

How to Develop a Child Safety and Protection Program In Your Church

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**"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them,
for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Matt 19:14**

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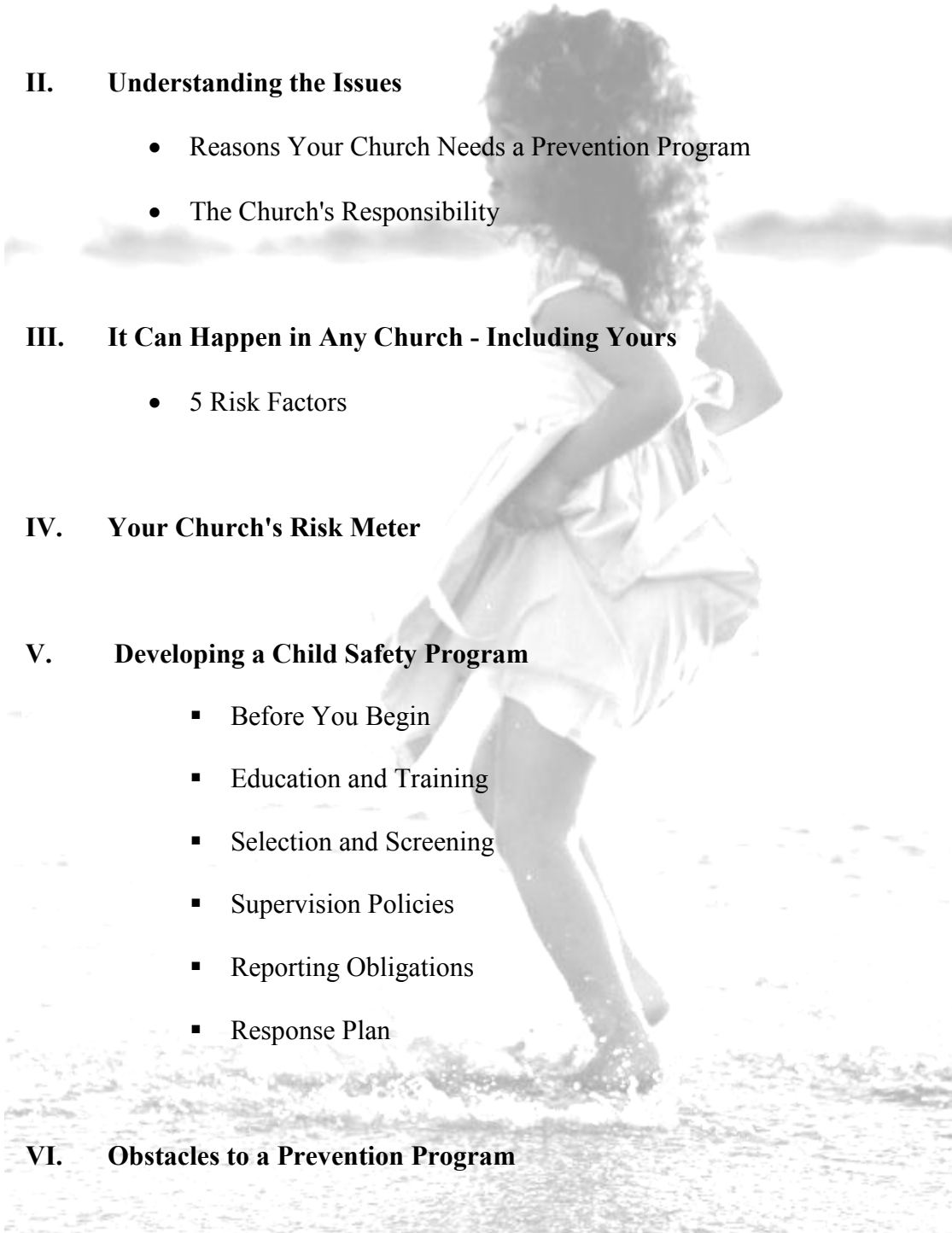
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I. Introduction

Goals of this class (Part I & II)

Educate

- About the increasing **severity** of child abuse and the impact it has on the church.
- How to lead **proactively** through prevention.
- Raising awareness of the **moral** and **legal** ramifications for the church
- **5 ways** your children and church may be at **risk**.
- Focus - Safety, Stewardship, Prevention, **Not Fear**.

Equip

- By examination of **5 areas, foundational** to a **comprehensive** child safety and protection program.
- Outline a **step by step** strategy that will provide a **guideline** to develop, implement or refine **your own** specific safety prevention program.
- By learning policies, procedures and guidelines you need to know to be effective in prevention.
- By developing a **response plan** if an incident occurs.

Encourage

- By familiarizing you with **valuable training resources** that will provide you with all the knowledge, training materials, forms and other tools to help you implement your own program without reinventing the wheel.
- By being available for further help or assistance; contact Francie Martin @ - (909)

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I.

Disclaimer:

1. **Not** a “qualified professional or legal expert.
2. This class and resources recommended do not constitute **legal advice** or **counsel**. Rather, they are intended to help you develop and implement your own safety and protection program.
3. Strongly recommended that you establish a relationship with a qualified professional and legal counsel to **review** and **approve** your own specific policies, procedures and guidelines. Also, be sure...
 - a. That your church **complies** with federal and state laws.
 - b. That your church understands all **legal reporting requirements** regarding children’s ministry **in your state**.
4. Recommend **periodic review** to incorporate any new legal developments.
5. There is no such thing as a “fail safe” system or guarantee against an occurrence of child abuse (focus → risk prevention).

II. Understanding the Issues

Why - Your Church Needs a Safety and Prevention Program

1. The problem of child abuse is **real and growing!**

Described as a “national epidemic:”

(Safety)

“Each year, parents, guardians and others seriously abuse approximately **2 million children** throughout the United States. Every year, **at least one thousand children will die** as a result of abuse and neglect. Some 90 percent of deaths resulting from abuse or neglect involve children under the age of five; 44 percent of deaths involve children under the age of one. These statistics do not take into account **thousands of unreported acts** of child abuse.”¹

2. Pastors, and church leaders will be able to help protect children, youth and staff serving in their ministries, by equipping the church with practical and legal skills that ***safeguard people, limit damage and prevent lawsuits.**

(Prevention)

“A single incident of child molestation can devastate a church and divide a congregation. Members become outraged and bewildered; parents question whether their own children have been victimized; the viability of the church’s youth and children’s programs are jeopardized; and church leaders face blame and guilt for allowing the incident to happen. Such incidents often result in massive media attention, sometimes on a national scale. Front page stories hit the local paper. Community residents begin to associate the church with the incident of molestation. But far more tragic is the emotional trauma to the victim and the victims family, and the enormous potential legal liability the church faces. And if a trial ensues the issue stays alive in the media for months, sometimes even years.”²

3. Ministry staff and volunteers learn to **avoid situations** that set them up for false allegations and litigation.
4. Parents are **assured** that their children/youth are in a safe and **secure** environment, being protected from anyone seeking to hurt them.

¹ “Child Abuse and Neglect - A Report By the Blue Ribbon Panel on Family Violence,” 1997, p. 4-5

² “Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church,” Copyright 1993 By Church Law and Tax Report, p. 12

II.

5. Your church is most likely **under insured** without a child safety and protection program in place,

(Stewardship)

- a. “No one evaluates risk better than insurance companies. Some companies are reducing their coverage they provide for child abuse or molestation, and in some cases are excluding it entirely. Your church board should immediately review your church liability policy to determine whether you have any coverage for acts of molestation occurring on your property or during your activities, and if so, whether your coverage has been limited in any way. Many churches discover that they have no coverage for such incidents, or that policy limits have been significantly reduced.”³

If this is the case you have a potentially enormous uninsured risk. County, state and federal laws as well as insurance companies require child safety policies. You might not be insured without one!

- b. During the past 10 years, over 3500 churches have responded to allegations of sexual misconduct involving a minor. One in twenty-five congregations (over 1000 members) will wind up in court over this issue, this year (church law and tax report statistics).

6. Finally and perhaps most importantly, a safety and protection program will allow the **(Focus)** church to relax and pursue its **God-given mission** while providing a safe, secure and healthy ministry environment.

³ “Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church,” Copyright 1993 By Church Law and Tax Report, p. 19

II.

The Church's Responsibility

A. Spiritual/Moral Responsibility

1. “Church leaders have a spiritual, moral and legal obligation to provide a safe and secure environment for all individuals – children, youth and adults – who participate in their ministries (Safe Place).”⁴ In our society today, there is no excuse for any church to neglect this responsibility.
2. The **church represents Jesus Christ** and therefore, must be a model and expression of his love, integrity and holiness to one another.
3. A ministry that makes safety and security for children/youth a high priority is a **witness of God's love.**

4. Biblical instruction and warning on this issue:

I Thessalonians 5:22 – “But among you there must be not even a hint of sexual immorality... because these are improper for God's holy people.”

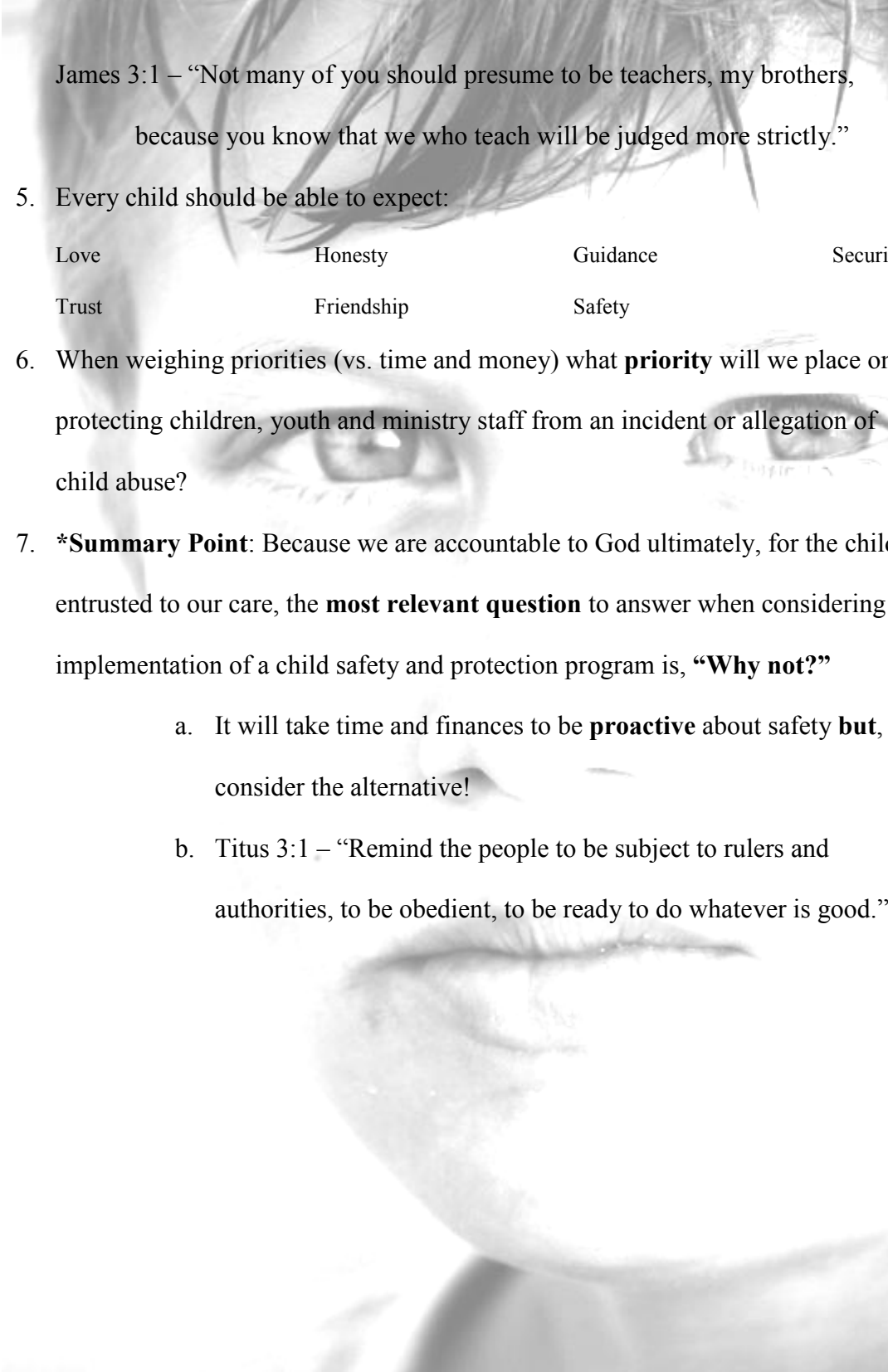
Matthew 19:14 – “Let the little children come to me, and so not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

Mark 10:16 – “And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them (encouragement to ministry workers who may be anxious or fearful because of all the issues surrounding child abuse).”

Matthew 18: 6 – “But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.”

⁴ “Safe Place,” Copyright 2002 by the Discipline Making Ministries Office of Christian Publications, Inc. p. 6

II.



James 3:1 – “Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.”

5. Every child should be able to expect:

| | | | |
|-------|------------|----------|----------|
| Love | Honesty | Guidance | Security |
| Trust | Friendship | Safety | |

6. When weighing priorities (vs. time and money) what **priority** will we place on protecting children, youth and ministry staff from an incident or allegation of child abuse?

7. ***Summary Point:** Because we are accountable to God ultimately, for the children entrusted to our care, the **most relevant question** to answer when considering the implementation of a child safety and protection program is, “**Why not?**”

a. It will take time and finances to be **proactive** about safety **but**, consider the alternative!

b. Titus 3:1 – “Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good.”

II.

The Church's Responsibility

B. Civil and Legal Liability

1. Lawsuits are being filed against churches and their personnel because the **church failed** to:
 - a. Act reasonably and with due care in the **selection** of workers for positions involving the supervision and care of minors. (Negligent selection)
 - b. Exercise sufficient care in the **supervision** of workers and minors – both on the church premises, as well as off-site activities. (Negligent supervision)
2. The law defines **negligence** as “*conduct that creates and unreasonable risk of foreseeable harm to others.*”
3. If a church faces an allegation of negligence related to a case of child abuse or maltreatment – the outcome will largely depend on **3 factors**:
 - a. What **policies** did the church have in place regarding the **selection** and **supervision** of employees and volunteers? (*Reasonable care*)
 - b. To what degree were those policies **followed** in the case under consideration? (*Breach of reasonable care*)
 - c. **Damage** caused by a breach of reasonable care?
*Incidentally, this is one reason why an **operant** ministry training manual is vital to a prevention and safety program.

II.

4. A court will ask, “How did you prevent this tragedy from happening?”
*Remember this question as your **guiding principle!**
*Your excuse will have no value in a court of law or to a child who has become a victim of abuse.

5. **Additional ways** a church may be found **negligent**:

("Respondent Superior")

- a. **Vicarious liability** which means *“that employers are responsible for the actions of their agents (employees/volunteers) and that these actions must take place while the agent is performing duties on behalf of the employer.”*⁵ (regardless of whether the employer was negligent or even aware of any abuse)

- b. “Masters are responsible for the actions of their servants.”

6. It is important to understand that the courts view these **two theories of potential liability** because of the ramifications to the church. (Church’s own negligence and vicarious liability)
7. The **best policy** is to protect a child and the church by **being aware** of what is going on **at all times** in your ministry (to prevent any opportunity for an act to occur).
8. ***Summary Point**: As the church seeks to expand risk management to address child safety, they need to know the laws governing child safety. Legally, churches are no longer immune from these issues.

“Congregations must have a least a cursory understanding of what their legal duties are in order to protect against negligence (acting carelessly and without proper attention). *Remember, it is impossible for churches to guarantee complete safety to every child in their care. Children hurt themselves everyday regardless of how stringent the supervision. What congregations must do however, is guard against any injury that may occur as a result of their own carelessness or failure to provide proper attention.”⁶

⁵ Middlebrook, David O., “The Guardian System,” Creation House Publishing, 2000, p.104

⁶ Middlebrook, David O., “The Guardian System,” Creation House Publishing, 2000, p. 102

III. It Can Happen on Any Church – Including Yours

Why? – Churches are vulnerable: (5 risk factors)

1. Lack of Education and Training

- a. 1st step in prevention – **acknowledging**, it can happen to us.
- b. Too many are **ignorant of facts** surrounding child abuse – believe a lot of myths.
- c. Not educated and aware – **how to recognize** the signs and behavioral indicators of child abuse.
- d. Do not understand the **profile** behind different types of molesters.
*Need to change preconceived ideas of child molesters.
- e. **Too casual** about safety, lead reactively.

2. Communities of trust and denial

- a. What's our famous line? (It won't happen to us.)
- b. Molesters bank on this naïve assumption! Churches that are the last to become proactive will face increased risk as sexual molesters target those with the loosest precautions.
- c. Many feel uncomfortable questioning a volunteer's character, personal life, etc.
- d. **Statistic** (fog cutter) ~ in 1985: **95%** of convicted child molesters (nationally) worked in the church setting, Boy Scouts, etc.

3. Lack of Screening and Supervision Policies

- a. Approximately **70%** of churches polled in a recent survey → **do not screen** their volunteers.

III.

- b. **Complete strangers** are invited and encouraged to work with and care for their children (poor recruitment)!

4. Opportunity – Access

- a. Numerous opportunities exist for unsupervised close personal contact between adults and minors – esp. **off-site** and **overnight** activities!
- b. “Child molesters are attracted to and will seek out any institution in which they may have immediate access to potential victims in an atmosphere of complete and blind trust (Hammer, R.)” – the church!

5. Need

- a. Most churches struggle to get help. Turnover is high
- b. Improper adult/child ratios don’t allow for proper supervision (or ministry).
- c. Any volunteer becomes a welcome relief!

*Combine these 5 risk factors – we have all the ingredients for an incident to occur.

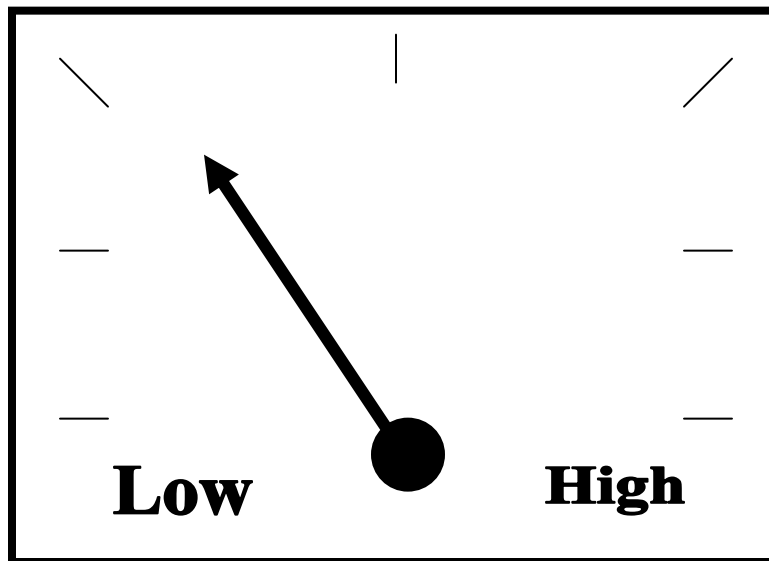
6. *Summery Point: Top 5 reasons churches are being sued are **negligence in:**

- a. Screening
- b. Training
- c. Supervision
- d. Event Planning
- e. Emergency Actions

IV. Your Church's Risk Meter

How much legal risk does your church want to assume?

The Risk Meter



Legal Risk

“A church’s response to the recommendations made can be illustrated using a ‘risk meter’ like the one above... where do you want the needle to register – near the low rating or the high rating? Each church will decide for itself where the needle will appear.

1. A church leader asks if the church can use someone who has been accused of abuse but who denies any wrongdoing.
Or
2. A church would like to use a screening procedure that does not involve reference checks.
3. What about not using a two-adult rule in the nursery due to a lack of helpers on a particular Sunday.
Or
4. Using a secondary screening procedure for workers who are not occasional volunteers or who are not church members?
5. What about taking a father along on an overnight activity who shows up at the last minute and volunteers to help?

Such questions come down to the issue of risk. How much legal risk does a church want to assume? Churches are free to use one attendant in the nursery, or to conduct little if any screening of workers. These activities are not ‘illegal,’ but the effect of this will be to move your needle over toward the high side of the meter. Keep the idea of a “risk meter” in mind as your church makes the many decisions that go into the implementation of a screening procedure. Remember, your decisions in creating and implementing a prevention program will determine where the needle will be on your ‘risk meter.’”⁷

***As we transition from the reasons/needs for a child safety and protection program to an actual implementation strategy, keep your church’s “Risk Meter” in mind.**

⁷ “Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church,” Copyright 1993 By Church Law and Tax Report, p. 50

V. Developing a Child Safety Program

Lead Proactively Through Prevention

- A comprehensive prevention strategy must focus on 5 areas to effectively reduce the risk of child abuse.

- a. Education and training
- b. Selection and Screening
- c. Supervision policies (retention)
- d. Reporting obligations
- e. Response Plan

Before you Begin...

*Pray!

1. **Ask** for Support
 - a. Meet **informally** with key leaders of your church or ministry to obtain their informal support.
 - b. **Include** people who will be most affected by a child safety program (i.e., Senior Pastor, Children's Pastor/Director, Church Administrator, Youth Pastor/Director, nursery...)
 - c. Use **tools** and stress the importance of **leading proactively through prevention**.
2. Obtain **Formal** Support
 - a. **A successful safety program requires **time, resources, accountability** and a **responsible leader** authorized to make the plan work.

V.

b. To succeed, a child safety program must **become a priority** for the senior pastor and top leadership. **To implement – ask them to commit to:**

- Authorize staff, time and financial resources
- Authorize a leader or leaders for the program
- Enforcement of policies and procedures and any modifications to existing ministries when needed.
- Expectations and accountability of key leaders to maintain a safe ministry environment.
- Set a **realistic goal** to have the program in place by a **certain date**.

3. Prepare your church for prevention

- This is where education and training formally begins.

V.

A. Education and Training

1. Education and training are **absolutely foundational** to an effective child abuse prevention program.
2. Through education and training you are **equipping** your ministry staff, volunteers and children with **tools to recognize, report and prevent child abuse**
3. Develop a **realistic approach** to education:
 - a. Don't assume everyone in your church will support the implementation of a child safety program.
 - b. Over reaction, denial, fear, etc. – **Be sensitive!**
4. Educate your **church congregation**
 - a. Who is heading up the program (and leadership support)?
 - b. What the training and program will involve and why.
 - c. Present information – positive and proactive light.
 - d. Awareness of consequences and ramifications if the church fails to implement an abuse prevention program.
 - e. Need support of parents
 - f. Cultivate a “safety first” culture in your church. **Safety 1st is our primary goal!**
 - Creating a safety 1st culture is also the **key to acceptance** of screening policies.
 - g. How? Training session, newsletter, pulpit, etc.

V.

5. Educate Your **Children** (“outcry training”).
 - a. Teaching parents and children to be proactive in prevention
 - b. Goal – helping empower children to help themselves and how to ask for help when they need it.
 - c. Should educate and train children. Be sure to inform parents first and receive their permission and a signed consent form.
 - d. Examples are provided in training resources!
6. Educate your **ministry staff** and **volunteers**. (Resources contain what you need for this!)
7. **Who should be trained?**
 - a. **All employee’s**: (Pastors, Directors, Supervisors, all staff)

Two types of **employees**: (option – classification)

 1. Primary access to children – volunteer level 1 (v1)
 2. Secondary access to children – volunteer level 2 (v2)
 - b. **All volunteers** (Supervisors, volunteer workers)

Two types of **volunteers**: (classification)

 1. Primary access to children – volunteer level 1 (v1)
 2. Secondary access to children – volunteer level 2 (v2)

*Job descriptions are vital to help your church classify a position as primary or secondary and to determine selection techniques (and screening).

*Classification of job descriptions also helps to balance precaution and practicality with screening recommendations.

V.

8. **What** basic training should they receive? (orientation)

- How to recognize signs of abuse (all)
- How to interact properly with minors (all)
- How to report abuse (E1, E2, V1)
- How to supervise children's ministry activities (E1, V1)

9. Orientation and continuing education **should include**:

- a. Identifying victims of child abuse (physical/behavioral indicators)
- b. Recognizing a perpetrator of child abuse.
- c. Appropriate/inappropriate interaction with children/youth.
- d. Church policies and procedures that govern working with minors.
- e. Reporting procedures for observed or suspected abuse/misconduct.
- f. How to respond to an allegation of child abuse.
- g. Guidelines for discipline
- h. Emergency and safety training
- i. CPR and first and training

10. **Lack of time** and **busy schedules** too often cause training and education to be put on the back burner.

- a. **Without training** – you will not be equipped and lack of training leads to serious mistakes and liability. (risk)

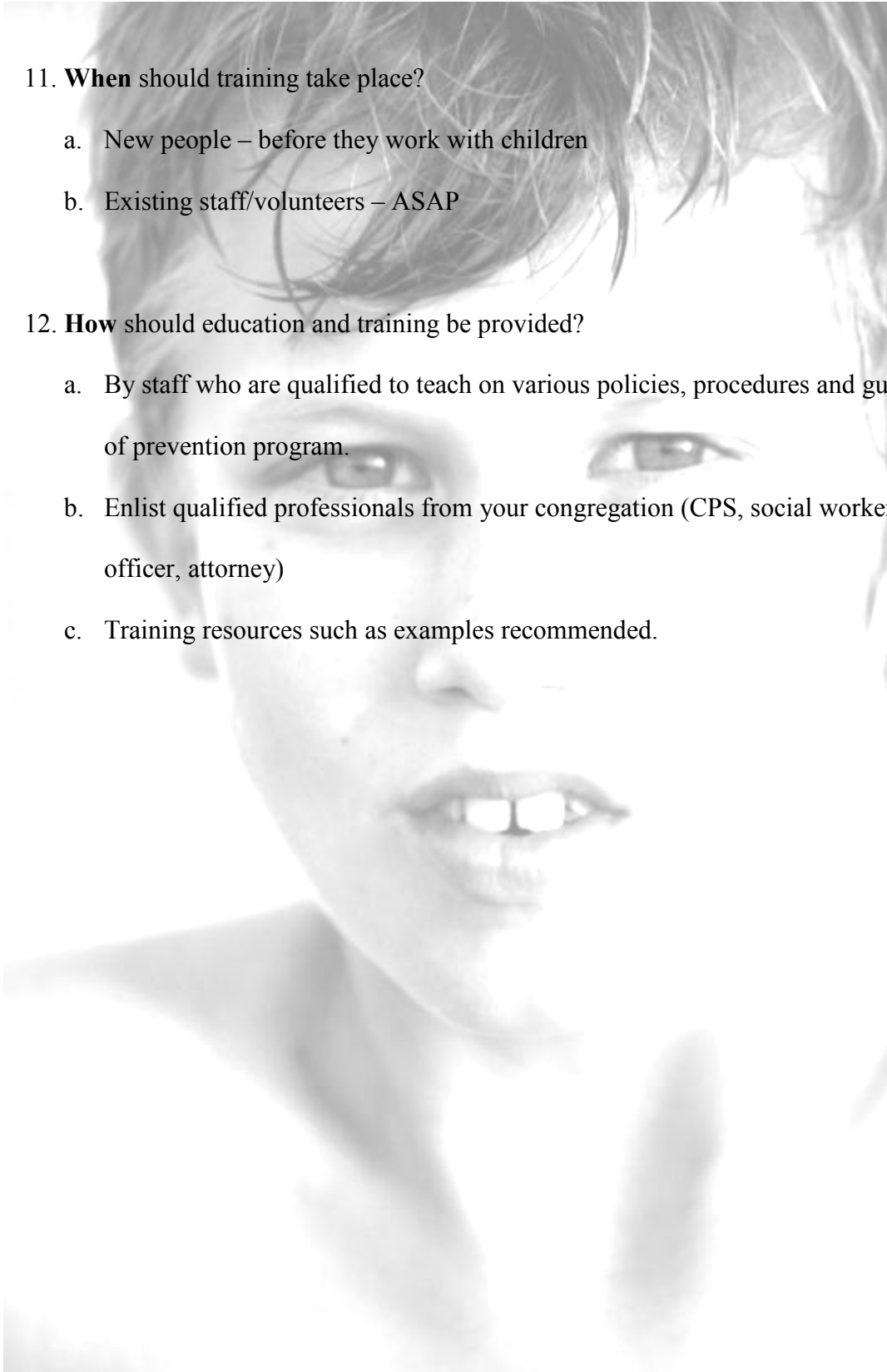
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11. **When** should training take place?

- a. New people – before they work with children
- b. Existing staff/volunteers – ASAP

12. **How** should education and training be provided?

- a. By staff who are qualified to teach on various policies, procedures and guidelines of prevention program.
- b. Enlist qualified professionals from your congregation (CPS, social worker, police officer, attorney)
- c. Training resources such as examples recommended.



V.

B. Selection – Screening

1. Provide Job Descriptions:

- a. Every employee/volunteer should have an **accurate and detailed job description** (in writing) that establishes the duties and responsibilities for the position.
- b. Job descriptions serve **4 main purposes**:
 - Puts expectations and responsibilities in writing.
 - Determines the degree of risk involved in the position which justifies the level of screening required.
 - Useful for performance reviews
 - Protects the church from a lawsuit by demonstrating ~
 - That the church made a reasonable effort to train and supervise workers
 - Applicant was aware of policies and guidelines.
 - Applicant agreed in writing, to follow the guidelines.
- c. Job descriptions **should include**:

| | |
|--|---|
| • Position/job title | • Necessary qualifications |
| • Position in line of authority | • Gifts, skills needed |
| • Time commitment required | • Training for position |
| • Length of service | • Work location |
| • Specific duties and responsibilities | • Whether position involves primary or secondary access to children |

V.

d. **Classifying** Job descriptions

Treating all workers as “primary level” is safest and most ideal however, if a single maximum standard for screening is not possible – churches have another option which is to **classify** a position as **primary** or **secondary**.

- Definitions and examples are included in training resources.
- When balancing precaution and practicality remember ~ practical means that the level of screening is commensurate with the level of contact with children (risk).

2. **Policy disclosure:**

- a. Be open and upfront about your child protection policies with all church members and prospective applicants.

3. **“The 6 Month-Minimum” Rule**

- a. accomplishes 2 purposes
 - Deters a perpetrator – no quick or easy access
 - Gives church, ministry leaders time to know applicant
- b. Rare exceptions to this rule – seminary intern, new youth or children pastor/director to your staff (paid).

*Note: **exception or waiving** of any screening and/or supervision policy should be under the **authority of a designated leader only** – no one else should have authority to waive these policies.

4. **Application Form**

- a. Required for **all** applicants to children/youth ministries.
- b. A completed application is a significant legal document and is the beginning of the formal screening process.

V.

- c. A completed application is also beginning the process of documenting its exercise of **reasonable care** in the selection of employers and volunteers **before** allowing **access** to children.
- d. This is why all screening **documents** need to be **retained** ~
 - * In employee file or volunteer file (**secured and confidential!**)
 - 7 years on employees/volunteers after date of termination
 - 12 months on unsuccessful applicants
- e. Applications for employees and volunteers have **different requirements**
 - State and federal laws govern employee applications – know them!
 - There are **questions** that are **not to be asked**, for **employee applications** (The Guardian System – Appendix 8)
- f. Be sure at a **minimum**: *(recommended resources provide applications)
 - Applicant agrees to ministry guidelines
 - Does not have a history of abusing children, disciplinary actions or prior employment problems related to treatment of children, or a criminal record.
 - Gives permission (in writing) and waives liability for reference checks and inquires into all information provided on the application and in the interview (including criminal background check).
 - In a sensitive manner, the applications should ask if the applicant is a victim of child abuse.
 - Have a signed statement of “no criminal record”

V.

- g. Upon receiving a completed application:
- Must verify that all the pertinent information is correct.
 - No missing key information
 - That no information is left out that would disqualify the applicant

5. Record request authorization:

- a. Usually included in the written application or as attachments
- b. Copies may be needed by organizations providing information to you.

6. Reference checks: (most often neglected)

- a. Are a collection of information from collateral sources that can help to identify criminal history or other issues in an applicants past that are not revealed in a criminal records check or application form.
- b. The positive side is that references can help you select the best qualified applicants, assess their experience, judgment, maturity, talents and abilities.
- c. Reference checks should be done on **all** children and youth employees and volunteers.
 - 3 or more for primary level, minimum of 2 for secondary level.
- d. When doing phone interviews – **take complete and careful notes and retain in file**
 - Demonstrating due diligence in researching background of an applicant.
- e. The Guardian System training resource lists key questions to ask and more about how to document information (p. 39).

V.

7. In Person Interview:

- a. Opportunity to evaluate the applicant objectively
- b. Take notes and **keep in file**.
- c. Again, state and federal laws govern employee interviews – not volunteers.
- d. Confidential and sensitive discussion may be more appropriate in an interview.

8. Criminal Background and Records Check: (The Guardian System)

- a. **Two primary methods** of conducting a criminal background check:
 - Self-directed (least costly, least effective method)
 - Professional search agencies hired by the church.
- b. A **Self-directed search** is only as good as the individual conducting the search and is limited to the county where the search is conducted.
- c. **Optional Sources** to aid a **self-directed** Background search are:
 - District and State county clerk offices.
 - Statewide data bases accessible for a fee
 - Internet online searches via companies that offer criminal background checks for a fee
 - Local child protection agencies
 - “Megan’s Law”
- d. The second method and more preferable option is for your church to hire a professional pre-employment background screening company that has the experience and capacity to conduct searches on a local and national level.

V.

e. When hiring an agency to conduct a criminal background check, it is necessary to

confirm the following:

- The geographic area to be searched
- The types of records and offences to be searched
- The length of time that they will look back
- The experience of the agency
- The existence of their errors and omissions insurance coverage
- The cost of various searches

f. Keep in mind that the selection of the proper method and company for conducting criminal background checks will have a tremendous impact on the determination of whether or not the church demonstrated “reasonable care.”

g. In addition, some background check companies have “**hold harmless**” language in their contracts **which means** their **clients are responsible** for the accuracy of the contract agency’s work.

h. Because of the importance of thorough, reliable background checks – the following are some recommendations from the training resources in your handout:

- The Guardian System recommends BTi Employee Screening Securities, Inc. (Appendix 12) phone # 1(800) 658-5642
- Nexus Solutions recommends Avert as a part of their “Safe Screen” package.

i. Do not become overly reliant on a criminal background check by itself – because there are limitations to these checks.

V.

9. Auto Safety Screening

- a. Checking driving records is an additional safeguard for any workers who may be in the position of operating church owned or private vehicles as part of their church duties.
- b. This is important even if the employee or volunteer is not transporting children, there is still potential liability for any accident that may occur during work hours.
- c. **Screening information needed for driving record check:**
 - A valid drivers license for your state with a photocopy on file (for types of vehicle operated)
 - Proof of valid auto insurance with a photocopy on file
 - Driving record report from the DMV for your state – keep original or photocopy on file.
- d. **Additional safeguards for drivers** should include:
 - A clear written set of policies or guidelines for drivers. Require drivers to **acknowledge** that they understand the policies and agree to follow them. Have them sign the form and keep a copy on file. Provide a copy to driver for their own reference.
 - Require each driver to notify the appropriate church leader if any of the following should occur: (*Have a signed copy of this promise to notify the church and keep in driver's personal file.)
 - Has personal auto insurance canceled
 - Has driver's license revoked
 - Receives a citation (ticket) for a moving violation.

V.

- e. A ticket does not mean that a driver should or will be prohibited from driving. However, it is in the church's best interests to evaluate driving violations and decide on the driver's fitness as a prevention measure.

10. Additional Selection and Screening steps:

a. No Second Chances

- Seek out and know the list of non-negotiable, no-exception types of conduct that would result in an applicant's immediate disqualification (with minors).

b. Staff and volunteer training (covered earlier).

c. A **reporting** and **response** plan.

* **Concluding quotes** regarding selection and screening:

- "A screening system is a tangible commitment by a church that requires all employees and volunteers to pass through a system of screening filters. A screening system should be viewed as a prevention devise designed to be a 'filter – instead of a barrier (The Guardian System).'"

- "The church needs to be "reasonable, not perfect. (The Guardian System)"

V.

C. Supervision Policies and Procedures

*Provide a “hedge of protection

1. Establish **one primary director** for your child safety and protection program.
 - a. Prevents things from going unnoticed or slipping through the cracks
 - b. Ensures that any reports are given to one person.
 - c. Director should create a team of responsible people to assist the director.
 - d. “Reports to pastors and elders.
 - e. Is a paid staff member or long term volunteer.
 - f. Gives oversight to observation.
 - g. Has operational oversight
 - h. Provides staff supervision (The Guardian System p. 107).”
2. **Operational procedures**
 - a. **“The two-deep rule”**

“This is possibly one of the most effective tools a church can use to prevent abuse. The adults should be unrelated – meaning no married couples or family members. This prevents one part from ‘covering’ for another due to their relationship. By ensuring that two adults are always with the children, you will deter any potential misconduct. In addition, if any molestation is alleged the accused will have a witness who can verify that nothing improper happened (The Guardian System p. 111).”
 - b. **Volunteer sign-in forms**
 - Keep on file
 - Documents, volunteers, dates, two adult rule

V.

- c. **Security check-out procedure** (releasing children).
- d. **No early releases** of children or children unattended (hallways).
- e. **Touching policy**
 - Education and training to include
 - “Any touching should be given in reference to the needs of the child – not the needs of the worker
 - Any touching should take place in public – never in private (behind closed doors)
 - Make sure any physical contact is age appropriate
 - Avoid any contact that could be interpreted as sexually stimulating to an adult or child.
 - Any observed inappropriate behavior by a worker, reported to a supervisor immediately (The Guardian System p.112).”
- f. **Restroom policy and procedures**
 - Diaper changing policy (table in full view)
 - Hallway security
- g. **Transportation Policies**
- h. **Off-site and overnight events/activities**
 - Parental consent forms, 2 adult rule, qualified volunteers, proper planning, proper ratios, insurance coverage.

V.

i. Facility – safety

- Windows and doors where children’s ministry takes place
- Video cameras or security – hallways, parking lot, etc.
- First aid supplies that are readily accessible to staff
- Safety checklists for rooms and equipment
- Play grounds
- Post policies (i.e. EMS, Law Enforcement, Fire Department, Poison Control, child abuse hotline, your facility’s name, address and phone)
- Block off any secluded areas; closets, stairwells and/or monitor them, even if off limits.
- No outside access to children’s ministry rooms.

j. Parental Communication

- Parents should be well informed of the activity scheduled
- Describe the activity clearly, any risks involved, dates, contacts, etc.
- Include permission for any events/activities (waiver and consent forms)
- Parental permission for any private meeting with a minor (mentoring, counseling)

V.

k. Confidential Record Retention Policy

- All employee and volunteer information and all staff records must be kept in a secure location with limited access to only selected employees.
- Never leave a file out on your desk
- Never discuss info with an unauthorized person.
- The following should be considered as well, for inclusion in children's ministry – individual files:
 - ▶ Permission waivers signed by parents
 - ▶ Any incident reports
 - ▶ Consents for medical treatment

l. Adequate staffing – qualified adults (Luke 10:1-3)

- Two adult rule should be observed
- Different situations may require more adult supervision based on risk factors (i.e. overnight trips, off-site activities, etc.)
- Understaffing
 - Leads to last minute preparations, short tempers, fatigue, and other conditions that lead to errors.
 - Understaffing burns out ministry workers which will reduce the effectiveness of the ministry.

V.

- Finally, overworked and understaffed workers often commit the next common mistake, lack of proper planning, because they do not have enough time to plan and prepare properly.

m. Event Planning (high risk activities)

- Too many ministry workers begin activities or events without proper planning and foresight.
- Must ask the who, what, when and how questions while planning an event.
- When answering all the questions that need to be covered seems too burdensome, you may be guilty of another common factor in accidents and abuse.
- This leads to **casual attitudes**. Beware - Many leaders who have experienced a serious accident say later that they did not take the time to consider what could go wrong.
- **Risky business** – there are some activities that are more risky than others based on experience and statistics (see p. 56 – The Guardian System for examples).

n. Be sure your church is **adequately insured** for any event!

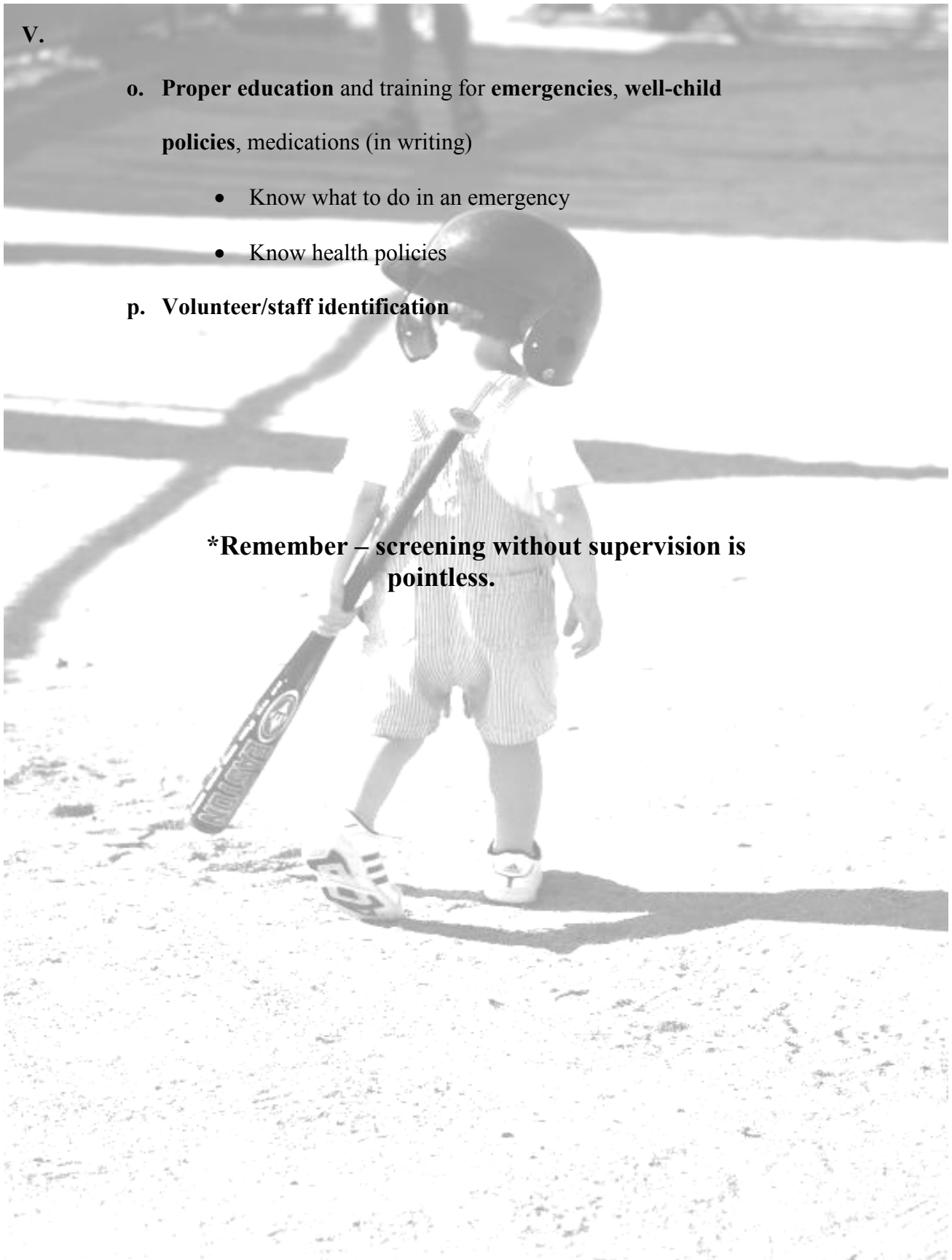
V.

o. **Proper education and training for emergencies, well-child policies, medications (in writing)**

- Know what to do in an emergency
- Know health policies

p. **Volunteer/staff identification**

***Remember – screening without supervision is pointless.**



V.

D. Reporting Obligations

*Develop a clear reporting procedure for all ministries that work with minors and assure workers of laws that protect them (immunity). These laws are intended to protect children from further harm. Learn them and obey them.

1. Every state has mandatory reporting laws that govern the reporting of child abuse. (This information is available from DHS, a lawyer, Law Enforcement Agency, etc.)
2. **“Key points to understand in your state’s law on mandatory reporting** (Church leaders must make sure that church policies correspond to state law):
 - i. Who or what types of workers are required to report? Does your church have workers that fit these categories?
 - ii. What is your states definition of abuse and neglect?
 - iii. Is the victim a “child” who is protected by the reporting law?
 - iv. What is the standard used for “a reason to believe” that abuse has occurred?
 - v. How quickly must suspected abuse be reported?
 - vi. To whom should reports be made?

V.

- vii. Is immunity conferred on reporters acting in good faith? Is there a penalty for deliberately false or malicious reports? What are the definitions of key terms, such as “good faith” or “false and malicious,” which may be used in your state’s laws?
- viii. Are there criminal penalties for individuals who fail to report?⁸

3. Recognize What to Report

- i. Learn to recognize the indicators, signs and behavior of child abuse (education and training)
- ii. Any concern of **suspected** child abuse should be reported to the ministry head and pastoral staff immediately.

⁸ The Good Shepherd Program. Copyright NEXUS Solutions. Fort Collins, CO. 1996. p.81

V.

E. A Response Plan

1. Principles to keep in mind when developing a Response Plan

- a. “Responding appropriately to an incident can significantly reduce the damage done to a child or your ministry.
- b. Response guidelines should be in place before an incident occurs
- c. Church policies must correspond to state law to avoid legal liability.
- d. All allegations should be taken seriously.
- e. An incident must be handled quickly and with due respect for an individuals privacy and confidentiality.
- f. Full cooperation must be given to civil authorities under the guidance of your churches attorney.
- g. Demonstrate appropriate care for the wellbeing of alleged victim(s).
- h. The alleged victim should not be held responsible
- i. Contact your insurance agent immediately.
- j. Don’t downplay or minimize the aftermath – get help for your children and workers to cope with the shock and grief.”

- (The Good Shepherd. p. 85)

V.

2. The Response Plan

- a. **Maintain accurate records:** Records should be kept for at least seven years after conclusion of a person's volunteer ministry (applications, references, screening/consent forms...)
- b. **Designate a spokes person:** Everyone in the ministry should know who this person is and should not attempt to respond to allegations themselves. All inquiries should be referred to the appointed spokes person who should speak to the media and the congregation in a discreet, informed, truthful and diplomatic way.
- c. **Use a reporting procedure:** Workers should be instructed as to what behaviors should be reported, to whom they should report and when to report.

3. When An Allegation Occurs

- a. **Document all your efforts in handling the situation:** Forms should be filled out immediately with the ministry director, pastor or member of a designated "Response Team."
- b. **Believe the child:** Be sure to take his or her word seriously. Even if the accusations turn out to be false, you must respond to protect the child; his or her safety is the first priority.
- c. **React calmly:** Show concern. Be a source of stability and sensible reaction for the child, his or her family and others involved. Be sensitive. Listen carefully.

V.

- d. **Treat the accused with dignity and support.** If the accused is a church worker that person will immediately be relieved of contact with minors until the investigation is completed. If the person is found guilty, appropriate church discipline will be taken with special attention given to protection of the victim.
- e. **Avoid interrogation.** It is not the responsibility of the reporting person or paid staff to substantiate any allegations for suspicions. Leave in-depth questions of the victim and suspect to professionals who are trained to investigate and assess the need for intervention. Never speak to the accused to “get their side of the story.”
- f. **Reassure the child.** He or she needs to know they were right in telling, and that he or she is not at fault. Do not promise the child or youth that you will not tell anyone.
- g. **All suspected abuse should be reported to the ministry head and “Response Team.”** In no case should the youth worker try to handle the situation without outside assistance.
- h. **Confidentiality!** Be careful to handle the confidentiality of all involved. Any contact with the media should be handled by the pastor or designated spokes person only. In the event of an accusation, the congregation should be notified by the pastor on or by the following Sunday.



V.

- i. **Do not engage in denial, minimization or blame.**
- j. Select a **spokes person** for the church. Prepare a **position statement**.
- k. **Report** the incident **immediately** to your church's **attorney**, **insurance agent** and **denominational officials**. Do not try to handle this with outside assistance. The accused should do the same.

***No action will be taken** against a person who in good faith is making a report unless it is made maliciously or without reasonable grounds for belief (immunity).

***Action is taken** when a person fails to report (no immunity).

****Remember, a wrong response can magnify the pain and liability inherent in such a case.**

VI. Obstacles to a Prevention Program

1. “We don’t have enough time, money of people.”

- a. Real issue is priorities, not a lack or resources.
- b. Though it will take time and money for kid’s safety, the alternative is much more expensive in human, spiritual and financial terms.

2. “It’s never happened before. We’ve been okay so far.”

“Experience is a very harsh teacher. Many churches have never lost a building to a fire, yet we continue to buy insurance, put in safety and fire systems and other precautions. Why? Because we recognize that while a fire is rare, the consequences of one are devastating (The Good Shepherd p. 17).”

3. “Won’t this create an atmosphere of fear or distrust?”

*Ask yourself which church you would rather entrust your children to?

a. **The Proactive church:**

- One that is educated and aware of the facts and profiles of child abuse.
- One that does not permit easy access to my child
- One that has policies and procedures to safeguard their children, their staff and their church.

b. **The Reactive Church**

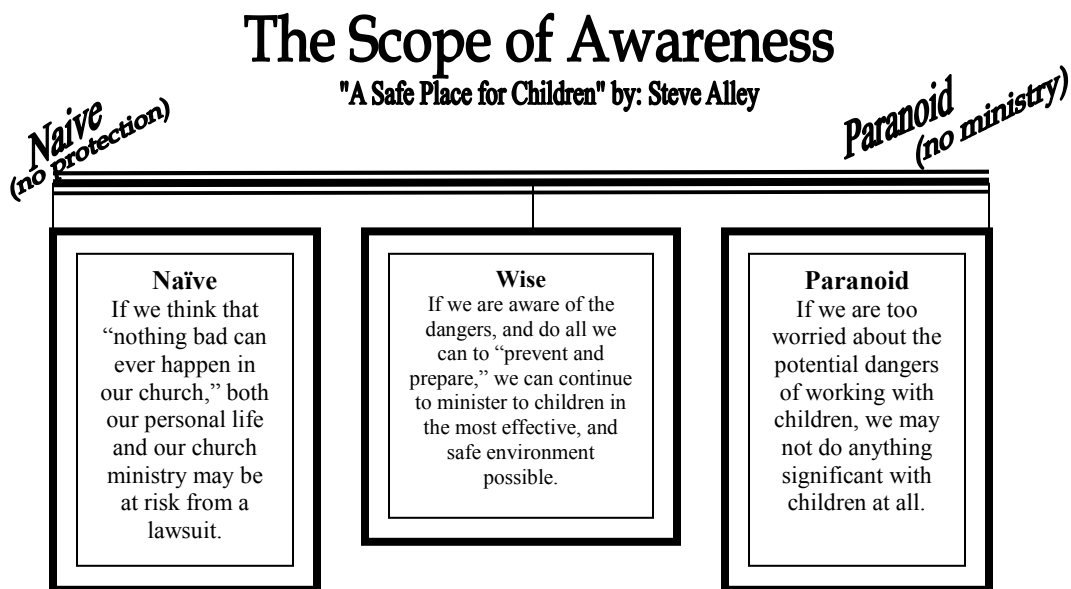
- One that is ignorant of the facts and denies that child abuse could happen in their church.
- One that blindly trusts anyone willing to help out
- One that allows a number of opportunities because it has no prevention or procedures.
- A church that is willing to ignore the risks and consequences.

***When opposition comes remember – keeping kids safe is a Biblical ministry and an issue of stewardship!**

Conclusion:

***Again the goal is not to instill fear or paranoia.**

**** The goal is to develop a safety program that will “allow the church to relax as it pursues its God-given mission of making healthy disciples of children, youth and adults (Safe Place p. 1).”**



Training Resources Available

* There is a lot of confusion, anxiety, fear, apathy and even hopelessness concerning children's ministry issues and child sexual abuse in the church. There are many reasons, one of which is the widespread need for comprehension resources that will practically help churches to provide a safe, secure ministry environment.

The following are excellent training resources for churches seeking tools that will help equip them to reduce the risk of child abuse in their church.

1. The Guardian System (videos and books) produced and written by David O Middlebrook. \$149.95 from Strang Communications, Call 1 (407) 333-0600 or 1(800) 283-8494, or visit www.creationhouse.com
2. The Good Shepherd Program, (Notebook and CD) by Nexus, \$208.95, call 1(888) 639-8188, or visit www.nexus-solutions.com
3. Safe Place – Guidelines For Creating An Abuse-free Environment, (book and CD) by Christian Publications, Inc., Call 1 (800) 233-4443, or visit www.christianpublications.com
4. Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church, by Richard R Hammar, Steven W Klipowicz and James F. Cobble, Jr., published by Church Law and Tax Report (training materials and video), call 1(704) 841-8066 or 1(800) 641-4310, or visit www.churchlawtoday.com and www.screenchurchstaff.com
5. Guide One Center for Risk Management, Call 1(877) 448-4331, or visit www.guideone.com
6. In His Hands Ministry – Child Abuse Prevention, Safety Awareness Training and Education, by Donna Langford, PO Box 5624 Buena Park CA 90622-5624, Call 1(714) 523-0484.
7. Pastor Church and Law (book), by Richard Hammar, \$16.95 from Gospel Publishing House.
8. "Protecting Your Church and Child" document (10 pages), www.priority2.org/church.htm
9. Parent Pager – Call (616) 355-0900, or visit www.parentpager.com . Security system for churches.

Live Scan Resources

1. Department of Justice

Website: <http://caag.state.ca.us/fingerprints/index.htm> or visit <http://caag.state.ca.us/htm>.

Click on "fingerprint submissions."

To order applications, request the following by mail, fax or phone:

Request for Live Scan Service – applicant submission form BHII 8016/8016A

Include the following information:

Amount ordered _____ (limit to a 3 month supply); Agency Name; Contact Person;
Mailing address; Phone Number; Date Requested

By Mail: Department of Justice
Applicant Processing Program – Live Scan Request
PO Box 903417
Sacramento, CA 94203-4170

By Fax: (916) 227-2000

By Phone: (916) 622-2209, Option 7

2. Access Fingerprinting Services- LiveScanUSA

Phone: 1-866-774-6850

Website: www.accessfingerprinting.com

Email: info@accessfingerprinting.com

3. To check for registered sex offenders in any state

Website: www.familywatchdog.us

4. Home page for Megan's Law (informational site for DOJ/CA only)

Website: www.caag.state.ca.us