

Car Seats and Prevention Policies: Keeping your child safe then and now.

One pastor offers this story as a way to explain the need for abuse prevention policies in congregations.

When his oldest child (now age 25) was born, car seats were seen as optional. Some parents used them, some did not. Some were poorly constructed and not everyone knew how to use them properly. Car seats were available to protect children, but many times parents didn't see the risk or the danger of transporting a child without a safety car seat as real.

20 years later, another child is born. This time, the hospital would not allow him to bring his baby home until they had seen that a quality car seat had been purchased and installed properly in their car. Not only was it the law, but the danger and risk of driving away with their precious newborn NOT strapped into a car seat was unthinkable. Through the years, there was positive societal pressure upon all families to manage the risk by using car seats with their children.

The pastor says, "It's not that we were bad parents the first time around, it's just that we have learned some things, as individuals and as a society about danger and risk and now we know how to provide the safest journey for our child when she is in our car."

So too....

If churches have not had abuse prevention policies in place previously, this does not make them "bad churches." Today we are aware of our cultural climate and realize the world is different than it was 20 and 40 years ago. Today we know more about how to manage the risks of ministering to children and youth in the congregation and we know more about how to prevent bad things from happening.

Taking the time to understand the need for abuse prevention policies takes energy and care, but it is an investment in creating the kind of *Safe Sanctuary* that congregations need to provide.

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