

Participant Handout for Part 2
SAFE CHURCH PRACTICES

1. Screening

- a. Be known by head of church for at least 6 months
- b. Complete an application (even volunteers)
- c. Reference check
- d. Personal interview
- e. Background check of sex offender and criminal records

2. Interacting

- a. Review Appendix A (pg. 9) for examples of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors when working with children and youth

3. Preventing False Allegations

False allegations are rarely “out of the blue.” Most often false allegations occur when an adult uses poor judgment or interacts with children in a way that makes them feel unsafe. Some behaviors that have led to false allegations of abuse:

- a. Meeting alone in isolated places
- b. Showing favoritism
- c. Engaging in physical contact that was misinterpreted
- d. Wearing provocative or revealing attire
- e. Meeting in homes and in bedrooms without others present
- f. Being nude in front of children
- g. Sleeping in bed with or lying next to children or youth
- h. Giving special or secret gifts
- i. Graphically discussing sexual activities or encouraging others to do so
- j. Keeping “secrets” about relationships
- k. Failing to adhere to uniform or accepted standards of affection
- l. Showing affection when no one else is around
- m. Staring while others are dressing
- n. Commenting on children’s bodies
- o. Taking pictures while children are dressing or showering
- p. Shaming or belittling an individual

4. Monitoring

Standards for programs and those who lead or work with them

- a. All programs should have clear guidelines
- b. Review pages 5-7 in Handbook

5. Training

Safeguarding God's Children training is required for all employees of schools, churches, and diocesan institutions, and for all (even volunteers) who work with children and youth including those who serve in non-church or school programs on church or school property. (Page 5 in Handbook; Definitions are on page 3.)

6. Responding

How and to whom to report policy or boundary violations or suspected child abuse

- a. Barriers to reporting – what prevents individuals from reporting cases of abuse?
 - i. **Denial**
 - ii. **Loyalty**
 - iii. **Fear**
 - iv. **Protection**
 - v. **Avoidance**
 - vi. **Guilt**

- b. How to respond when a child reports abuse

- i. Put your own feelings aside trying not to communicate shock, disgust, embarrassment, or disbelief. Be calm and supportive.
- ii. Never agree to a child that asks “if I tell you, promise you won’t tell anyone?”
- iii. Seek an appropriately private location so that the child is protected from disclosing in public.
- iv. Assure the child that he/she did the right thing by telling and that you believe him/her.
- v. Try not to lead the victim even if he/she has difficulty in the telling or is non-verbal. Let her/him tell his/her own story, in his/her own words as much as possible.
- vi. Never blame the victim or make judgments about what happened.
- vii. Try not to say things that might make the victim feel guilty or inadequate (“why didn’t you say no?”).
- viii. Try not to speak badly of the abuser. Remember, this could be the child’s parent whom he/she nonetheless loves.

- ix. Remember, it is not up to you to investigate or elaborate on the child's story. You need only have *suspicion* to report.
- x. Tell the child that you want to help but to do so you will need to tell those who can be of help. Tell the child that other professionals may also need to talk with him/her about it.
- xi. Assure the child that someone will stand by him/her in the process of getting help...if not you then another trusted staff member/parishioner.
- xii. Report the abuse to the person in your protocol. If you feel the child is in immediate danger, be sure to share that concern.
- xiii. These concerns may also need to be reported to CPS. Again, if you feel the child is in immediate danger, be sure to share those concerns.
- xiv. The child's report should be discussed only with authorized people and not with other children or uninvolved adults. It is important to tell only people who are required to know. The child has a right to confidentiality.
- xv. Stay close (or arrange for someone else to do so) to the child immediately after disclosure to provide some sense of physical security.
- xvi. Maintain a normally responsive interaction with the child after the disclosure, being sensitive to the child's need to talk.
- xvii. Recognize that this process may cause conflicted feelings in you. Be aware that you also may need to process your feelings. Be careful that who you choose to do this with maintains the child's confidentiality and yours.

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- c. Reporting procedures - Review pages 7-8 in Handbook