



Faith Communities Keeping Children & Youth Safe

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Child and Youth Protection Policy Checklist

Churches

Here is a menu of items to be included in a child and youth protection policy for a church.

- Name of church – a policy can be modeled after another but should be unique to your church
- Definitions of abuse – specific to your state (<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/can/defining>)

Training

For whom – indicate how often:

- Staff All adults Teachers Children and youth
- All volunteers who have contact with children and youth

Content:

- Types of abuse, including signs Risk and protective factors Response plan

Personnel

- Application, background checks, interview, and references for all staff
- Application, background checks, interview, and references for volunteers who work with children/youth
- Six-month church involvement before teaching or leading children/youth
- Read and agree to abide by the child and youth protection policy annually

Supervision of children and youth

- Two-adult rule: One adult should never be alone with one child
- Nursery Vacation Bible school
- Sunday school Youth group activities (especially any overnight activities)
- Children's church Before and after church activities

Interactions with children and youth

- Restorative (nonviolent) and age-appropriate discipline
- Appropriate touch and consent
- Bathroom use policy

Church facility

- Install windows in inside doors/walls
- Childproof all rooms (e.g., cleaning supplies, outlets, knives in kitchen)
- Stock first aid kit
- Clean and sanitize toys/surfaces regularly

Response to possible child abuse and neglect

- Plan for reporting to authorities (who, when, where to call)
- Plan for keeping children and youth safe (both immediate and longer term)
- Plan for notifying nonoffending parent(s)
- Plan for notifying others in the congregation

Response to known offender in congregation

- Assessment of congregation's readiness to receive individual, to include training on sexual abuse signs and prevention as well as conversations with known abuse victims/survivors in congregation
- Assessment of individual's readiness and appropriateness for participation in church activities, to include history, pertinent court orders, treatment status, motivation
- Written plan with individual and professionals in individual's life, to include supervision plan and clear definition of role of individual in church activities (no access to children or youth)
- Plan to communicate with church community about the presence of and written plan with the individual
- Spiritual, emotional, and practical support for the individual
- Spiritual, emotional, and practical support for survivors and victims in the church community

Other

- Guidelines related to social media, video conference, and texting/messaging for volunteers and staff
- Include a child protection theme in worship – indicate how often
- Notify parents before a child or youth is transported
- Community referrals known and readily available: counseling for children and families, basic needs, domestic violence, substance abuse, mental illness
- Hygiene policies, such as handwashing and sanitizing
- Well child policies related to keeping a sick or symptomatic child home

Community (beyond church community)

- Planned outreach for families and children at risk
- Awareness/collaboration with community agencies/personnel (for purposes of volunteering, referrals, services for families and children in church)

Policy

- Adopted and implemented – indicate who is responsible
- Accessible (e.g., posted on bulletin boards, website)

Resources

Harder, J. (2010). *Let the Children Come: Preparing Faith Communities to End Child Abuse and Neglect*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press. <https://dovesnest.net/letthechildrencome>

Dove's Nest trainings: <https://dovesnest.net/events>

Dove's Nest's Protection & Inclusion document:
https://dovesnest.net/sites/default/files/Protection_Inclusion_2018.pdf

Model (long and short versions) and sample child protection policies: <https://dovesnest.net/policies>

Circle of Grace. <https://dovesnest.net/circleofgrace>