state/local authorities regarding suspected abuse/sexual misconduct? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
If yes, list agency name: _____	
Name of contact: _____	
Phone: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____	

Signature: _____

Date of report: _____ Time of report: _____

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE CONGREGATION

Dear Members and Friends of (name of church or ministry):

As your (pastor/leader/elder/etc.), providing for the spiritual growth and well-being of the church body is my/our highest calling. This involves protecting our most vulnerable members, including children, youth, and vulnerable adults, from abuse.

We value everyone here at (name of church), and we are taking active steps to protect our children from abuse. Based on our desire to create the safest church possible, we have developed a child abuse prevention plan designed to provide enhanced oversight and protection for our children, youth, vulnerable adults, ministry volunteers, and employees.

It is our moral duty to prevent abuse in our church. The program implements new policies, procedures, and screening for all staff, regardless of position, and any volunteer working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults. Such a program is the best way for us to protect our people.

(Relay the general features of your plan—timetable for implementing a screening program; the procedures involved, including completion of the necessary forms and background checks; training procedures; how the program will be monitored, and ongoing communication and education efforts.)

We feel that this is a prudent step to take to ensure a safe and secure environment for our attenders and volunteers. If you have questions about our new child abuse prevention plan, you can contact (name of person) at (contact phone, email). He/She will be happy to discuss our program with you in greater detail.

Sincerely,

Ministry Leader's Name

SAMPLE POSTER LANGUAGE

_____ is serious about protecting our children, youth, and vulnerable adults from abuse. Our abuse prevention program begins with selecting and screening all volunteers. Our policies and training emphasize the two-adult rule and the rule of three. Finally, ministry volunteers should report any suspected abuse to the ministry supervisor.

S

SELECT AND SCREEN

We select and screen our ministry volunteers.

M

MANAGE RISK WITH WRITTEN POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Our written policies must be followed and are enforced.

A

ALWAYS TOGETHER

Children are never to be left alone. Adults are not allowed to be one-on-one with children or youth. Always follow the two-adult rule /rule of three.

R

RESPOND TO ANY ACCUSATION REPORT ANY ABUSE

We will respond to accusations and report any abuse.

T

TRAIN

Volunteers are trained to recognize abuse.

_____ is SMART About Child Abuse
Name of Ministry

Report suspected abuse to ministry supervisor

SAMPLE POSTER LANGUAGE

_____ is serious about protecting our children, youth, and vulnerable adults from abuse. Our abuse prevention program begins with selecting and screening all volunteers. Our policies and training emphasize the two-adult rule and the rule of three. Finally, ministry volunteers should report any suspected abuse to the ministry supervisor.

S

SELECT AND SCREEN

All volunteers who work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults are screened (application, background investigation, interview).

A

ALWAYS TOGETHER

We follow our written policies and procedures, especially the two-adult rule and the rule of three.

F

FOSTER A CULTURE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

We foster a culture where our leaders and volunteers are accountable to provide solid teaching in a safe environment.

E

EDUCATE

We educate volunteers and members about our policies.

R

REPORT

We report any suspected abuse to the ministry supervisor.

BACKGROUND SCREENING CHECKLIST

Guiding Principle: All ministry workers require screening—both paid and volunteer

	Yes	No
1. Do you currently have a written child abuse prevention policy for your children's, youth, and vulnerable adult ministry programs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. If you currently have a child abuse prevention program, are there elements that need improvement?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Have you consulted an attorney in the development of a child abuse prevention policy and screening procedure?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Do you ask volunteers to wait until they are associated with your ministry for at least six months before allowing them involvement with children of any age?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Do you screen all employees, including ministerial staff, whether or not they will work with children and youth?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Do you screen volunteers who work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Does your screening include a written application and personal interview?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Do you consistently check employee and volunteer references, including prior church membership?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Do you regularly conduct criminal background checks on all employees?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Do you conduct personal interviews with each ministry worker on a one- to three-year basis?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Do you require all prospective employees to sign a liability release that grants consent for you to contact former employers and to conduct a criminal records check?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Do you regularly conduct criminal background checks on volunteers who work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Do you request at least two independent references from employees and volunteers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Do you provide regular training for children's and youth ministry workers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Do you have a clearly defined reporting procedure in case an incident of abuse occurs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Are you prepared to respond to potential media inquiries?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Do you strictly enforce your current policy or program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Do you have adequate insurance coverage to protect yourself financially if a claim of child abuse occurs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. Have you developed and implemented a communication plan to meet your ongoing need to inform the members of your congregation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. Do you regularly review your program and make changes when needed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Completed by: _____ Date: _____

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY PROCEDURES CHECKLIST

Incorporate the following elements into your written check-in/check-out procedures.

Introduction

Your introduction should emphasize the safety and security for all infants and children. It may contain a purpose statement and a belief statement supported by Scripture.

Entrances and Exits

Only the main entrance into the child care area should be unlocked. This should be the only entrance or exit for all who come and go, apart from fire exits. Only workers, parents, and properly checked-in children should be allowed in the child care area.

Supervision

Follow the Rule of Two or Rule of Three for all classrooms. If a child needs to leave, use additional ministry volunteers so no one is alone with a child and a child is never left alone.

Food and Drinks

Workers in the classrooms should not consume coffee or hot beverages without lids. Adults are prohibited from bringing food or beverages into a classroom. Exception: infant formula or breast milk.

Child Registration

All children (including visitors) must pre-register to attend. This policy:

- Ensures that children are in the classroom appropriate for their age or level of development.
- Identifies any special needs.
- Provides information, such as an address and phone number.
- Notes the location of the parent/guardian.

If you're not using a computerized system, your registration form should include basic information, such as parents' names, address, phone number, emergency contact, medical and allergy issues, and custody orders. For all adults eligible to check-in and check-out the child, obtain a copy of the driver's license—you'll want to consult this file if a parent loses his or her form of paired identification.

Decide if you'll allow an older sibling to check-in and check-out a child. Your policy should include an age limit, and if the older sibling is required to own a driver's license. If so, ensure that you obtain this information in the registration process.

Secure Check-in Procedures

No one will be admitted without an ID tag. Decide on your method of identification. You can use a computerized tag system, matching badges, or a sign-in sheet combined with a pager system. Your method should ensure that each child and parent are uniquely matched, and that the child's name, contact name, and allergy information are easily visible.

Develop a written procedure that is simple to follow for parents and a child/parent identification system that's easy to verify for workers. Require a worker to supervise the process, if it's computerized.

Secure Check-out Procedures

All children will be released only to an adult with matching identification. No one will be released without an ID tag. If the tags do not match, the children's area team leader will ask for verification of identity or pastoral staff input.

Arrival and Departure Times

Set clear arrival and departure times for parents. Example: Children should check in no sooner than 15 minutes before a service, study group, or event, and check out no later than 15 minutes after the event's conclusion.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY PROCEDURES CHECKLIST

Custody Issues

A court order regarding the child, should be noted on the check-out list. Ask the custodial parent to supply a copy of the court document for child's file.

Worker Identification Policy

All approved volunteer staff members are required to wear an identification tag or lanyard that clearly identifies them as qualified workers, authorized by the church to work with children.

Contacting a Parent While Their Child is in Our Care

If you feel a child requires medical attention, please alert the children's area team leader and use the following steps:

- In an emergency, dial 911, or your local emergency number, first. Contact the parent via the method outlined in the registration process. During Bible study, call the group leader.
- Alert safety and security team at XXX-XXXX.
- If it's a non-life threatening medical issue, prepare the child to leave. Explain any necessary information to the parent. Ask for a safety and security team member to accompany the parent to the hospital.
- If the parent cannot be reached, the child must be transported to the hospital by way of ambulance. A safety team member should stay with the child at all times until the parent arrives. A worker should remain in the child's classroom to alert the parent of the situation.

To round out your child care policy, include procedures for these issues:

- Injury and first aid administration policy
- Medication policy
- Evacuation plan
- Volunteer requirements to serve
- Sanitation procedures
- Discipline policy
- Restroom guidelines
- Personal items for child

CREATING YOUR PROGRAM, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES CHECKLIST

	Yes	No
1. Do you currently have a written child abuse prevention policy for your children's and youth ministry programs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. If you currently have a child abuse prevention program, are there elements that need improvement? Notes:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Have you consulted an attorney in the development of a child abuse prevention policy and screening procedure?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Do you strictly enforce your current policy or program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Do your policies include safeguards from minimizing the risk of abuse?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
a. On and off church premises, do you have at least two adults supervise a group of children at all times, whether they are in a room, a vehicle, or other enclosed space—even if only one or two children need care?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Do you ensure an adequate number of adult chaperones for all off-premise events, especially those that involve overnights?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Do you discourage the use of teenagers as nursery workers (or any other type of child care provider) unless they are screened and are working alongside two adults?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Do you use a "claim check" procedure so that children are released only to a parent, guardian, or other authorized person?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Do you forbid one-to-one electronic communication between adults and youth?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Do you have adequate insurance coverage to protect yourself financially if a claim of child abuse occurs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Do you provide regular training for children's and youth ministry workers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Do you have a clearly defined reporting procedure in case an incident of abuse occurs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
a. Do your children's ministry leaders know the state and federal requirement for reporting child abuse and neglect?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Do your staff members and volunteers know how to identify inappropriate behavior and the procedures for reporting such conduct?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Are you prepared to respond to potential media inquiries?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Have you developed and implemented a communication plan to meet your ongoing need to inform the members of your congregation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Do you regularly review your program and make changes when needed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Completed by: _____ Date: _____

ELIMINATE SECLUDED AREAS CHECKLIST

Most likely, your building was designed for worship, education, and safety—and not to prevent child abusers' secretive access to children. Gather your building's floorplan or make a quick sketch. Go room to room to identify areas where privacy is unnecessary.

	Yes	No
1. Are unused rooms, closets, and outdoor structures kept locked with limited key access? Be sure to evaluate a garage, baptismal room, library, stairwells, shed, athletic areas, and stage areas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Are church vehicles kept locked at all times, with limited key access?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Is coat room activity monitorable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Do you have wide-angle security mirrors installed to view areas with limited visibility?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Do all rooms (except for bathrooms) have windows?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Have you removed curtains, blinds, or screens that block the view of all child care areas?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Have you limited privacy in a nurse's station area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Are diapering areas open and easily visible?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Are all angles of your outdoor play areas open and visible to those both inside and outside of the facility?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Can you closely monitor enclosed play structures in a classroom or on a playground?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Do you restrict access to all buildings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Do you use and monitor security cameras for all entrances?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Completed by: _____ Date: _____



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