



Creating a Safe Place for Children and Youth in Communities of Faith

It is a powerful responsibility to ensure that children and youth are able to thrive within a faith community. The importance of creating and maintaining safe places for ALL members, especially those unable to protect themselves, must be considered with great care.



Questions to ask within your Faith Community

It is a good idea to check with your faith leaders to ask what trainings and policies may already exist in your local and national organization. Exploring these questions with your leadership can be the first step on the journey of helping keep your space a safe and nurturing place for all. The two lists below are not indented to be comprehensive list, but should help in starting conversations and guiding your best practices.

Policies

- Does our community have a written policy on the prevention of Child Sexual Abuse and how to handle allegations of abuse?
- Do we offer trainings on child abuse prevention and our reporting practices?
- Do our children receive education on abuse prevention and appropriate boundaries?
- Do we have training and guidelines in place for ministries involving homebound adults or pastoral care?
- Do we currently have a posted schedule of the ministries and group meetings offered?
- Are new ministries reviewed and approved before they begin meeting?
- How long should volunteers be a part of our faith community before getting involved with children/youth programs?
- Is there a designated or identified person to handle reports or questions regarding abuse or behavioral concerns?
- Do we use background checks and an interview process in hiring staff and screening volunteers?
- Is it understood that we always report to an outside agency (Child Protection Services or Law Enforcement) in addition to any notifications made within our own walls when child abuse is involved?



Practices

- Is it a requirement that a minimum of two adults be present in all ministries involving children and teens?
- Are our meeting spaces and play areas visible to others? Should we add windows to our meeting room doors?
- How do we handle access to our building? Who has access to our keys?
- Do we conduct random checks to swing in and visit various ministries as they meet? Is there a specific staff member asked to monitor programs?
- Who handles our employment and volunteer applications and screening? Are all volunteers checked against sexual offender registries as well as having a criminal background check?
- Do we call references for any new employee or volunteers wanting to work with children or youth?
- How are convicted sex offenders monitored and supervised within our community to ensure safety?

If you are in the Minnesota area and are interested in having a speaker come to your faith community on sexual abuse prevention, please contact the Jacob Wetterling Resource Center.



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