

WHY DO YOU NEED A PROTECTION POLICY IN YOUR CHURCH?

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SOMETIMES CHURCHES THINK:

1. In denial that abuse exists
2. Trust too much
3. They can take care of it themselves
4. Harbor offenders in order to preserve a family
5. Expect forgiveness too soon



PERHAPS YOUR CHURCH THINKS IT DOESN'T NEED A POLICY?

While we don't want to live in fear, neither should we be blinded by trust or act recklessly.

A policy will help us be alert to possible wrongdoing. Offenders look like you and me!!

A visible policy may deter an offender!!

HOPING ABUSE WON'T HAPPEN, WILL NOT KEEP OUR CHILDREN AND YOUTH SAFE!!

- ▶ Every church needs to have a written child abuse prevention policy, **Our children are too important, too precious to leave their safety to chance!**
- ▶ Shows your commitment to children and youth
- ▶ A policy shows expectations and guidelines for appropriate behavior
- ▶ Communicates to parents that their children and youth are valued and gives reassurance
- ▶ It may also help protect the church from liability

POLICY IS IMPORTANT


- ▶ Legal definitions of abuse
- ▶ Training for teachers, leaders, parents and children/youth
- ▶ Personnel background checks
- ▶ A response plan
- ▶ Adequate supervision
- ▶ Appropriate facilities
- ▶ Make it public

WHAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN YOUR POLICY

- ▶ Appoint or elect a small number of individuals including the pastor
- ▶ Assign parts to individuals
- ▶ Begin to formulate
- ▶ Have it approved by your church board or consistory
- ▶ Implement throughout the church
- ▶ Revisit every 3-5 years and add any needed updates or revisions

HOW DO YOU START

- ▶ Hold trainings and **Educate**
- ▶ **Talk** about child protection
- ▶ **Listen** and share stories
- ▶ **Post** on your church website



DON'T HIDE YOUR POLICY IN FILE !!

- ▶ Hold trainings for staff, teachers, and students
 - ▶ Teach them about signs of abuse
 - ▶ Types of abuse
 - ▶ Characteristics of offenders
 - ▶ Risks and how to protect
- ▶ Resources
 - ▶ Let them know the facts and statistics
 - ▶ Involve community organizations



EDUCATE!!

Circle of Grace Curriculum


- ▶ K-12 Curriculum which is developmentally appropriate
- ▶ Leader guidelines
- ▶ Easy-to-teach lessons
- ▶ Sample prayers
- ▶ Handouts
- ▶ Parent Take-home sheets
- ▶ Lesson evaluations

WHERE CAN YOU FIND TRAINING FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH?

- ▶ Use all opportunities in the church to talk and share your policy!
- ▶ Suggestions
 - ▶ Sermons
 - ▶ Sunday school classes
 - ▶ Small groups
 - ▶ Committee meetings
 - ▶ Conversations
- ▶ Make sure all leaders and teachers know the proper channels if a child discloses or if they suspect abuse or neglect

COMMUNICATE!

- ▶ Identify people who listen well and are nonjudgmental
- ▶ Provide ways for people who have been abused to share their feelings to help them continue to heal



LISTEN!!

POST!!

Make sure your policy does not just sit in a filing cabinet!!



POST!!

WHAT PEOPLE MAY THINK!

A policy is:

- ❖ Unnecessary and would be an inconvenience
- ❖ Will communicate an environment of distrust
- ❖ Going to instill fear in children and adults
- ❖ Can't believe abuse could ever happen in **their** church

WHAT TO ANTICIPATE

- ▶ Recognize that both communities have strengths
- ▶ Identify shared values
- ▶ Work to form relationships before a crisis occurs
- ▶ Have agencies visit and provide trainings
- ▶ Have people from your church visit and volunteer in community agencies


USE THE OPPORTUNITY TO COLLABORATE WITH COMMUNITY AGENCIES

Ask Your Church These Questions?

- ▶ Do you have a policy?
 - ▶ If so revisit and update.
 - ▶ If you do not start by contacting your pastor and telling him/her the importance of having one!
- ▶ Form a group to start working on development!
- ▶ Implement your new policy!

NEXT STEPS!!

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION



Circle of Grace, (2010), Protestant or Catholic version.
Dove's Nest: Faith Communities Keeping Children and Youth Safe, (2012), Retrieved from www.DovesNest.net
Harder, J. (2010). Let the children come :Preparing faith Communities to end child abuse and neglect, Scottsdale, PA Herald Press.
Reiter, T.P. (2011), Nelson's Children's Minister's Manual, Nashville, TN Thomas Nelson.

RESOURCES
