



Child Safety

Guidelines

for

Church Planters



**Protecting Children from Sexual Abuse
in the Church House**

Roger N. McNamara





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RNMcNamara@juno.com

www.bmm.org

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction | 5 |
| Section 1 - Why do we need a Child Safety Program? | 7 |
| Objections to Child Safety Guidelines | 7 |
| The Biblical Mandate to Protect Children | 8 |
| The Explosion of Child Sexual Abuse Cases | 11 |
| Minimizing the Church's Liability | 12 |
| The Devastating Impact of Child Sexual Abuse | 14 |
| Protecting the Reputation of Christ and his Church | 17 |
| | |
| Section 2 - Child Abuse - What is it? | 19 |
| What Constitutes Child Sexual Abuse? | 19 |
| The Indicators of Child Sexual Abuse | 19 |
| The Impact of Sexual Abuse on a Child | 21 |
| The Profile of an Child Sexual Abuser | 22 |
| The Myths Surrounding Child Sexual Abuse | 23 |
| Questions concerning Child Sexual Abuse | 25 |
| | |
| Section 3 - Policies and Procedures | 27 |
| Develop your Child Safety Guidelines Early | 27 |
| Start by Developing the General Principles First | 28 |
| Recruitment Guidelines | 31 |
| Appropriate Behavior Guidelines | 35 |
| Supervisory Guidelines | 36 |
| Reporting Guidelines | 41 |
| Removal of Workers Guidelines | 47 |
| Statement of Intent | 49 |
| A Policies and Procedures Manual | 49 |
| | |
| Section 4 - Educating your People | 50 |
| Educate your Core Group | 50 |
| Educate your Lay Leaders | 50 |
| Educate your Perspective Members | 51 |
| Educate your Workers | 51 |
| Educate your Families | 52 |
| Educate your Congregation | 52 |
| Educate your Community | 52 |
| | |
| Glossary of Terms | 53 |

Section 5 - Samples and Forms..... 55

 Letter to Explain the Need for a Child Safety Program 55

 Resolution on Child Abuse and Child Safety 56

 Sample Policies and Procedures for the Nursery and Children's Ministries 57

 Positional Statement on Child Sexual Abuse for Release to the Media 65

 Appropriate Behavior Guidelines 66

 Child Sexual Abuse Knowledge Inventory 67

 Application for Nursery and Children's Ministry 68

 Reference Contact Form #1 72

 Reference Contact Form #2 73

 Criminal History Record Name Search Request Form 74

 Instructions for completing the Criminal History Request Form 76

 Alternate Request for Criminal Records Check and Authorization 77

 Determining My Ministry S-H-A-P-E 78

 Individual Child Safety Survey 79

 Personnel Screening - Child Safety Interview 80

 Children's and Youth Worker Agreement 83

 All About Me 84

 Children's Registration Form 85

 Sample Nursery Book for Parents 88

 Endnotes 99

Introduction

"Mommy! Mommy! We didn't know you were coming to Sunday School this morning."

I'd never seen the attractive, well-dressed young lady who entered the church auditorium a few minutes before the start of the Sunday School hour and made her way to the front where the three exuberant children were sitting. We had been picking the children up for several weeks and this was the first time either of the parents had come to the church.

I momentarily wondered why she hadn't brought the children instead of allowing us to pick them up that morning, but she quickly reassured us that the children's exuberance about going to Sunday School when they left the house that morning had caused her to decide to get around and join them. Her children were obviously elated to have her there, and so were we.

To our disappointment, Mom loaded the kids in her car after Sunday School and left, explaining that the kids hadn't had any breakfast that morning and she was going to take them to McDonalds for a bite to eat. Such is life in a church plant. At least we would have a new contact when we went back to visit the family later in the week.

Our serene world, however, was suddenly turned upside down shortly after we arrived home from church. The phone rang and Dad wanted to know where the kids were! Why hadn't we dropped them off at the regular time?

My heart leaped into my throat as I said, *"What do you mean? Your wife came to church today, and the children went home with her. I think they were planning to stop at McDonalds to get a bite to eat."*

I could hear the alarm in his voice and I knew we were in big trouble when he said, *"My wife? She was there, and she took the children? That wasn't my wife. That was my ex-wife, and we've been locked in a custody battle over the children. She's kidnapped the kids!"*

A sickening, frightening feeling swept over me as I realized we had failed to protect the children entrusted to our care. Because we were a fairly new church plant, we had never developed nor implemented a child safety program that might have prevented that tragedy from happening. After all, such a thing couldn't possibly happen in our church. We were too new and too small for it to happen to us.

Because of our negligence, three precious children were now missing and we had no idea of where they were or what had happened to them. Moreover, we were legally liable in a court of law and might be facing a huge law suit that could cost us our church, our ministry, and even our freedom.

Fortunately, the children were found safe several months later in another state, and the father chose not to prosecute the church.

The above true story is but one example of how vulnerable church planters and their ministries are. New church plants are often small and frequently lack resources and personnel. Because of this, many church planters haven't taken the time to develop guidelines for recruiting and supervising those who come in contact with the children under their care. All too often, anyone willing to help is given the opportunity to teach a Sunday School class, work in the nursery or help out with the youth program.

Often times, a single adult or teen is sequestered alone with several children in an isolated backroom or an out-of-the-way location with no windows and no supervision. Such situations are intolerable in today's legal climate in light of the growing incidents of child sexual abuse cases involving churches and church workers.

To think, *"It can't happen here,"* is to be naive, because it DOES happen in churches all across America almost every day. Lawsuits against churches involving sexual abuse of children on church grounds have exploded since the first case was prosecuted in 1984.

Failure to properly screen and supervise workers constitutes gross negligence. If abuse ever happens in your church plant, the victim's lawyer is going to ask, *"What did you and your church do to prevent this tragedy from occurring?"* If your answer is, *"Nothing,"* the only question in the jurors' minds will be the size of the judgment against you and the church.

I wish this manual were not necessary. But the grim reality is that we live in the midst of a sinful world in which the truth of Jeremiah 17:9 is evidenced every day. Men's hearts truly are *"deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked,"* and that wickedness is manifested in horrible acts of abuse against children, even on church grounds.

Proverbs 22:3 and 27:12 both tell us that *"a prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished."* The purpose of this manual is to alert you to the *"evil"* that lurks on the periphery of your ministry, and to encourage you to take prudent steps to minimize the potential harm that could result from it. You will find some redundancy in the pages ahead simply because some items fit in multiple categories. They are worth repeating because church planters and church leaders are prone to believe they are immune from the calamities that strike other churches.

As you read you may think, *"We can't do all this. We're just a small church starting out. We don't have the money, personnel, and facilities to do everything recommended here."* That may be true, but if this manual causes you to take the threat of child sexual abuse seriously and to implement some of the provisions herein, I will have succeeded partially in my purpose. We want to ensure that the children who are part of your ministry have a safe and secure environment in which to learn and grow in their knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Roger N. McNamara

RNM McNamara@juno.com
540) 604 - 1838

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Section 1 - Why do we need a Child Safety Program?

Christians, including many church planters, are among the most naive people in the world! We live in our ivory palaces, send our kids to Christian schools or else home school them, attend good Bible-teaching churches, and limit our fellowship to a small group of Christian friends. As much as possible, we try to isolate ourselves and our children from the world around us lest we be influenced or contaminated by it. We are determined to protect our children at all costs, and so we seek to create a perfect world in which sin cannot raise its ugly head, nor reach out to touch them.

The only problem with that scenario is that it doesn't reflect reality. We can go through life with our heads stuck in the sand pretending that child abuse, especially child sexual abuse, doesn't happen or that it doesn't happen in churches or that church people would never do something as disgusting and as devastating as harming or molesting a child. But the truth is, it can and does happen in churches just like yours, and the perpetrators are often among the most respected and trusted people in the church.

No one knows for sure how wide-spread child sexual abuse is in this country since 50-80% of all cases go unreported.¹ A 1996 National Institute of Justice study puts that figure even higher at between ninety and 95 percent. The National Center on Child Abuse indicates that one out of eight boys and one of every five girls is a victim of some form of sexual abuse by age 12.² Conservative estimates suggest that from 500,000 to over 1,500,000 children are sexually abused each year.³ While the vast majority of abuse cases occur outside the church and involve people not associated with the church, recent revelations of priest pedophilia and abuse cases within the Roman Catholic Church have focused attention on the growing problem of child sexual abuse in churches in general.

While the primary focus has been on abuse within the Catholic Church, the reality is that most of the allegations of child sexual abuse are lodged against Protestant churches and the volunteers who work in them.⁴ Christian Ministry Resources (CMR) reports that an average of 70 allegations of child sexual abuse is lodged against American churches every week.⁵ The actual incidence of child abuse in churches is thought to be much higher since most abuse is not reported and information is difficult to obtain.

Many church planters (as well as pastors) fail to see the importance of establishing child safety guidelines early in their ministry or of implementing such guidelines uniformly throughout their churches. This attitude makes their ministries susceptible to abuse charges, and exposes both them and the children under their care to inherent dangers. Their reluctance to establish safety procedures are based on a number of questionable objections.

Objections to Child Safety Guidelines

1. *"Implementing a child safety program is costly. We can't afford it."*

Church planters often function on a shoestring and a prayer. Funds are limited and resources are scarce. Facility rent, utilities, outreach, and the pastor's salary leave precious little money to spend on a child safety program or so it is thought. Child safety programs do not need to be costly. While we would recommend the church purchase a child safety screening program and conduct criminal background checks, such programs are not prohibitively expensive. The investment of a couple hundred dollars up front can save the church tens of thousands of dollars in legal fees, and even much more in punitive damages, should a child ever say, *"Mommy, my teacher touched me here."*

A church planter's attitude toward money will significantly influence his success or failure in ministry. Is he a frugal saver or a prudent investor? Does he see money as something to be set aside toward the eventual purchase of property or as a commodity to be invested wisely so as to promote ministry? It is absolutely imperative that church planters include sufficient funds in their preplanning agenda to provide for a well-thought out child safety program for their new churches. Failure to do so would be penny wise, but pound foolish. Rather than not being able to afford a child safety program, church planters cannot afford NOT to develop such safeguards. Don't even think of starting a new church plant without having such a program in place from the very beginning.

2. *"We're just a small church and we know everyone involved in our ministry. It couldn't happen here. Our people would never do that."*

The church that thinks it is immune from child sexual abuse is the very church where it could easily occur sooner or later. There are two basic kinds of abusers: opportunistic and predatory. The one abuses on the spur of the moment simply because he/she is left alone with a child while the other actually stalks children looking for the chance to use them for his/her own gratification. Pedophiles know churches provide fertile soil that is ripe for abuse. Houses of worship generally have lots of children, and are constantly looking for volunteer workers.

The average abuser isn't *"a dirty old man"* with beady eyes, a lustful look, and a menacing personality. More often than not, he (sometimes she) is a highly respected church member, married with children of his own, who occupies a position of trust within the church or community. He looks and acts just like any other ordinary person in the congregation.

In most cases, church planters don't really know the other people involved in the church plant. Some have been attending for only a few months. Others may have come to Christ in the recent past. In church planting (as well as in churches in general), we tend to base our opinions of people on what we have seen and heard about them from the time we met them. We don't really know much about their past.

That person you think is a *"wonderful Christian man"* may actually be a harsh, abusive, dictatorial husband and father at home. That couple with the *"dynamic Christian marriage"* may actually be on the verge of divorce. That warm, friendly guy who is always volunteering to help out with the children's and youth ministries may actually have a criminal record of abuse. You simply don't know.

It is naive to think *"it couldn't happen here"* because it happens all too often in churches just like yours. It is the height of irresponsibility to conduct children's ministries without having screening and supervisory processes in place to protect both the children and the church.

3. *"We won't be able to get workers and helpers if we implement a screening process."*

Pastors and church planters often assume lay people will be reluctant to volunteer to help with nursery and children's ministries if they are required to successfully complete a screening process that involves a detailed application, a screening test, personal interview, and criminal background check. Those fears are largely unfounded.

In our own personal church-planting experience, we found people were MORE willing to serve in ministry roles involving children when they knew there was a well-established child safety program in place that both protected the children and shielded the worker from potential

allegations of abuse. Men, women, and grandmothers were perfectly willing to complete confidential questionnaires that included questions concerning their backgrounds, marriages, sexual activity, and attitudes. Each underwent a personal interview and agreed to have their names submitted to the State Police for criminal background checks. Rather than creating reluctance, our child safety program resulted in people being more confident and more willing to serve. A valid screening process does not reduce the number of volunteers, but rather expands the number of people willing to help. It also encourages abusers and people who should not be working with children to stay away from your church.

4. *"We don't own the building we use and could not make the renovations required by a safety program."*

Child safety has more to do with the policies and procedures you implement than with the physical plant in which the church meets. Yes, precautions should be taken to eliminate as much of the risk as possible. Every interior door should have a shatter-proof glass window in it so people can see what is going on inside the room, and every door should have a lock on it so it can be kept locked when not in use, and dark areas should be kept well lit.

New church plants tend to meet in rented facilities such as schools, public buildings, store fronts or old churches. These buildings may or may not be outfitted with the proper equipment in place. You have four options if the building you are using needs renovating to provide maximum security for the children

First, talk with the landlord about the safety issue and see if he would be willing to make the needed renovations. Point out that making the suggested changes could significantly increase the value of his building, improve his insurance rates, provide him with a nice tax write-off, and reduce his liability should abuse occur. With those incentives in mind, he may be willing to make the renovations for you at his own cost.

Second, if the landlord is unwilling to make the changes you request, offer to have the church pay for the renovations to be done by qualified, licensed professionals. Point out once again that this will enhance the value of his building, reduce his liability, and afford your church additional protection. Don't compromise the safety of your ministry for a few hundred dollars. A small investment now can save your church thousands of dollars later on.

Third, if the landlord refuses to allow renovations to be made, simply require that all doors be kept open at all times, and arrange for the halls and rooms to be patrolled regularly by trusted personnel.

Fourth, if this is not feasible, seek a different facility in which to conduct your church ministry.

The Biblical Mandate to Protect Children

God loves children and wants them to come to know Christ as their Lord and Savior. Each one is a precious soul for whom Christ died. Psalm 127:3 tells us *"children are an heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is his reward."* Children are God's gifts to parents. Genesis 49:25 describes them as *"the blessings of the womb."*

Throughout Scripture we find God intimately involved in the creation, development, and raising of children. He is there to superintend and to protect them from harm. Each is a special creation of his almighty hand as he watches over their development in the womb. The Psalmist David reminds us in Psalm 139:14-16, *"I am fearfully and wonderfully made ... My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them."*

God is concerned with protecting the unborn child in Exodus 21:22 and holds those accountable who harm a fetus. In Psalm 22:9, 10 David reminds us that God is there at the moment of birth to provide nourishment, protection, and tender care for infant and small children.

The Lord wants children to grow up in a safe, loving environment where they can see and hear biblical principles modeled by nurturing parents and caring adults. Way back in Deuteronomy 6:7 parents were told to take the words of God and *"teach them diligently unto thy children, and talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."*

Proverbs 22:6 admonishes us to *"train up a child in the way he should go"* and Ephesians 6:4 tells us to *"bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."* Each of these passages is filled with security, love, and safety. Parents and those who work with children have an inherent responsibility to protect those youngsters from harm so they can learn to love God and to live in obedience to him.

Leviticus 18:9-11, 17 specifically prohibits any sexual contact between an adult and anyone else other than one's spouse. To *"uncover the nakedness"* of a child or anyone to whom you are not married is condemned in the harshest terms as an *"abomination" in the sight of God, resulting in the person being "cut off from among their people"* (death). (See vs. 26-30)

In Matthew 19:14 Jesus said, *"Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."* Again, this passage speaks of the safety and security children have the right to expect from those with whom they come in contact. No child should ever fear to be with an adult any more than they should fear being in the arms of Jesus.

Harming a child, using them for one's own selfish gratification, exploiting them, taking advantage of them or failing to take adequate steps to protect them is a terrible sin that meets with God's severest judgment. Jesus said it was better to have a millstone hung around one's neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea rather than to *"offend"* or harm *"one of these little ones"* (Matthew 18:6).

Of all places, the house of God (be it a shopping center, a house or a school) should be a place of safety and security where children can come without fear of being touched or groped inappropriately by some predator masquerading as a caring adult. Ministry is built on trust, but it only takes one indiscretion to destroy that trust for years to come.

God's Word mandates that we take every appropriate step to provide a safe, secure, and loving environment in which children can learn of God's love for them

The Explosion of Child Abuse Cases

Sadly, children have been sexually abused for generations, but it was not until 1984 that the first lawsuit was filed against a church involving charges of child sexual abuse. Today, hundreds of churches have been sued for the same reason. Allegations of sexual misconduct are brought against an average of TEN churches every single day. Eighty percent of those incidents involved someone known to the victim such as a teacher, a nursery worker, a children's helper or a youth leader.⁶ Unfortunately, this is just the tip of the iceberg. Most incidents of abuse go unreported or are settled out of court.

As a church planter, you need to have a child safety program in place in order to minimize the possibility of abuse occurring in your ministry, and to avoid the costly, humiliating experience of appearing in court to explain why you didn't take appropriate steps to protect the children entrusted to your care. Ignoring the danger and saying, "*It couldn't happen here*" is the height of folly. We live in sexually charged culture in which immorality, promiscuity, and sexual sin is flaunted on every hand. Moral values are crumbling and people are taking liberties with children that were unimaginable a few years ago. You **MUST** take precautions to protect those innocent little ones from opportunists and predators that would exploit and harm them.

There are several reasons why churches and church plants are so susceptible and vulnerable to sexual abuse.

First, *there is the issue of faith and trust*. A basic tenet of our faith is that anyone who professes to be born-again is seeking to live a godly life of obedience to Christ. Old things have passed away and all things have become new. While sinful desires still rear their ugly head from time to time, believers are expected to resist those temptations and to do what is right. To a certain extent, we have created an idyllic world in which it is inconceivable that a person would ever use his/her profession of faith as a cloak for such a hideous act as abusing a child, especially on church property. All too often evidence to the contrary is ignored when questions are raised. It simply doesn't fit in the "*Christian picture*" of the church. This blind spot leaves churches wide open to incidents of abuse.

Second, *churches are volunteer organizations that are in constant need of helpers*. We need warm bodies to fill ministry slots. This is especially true in church plants where there are so few people willing to help. Without people we can't run the programs and ministries that will attract additional people. The three critical areas in which we need workers are: the nursery, the Sunday School, and the youth ministry. New churches often lump ministries together. You may have a nursery program, a single children's ministry, and a teen program. That requires at least three people every Sunday morning (a number that is totally inadequate). The nursery is often staffed by anyone willing to help, be it a teen, a sibling or even a first-time visitor who stays with her toddler. Since turnover is high in volunteer organizations such as new church plants and workers are scarce, these groups are especially susceptible to charges of child abuse.

Third, *churches provide easy access and ample opportunities for unsupervised, close personal contact between adults and children*.⁷ Child molesters are attracted to institutions in which they have immediate access to potential victims in an atmosphere of complete trust. All they have to do is volunteer to work in a children or youth ministry, and they will be given a private room (nursery, Sunday School or youth room) with lots of time alone with the children. It is a pedophile's dream come true. The risk of abuse increases dramatically whenever the church sponsors an overnight activity such as a sleepover, a "*lock in*" or a camping trip.

Fourth, *churches often have no screening process in place*. They simply accept whoever steps forward to volunteer. People with abusive tendencies are never challenged nor turned down because the church is afraid to ask the hard questions lest the person refuse to serve or worse yet, leave the church. Failure to screen workers constitutes negligence in most courts of law. It is far better to lose a few people who refuse to be screened than to lose your entire ministry because you failed to screen. If you think

screening is unreasonable or unimportant, just ask any member of a church in which an incident of sexual abuse has occurred.

Minimizing the Church's Liability

We live in a litigious society in which people and trial lawyers are ready to sue at the slightest provocation. Lawyers have learned that churches tend to engage in negligent behavior (by doing nothing) and that they often have deep pockets. They make easy targets. Lawyers have no qualms about suing a religious institution, even if doing so destroys that institution's reputation and ministry. The only thing that counts is the amount of money which can be won by taking such cases.

"But doesn't I Corinthians 6:1-8 teach that it is wrong for Christians to sue each other? If these people who allege abuse are really Christians, they won't sue the church, will they?" Yes, that is what that passage teaches, but that is no guarantee they won't. Unfortunately, professing Christians do not always follow biblical principles when money is involved or when they have been injured in some grievous manner. Child sexual abuse is a crime in all fifty states and is therefore punishable under the law. Certainly, the perpetrator of such a vile act should be held accountable for his behavior and suffer the consequences of his choices. This can and should be done, however, by reporting the individual to the proper authorities rather than suing the church for monetary damages in court.

Richard Hammar cites seven additional reasons for the sharp rise in abuse litigation against churches in recent years. These include: media attention, extended statutes of limitations, innovative theories of liability, the extent of psychological and emotional injury caused by sexual molestation, the staggering number of adults who were sexually abused as children, state mandated reporting requirements, and support for law suits by advocacy groups.⁸

Whether we like it or not, churches are in the cross-hairs of the legal community and it behooves us to take prudent steps to lower the possibility of abuse occurring in our ministries while limiting our liability. That is exactly what Psalms 112:5 admonishes us to do when it says, *"a good man ... will guide his affairs with discretion"* and Proverbs 22:3 tells us *"a prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished."*

Ignorance of the law is no excuse. Just because you don't know you're in a 25-mile-per-hour zone won't keep you from getting a ticket if you are going 35 mph. Many churches, pastors and church planters don't understand what constitutes *"negligence."* They think they have to intentionally do something to be guilty, and sometimes that is true. If you operate a van or church bus in a careless or reckless manner, you are engaging in negligent behavior. If you host a *"teen all-nighter"* and lock all the doors so no one can get in or out, you are guilty of negligent behavior because you are endangering the lives of the teens if there should be a fire.

In the case of child sexual abuse, however, you don't have to do anything to be guilty of negligence. Rather, the negligence is in the failure to do what should have been done to protect the child. In other words, doing nothing, when you should do something, constitutes negligence

Negligence is defined as *"conduct that creates an unreasonable risk of foreseeable harm to others."* It connotes carelessness, heedlessness, inattention, or inadvertence.⁹ The American College Dictionary defines it as failure to exercise that degree of care which, under the circumstances, the law requires for the protection of those interests of other persons which may be injuriously affected by the want of such care.¹⁰

The word "*neglect*" means to pay no attention to; to disregard; to be remiss in the care for or treatment of; to omit through indifference or carelessness; to fail to carry out one's responsibilities. As a church planter, you don't have to do anything to be negligent other than failing to take the precautions that other reasonable people in similar situations would take.

There are three major areas in which churches and church planters are often negligent when it comes to the care of children: 1) the recruitment of workers, 2) the supervision of those workers, and 3) the provision of a safe environment.

The recruitment of workers - To be negligent in the recruitment of workers simply means that the church failed to act responsibly and with due care in the selection of workers for positions involving the supervision or custody of minors.¹¹ To "*act responsibly*" means to take the same precautions that any other childcare provider (such as a Day Care Center, a YMCA or a school) would be expected or required to take. It means being aware of the growing incidence of child sexual abuse involving churches and taking steps to minimize the danger in your church. It means to realize that sexual predators often target volunteer organizations such as churches because children are often left unsupervised in the presence of a single adult or teen.

Virtually all child care providers are required to screen anyone wishing to work on their premises. This includes screening tests, background checks, and personal interviews for all applicants. Because of the inherent danger of child abuse that exists in our society, it is imperative that churches and church planters take every reasonable step to carefully screen everyone who may be involved in any aspect of the children's or youth ministries of the church. Failure to do so constitutes gross negligence.

An Example of Negligence: *The church is conducting an overnight fishing trip for boys 8-12 years old and doesn't have enough men to chaperon the group. At the last minute, Bob's brother, Joe, who is visiting for a couple of days, offers to go along to help out. The church, desperate for help, gladly accepts his offer. After all, he's Bob's brother. Bob's brother, however, was not properly screened, and thus the church was negligent in allowing him to be a chaperon.*

The supervision of workers - Negligent supervision is the failure to exercise reasonable care in the supervision of church workers and activities.¹² Supervision involves establishing and enforcing policies and guidelines that govern how an activity or ministry is to be conducted. Every church (regardless of how small) should have a Policies and Procedures manual that sets forth in written form the policies to be followed in the nursery, children's, and youth ministries. All workers should be required to read and sign a copy of the guidelines before being allowed to work with children. This should be repeated each year as you conduct an annual workers training session.

It is not enough, however, to have written policies and signed copies of the policy on hand. You must enforce those policies and be sure workers are following them at all times. If your policy requires two people to be present at all times, then make sure that two people are always present in the nursery, each classroom, and with the young people. If your policy requires all workers to be properly screened before being allowed to work with children, then don't accept offers of help from college kids when they come home for summer break unless you first require them to go through the screening process. Failure to follow your own procedures is worse than having no policy in place at all. Doing so makes you liable for gross negligence.

An Example of Negligence: *The church's child safety guidelines require that two people be present at all times whenever children are involved. Two ladies are working in the toddler nursery together when one of the children announces he needs to go to the bathroom. One of the ladies escorts the child down the hall to the bathroom while the other stays with the children in the nursery. The*

"two-person" rule was not enforced during the time the ladies were apart, thus constituting negligence.

Provision of a safe environment - While a church cannot absolutely guarantee a child's safety, parents have the right to expect their children to be kept in a safe environment when they bring them to the church. Electrical outlets should have safety covers on them. Nails and sharp objects should all be removed. Equipment should be safe and secure. Rooms should be well-lit and floors should be kept clean. Teachers and workers should be properly screened and supervised. Children should never be left alone with just one adult or teen present.

These are reasonable precautions that caring people would be expected to take. And yet many churches and church planters are negligent in this area. They use equipment (such as baby cribs) that is broken or in poor condition, meet in rented facilities that have secluded or unlit areas, and allow children to wander about in buildings unsupervised.

An Example of Negligence: *A new church plant meets in a fire hall where Bingo is conducted every Saturday night. The church then cleans the building, stacks the tables, empties the waste cans and puts them in a back room. A clean, new plastic liner is placed in each waste can. The next morning the toddler nursery meets in the room where the waste cans (with their plastic liners) are stored. This constitutes negligence because a child could easily pull one of the plastic liners out of the waste can and suffocate himself by pulling the liner over his head.*

The Devastating Impact of Child Sexual Abuse

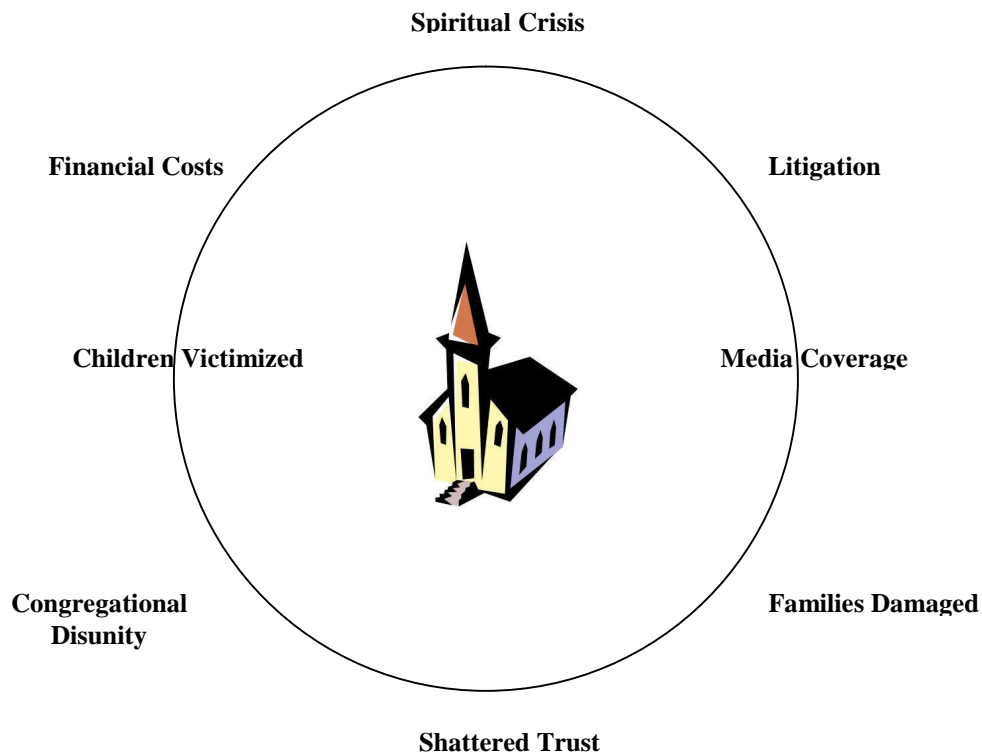
The impact of child sexual abuse is more devastating and far reaching than most church planters imagine. Children will be scarred for life, families will be destroyed, ministries will be crippled, reputations will be sullied, trust will be lost, congregations will be divided, finances will be bankrupted, and media coverage will be unrelenting. It will take years and years to overcome the negative publicity that ensues from allegations of misconduct. Because of the church's newness in the community, it could well close its doors as a result of a single incident.

Example: *The pastor and deacons of a church in the northeast agreed to counsel with a man who had been released from prison and had completed a sexual offender's program run by the State. The man professed to be a Christian and wanted the church's help in rehabilitating back into society. The man was allowed to stay in the church's missionary home near the church since it was unoccupied at the time. The man met with the pastor on a weekly basis for counseling. The church, unaware of the man's past criminal behavior, welcomed him with open arms and expressions of love.*

Within a few weeks the pastor received a phone call from distraught parents who alleged the man had sexually molested their child at church that morning. The pastor and deacons immediately notified the police and had the man arrested. He was subsequently tried and convicted. The church, however, was in turmoil over the fact that the pastor and deacons had brought a convicted sex offender into their church without telling the congregation about the man's background. The pastor and several of the deacons were forced to resign. Nevertheless, many people withdrew from the church, taking their children with them. The church's reputation in the community was destroyed and the church continued to decline for several years, and never regained its former vitality and ministry.

The chart below illustrates the many areas which are impacted by a failure to have and to enforce a child safety program.¹³ Stop and think about the implications of each one.

A Spiritual Crisis - Allegations of child sexual abuse will plunge your church plant into an unimaginable spiritual crisis from which it will not emerge for years to come, if it survives at all. The church's testimony will be tarnished significantly, the friendly, joyful atmosphere in services will be replaced with a morbid sense of anger, sorrow, embarrassment, and fear. Singing will be flat and unenthusiastic. Prayers will sound hollow and hypocritical. Offerings and attendance will decline, and a sense of doom will settle upon the remaining congregation. People will wonder if God was ever involved in your church plant. Child sexual abuse is so heinous that it shakes people's faith in you, in the church, and in some cases, in God.



Shattered Trust - Ministry is built on trust. Church planters must be men of integrity, truthfulness, and openness if they are to gain the confidence of people. They already face an uphill battle from the very beginning. New churches are often viewed with suspicion because of their lack of families, finances, and facilities. They tend to be here today and gone tomorrow. You have to work hard to overcome that perception so that people will believe in you and what you are doing, and thus support your ministry and become involved.

Being able to articulate a clear vision of why the church exists, what it is supposed to be doing, and where it is going will do much to gain the confidence of people. People will come to trust you if you love and serve them, faithfully proclaim God's Word, seek to win the lost, and emphasize quality in your programming. Parents will trust you with their kids. Couples will confide in you about their marriages and problems. People will seek out your counsel and advice.

But let one incident of impropriety occur and that hard earned trust will evaporate instantly. People will question your leadership and your judgment. Everything you say will be suspect. They will wonder why you didn't take adequate precautions to prevent the abuse from happening. Why did you allow people to work with children without screening them and supervising them properly? Once that trust is lost, it is virtually impossible to regain. Even though you were not the perpetrator, your ministry is probably over there because you were in charge, and it happened on your watch.

Children are scarred for life - Children are amazingly resilient, and for many years it was erroneously thought they suffered little or no lasting affects from being abused. Many tried to bury their past in their sub-conscience or tried to forget what happened to them. Few succeeded. Sexual abuse robs children of their childhood and often leaves them angry, hurt, ashamed, and guilt ridden. They become aggressive or withdrawn, some become promiscuous or grow up to become abusers themselves. They may have difficulty giving themselves sexually to their spouse when they marry. Only the grace of God can heal the terrible scars left by such a hideous crime against children.

Families are often Damaged - Parents of a child molested during a church function will be angry and deeply hurt that their trust in the church has been violated. Their faith in the pastor and people will be shaken to its very foundations. They will wonder why they ever trusted you or came to your church. They may lash out with angry words of condemnation, and may take legal action against the church, the pastor, and the perpetrator of the abuse. They may vow never to attend another church as long as they live and may even renounce their faith in God. In some cases, the husband and wife may blame each other, especially if one attended the church and the other didn't. Mothers, especially, may blame themselves for putting their children in harm's way or for not seeing the warning signs. They may experience deep feelings of guilt for not checking to be sure the church had a sexual abuse policy which was meticulously followed. The anger and guilt that results from having a child abused at church can tear a family apart.

Congregational Disunity - Abuse doesn't just tear up families, it tears up churches as well. The shock and horror of abuse allegations will sweep through the congregation like wildfire. People will want to know why it happened, and why the leadership didn't take appropriate steps to prevent it from occurring. They will point the finger of blame directly at the pastor and deacons for not having procedures in place to protect children in their midst. Anger will well up and voices will be raised demanding the removal of those who are deemed to have been negligent. Worse yet, fearful that their own children may be in danger or not wanting to be associated with a church where abuse has occurred, many will abruptly leave the church and never return. The testimony of the church will be severely damaged by allegations of abuse.

Media Coverage - Child sexual abuse is a crime and must be reported to the proper authorities. Investigations will ensue. Questions will be raised. News will get out, and when it does the media will be on hand to report it. It is no secret that the media views the church with a jaundiced eye. Everything you do or say will be suspect. Inconsistencies in statements will be magnified, and a cloud of suspicion will hang over the church. You may experience weeks of "bad press" depending on how aggressive the reporters are.

Pending Litigation - Attitudes toward religion in general, and toward churches in particular have changed dramatically over the past thirty years. Many have been tainted by the actions of a few. All too often, pastors and religious leaders are seen as immoral and corrupt. This image has been reinforced by numerous moral failures of pastors and by the pedophilia scandal in the Catholic Church. Consequently, people are more than willing to sue a church if their child has been sexually abused.

Every aspect of your ministry will be scrutinized in detail. Every decision will be examined. Shortcomings and failures will be intentionally magnified, and you and your church will be vilified. Your

child safety guidelines (or lack thereof) will be microscopically held up for public review. The presumption of innocence is often lacking in cases of alleged child sexual abuse. You and your church will often be assumed to be guilty until you can prove otherwise, and even then many people will continue to believe to the contrary. Jesus warned us in Matthew 5:25 to take every precaution possible lest an *"adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer."* A carefully crafted child safety program can go along way in alleviating that possibility.

Financial Losses - Child abuse allegations are expensive. Not only will the church need to hire a lawyer to represent it, but the congregation may be required to pay for medical exams, and the legal costs of the alleged victim, as well as any judgment against it. If gross negligence is found in the church's actions, punitive damages may also be assessed against the church. In some cases, the pastor and individuals in the church may be held responsible, and be forced to pay substantial penalties. Many insurance companies exclude sexual abuse cases from their policies and will not pay for any court costs or judgments against the church.

In addition to the legal fees and judgments which may be rendered toward the church, there will also be a substantial decrease in the tithes and offerings of the church. Having lost confidence in the church, people will stop giving or leave all together. Charges of child molestation can ruin a church financially, and threaten its very existence.

The fall out from child sexual abuse is far reaching and long lasting. Much of the danger and harm can be eliminated by developing and implementing a carefully thought out child safety program, and then monitoring it closely to ensure that it is being followed consistently by everyone involved in children's ministries.

Protecting the Reputation of Christ and his Church

The Lord Jesus Christ is pure, holy, and undefiled by sin (Hebrews 7:26). His bride, the church, is also to be *"holy in all manner of conversation"* or in all manner of conduct (I Peter 1:15, 16). Christ and his church are inseparably linked. Whatever is true of the one is to be true of the other. The church's reputation is based in part on its association with the Savior just as the Savior's reputation is based in part on his association with the church. The church is viewed as being good because Christ is good. Houses of worship are seen as places of refuge and security because Christ affords us refuge and security.

Whenever sin (of whatever sort it may be) seeps into a church, it sullies not only the reputation of that church, and other churches as well, but it also reflects upon the Savior. His name is defiled, his cause is hindered, and his standing in the minds of men is lowered. When Nathan the prophet confronted David about his immoral behavior he said, *"Because of this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme"* (II Samuel 12:14). Nothing sullies the name of Christ more quickly than allegations of child sexual abuse. Everything he and the church stand for is cast into the mud and trampled underfoot. Unbelievers knowingly nod their heads and say, *"Un huh, just as I thought. Those Christians are just a bunch of hypocrites. They're not any different than anyone else. This Jesus business is just a hoax. There's nothing to it."*

By developing written child safety guidelines early in the church-planting process and then implementing them conscientiously, church planters are helping to protect the reputation of both Christ and his church. Knowing that your church has a child safety program in place builds confidence with the community, affords protection for children, demonstrates sound leadership, and minimizes the chances for abuse to occur. Wise church planters don't put children at risk through careless, negligent behavior.

Like the prudent man in Proverbs 22:3, he "*foresees the evil, and hides himself from it*" by taking appropriate steps to avoid it.

Section 2 - Child Sexual Abuse - What is it?

Ignorance is a terrible thing. What you don't know CAN hurt you. That is especially true when it comes to children and to ministry. Many Christians, including pastors and church planters, have so insulated themselves from the world that they are unaware of the dangers children face in a sexually saturated society such as the one in which we live today. Placing our heads in the sand and pretending that child sexual abuse doesn't occur in Bible-believing churches won't prevent it from happening in your church. If any thing, it makes it more likely to occur because needed precautions won't be taken to protect the children from harm. It is vital that we understand what constitutes sexual abuse of children, who the likely perpetrators are, and how to handle it if it ever does occur in one of our churches.

What Constitutes Child Sexual Abuse?

Definitions of child abuse and child sexual abuse vary from state to state. *Child abuse* is generally defined as any form of mistreatment or exploitation inflicted upon a child. Depending on the state you are in, it can include any action that inflicts or threatens to inflict physical or mental injury to a child or the failure to provide adequate care necessary for the child's health.

Child sexual abuse is defined as any form of sexual contact, interaction, activity or exploitation between a child and an adult in which the child is used for the sexual stimulation of that adult or another person. It includes such physical acts as genital or oral stimulation, fondling, digital penetration, anal or vaginal intercourse, and such non physical acts as indecent exposure or being used sexually in photographs, films, or videos.

Children are vulnerable and powerless. Any sexual activity with anyone under the age of eighteen is considered exploitation, and therefore constitutes sexual abuse. It is a crime punishable by law in all fifty states. Examples of child sexual abuse include a nursery worker who fondles a child's genitals when changing the child's diaper, a youth leader intentionally rubbing against a girl's breasts, exposing one's self to a child, taking photographs of children when they are unclothed or using sexually suggestive language when speaking with a child.

Child sexual abuse can involve both touching and non-touching behavior as well as violent and non-violent actions. Younger children may not even realize the behavior is wrong or that they are being abused.

The Indicators of Child Sexual Abuse

Abuse always leaves a mark on the child. Some are more visible than others, but they are there. Because churches are places of trust, parents and workers may easily overlook the telltale signs of abuse, and children may be afraid to tell what happened to them. So, how are we to recognize the signs that sexual abuse may have taken place? The signs of abuse fall into three broad categories:¹⁴

Physical signs of abuse - While some forms of sexual abuse leave visible, physical indications such as bruises and bleeding, others do not. In spite of this, there are other physical behaviors on the part of the child that may indicate abuse has occurred. These include:

- Lacerations and bruises
- Irritation, pain, itching, injury or odors in the genital area
- Difficulty with urination
- Discomfort when walking or sitting
- Torn or bloody underclothing
- Headaches, backaches or stomach aches
- Sores in the mouth
- Venereal disease
- Pregnancy
- Nightmares

Behavioral signs of abuse - Children inherently know there is something wrong when an adult or teen involves them in sexual activity. They may have been threatened with bodily harm if they tell. Consequently, they often try to repress their feelings of guilt, shame, and fear. Often, however, their own emotions and behavior give off indicators of their inner turmoil. Indicators include such things as:

- Anxiety when approaching the church or nursery area
- Refusal to go to school or decreased school performance
- Unwilling or unable to participate in physical education
- Nervous or hostile behavior toward adults
- Fear of specific persons, situations or strangers
- Sexual self-consciousness, increased masturbation
- "Acting out" of sexual behavior, being promiscuous or seductive
- Changes in type of fantasy play, living in a fantasy world
- Withdrawal from church activities and friends
- Unusually quiet, sullen or withdrawn
- Inability to concentrate
- Excessive eating or unusual weight gains
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Personality changes and odd behavior
- Depression, self-injurious behaviors or thoughts of suicide
- Fear of being alone
- Excessive attempts to control environment and fear of the unknown

Verbal signs of abuse - Sometimes children will come right out and tell a parent or teacher when they have been inappropriately touched or abused. Other times they are reluctant to tell because they have been threatened or feel a great sense of shame or embarrassment. Still, many will say things that should alert an adult to the fact that something has happened and the child needs help. These include:

- Increased negative self-talk - "I'm no good; I can't do anything right"
- Expressions of dislike toward church workers - "I don't like (name)."
- Expressions of fear - "I don't like being alone with (name)."
- Indications of improper behavior - "(Name) does things to me when we are alone."
- Words of warning - "He's too free with his hands."
- Inquiring questions - "What would you do if you knew someone was being . . ."

Great care needs to be taken that parents and leaders not jump to unwarranted conclusions when they encounter any of the above indicators. Just because a child doesn't want to go to school or expresses dislike for a particular teacher does not mean he/she has been sexually molested by that person. Lacerations and bruises in the genital area are not necessarily positive signs of abuse. The child may have

fallen astraddle a bike or fence. There are other reasonable explanations for each of the above behaviors and these should be carefully explored if there is reason for concern.

Be careful not to embarrass the child publicly or in front of others. With another adult present, take him/her aside privately and lovingly express your concern for him. Let him know you value him highly and want God's best for him. Tell him what you have observed and ask if anyone has touched him inappropriately or done anything with or to him that left him feeling uncomfortable.

Children may be reluctant to tell you they have been abused either because of shame, embarrassment, threats that have been made or fear that you will not love them any longer. They may think they are the only ones who have ever experienced such abuse.

Reassure the child that it is o.k. to tell you the truth and that you will continue to love him regardless of what happened. If she tells you inappropriate behavior did occur, ask for specifics: Exactly what was done? Who did it? When was it done? How often was it done? And where was it done?

Immediately notify the pastor (unless he is the perpetrator), and the authorities. Then take your child to a doctor for a full physical exam to document any injuries which may have occurred. Be careful about jumping to conclusions. Let the authorities investigate to determine if abuse actually occurred before taking any further actions.

The Impact of Sexual Abuse on a Child

Sexual abuse robs children of their childhood and innocence. It injects them into a sinister world of exploitation and intimidation for which they are neither physically nor emotionally prepared. Fear, anger, shame, and confusion replace the love, joy, and security they once knew. The sense of betrayal and the loss of trust can be devastating to the abused child.

The degree of damage depends on several factors including the intensity, duration, and frequency of the abuse. In addition, the relationship of the perpetrator to the child matters. If the abuser is a known and trusted authority figure in the child's life, the degree of impact will increase dramatically.¹⁵ Children who have been sexually abused experience numerous losses. Greatest of these is the loss of trust in those in places of authority such as a teacher, pastor, parent, friend or relative. Bitterness, anger, and resentment can last for decades. The *"Winter Commission"* found that sexually abused children lost childhood memories, healthy social contacts, the opportunity to learn, bodily integrity, their identity, self-determination, and the capacity to appreciate sexual intimacy in a healthy, nurturing, loving relationship.¹⁶

The consequences of child sexual abuse can plague victims into adulthood. When church leaders, pastors, and respected congregational workers perpetrate the abuse, lifelong religious confusion and deep feelings of enmity toward God and the church can occur. Some of the long-term affects of sexual abuse included:

- Lack of trust
- Confusion of family roles
- Depression, self-pity, suicide
- Anger, unresolved and repressed
- Emotional blocking, turning off sexually, hypersexuality
- Denial of the experience
- Isolation, social shyness, self-protective
- Sexualization of relationships

- Anxiety, fears, phobias
- Sexual dysfunction
- Eating disorders
- Substance abuse
- Promiscuity
- Disassociation from emotions
- Possible perpetration of sexual abuse on others¹⁷

The Profile of a Child Sexual Abuser

Contrary to popular opinion, sexual abusers are not easily identified. They do not have a capital "A" tattooed on their foreheads nor do they wear wristbands identifying them as sexual predators. Although most states now have online registries of known sexual offenders, they still blend in communities with little difficulty. They do not have beady eyes, wear long trench coats nor look shifty and threatening. The stereotype most people have in their mind of a sexual abuser is totally inaccurate.

Abusers can be of any age, race, sex, culture, nationality or economic status. Eighty percent of the time the abuser is known to the victim. Most abuse takes place in the context of an ongoing relationship such as parent, teacher or leader. Ninety-seven percent of aggressors are male, although sixty percent of male victims report that at least one of their perpetrators was a female.

Sexual offenders against children are most often between the ages of 20 and 40, married and have children of their own. The majority are good providers, the religious heads of their homes, active in their church, and hard working. They are respectable and looked up to by those who know them. They grew up in homes where their fathers were either absent frequently or preoccupied. Dad was often a strict, authoritative disciplinarian. Following in his father's footsteps (or so he thinks), the abuser becomes a family tyrant who is harsh, over controlling, and punitive. They tend to be insecure, but try to hide this fact by their rigid behavior.

Many abusers were themselves sexually abused as children. They themselves began abusing other children while still in their teens. One report found that 56 percent of reported child molestation cases were committed by adolescents, rather than adults.¹⁸ One newspaper reports that 25 percent of those accused of sexual abuse against children were children themselves.¹⁹

The good news, if there is any good news here, is that the clergy aren't the major offenders. Pastors and paid staff account for about one-fourth of abuse that occurs against children (this is still way too high.) Nearly half of all sexual abuse allegations in churches are directed toward volunteer workers and lay personnel. In most cases, people find it difficult to believe that such a kind, caring person could ever be guilty of such hideous behavior as child sexual abuse. Here is how one sexual molester described himself:

I want to describe a child molester I know very well. This man was raised by devout Christian parents. As a child he rarely missed church. Even after he became an adult he was faithful as a church member. He was a straight A student in high school and college.

He has been married and has a child of his own. He coached Little League baseball. He was a choir director at his church. He never used any illegal drugs. He never had a drink of alcohol. He was considered a clean-cut, All-American boy. Everyone seemed to like him. He was a volunteer in numerous civic community functions. He had a well-paying career job. He was considered "well-to-do" in society. But from the age of 13-years-old he sexually molested little boys. He never victimized a stranger. All of his victims were friends ... I know this child molester very well because he is me!!!²⁰

The Myths surrounding Child Sexual Abuse

People's beliefs about sex abuse and child molesters are often based on hearsay, myths, and misconceptions rather than on facts. These myths, coupled with societal acceptance of them, help sex offenders escape detection while at the same time silencing those who have been abused by them. The following list of eight myths was prepared by The Leadership Council:²¹

Myth #1 - *Well educated, middle-class people don't molest children.*

The reality is that child sexual abuse cuts across all strata of society. Sexual abusers can be rich or poor, educated or uneducated, black, white, Asian or Hispanic, young or old, religious or irreligious, suburbanite or city dweller, male or female. They are often respected members of the community who hold positions of leadership and trust that place them in close proximity with children. They may serve as teachers, coaches, Scout leaders, day care workers, school principals, camp counselors, youth sponsors, choir directors or even pastors. Being a sexual abuser is an issue of the heart rather than one's social or economic status.

Myth #2 - *People are too quick to believe the accused is guilty, even when there is no supporting evidence.*

There is some truth in this myth because of the high profile sex scandals involving the Catholic Church, especially if the accused is a church leader. Child sexual abuse, however, is such a repugnant crime that many people find it hard to believe. In the thinking of many individuals, no one in their right mind could possibly commit such a heinous act upon a child. They see the world as a kinder, gentler place than it actually is, and thus tend to believe the accused is innocent, especially if it is someone they know and trust. In many cases, they think the victim is lying or must have done something that caused the incident to happen.

Myth #3 - *Child abusers are usually indiscriminate and don't usually know their victims.*

This simply isn't true. Eighty percent of people who are molested knew their attacker before the abuse occurred. Often times it will be a parent, a relative, a teacher or a trusted leader. While some sexual offenders are opportunists, the vast majority select their victims well in advance and seek to establish a trusting relationship with them through a "grooming" process. They will often pretend to be the children's friend giving them candy, buying them presents, and taking them on trips to the park, mall or ball park.

Myth #4 - *Children who are abused will immediately tell their parents.*

While this does sometimes happen, children are frequently so embarrassed or ashamed of what happen that they never tell anyone. One recent survey of 3,000 women who have been raped as children revealed that 47% of them never told anyone about their abuse until they were asked about it by the surveyors. In some cases they had been threatened with bodily harm to themselves or to their other family members if they told. Other times, they were told they were responsible for what happened because of something they said or did. Fear, guilt, embarrassment, and feelings of complicity all contributed to their silence, and thus allowed the abuser to go on his way undetected.

Myth #5 - *Children who have been abused will show physical signs of abuse.*

This simply isn't true. Some forms of sexual abuse such as fondling, groping, photographing, exposure, and oral sex leave no physical traces. Moreover, research indicates that only about six percent of girls who have been abused show any physical signs of vaginal penetration. The absence of physical signs neither proves or disproves anything.

Myth #6 - *Hundreds of innocent men and women have been falsely accused and sent to prison for molesting children.*

Child sexual abuse is a highly emotional issue in which the accused is sometimes presumed guilty until proven innocent. In this supercharged environment some people have undoubtedly been falsely charged and convicted of a crime they did not commit. Their lives and reputations are ruined by these tragic incidents, and hopefully they are able to clear their names in time.

In reality, however, the vast majority of abuse incidents go unreported. Of those cases that do get reported, criminal action is taken against the perpetrator only about 24 percent of the time. A 2001 study found that only 1-2% of cases in which abuse was suspected resulted in convictions.²² The vast majority of abusers go undetected and unpunished.

Myth #7 - *If asked about abuse, children tend to exaggerate and are prone to making false accusations.*

Rather than exaggerating about what happened to them, most children either deny or minimize the incident. They don't like revisiting an event that left them feeling embarrassed, ashamed or frightened. Some are young enough that they lack the language skills needed to describe their ordeal.

Myth #8 - *By using repeated interviews, therapist and police can easily implant false memories and cause false accusations among children of any age.*

The issue of repressed memories is hotly debated among lawyers, psychologists, and social workers. We have all heard of overzealous clinicians using leading statements and suggestive therapies to elicit the answers they desire. Research, however, indicates that it is quite difficult to implant memories of an unpleasant experience that didn't happen into the mind of a child. In one study, seventy-two young girls were given physical exams. Half of them received vaginal exams while the other half did not. Later, when asked about the exams, most of those who had

received the genital exam failed to mention it. Children are more likely to fail to report negative experiences that actually happened to them than they are to remember ones that did not happen.

Questions concerning Child Sexual Abuse

1. *"Aren't we making a mountain out of a molehill? Aren't allegations of sexual abuse against churches quite uncommon?"*

Child sexual abuse is far more prevalent than most people imagine. Conservative estimates suggest that from 500,000 to over 1,500,000 children are sexually abused each year with the vast majority going unreported. While most sexual abuse takes place somewhere other than a church sponsored activity, the incidence of cases involving churches has reached *"epidemic"* proportions according to one insurance executive.²³ Sexual misconduct charges involving children are brought against approximately 3,500 churches every year. The question is not *"whether"* abuse will occur at your church, but *"when"* it will happen. Rather than playing *"Russian roulette"* with the children's safety and the church's reputation, the prudent course of action is to take steps now to minimize the possibility of abuse occurring in your ministry.

2. *"Isn't requiring screening of all children's workers unduly burdensome on the church, and an invasion of people's privacy?"*

The church's future hangs in the balance here. Allegations of child sexual abuse can tarnish its image, destroy its reputation, and undermine its ministry. The expenditure of a few dollars now can save the church tens of thousands of dollars in attorney fees and punitive damages should a case of abuse take place. Just ask anyone associated with a church where allegations of abuse were leveled against that church.

Screening and background checks are not an invasion of a person's privacy. People have the right to refuse to give the desired information and can decline taking the tests. Completing the questionnaires is completely voluntary. No person, however, has the right to work with children in the church's ministry. The church alone retains the right to determine who will be allowed to work with children, and what qualifications and requirements they must meet. If an individual is unwilling to meet those requirements, then he/she should not be allowed to work with nor have access to children in any aspect of the church's ministry.

3. *"Is it permissible to use a person who was charged with child sexual abuse before he was saved, now that he has made a profession of faith? After all, he's a new creature in Christ, isn't he?"*

It is true that a person who has been truly born-again is a new creature in Christ, but you can't be sure whether his profession of faith is genuine or a false profession designed to gain your trust. Moreover, regeneration does not eliminate a person's sinful nature and the impulses which accompany it. To knowingly place a person who has been accused or convicted of child molestation in the past in a ministry role involving children puts the church in an indefensible position should an incidence of abuse occur. A safer course of action would be to place that person into a ministry role that does not involve contact with children.

4. *"Isn't the 'two-adult' rule a bit much in a small church where there are so few workers?"*

Just ask any church where sexual abuse allegations have been made if the *"two-adult"* rule is too burdensome. They will either tell you they are glad they had it in place or that they wish they had had it

in place. Not only does the *"two-adult"* rule help to protect children, it also helps to protect workers against false accusations of abuse. We have found that the *"two-adult"* rule actually increases people's willingness to serve, thus making more workers available, even in small churches.

5. *"We're only a new church just getting started. Can't we wait until we get larger before implementing a child safety program?"*

It is often easier to implement new programs at the beginning of a church plant than later in the process. The standards you set at the start will govern the church's ministry for years to come. You want to build confidence among young couples with small children. A child safety program is one of the best tools available for doing this. You also need to realize that new churches make tempting targets for sexual predators. The absence of standards and the pressing need for workers makes it easy for them to gain positions of trust in which children are extremely vulnerable. For this reason it is even more important for new church plants to have a child safety program in place from the very start of the ministry.

Section 3 - Policies and Procedures

Every church and every church plant needs to develop and implement policy guidelines for how it will protect the children under its ministry from possible sexual abuse, and for how it will handle any suspicions or allegations of abuse that may arise. The time to do this is well in advance rather than in the midst of an abuse crisis. Waiting until abuse occurs is like shutting the barn door after the horses have escaped.

Develop your Child Safety Guidelines Early

The welfare of both the children and the church require that safeguards be put in place at the earliest possible time. Thinking that *"it couldn't possibly happen here"* makes it more likely to happen in your church sooner or later. As the founding pastor of the church, the church planter is the logical person to develop the safety procedures for the church he expects to plant. He is the architect. He draws up the blue prints of what the church will look like and how it will function. It is his responsibility to see that things are done decently and in order.

Church planting involves five basic cycles: conception, prenatal development, birth and infancy, adolescent growth, and adult reproduction. The prenatal development stage is that period of time before the launch of public services when plans are developed, goals are set, financing is secured, equipment is gathered, and a core group is formed. It may cover anywhere from six to fifteen months in length. It is during this prenatal phase that the church planter should develop the child safety standards that will govern the new church and its children's ministries from the very beginning.

You'll have more time now to do the reading and research needed than you will once you launch public services. Contact the appropriate authorities to find out how child sexual abuse is defined in your state, and what the required reporting procedures are. Child sexual abuse is a crime in all fifty states, and it is a crime NOT to report cases of suspected or known abuse in many states. Some states exempt pastors and religious leaders from this reporting requirement. Others do not. Find out what your state requires. Does your state have a website listing the names of those who have been convicted of sexual abuse? If so, do you know how to access it? Is there a specific form that must be used when requesting a criminal background check? Is there a fee involved?

Check out the web to research the growing problem of child sexual abuse, especially as it relates to churches and religious organizations. Know the telltale signs of sexual abuse and the reporting procedures involved. Educate yourself and be informed before you try to write a sexual abuse policy for your future church ministry.

Once you have developed written guidelines to minimize the potential for sexual abuse occurring in your church, ask another knowledgeable pastor, church planter or mentor to review them and to make suggestions. We all have blind spots and can easily overlook a vital precaution that should be included. Review the child safety guidelines with your core group, being sure they understand them and agree to abide by them.

Some of you may already be beyond the prenatal stage. You've already started holding public services or have been functioning as a church for several years. If that is the case, select key leaders to work with you in developing safety guidelines for your children and youth ministries. This manual will guide you through the key areas of concern. Once the guidelines are finished, communicate them to your

workers and your congregation. You will want to adopt appropriate resolutions and place the guidelines in a Policies and Procedures manual. Then implement them consistently throughout your nursery, children, and youth ministries.

Since allegations of child sexual abuse are likely to trigger a criminal investigation and possible court proceedings, you need to develop a comprehensive document that clearly sets forth the church's policies and procedures as it relates to the children's and youth ministry of the church. There are several areas that you will want to cover in your safety guidelines. You will find samples of the items covered here at the end of this manual. You are at liberty to utilize them in your ministry as you see fit.

Start by Developing the General Principles First

General principles are those broad, basic concepts that apply to the overall conduct of the individuals involved in any aspect of the children's ministry of your church. They are applicable regardless of whether the individual works in the nursery, Sunday school, junior church or youth ministry. They also apply to all persons on church property or attending a function of the church, regardless of whether they are members or not.

State the purpose for developing child sexual abuse guidelines - A statement of purpose explains why a thing is being done or why it exists. In this case you are setting forth the procedures to be employed at this particular church for protecting children from exposure to possible sexual abuse while on church grounds or while attending a church function, and to provide guidelines for the recruitment, screening, and supervision of workers involved in the children and youth ministries of this church.

List the objectives for the abuse guidelines - An objective is something you want to accomplish by what you are doing. It is a goal you have in mind. There are four main objectives you want to achieve through your abuse guidelines: 1) to protect the safety of the children to whom the church ministers; 2) to ensure that only reasonably qualified people work in the children's programs and that their reputations are protected from false accusations; 3) to safeguard the witness and effectiveness of the church's ministry; and 4) to limit the church's legal liability in case an incident of abuse should occur.

State the motivation behind the abuse guidelines - What stimulated or prompted the development of this preventative action? What was the motive behind it? The stimulus for the development of your abuse guidelines is the rapid rise of alleged sexual abuse against children while on church grounds or while attending church functions. These preventative policies are being implemented to protect both the children and the church from allegations of and actual child abuse.

Give the background for the abuse guidelines - While we acknowledge that God is our refuge, we also have an obligation to him and to the people who frequent our churches to take practical steps which nourish and enhance the security of our ministries. Your guidelines are not a legal treatise, but legal considerations do provide encouragement for their implementation.

Develop a general statement concerning child sexual abuse and the church - What does our faith in Christ require of us as believers and as members of Bible-believing churches as it relates to child and sexual abuse? Include statements to the effect that the church believes in the respect, dignity, and purity of children, and that they need a safe atmosphere in which they are free to report any abuse they may have suffered. Mention the church's obligation to be thoroughly informed about sexual abuse and its impact on children, their families, the church, and the community. Relate the need for the church to have policies in place so it can prevent abuse from occurring in its ministry, recognize signs of abuse, and respond appropriately to them. Note the church's responsibility to educate both its workers and its families about

the worth of children and the proper relationship of adults to them. See the sample statement at the end of this manual.

Define child sexual abuse early in your policy statement - You want to be sure workers and people in the church understand what child sexual abuse involves. Be specific. You don't want any fuzziness or confusion in people's minds. You might also include the legal definition as given in your state's penal code.

Explain the church's approach to the problem of child abuse - There are both biblical and legal considerations for the church implementing appropriate safeguards so as to protect the children under its care from physical and sexual harm. While we trust God for our salvation and our protection, Scripture also admonishes us to obey the laws of man so long as those laws do not conflict with the laws of God. In doing so, we recognize that there are practical steps required of us to ensure that those laws are not broken by anyone involved in our ministries.

The Next Steps

The legal profession in America believes that without reasonable screening procedures and strict supervisory guidelines in place, a church is liable of negligence should a child be abused while under its care. Therefore, it behooves churches to take all prudent precautions that are appropriate to minimize the potential for abuse occurring within its ministry.

Require the screening of all children's workers - This includes anyone who works in the nursery, Sunday school, children's church, day care, Christian school or youth ministries. It includes teachers, janitors, helpers, substitutes, supervisors, youth leaders, music directors, chaperons, and pastors. Anyone involved in the church's ministry to children in any way should be screened including all members of the pastoral staff. Failure to properly screen potential workers is considered gross negligence by the legal community and places the church in grave danger. There should be no exceptions to this rule. You'll find greater detail on this point in the section on "*Developing Recruitment Guidelines*" and in the sample section at the end of this manual.

Require all workers to read and agree in writing to abide by the church's sexual abuse guidelines- Review the child safety guidelines with each applicant and be sure they understand them. Before anyone is allowed to work with children have them sign a statement or covenant whereby they acknowledge that they have read the child safety guidelines and that they agree to abide by them. Keep this document in their personnel file.

Require all workers to attend an annual safety seminar - All children's workers should attend an annual training seminar sponsored by the church during which the child safety guidelines and policies are reviewed. Specify what constitutes child sexual abuse, review reporting procedures, and remind them of the two-person requirement. This is one area where you don't want people to get lax with time.

Establish a two-person rule - Whenever the church sponsors an activity involving children under eighteen years of age, whether it is on or off premises, two properly screened persons should be present at all times in each room, vehicle, or other enclosed space. No child should ever be left alone with just one worker present without the express written permission from the parent.

New church plants and smaller churches may find this rule unpalatable (or even unworkable) due to their size and limited pool of workers. They try to run a full program of nursery, Sunday School, junior church, and youth ministries before they have the personnel to staff those ministries. Volunteers often do

double duty serving in more than one ministry role. These churches find it virtually impossible to follow the two-person rule.

Many of the programs in these churches are ineffective because they are understaffed and poorly run. Too many ministries are started too soon without adequate preparation and personnel. Rather than exposing the children in these ministries (as well as the church) to an unnecessary risk of abuse, it would be better to run fewer programs that are adequately staffed.

If a church disregards this counsel and chooses to place just one worker in a particular ministry involving children, it should at the very least require windows in all classroom and nursery doors or that doors be left open at all times so someone walking by can see and hear what is going on in that room.

Establish a three or six month rule - No person should be allowed to work with children or youth until he/she has attended the core group or the church regularly for a period of at least three months in new church plants and six months in established churches. Abusers often volunteer for ministries in which they can have easy access to children. The three-month rule gives the church more time to get to know and evaluate potential children's workers. Most abusers will not subject themselves to this scrutiny. New church plants are more vulnerable than established churches in this area because of the shorter waiting period, but they cannot afford to wait six months before providing child-care services. Once the church is up and running, it can expand the waiting period to six months.

Exclude anyone who has ever been charged, convicted or pled guilty to physical or sexual abuse - While this rule may result in some innocent people (those falsely accused) being excluded from children's ministries, the risk and culpability of knowingly putting that person into close contact with children is simply too great. If abuse were to occur, it could result in both criminal and civil charges being brought against the church and its leaders.

Establish bathroom and changing policies - Younger child should not be allowed to leave a room to go to the bathroom without the supervision of an adult. Bathroom breaks should be scheduled at regular intervals for younger children, thus allowing both workers to be present. One of the workers should knock on the bathroom door and take a quick look inside. The worker should prop the door open and wait outside while the children go to the restroom. If a child needs help, leave both the bathroom door and the stall open or have both workers present while the child is helped.

The changing of infants and toddlers should be done only within the view of another adult. Older children can be allowed to go to the bathroom alone only when there is an adult present to monitor the hallways and restroom areas.

Require strict check-in and pick-up procedures for all children - Every child under the age of ten should be accompanied to his/her classroom (or nursery) by a parent or person who is responsible for him. The child is checked in and a numbered card ("*claim check*") is given to the person who brought the child. All children remain in the assigned room with both adult supervisors present until someone with the numbered card comes to pick them up.

Another approach is to record the name of the person who checks the child in. The child then remains in the room with his supervisors until that person returns to pick up the child. No one else is allowed to pick up the child. Children in the nursery should be released only to a parent with a photo ID card. This provides both the child and the church with extra protection in this day of custody battles.

A new Texas church plant meeting in a school requires everyone to register at a computerized welcoming kiosk they set up each week in the hallway. A printer then produces a sticker or wrist band for each child listing the child's name, room assignment, teacher's name, and parent or guardian. The

parent receives a similar printout which he/she must present when picking the child up from the classroom. Children are not allowed to leave the room until the parent comes for them.

Children must be accompanied by an approved adult at all times while on church property - No child should be allowed to roam hallways, go to classes or be alone in a room unsupervised or alone with only one adult present other than a parent or guardian. They should not be dismissed from their classes until a parent picks them up at the door.

Recruitment Guidelines

Recruitment is the first line of defense against child sexual abuse. It is also the area in which churches are most vulnerable. Because of the chronic shortage of helpers in many ministries, churches are often willing to accept anyone who offers to help with few questions asked. Churches tend to be trusting institutions. They think anyone who claims to be a Christian must be what they claim to be - a wonderful person who would never harm a child.

Unfortunately, that is not always true. A wise church planter will trust people, but he will also seek to verify their claims before putting them into places of leadership involving children. Failure to do so constitutes gross negligence for which the church and the church planter are liable, and exposes children to unnecessary risk of abuse.

A good screening program is a church's best line of defense in protecting children from abuse and the church from charges of negligence. No one should be allowed to work with children unless they have successfully completed the screening process. A screening program has several facets to it:

All volunteer and staff workers should be required to complete a ministry assignment application - The form will provide you with basic information the church needs to initiate the screening process. The application should include the following items:

- Date
- Person's full name
- Present address
- Driver's license number and Social Security number
- Home phone number and cell phone number
- Information about any prior criminal convictions, drug use or sexual abuse
- Their church membership and involvement for the past five years
- Previous ministry experience with children
- Three personal references
- A photograph of the applicant
- A written account of the applicant's salvation experience
- A statement in which the applicant asserts that all the information given is truthful and complete, and in which the church and its representatives are released from all liability for any damage the applicant may suffer as a result of giving this information or having it verified.

The applicant should sign and date the application form in the presence of a witness who should also sign and date the form.

Criminal background checks should be completed for all applicants - Churches typically trust their people, and this is fine and good. But people sometimes have hidden secrets that might disqualify them

from working with children. Some people advocate that background checks should only be run when a question arises concerning a particular applicant. This would leave churches open to charges of negligence since it could be alleged that something the applicant said or recorded on the application form should have aroused suspicion. While it is not a legal mandate that background checks be performed on everyone working with children, the prudent church will do so.

Each state will have its own requirements for doing background checks. Nearly all states will have both a release and a request form on their State Police Website. There may be more than one form available depending on whether the organization making the request is a church, a Day Care Center, a home health care organization, a foster care or adoption provider. Call the police to learn which form churches should use.

Most forms will require the notarized signature of the person whose background you are checking as well as the notarized signature of the person who is to receive the information. You cannot perform a criminal nor sexual background check on a person without their knowledge and permission. Thus, you should require the person to submit a notarized signed release form with their application.

Request both a criminal history and sexual offender search. This can be done by simply checking the appropriate box on the form. Separate requests must be made for each person being checked. There is often a small fee that must accompany each request.

In addition, check to see if your state maintains a sexual offender registry. This can usually be found on the State Police website. A criminal history and sexual offender search will only reveal if the person has been convicted of crimes in the state in which he now resides whereas the sexual offender registry includes all sexual offenders residing in the state regardless of where the crime was committed. A person guilty of sexual abuse in another state might show a clean record in your state (leading you to believe it is safe to put him/her with children), but his name would appear on the sexual offender registry (warning you that it is not safe to put him/her with children). So, run the criminal history search, the sexual offender search, and check the sexual offender registry as well.

In most cases you will have better success if you work through the State Police than if you go through local authorities, even though most are more than willing to help identify sexual offenders. If an agency declines to help you, request a written letter of confirmation from them listing the reason for their refusal. This shows that the church made a "*good faith*" effort to screen applicants and shifts the burden of responsibility from the church to the public officials should a child be abused by someone for whom you sought a background check. Keep copies of all requests and reports in a locked confidential personnel file.

Contact and interview all references - People requesting to work with children must list the names, addresses, and phone numbers of three references who are familiar with them and their past history of working with children. Contact each reference and explain that the applicant is seeking a position working with children in your church. Inquire whether the person has done that type of work before and ask for an evaluation of their work. Were there ever any allegations of misconduct? Would the reference person feel comfortable having the applicant working with his/her children? Note any reluctance to respond to questions.

Keep a written record of each reference contacted. Include the name of the contact, the date and time, the name of the person making the contact, and a summary of the conversation. Include this record in the personnel file of the applicant.

If an applicant fails to give any references or has never worked with children before, meet with him/her personally and request the names of three people who know him/her well that you can contact. If

a person is unwilling to give you the names of people you can contact, do not allow him to work in any capacity with children.

All applications should complete an individual child safety survey test - This is a confidential screening test designed to evaluate a person's suitability for working with children, especially as it relates to their sexuality. It will NOT identify sexual abusers or those who might become sexual abusers. It only accesses whether or not that person should be recommended to work with children based on the background information provided by the individual on the test.

A variety of tests can be purchased from professional companies. Marget Systems International of Matteson, Illinois has produced a computerized test with eighty-four true and false questions (available through WORD, Inc., in Waco, TX). There are two ways to complete the test: 1) The applicant can take the test on a computer by simply pressing the "T" or "F" buttons or 2) he/she can take the test on paper by circling the appropriate letters. The answers are then typed into the computer by the person giving the test. The first approach maintains total confidentiality in that no one but the applicant will know how he answered each question. The computer will not retain their answers once it grades the test. The second approach provides a "paper trail" that can be kept in the applicant's file.

Test questions range from "I feel very competent in most things" to "I am ashamed of my sexual practices." The questions are discreet, but to the point. No one question would disqualify a person from working with children. The computer looks for a pattern that might indicate an unacceptable degree of risk. The computer will grade each person taking the test in one of three ways:

- 1) This person is recommended to work with children.
- 2) This person is recommended to work with children only with another adult present.
- 3) This person is recommended to work in adult ministries not involving children.

The third rating does not indicate a person is a likely abuser. It only means that there are issues in the person's life that makes him more suitable for working with adults rather than with children. The child safety survey test is but one of the tools you will use in determining whether or not to place this individual into a ministry with children. Other considerations include the criminal and sexual offender background checks, the information gathered from references, and a personal interview with the applicant.

Evaluate the person's ministry S-H-A-P-E - God equips people for different ministries and gives each one a unique ministry S-H-A-P-E. Rather than seeking to fill ministry slots with people who may or may not be qualified for those ministry roles, seek to place people into ministries for which God has prepared them. Five things go into determining a person's ministry S-H-A-P-E:

- S** - *Spiritual gifts* - What special insights and enablements has God given them?
- H** - *Heart* - What are they passionate about?
- A** - *Aptitudes* - What skills and talents do they possess?
- P** - *Personality* - Are they outgoing or quiet and withdrawn?
- E** - *Experiences* - What life experiences has God taken them through (salvation, illnesses, victories, hardships, etc.) that prepares them for this ministry?

Prepare a form like the one in the sample section at the end of this manual and ask each applicant to complete it and to hand it in with their application. Does their ministry S-H-A-P-E indicate that they will fit well into some aspect of children's or youth ministry? Put people where they are likely to succeed.

Conduct a personal screening interview with each applicant - This should be done in a private setting away from listening ears and peering eyes. All interviews should be confidential unless another leader

needs to be informed of the outcome. Normally, the pastor or church planter will conduct the interview with the applicant.

Review the application form with the applicant along with the results of the background checks and the outcome of the child safety survey. Examine any areas of concern and seek clarification. There are four major areas you want to explore during the interview with the applicant. These include:

1) Their motivation - Why do they want to work with children (or the youth)? What interests them most about working with kids? What age group interests them most? Why? What "rewards" do they get from working with that age group? What would they do if a child told them he/she had been sexually abused at home or at church? Do they agree with the church's policy on children and abuse? How would they address the issue if changes were made with which they disagree?

2) Their experience and background - Ask for a brief account of their employment history. Have they ever been terminated from a job? If so, what was the reason? Were they ever members of the military? Why did they join? What type of discharge did they receive? Have any of their jobs involved dealing with children? Have they ever been involved in a children's ministry before? In what capacity and for how long? Have they ever been asked or forced to resign from any church related or non-church related children's ministry? Is there anything in their past that would cause concern with their working with children? Are they physically and emotionally able to perform the functions as a children's ministry worker without endangering the health and safety of the children? Are they familiar with the church's child safety guidelines and are they willing to abide by them?

3) Their spiritual background - Do they have a personal relationship with God through faith in Christ alone? When did they get saved? Have they been scripturally baptized by immersion? What churches have they belonged to since being saved? Where is their current church membership? Are they willing to unite with this church and support its ministry? Ask them about their personal devotional life. How often do they read the Bible? Do they have a regular prayer time? How have they grown spiritually in the last year? What changes have taken place in their lives during that time? When was the last time they shared their testimony or witnessed to an unsaved person? Do they tithe or give regularly to the church? Are they married? Is their spouse a believer? Does their spouse support their getting involved in children's ministry?

4) Miscellaneous questions - Have they had any serious motor vehicle violations or accidents? Have they ever been convicted of DWI or DUI? How long ago? Have they ever been arrested or convicted of a criminal offense? How long ago? Have they ever been suspected of, charged with or convicted of any type of assault or abuse? If so, have them explain. You are looking for signs of irresponsibility for the safety of others.

If you have already decided not to use the person in children's ministry based on the result of your prior investigations, be honest and frank with them, and explain the reason for your decision. Are there other areas of ministry in which they may be more suited to serve? If so, encourage them to prayerfully pursue those avenues of service.

It is probably best not to make a final decision on placing the person into a ministry role involving children until you have had time to prayerfully consider all the information that has been gathered. Simply tell them things look favorable (if they do) and that you will be getting in contact with them shortly. Keep a written record of your interview with each applicant in their personnel file.

Right of exclusion - Include in your policy a statement that the church has the right to exclude or to remove any person from any ministry role at any time for any reason. Ministry is not a right, but a

privilege, and the church has the sole right to determine if and whether an individual should be allowed to serve in a particular ministry of the church.

Appropriate Behavior Guidelines

Boundaries are important because they define what is acceptable, safe, and appropriate. They keep us from harm, danger, and exploitation. They tell what is off limits and what isn't. They are like red flags that warn us of impending peril. You want everyone to know where the parameters are when it comes to appropriate conduct and contact between adults, teens, and children. That often is not the case. Thus, it is vital that the church establish clearly defined guidelines that specify what constitutes appropriate behavior at church sponsored activities.

Adults should avoid unsupervised time alone with a child or teen - There are many situations in which this can happen unless the two-person rule is followed closely. A teacher may be setting up the classroom when a student arrives early. A nursery worker is left alone with a child when the parent is late in picking up the child. A youth leader meets a troubled teen who needs counseling. While each of these may be entirely innocent situations, they present an opportunity for abuse to occur. Written parental consent should be sought each time an adult is going to be alone with any child or teen.

In the absence of permission from a parent or guardian, any individual meetings with a child or teen should be held in public areas of the church or in a church office with the door left open - Kids and teens will often want to talk to their teacher or youth leader before or after church. They simply come bursting into the room without any warning with some incident or problem they want to share. The adult should immediately either escort them to a public area where they can talk or stand in front of an open door where they can be easily seen by others passing by.

No child or teen should be left alone with another child, teen or adult in an unsupervised situation - Abusers are not always adults. Both teens and children have been guilty of sexually abusing other children and teens. Under no circumstances should individual children be left alone with other children or teens unless those children are their immediate siblings.

No group of children or teens should be left alone without adult supervision - While there is safety in numbers, numbers alone cannot guarantee the safety of children. One report tells of a seven-year-old girl who was molested by two ten year old boys. Teens on a church-sponsored outing sometimes pair off by themselves and go off alone if left unsupervised. Adults should always be on hand to chaperon whenever children or teens are together.

No teacher, supervisor, mentor or other person should be allowed to take children on field trips without the written consent of the parent and notification to the pastor - All church-sponsored activities off-site should follow the two-adult rule and require written parental consent. This includes trips to a theme park, zoo, ball games, camps, picnics, and other activities.

Teens and adults should refrain from transporting a child or teen anywhere alone without the express written consent of the parent - Caring people often provide rides for children and teens to and from Sunday School, church, and teen activities. This is fine as long as there are at least two adults, two teens or two children present. What is not permissible is for an adult or teen to be left alone in the car with just one child or teen. For example, a man may drop off the three Smith children together, but he cannot drop off seven year old Jessica alone. A seventeen year old boy can offer to take several teens home from the youth meeting, so long as he and his friend are not left alone with just one girl in the car.

All teachers, workers, supervisors, youth leaders, ministers and other adults should refrain from inappropriate physical contact with children - This includes wrestling, kissing, prolonged embracing or the massaging of arms, legs, backs and shoulders. A youth pastor who was "goofing off" with his teens impulsively accepted the dare of one of the teen girls to kiss her on the lips. It cost him his job. A male chaperon on a picnic outing at a local park was observed rubbing the shoulders of one of the female youth members. He was immediately pulled aside by another male chaperon and warned that such behavior fell outside of proper volunteer behavior.

Any touching of breasts, buttocks, genitals or pelvic areas should be strictly avoided - It is recognized that people do sometimes bump against each other and inadvertently touch a sensitive area. All intentional touching of those areas should be carefully avoided. Examples of inappropriate behavior would include a teenage boy slapping the butt of a girl while playing games or rubbing up against her breasts while in the pool. Sitting on one another's laps should be avoided after age ten.

The use of sexually suggestive language, pornographic materials or other sexually explicit materials is strictly prohibited - Course jokes, innuendo, words with double meanings should be avoided when speaking with children and teens. We recognize that children and teens are much more sexually aware than they used to be, and there will be times when youth leaders may want to discuss dating, sex, and marriage with their teens. Other times, teens (and in rare cases, children) may ask sexually explicit questions. Those questions should always be answered honestly and scripturally while using appropriate terminology.

Each worker should be given a copy of the guidelines for appropriate behavior - Be sure everyone has read and knows what constitutes "appropriate behavior" between children, teens, and adults. Give each one a copy at the time they are assigned a ministry role and go over it with them. Review these guidelines at the annual safety seminar. There should be no doubt in anyone's mind where the boundaries lie in this area.

Require each worker to sign an agreement (covenant) annually agreeing to follow the child safety and appropriate behavior guidelines - This can be done at the annual safety seminar. Simply distribute copies of the guidelines and a form for them to sign stating that they have read and agree to abide by the church's policies on child safety.

Supervisory Guidelines

As mentioned earlier, there are two primary areas in which churches are often legally negligent in cases of child sexual abuse. One is the area of the recruitment and screening of those who wish to work with children, and the other is in the area of supervising those who do work with children. It is not enough to run background checks, administer child safety surveys, and conduct personal interviews to weed out those who may be unqualified for ministry with children. You can do all those things and still be negligent in the area of properly supervising the activities and actions of workers and children involved in your ministry.

There are certain reasonable precautions which would normally be expected of any organization working with children, including churches such as yours. This is especially true in the area of knowing what is going on and what is being done on the church's property and at church-sponsored activities. You must exercise "reasonable care" in order to avoid being negligent. There are several things church planters can do in the area of supervision that will enhance the safety of the children involved in their ministry while minimizing the risk the church faces.

Follow a team approach - There is safety in numbers. Ecclesiastes 4:9 tells us "two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour." This is true both for the children as well as for the workers. There should always be two screened, approved workers present at all times with each group of children or teens. Not only does this significantly lessen the likelihood of abuse occurring (another set of eyes is there watching), but it provides the workers (and the church) with a degree of protection should allegations of abuse ever be registered against a worker or the church. Someone else was there to see what actually happened.

No child or teen should ever be left alone with an adult or another teen without the express written consent of the parent. There should be a signed consent form for each time the child is left alone without adequate supervision. This is obviously a cumbersome requirement. It is far better simply to require two approved individuals to be present at all times.

Some church planter or pastor is going to say, "But we are just a small church getting started. We don't have enough personnel to enforce the 'two-person' rule." If you don't have adequate personnel to safely staff a ministry (such as Sunday School classes), then either combine classes and personnel, discontinue that portion of the ministry until you are able to staff it properly or leave all doors open so anyone passing by can see what is happening inside the room. Don't risk the safety of children in order to start a ministry prematurely.

Example: *Jennifer is scheduled to work in the nursery during the morning service, but her helper hasn't arrived by the time the first parents begin to appear with their children. Knowing their new church has a 'two-person' rule she explains the situation to the parents and asks if they could stay with their child till help arrives. While this is not an ideal situation (especially if the parents have not been screened), it is better than leaving Jennifer there alone with the children.*

Provide adequate supervisory personnel for all church activities - Supervision implies exactly that - someone is there to supervise or check up on what is transpiring in any given activity. With the passing of time people become careless and start to bend the rules unless someone is available to periodically monitor behavior. Call them "leaders," "directors," "supervisors," "chaperons" or whatever, but someone other than the workers needs to check from time to time to ensure that the guidelines are being followed. People are more likely to do what you inspect than what you expect.

Supervisory personnel need to circulate throughout their area of responsibility during activities rather than sitting in an office filling out attendance records or ordering materials. Stop in at every classroom or activity area to observe who is there and what is happening. Is the "two-person" rule being followed? Have all the adults and workers present been properly screened? Stop by more than once during the session at unannounced intervals. You don't necessarily have to enter the room if there is glass in the door. Simply observe what is going on in the room and then move on to the next room. People are much less likely to take any inappropriate liberties with a child if they know they are being watched or that someone may pop through the door at any moment.

Example: *Mrs. Jackson was recently chosen as the new Sunday School superintendent in a small church plant meeting in an older strip mall. They only have four Sunday School classes which meet behind curtains strung on wires stretched across the room. Even though she only has four teachers and knows them all personally, she takes great care to inform them of the dangers of negligence that could possibly lead to accusations of child abuse, and insists that everyone working with children be properly screened. Since they only have one teacher per class, she insists on leaving the curtains partially open so she can see what is happening in each area as she patrols the area throughout the Sunday School hour.*

Monitor all hallways, classrooms, and isolated areas whenever children are present - A monitor is someone who helps keep order. In this case, he/she provides an extra set of eyes to ensure that no unauthorized activity is taking place on church property or at church sponsored events. Monitors, like all children's workers, should be properly screened and approved for work with children. Their job is to patrol the halls, classrooms, isolated areas in and around the building to ensure that no child is alone by himself or with anyone other than a parent or guardian.

Monitors should patrol the hallways from the time children begin to arrive until the last one has left. They should check to ensure that the furnace room, closets, offices, and empty classrooms are locked. They should ensure that the lights are left on in all dark areas of the building. They need to also check the outside parameters of the building where a child molester might abuse a child unseen. In most cases, the monitor should be someone other than the supervisor simply because the supervisor has other responsibilities to care for.

Install windows in all doors (except bathrooms) - Openness and visibility are two of the greatest protections you can afford your workers and children. In John 3:19 Jesus said that *"men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."* Pedophiles and child abusers function behind the scenes and out of sight where no one is watching. Dark hallways, empty classrooms, remote offices, unoccupied bathrooms, and unlocked utility rooms make perfect places for abuse to occur. This danger can be partially neutralized by the installation of locks and windows in all doors (interior and exterior) with the exception of bathrooms. Windows make it possible to see what is going on in the rooms (the abuser's greatest fear), and thus reduce the risk of abuse taking place in those rooms. All unoccupied rooms should be kept locked at all times, thus making them unavailable to abusers. Bathroom doors should be propped open except when parents or teachers bring a child to the restroom as prescribed in the bathroom guidelines. The goal is to reduce the number of "safe" locations in which an abuser can function.

Example: *Brian's new church plant meets in a public school where there are multiple hallways and unused classrooms. All the classrooms have glass panels in the doors, but as precaution Brian arranges to have the school close off unused hallways with metal gates. Any unused classrooms are kept locked or have the doors propped open at all times, and monitors regularly patrol the hallways as long as anyone from the church is in the school.*

Do not allow children or teens to roam freely around the church facilities or property without adequate adult supervision - Parents, guardians, teachers or hall monitors should be present at all times when children are in the church house. This not only helps to minimize the possibility of injury from running, jumping, and pushing, but it protects them from being isolated with a possible abuser. Parents (or teachers) should escort children to and from their classrooms rather than allowing them to find their own way. Parents should stay with the child in the classroom until two approved workers are present. Children in the nursery and toddler departments should always be picked up by the person who signed them in. Don't allow three-year olds to run down the hallway and into the auditorium to find their parents. Stay in the nursery with the children until the parent picks them up.

Example: *Choir members come to practice an hour before the Sunday evening service and often bring their children with them. The children are allowed to entertain themselves by playing in the nursery, sitting in the auditorium or visiting their classrooms. The older kids are supposed to keep an eye on the younger children. This situation is ripe for potential abuse because of the lack of adult supervision.*

Obtain a signed consent form from the child's parent or legal guardian before spending time alone with the child in an unsupervised situation - This author finds it hard to imagine any justifiable reason for violating the "two-person" rule, but there may be rare occasions when that is the case. By choosing to be alone with a child or teen, you jeopardize your own testimony as well as that of the church. In those

circumstances, always have the parent sign a consent form allowing you to be with that child and absolving the church of all responsibility. In those unforeseen situations in which you unexpectedly find yourself alone with a child or teen, always escort them immediately to the most open and most visible area of the church or to an area where you know another adult is present. Do not meet with them in an isolated area.

Example: Rob, one of the youth sponsors at his church, is concerned about fourteen-year old Jimmy who he suspects is experimenting with tobacco and alcohol, and may be getting mixed up in drugs as well. He decides it would be a good idea to spend some 'one-on-one' time with Jimmy and asks Jimmy's single-parent mom for permission to take him to a ballgame. Rob should either take another person with him or have Jimmy's mother sign a consent form giving him permission to spend time alone with Jimmy.

Obverse an overnight rule - It is not unusual for churches to schedule activities that involve children, teens, and adults being away from home overnight such as camps, lock-ins, sleepovers, and mission trips. Each of these requires the presence of adequate supervisory personnel and workers who have been properly screened and approved to work with children and teens. No one should be allowed to chaperon the kids without first completing the screening requirements. To do so would constitute supervisory negligence.

Example: Jim, who is home on leave from the Army, volunteers to drive a church van of teens to an overnight youth retreat at a Christian camp. Although they are short-handed, the church graciously declines his offer even though he is a member of the church because he has never completed a child safety course or the required screening process.

Train workers to report all inappropriate or suspicious behavior immediately - Christian workers tend to believe the best of each. They have difficulty believing that anyone they know, especially anyone in their church, would ever hurt a child. Thus, they tend to make excuses or explain away inappropriate behavior when they observe it. They don't want to create a fuss or be guilty of falsely accusing another brother or sister in Christ, so they don't say anything.

While this is understandable, it endangers the child or children involved, it protects the perpetrator and allows him to continue his inappropriate behavior, it undermines the integrity of the church's child safety program, and it may well place the person who observed the behavior in jeopardy of being held legally liable since he did not report the suspected abuse.

Workers must be instructed to put the safety of the children uppermost in their thinking. It is more important that a child be protected from a lifetime of damage stemming from the suspected sexual abuse than that an abuser be protected from possible embarrassment. All workers should be required to attend an annual child safety course in which the proper steps for reporting suspected or known abuse are taught. Then they must be encouraged to report any inappropriate behavior to the proper authorities in the church.

Example: Chuck, the new youth director at the church, is seen rubbing the back of a teenage girl in the group during a cookout at one of the member's home. The host pulls him aside and informs him that such behavior is inappropriate and violates the "Acceptable Behavior Guidelines" of the church. He also reports the matter to the pastor who then discusses the matter privately with Chuck.

The pastor should immediately discuss all inappropriate or suspicious behavior with the person - Time is of the essence whenever you see or hear of any type of inappropriate, suspicious or abusive behavior involving anyone associated with the church. It doesn't make any difference whether it is your best friend, the head deacon or the most prominent individual in the church, if you see or hear anything

suspicious, get your facts straight and arrange to meet with the person immediately. DO NOT WAIT and don't assume that someone is overreacting or that the incident was just an "accident."

If you delay, and the incident occurs again, you have jeopardized the safety of the church, and you are guilty of supervisory negligence because you suspected (or knew) something and did nothing about it.

Arrange to meet with that person that same day, preferably with another mature believer present, and kindly, but firmly tell them what you have seen or heard. Give them the benefit of the doubt by allowing them to explain from their perspective what happened. Was it a case of ignorance? Was it accidental? Did someone read something into an innocent circumstance?

If the incident was relatively minor or accidental, review the child safety guidelines with the person, and warn him/her that such behavior is not acceptable, and that another violation will result in their removal from their ministry slots.

If there are actual allegations of abuse, the person should be immediately removed from all contact with children while a thorough investigation is conducted by the appropriate authorities.

***Example:** Mrs. Johnson is quite upset when she calls the pastor on Sunday afternoon to report that her daughter's diaper contained traces of blood when she brought her home from church that day. The pastor immediately arranged to meet that afternoon with the nursery supervisor and the nursery workers in question. The supervisor was able to verify that the "two-person" rule had been followed that day. Neither lady was left alone at any time with the toddler. The workers reported the little girl had come to church with a severe rash in the diaper area. A subsequent visit to a doctor verified that the blood traces came from the little girl's rash and not from any type of abuse. The incident was dealt with quickly before false allegations began to spread.*

Establish a nursery identification procedure for check-in and check-out - This has been dealt with in a prior section, but constitutes a vital part of the supervisory guidelines of the church. It is imperative that you know where children are and who they are with. You need to establish some type of verifiable identification procedure for checking children in and out of the nursery and toddler departments. This can be a number that is handed to the parent at the time of check-in. They must bring back the number in order to pick up the child at the conclusion of the service. A safer procedure is to require the parent to sign in the child using their driver's license number. They must then show the license in order to pick up the child. This provides workers with a photo I.D. whereas the numbered cards can be given to other family members. This procedure will not seem bothersome if the church is ever caught in the middle of a child custody battle or if someone seeks access to a child for less than honorable purposes.

Encourage workers to limit physical contact with children - Children love physical contact. They liked to be hugged, held, and kissed. Unfortunately we live in such a culture that physical contact must be discreet, especially in the case of men and teenage boys. It is a sad day when male workers can no longer give hugs and kisses to little girls of any age. To do so is to subject one's self to possible allegations of abuse.

Train your workers to conduct activities in open areas rather than in private - Virtually all activity involving children and teens in the church must be conducted in public rather than in private. Classroom doors should have a glass window or be left open whenever children are present. Counseling and teaching sessions should be done in areas that are easily observable by others. Bathroom doors should be propped open with a teacher nearby whenever a child uses the facilities. Openness, transparency, and visibility are a workers best defense against false accusations of misconduct.

Example: Susan, fifteen, is having conflict with her mother over music and clothing styles. She calls her pastor and asks if she can meet with him at his office following the morning service. The pastor wisely recommends that they meet at the front of the auditorium while people are still packing up the sound equipment and where they can be easily seen by others still in the building.

Reporting Guidelines

In their book on "*Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church*," Richard Hammar, Steven Klipowicz and James Cobble give three compelling reasons why all incidents or suspected incidents of child sexual abuse should be reported to the proper authorities:²⁴

- 1) As citizens of the United States we have a *legal obligation* in most states to report suspected cases of child abuse. Child abuse and child sexual abuse are crimes in all fifty states. Anyone providing professional care or services (such as doctors, teachers, day care workers, etc.) is required to report any incidence of suspected or known abuse against a minor to the proper state authorities. Some states make failure to report abuse a crime itself punishable with possible fines and imprisonment. Churches, pastors, and church workers are included in this mandatory requirement in many states. They can go to jail if they do not report alleged cases of sexual abuse. At least one state (Virginia) exempts pastors from mandatory reporting, but most states do not.
- 2) As believers in Jesus Christ we have a *moral obligation* to report suspected cases of child abuse. The abuse of children is not only legally wrong, it is morally wrong. It violates God's moral laws of right and wrong. It is a sin of the gravest sort and must be confronted head on. Galatians 6:1 requires God's people to "*restore*" a man overtaken in a fault. This "*restoration*" involves confronting and exposing the sinful behavior while seeking to bring about genuine, life-changing repentance in accordance with Matthew 18:15,16. If the person is unrepentant, then his sin is to be reported to the entire church and the appropriate form of church discipline is to be implemented (vs. 17). We have a moral obligation to report suspected cases of sexual abuse to the proper church and legal authorities. Failure to do so places that child and other children in harm's way while protecting the alleged abuser, and thus allowing him to continue his sinful practices unhindered.
- 3) As members of a local church we have a *church obligation* to report suspected cases of child abuse. Accountability is one aspect of church membership that must not be overlooked or taken lightly. We are our brother's keeper and we have an obligation to the church to hold him/her accountable for behavior that violates the church's standards and guidelines. Failure to report an incidence of suspected abuse makes both the church and the individual failing to report the incident liable of negligence. Every member and every worker has an obligation to his/her church to protect the church's testimony and ministry from harm. Believe me, when news leaks out that people in your church knowingly covered up an incidence of child sexual abuse in its ministry, plenty of harm will come to your church. Reporting protects the child, the church, and the one doing the reporting.

Begin by creating a response plan - You'll be amazed at how quickly your well-ordered world will spin out of control once allegations of sexual abuse are raised by someone in your church. Parents, church leaders, the news media, law enforcement officials, insurance agents, and lawyers will all be demanding answers at once. Rumors will spread like wildfire. Stories will be embellished and false accusations totally unrelated to the incident will arise. You may face a battery of media cameras and reporters everywhere you go. Your phone may not stop ringing for weeks. Conflicting "*clarifications*"

may be given by various church leaders. You won't have time or the presence of mind to determine how to handle the allegations of sexual abuse once the accusations are made. Therefore, it is imperative that you develop a response plan as part of your child safety program. That way it will be available when you need it.

Make sure all workers and volunteers know and understand the reporting procedures - A strategic plan of action is only beneficial when people understand it and are committed to its implementation. If people don't know about it or don't see its value, they won't follow through with it if and when the time comes. Make your response plan part of the overall child safety program you review with each applicant who wishes to work with children. Don't simply hand them a packet of material. Go over it with them in detail so they will know what to do should they observe or learn of an incident of abuse. Review these guidelines with your workers at your mandatory annual safety review seminar so it stays fresh in the minds of the workers. You might even want to post a copy of the response guidelines in each classroom and in the nursery so it is handy if an event occurs.

Do not prejudge the accused, but take the accusations seriously - Awareness of possible abuse can be acquired in several ways such as witnessing suspicious behavior, observing bruises and marks on a child's body or being told of abuse by a child. A child might say, "I wish Mr. Anderson would stop hurting me" or "Billy touched me here" or "I don't like the things my teacher makes me do when we are alone." Such statements **MUST BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY!** There is almost universal agreement among researchers that children are generally not capable of creating the stories incest victims have to tell.²⁵

Emotions often run high when accusations of sexual abuse are leveled at a person. People automatically assume he/she must be guilty just because an allegation has been made against them. Just because someone saw something suspicious or out of the ordinary doesn't necessarily mean abuse took place or that the person is an abuser. Reserve judgment and assume the best until an investigation has been completed. Whatever you do, **DO NOT** share your suspicions with anyone other than the people you are supposed to report them to according to the response guidelines. You could ruin an innocent person's reputation and even destroy a church with ungrounded rumors that later prove untrue.

Resolve doubts in favor of reporting the alleged abuse - Accusations of sexual abuse against children are hard to comprehend. Why would anyone who professes to be a Christian ever harm a child in such a horrendous manner, especially someone in YOUR church that you know personally? He/She seems to be such a wonderful, loving, caring person. He would never do that, and yet you know what you saw, observed, and heard. Did you read too much into the situation? Are you just being super sensitive and overreacting because you read this manual?

When in doubt about the validity of a possible occurrence of abuse, always resolve those doubts in favor of reporting the alleged abuse. Yes, the person may be innocent and he may be hurt or embarrassed by the accusation. He may even end up leaving the church because you misjudged the situation and reported your suspicions to the proper church officials.

While that is certainly a concern, the safety of the children is paramount. What if your suspicions were correct and one or more children were being sexually abused by the person? Your failure to report your suspicions would expose the children to possible continued abuse. You would be protecting the abuser rather than his victims. Moreover, failure to report suspected abuse would be seen as negligence on your part and could carry a heavy penalty both for you and the church. You have heard it said, "When in doubt, don't," but in cases of suspected sexual abuse your motto must be, "When in doubt, **DO REPORT!**"

Workers should inform their supervisor and the pastor immediately – Whenever abuse is witnessed by or suspected by a teacher, worker, parent or other individual in the church, that person should promptly

notify his/her immediate supervisor of the situation stating what they saw, heard or observed. For example, a Sunday School teacher would go to the department head or to the Sunday School superintendent. A nursery worker would go to the person in charge of the nursery. A youth worker would go to the youth leader, etc. Then, the two of them should immediately go to the pastor and report the incident to him. In smaller works, such as church plants, you may not have department heads and supervisors. In those cases, the person making the allegation should go directly to the pastor and tell him what they witnessed or suspect. One obvious exception would be if the person being reported is the supervisor or pastor himself. In that case, the accuser should go directly to the next highest authority in the church such as the head deacon. Under no circumstance should they simply keep quiet.

Ask the person reporting the abuse to put his allegation in writing – It is extremely important that a written record be kept to document who is alleged to have done what to whom, when and where it occurred, and who was present. The individual reporting the alleged incident of abuse should be asked to give a detailed, written description of what happened. You want the person to be specific and detailed as to what they saw, heard, and observed. This is not a time for modesty or generalities. Children's safety is at stake here. This written account should be prepared at the time the allegation is brought to the pastor's attention while it is still fresh in the person's mind. Time blurs memories and people tend to embellish the facts or forget certain details, if it is not written down shortly after the event occurs. If the person is unable to record their thoughts clearly, the pastor (or another church leader) should interview the person making the accusation and record his answers. Either way, the one making the report should sign and date the record of the report.

If the person making the allegation is unwilling to put his/her assertion in writing or is unwilling to sign the report, remind them of the gravity of the situation and that the safety of the children is at stake. If they are still unwilling to sign the declaration, you may have a false accusation on your hands. You cannot make that assumption, however. You must pursue the matter once the allegation is made. If the person making the charge refuses to sign the written report, the pastor, and whatever other person may be present, should sign and date the document stating that the above report is a true and accurate reflection of the accusation made by the one making the allegations.

Remove the child from the situation immediately – The safety of the child must be paramount whenever there is suspicion of inappropriate sexual contact between the child and another person. The child should be immediately removed from all contact with the adult or teen in question. This should be done in a discreet manner so as not to embarrass the child. Don't go rushing into a classroom and pull the child out of class. If a class or service is in session, ask another adult to slip in as an observer to ensure that nothing else happens. The teacher or worker can then be relieved of responsibility for the class until the investigation is completed. If the abuse is taking place at home, your only course of action is to report the situation to the proper civil authorities who can then remove the child until an investigation is undertaken.

Notify key church leaders of the alleged abuse right away – Accusations of child sexual abuse represent a violent storm that is about to break upon the church. Key leaders must be notified as soon as the incident is reported. This is one battle you don't want to fight by yourself. You'll need all the godly counsel and advice you can get. You are facing a crisis that can make or break your church, and you need the help and the support of the leadership to weather it successfully. This situation will grow both you and your leaders into stronger, more spiritual people if you work together and follow biblical principles of conflict resolution. You don't have to tell everyone in leadership positions yet (helpers, workers, teachers, etc.), but you certainly want your deacons and the supervisors over the area where the alleged abuse occurred to be well informed.

Remove the accused perpetrator of the alleged abuse from all positions of leadership – The pastor and at least one key leader should immediately take steps to temporarily remove the person against whom

the accusation has been made from all positions of leadership and all contact with children until a thorough investigation has been completed, and the charges have been verified or negated. This is an unpleasant task, but it must be done for the protection of the children, and to safeguard the testimony of the church. Be sure to have another person present when you meet with the accused. You need to have witnesses to verify what transpired in the meeting.

Call and ask the individual to meet with you that same day. Do not discuss the issue with him over the phone. Simply tell him that a very important issue has come up and you need to discuss it with him as soon as possible. It is better to meet at the church rather than going to his home.

Begin with a word of prayer asking God for wisdom and guidance. Gently, and using a humble tone of voice, inform the accused that you have received an allegation of sexual misconduct against him/her involving a child. You do not need to name the child nor the person making the accusation. You might ask if there is any truthfulness to the accusation. Did he molest or engage in any type of inappropriate behavior with a child under his care? In some cases the person may admit to the charges and express deep sorrow over what happened. Other times, the person may respond in shock or anger.

In either case, express your sorrow over the situation and explain that your goal is to protect the children while seeking clarification of the accusations that have been made. Assure him that you are assuming his innocence until all the facts are in (unless he acknowledges the abuse). Explain, however, that because of the nature of the case you must suspend him from his ministry role until a thorough investigation has been completed. Until that time he is to have no contact with the child in question and is not to be alone with any child or teen on church property or at a church-sponsored activity. Also inform the person that the parents of the child, and the proper authorities, are being informed of the alleged incident. Encourage the accused individual to cooperate with the investigators so this situation can be expedited as soon as possible, and his name cleared if he is truly innocent.

At no time should you imply that you think the person is guilty. Rather, express your hope that he is truly innocent and that this incident can be cleared up quickly to the glory of God. Do keep a written record of the meeting with a summary of what was said.

Notify the church's lawyer and insurance company – Doing so may sound self-serving, but child sexual abuse is not just moral or spiritual problem. It also has legal and financial implications. The police, child protective services, and lawyers are all going to become part of your life for the foreseeable future. Unfortunately, they sometimes bring with them a presumption of guilt. You or the church must have done something wrong for this to have happened in your ministry. They are going to overturn every rock looking for some evidence of neglect on your part. Your church may face a legal challenge in court, and part of what will be examined is how you handled the situation once you learned of the allegations of abuse. Thus, it is imperative that you receive sound legal advice throughout this process. This is especially true in these early stages that are so critical to handling the situation properly.

You need to acquire a variety of insurance coverage when starting a new church. Be sure the company you retain includes coverage for child sexual abuse. Many companies specifically exclude this area from their coverage, so ask before signing on the dotted line. Insurance companies deal with child sexual abuse on a fairly frequent basis. They are the ones who will have to pay out tens, if not hundreds of thousands of dollars in damage claims, should the allegations be proven true. Thus, they and their lawyers are more than ready to advise you, both in developing a child safety program as well as what to do once allegations of abuse are made.

Inform the parents and request an immediate medical exam for the child – The parents of the child have a right to know, and the church has the obligation to tell parents whenever a case of alleged abuse arises. First, advise your key leaders of the situation, and then arrange to meet with the parents face to

face. Do not drop this bombshell on them over the phone. You are their pastor and they deserve to have you there when you deliver the devastating news that their child may have been molested by someone in the church. Take your wife or a key leader with you when you meet the parents of the child. Begin with a word of prayer and then kindly tell them that you have received a report that their child may have been sexually abused while on the grounds or in the care of the church. Explain that at this point it is only an allegation, and you do not know for sure if it is true or not. Do not divulge the name of the person accused nor any other information about the incident.

Ask the parents to take the child to a pediatrician within twenty-four hours for a physical exam to determine if there are any injuries or signs that might confirm that abuse did actually occur. If the child is old enough to understand the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch, you may want the parents to ask the child whether he or she has been exposed to an inappropriate touch. Remember that sexual abuse includes such things as sexually suggestive language, photographs, exposing one's genitals, and touching the breasts, buttocks, and genital area.

Explain to the parents that at this point all you have are allegations, but that these will be reported to the proper authorities and that a thorough investigation will be forthcoming. Seek their cooperation in getting to the bottom of the matter as quickly as possible. Offer to provide counseling for them and their child. Some parents may be very understanding and cooperative. Others may respond with anger and threats. Try to understand their response by putting yourself in their shoes. How would you feel if your child were abused by someone you loved and trusted? You want to be as supportive as possible to these folks who have just been hurled into the worst nightmare imaginable.

Keep detailed, written records – The swirl of events surrounding an accusation of sexual abuse in the church will become confusing very quickly. It will be difficult to keep all the facts straight about who said what, when details were reported, when phone calls were made, and what actions were taken. Thus, it behooves you to keep detailed, written records of every conversation and every event as they transpire or as they are reported to you. This information will be crucial later as you talk to investigators and possibly have to testify in court. Not only will detailed records help you avoid making contradictory statements, but they may well demonstrate that you made a good faith effort to handle the matter in a wise and proper manner.

Report the alleged incident to the proper state authorities within 36 - 48 hours – Check the reporting requirements in your state. They vary from state to state. Failure to report an alleged incident of abuse may actually be construed as negligence in a court of law should a lawsuit be filed against you or the church. The report of abuse may be filed with either the local police or with child services, depending on the reporting requirements of your state. Some states recognize a clergy-client privilege which exempts a pastor from reporting abuse if it is revealed to him by the abuser himself. Remember, your primary concern must be the safety of the child and that of other children who might be exposed to the abuser as a result of your decision not to report him or her.

Cooperate with the resulting investigation – Your phone will begin to ring shortly after filing a report of possible child sexual abuse. The police, child protective services, lawyers for the parents of the abused, investigators, insurance companies, and newspaper people will all want to interview you about the alleged incident. You should cooperate fully with the civil authorities as they conduct their investigation, although you may want to have the church's lawyer present to advise you at such times. Your goal should be to get the truth out in a straight-forward, biblical manner and to resolve the matter in a manner that is equitable to all. Remember, however, that some of those who request information may not have your best interests at heart. Thus, consult with your lawyer whenever meeting with investigators.

Prepare a positional statement for release to the news media - In spite of your best efforts to handle the matter confidentially, word of the alleged incidence of abuse will seep out more quickly than you think. Church members will talk and media reporters will call wanting to know if reports of abuse are true.

The best course of action is to prepare a statement for release to the news media (and to the congregation) that outlines the church's position on child abuse, its policies for screening and supervising workers, and its guidelines for reporting incidents of suspected abuse. Acknowledge that an allegation of possible abuse has been received, the parents have been notified, the person against whom the charges have been made has been temporarily removed from all contact with children, and the proper authorities have been notified. Explain that it would be improper for the church or anyone representing it to divulge additional information while the investigation is in progress. Be careful to protect the identity and privacy of the people involved in the alleged incident.

Such a statement can be prepared well in advance and kept on file for when it is needed. The last thing you want to do is to try to figure out how to respond when you are under media pressure.

Do not engage in denial, minimization or blame shifting - Churches sometime make the mistake of responding to people's question with a "No comment." That smacks of cover up and will only intensify people's efforts to find out what has transpired. Child sexual abuse is a highly charged subject and any effort to deny, minimize or shift responsibility away from the church will be met with skepticism and more intense scrutiny. Under no circumstances should you imply that the victim is partially or primarily responsible for what happen. Neither the public nor the legal system will accept that approach. Efforts to do so will only convince people that the church is trying to hide something because the allegations are probably true and the church is simply engaging in a cover up. After all, they have seen just that scenario played out time after time by other churches and religious leaders in recent years.

Appoint one person to be the spokesperson for the church - Conflicting and contradictory statements are sure to abound if multiple people speak on behalf of the church. These well-meaning individuals may simply be expressing their own opinions or their information may be fragmentary or entirely inaccurate. The pastor and deacons should select just one person to be the spokesperson for the church. It may be the pastor himself, a key leader or even the church's lawyer. This individual should be articulate, and well informed about the details of the incident and the investigation. He wants to be discreet and diplomatic, however, in the things he reveals.

Inform the congregation - It is far better for the church family to learn about the alleged abuse from the church leaders than through the "grapevine" that exists in every church. Be sure they will find out - It is only a matter of time until that happens. If you have ever played the game of "gossip" you know whispered information is often embellished, misleading, and frequently just plain wrong. People will be angry and some (perhaps many) may leave because they will feel the leaders were not honest with them. They may think you were trying to hide something (and they would be right).

The church leadership should take steps to inform the church of the alleged misconduct as soon as the safety of the children is assured, the accused individual has been removed from all ministry involvement, and the proper authorities have been notified. Time is of essence. You want to get the news out before rumors begin to spread. Do not delay in telling people the truth and reassuring them that the church is aggressively pursuing the matter so as to ensure the safety and security of their children. Bring the congregation together and read the positional statement you previously prepared for release. Be careful not to divulge the names of the parties involved. Ask the congregation to cooperate with investigators and to allow the investigation to run its course before forming any judgments.

Allegations of child sexual abuse will usher in a time of testing that will either strengthen or undermine your church-planting ministry. Openness, honesty, and having well-prepared child safety guidelines that are followed will go a long way toward building people's confidence in their pastor and the church leadership, especially when the church is facing the deep waters of child abuse.

Churches and church planters cannot fully guarantee the safety and welfare of the children entrusted to them except by closing their doors and going out of business. But we can certainly minimize the chances of misconduct occurring by taking prudent steps to minimize the potential by putting safeguards in place, training our people, and supervising them properly.

Removal of Workers Guidelines

Being accused of child molestation can be a devastating experience, especially if the allegations are not true. One minute a person is joyfully serving the Lord by providing childcare, teaching a class or ministering to children in some manner. Then, without any warning, the pastor and head deacon summon that individual to the office and inform him/her that they have received information alleging he/she has engaged in some type of inappropriate sexual conduct with a child or teenage in the church. In that instant, the person's world is turned upside down and will never be the same again regardless of the outcome of the investigation. Fear, anger, shock, and denial are not uncommon responses in these situations.

While we want to protect both the children and the church from harm, we must also seek to minimize any possible damage to innocent parties that are falsely accused, AND minister to those who are caught in their sin. Church planters and pastors should develop a list of situations that might warrant removal of workers from their ministries and also procedures that should be followed when removing them from those ministries.

Situations warranting possible removal of workers:

Falsifying of information on the child worker application – Anyone who falsifies information on their child worker application form, especially information about past allegations of misconduct with children, should be removed immediately from working with children. People who intentionally deceive cannot be trusted to work with children and teens. To knowingly allow a person previously accused of child abuse to continue working with children, even though you have encountered no problem with them, would endanger the welfare of the children and place the church in grave jeopardy.

Being accused of the sexual abuse of a child – Child sexual abuse is of such a serious nature that the mere allegation or suspicion of abuse toward a child should result in the immediate suspension of that person from all ministry assignments and all contact with children at church-sponsored functions until an investigation is completed and their innocence is assured. Removal from a ministry assignment should not be construed as implying guilt or innocence. It is simply a prudent safety precaution.

Being counseled or warned a second time about inappropriate behavior – There are behaviors, which while not sexual in nature, are nevertheless inappropriate between church workers and those to whom they minister. These should be outlined in a set of standards established by the church and communicated periodically to all workers (see page 34). Anyone who violates these standards twice within a year's time should be removed from their ministry assignment upon the second warning. People must understand that the church is serious about protecting children in their care from harm.

Repeatedly failing to abide by child safety guidelines – Each church needs to develop its own child safety guidelines. Workers who repeatedly fail to follow those guidelines are endangering both the children under their care and the testimony of the church. Ongoing failure to follow standard procedures established by the church indicates the person does not take his responsibilities seriously or is intentionally uncooperative. In either case, the person in question should be removed from his/her ministry role.

The above list of reasons for removal from ministry is not exhaustive. Ministry is always a privilege and not a right. Therefore, the church can remove anyone from any ministry role whenever it deems it appropriate to do so.

Procedures for removing workers from their ministries:

Arrange a meeting with the person being removed - Whenever it becomes necessary to remove a worker from his/her ministry assignment, it is only right that he/she be informed as to the cause for his removal. This should always be done in a face to face meeting rather than by phone or by e-mail. It is always wise to have at least one other key leader present at this meeting to verify what transpires. In cases involving possible sexual abuse, this meeting should not take place until the child's safety can be assured. Thank the person for meeting with you on short notice. Begin the session in prayer.

Inform the individual of the areas of concern – What has he done (or not done) that possibly warrants his removal from ministry? Did he falsify information on his application form? Has he violated the appropriate behavior guidelines again? Has he repeatedly failed to follow the child safety guidelines? Or has he been accused of inappropriate sexual contact with a minor? In cases involving sexual abuse accusations, simply explain that such allegations have been made against him, but do not divulge the child's name or the name of the parents.

Give the person the opportunity to respond to the allegations – Did he file false information on his application form? Did he violate the appropriate behavior standards a second time? Are the allegations of sexual abuse correct? In some cases, the person may admit that he is indeed guilty of the allegations. Other times, he may vehemently deny involvement, especially if abuse is alleged.

In non-abuse cases, encourage the person to complete a discipleship or ministry training program – This program should be designed to help them develop the basic habits that stimulate spiritual growth while developing their ministry skills in preparation for other types of ministry that better fit their ministry S-H-A-P-E.*

If abuse has been alleged, assure the person that you will assume he is innocent until there is conclusive evidence to the contrary – It is important not to prejudge a person's guilt unless there is overwhelming proof of their guilt (such as pictures or a secondary eye witness account). At this point you want to be fair to everyone involved. The charges may be false or maliciously motivated. Someone may have jumped to unwarranted conclusions. There may be a perfectly acceptable explanation for the behavior that was witnessed. Do not form an opinion until you have the facts in hand.

If abuse has been alleged, explain that the child safety guidelines require his/her immediate removal from all ministry responsibilities until all charges have been resolved – There can be no warnings and no second chances here. Yes, the person may be innocent and taking away his ministry may cause him a great deal of pain and embarrassment. But he may also be guilty, and failing to remove him from ministry not only endangers the children, but places the church in grave peril if the behavior is repeated. There is simply no legal defense for knowingly allowing an accused child abuser to work with children.

* Spiritual gifts, Heart (passion), Abilities, Personality, Experiences

If abuse is suspected or alleged, advise the person that you must inform the proper civil authorities – Explain that child sexual abuse is a crime and that in many states (check your state requirements) it is also a crime for you NOT to report suspected cases of abuse. YOU could go to jail if you do not report the allegations. Let him know that there will be an investigation by the authorities that could possibly clear their name. It could also confirm the allegations. Encourage him to cooperate with the authorities so this matter can be resolved as quickly as possible.

Instruct the accused individual to limit his contact with children until the investigation is concluded – He is to have no contact with any child or teen (other than his own) at the church or at a church-sponsored event. He is never to be in the presence of a child unless another adult is also present. Be kind, but be firm. This is a non-negotiable item.

Assure the person of your prayers - Child sexual abuse is a spiritual issue as well as a sexual and moral issue. Anyone who is accused of this terrible sin will find himself plunged into one of the most devastating crisis of his life. His life is turned upside down, his ministry is gone, friends will avoid him, and many Christians will shun him. Almost no one wants to be around him. This person needs to know that he has not been abandoned by his spiritual mentor. Even if you suspect he is guilty, he needs your prayers and your godly counsel. God may use you to bring this person to repentance and eventual restoration to fellowship. If the person is innocent, he needs your prayers and your support even more to endure the painful allegations as he works his way through the process of clearing his name.

Statement of Intent

It is virtually impossible to develop policies that cover every conceivable situation. Sooner or later someone will find a loop hole or engage in an activity that is not specifically covered by the policy guidelines. When confronted about unacceptable behavior they will respond, “*Well, the child safety guidelines don’t say anything about this. If it isn’t prohibited, then it must be permitted.*” You can avoid this situation with a general statement of intent to the effect that your guidelines are just that – guidelines and not a comprehensive statement. Your statement might read something like this:

This Policy Statement is intended as a guide for those working or volunteering with the church. It is a guide only, and is not to be construed as a comprehensive document intended to deal with all situations. When dealing with situations not addressed in this Policy Statement, workers or volunteers should use appropriate discretion under the circumstances, and promptly refer any questions or concerns to the pastor. The church reserves the right to make changes in this Policy Statement and implement those changes from time to time with or without notice.

A Policies and Procedures Manual

Every church planter should develop a Policies and Procedures manual in which he keeps a copy of all the guidelines, policies, procedures, and standards used in the church. Include such things as your child safety guidelines, nursery policies, service standards, election procedures, use of facility guidelines, membership requirement, music standards, business-meeting guidelines, and any other governing principles used by the church. The P&P manual provides him with a handy reference tool to which he can refer whenever there is a question concerning how things are to be done in the church.

Section 4 – Educate your People

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. It is a whole lot easier to minimize the possibilities for child sexual abuse to happen than it is to control the fallout resulting from a case of child molestation. For this reason, the church planter needs to develop his child safety standards during the prenatal stage of development so they are in place when public services begin. People will not question the standards nearly as much if they are part of the church's fabric from the beginning as they will if you wait to introduce them further down the road.

People are more likely to embrace the child safety guidelines if they understand why they are needed. Openness, clarity, and honesty are essential in gaining people's cooperation and support. While the need to have child safety guidelines in place should be obvious, the fact is many of God's people are blissfully ignorant of the dangers churches and the children in their ministries face today. Therefore, pastors and church planters must take appropriate steps to educate their people to these dangers, and to inform them what the new church is doing to minimize those hazards. There are several areas in which this education needs to be done.

Educate your Core Group

Church planters need to make child safety education a vital part of your prenatal planning before developing their core groups. If you don't program it into your plan, it won't get done. Include it in the planned teaching schedule and touch upon it in handouts you distribute to core group members. Let people know that the new church you are starting takes the matter of child safety seriously and that anyone working with children on any level will be required to abide by the safety guidelines including the required screening, and background checks. Distribute copies of the guidelines to core group members and allow them to ask questions. They need to understand where the church is going and what will be required of them if they chose to become part of the process.

While you want to encourage discussion of the safety guidelines and answer any questions people may have, this aspect of the ministry is not a negotiable item. This IS the way the new church is going to function simply because the church takes its responsibility to protect children seriously. Anyone unwilling to abide by the proposed policies should be informed very kindly that they will not be able to work with children. Since unity and a cooperative spirit are vital at this early stage of development, it would be best to lovingly encourage these folks to seek another church with which they can agree. This may seem like a harsh measure, but if you allow these folks to continue on as founding members, their refusal to abide by church policy will eventually undermine this crucial aspect of your ministry.

Educate your Lay Leaders

Lay leadership in the local church is more than an honorary position. Leadership is influence. Their opinions and actions will impact the rest of the congregation. You need the commitment and support of your lay leaders if you are to gain the cooperation of your people.

Leaders need to understand the potential danger the church faces in this area of sexual abuse. The entire ministry could be lost if the church does not take appropriate preventative measures to protect the children under its care. Moreover, the leaders themselves could be held legally accountable for the

church's failure since they are the one's who set the standard for what is done in the church. They need to understand the legal rationale for the safety procedures, and be fully committed to their implementation.

Thus, spend a Saturday morning with your leaders to thoroughly educate them concerning the child safety guidelines. This training needs to be repeated with each new person who joins the leadership team. Require all leaders to attend an annual safety training program for all church workers.

Educate your Prospective Members

Starting with your core group, implement a pre-membership course for anyone who is interested in becoming a member of the church. This multi-week course should cover all the vital aspects of the church's ministry including its child safety procedures. People need to know up front what type of church they are joining and what will be required of them once they unite with this particular group of believers. Let them know that they will be expected to become involved in one or more aspects of the church's ministry. If that ministry in any way involves children, then they will be required to undergo the screening process outline in the safety guidelines.

A very few people may be scared away by this prospect either because they don't want to be involved in ministry or because they may have something to hide. That is a positive rather than a negative factor. You don't want that type of people in your church. While you may lose a few prospective members because of your standards, many others will be more willing to become involved because of those same standards. People respond positively to a church that seeks to protect the children under its care and are far more likely to cooperate with such a program if they know about it beforehand rather than having it sprung on them after they join the congregation.

Educate your Workers

Every person accepting a ministry assignment involving children should undergo a sexual abuse orientation class. They must become familiar with the church's child safety guidelines, the definition and symptoms of sexual abuse, what constitutes inappropriate conduct, the civil and criminal consequences of misconduct, and the procedure for reporting suspected cases of abuse.²⁶ This training should be completed prior to their involvement with children. This may be done through one-on-one training or in a combined group setting with others. All workers should be required to attend an annual safety review session during which the church's safety guidelines are reviewed. Many church insurance companies have video material available to assist in training of workers in this crucial area.

In addition, you need to educate those people who are responsible for supervising the church's various children's ministries including nursery leaders, Sunday School superintendents and youth directors. In the past, the primary responsibility of these lay leaders was to schedule workers, order materials, and keep track of attendance. That can no longer be the case. In addition to the aforementioned responsibilities, these leaders must exercise hands-on supervision of their workers. They must walk the halls, make unannounced visits to classrooms and activities areas, and be on the lookout for any signs of sexual abuse or inappropriate behavior.

They are the first line of defense against abuse occurring as well as the first person to contact when abuse is suspected. They must know what to do and who to contact if a worker or a child reports suspicious behavior. Thus, it is important for them to periodically review the child safety guidelines.

Educate your Families

Parents often object to sex education classes in both the school house and the church house. They are sometimes reluctant to talk with their children about sex and sexual abuse. They don't want to implant adult ideas in the minds of their impressionable children or they are embarrassed to approach this sensitive subject. While they are concerned about a stranger possibly abusing one of their children, they have difficulty believing anyone they know would hurt one of their offspring. Thus, they don't teach their children about inappropriate touch or what to do if abuse does occur.

The church can help parents educate their children by discussing the child safety guidelines with those parents and by providing them with well-written materials for use at home. Their confidence in the church will grow when they come to understand that their church is concerned about the safety of their children and is taking preventative measures to minimize the possibility of abuse happening.

Educate your Congregation

Church planters and pastors do not know the backgrounds of their people. It is likely there will be one or more people in your core group or congregation who were sexually abused. Some have never reported their abuse, others are filled with shame, anger, embarrassment or guilt with which they need help. Good families in the church may be struggling with issues of incest and abuse at home that you know nothing about. There may even be someone present who is an abuser.

Communicating the child safety guidelines to your people will put potential abusers on notice that such behavior is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Abusers know detection is much more likely in churches with elevated awareness levels. Thus, they are more likely to withdraw or to keep their behavior in check.

Educating your people will enhance their confidence in the church and it's (your) leadership. Congregants who are still struggling with past abuse will be encouraged to seek help with their feelings of shame, anger, and guilt.

Start by sending a letter to every person who regularly attends the church, both members and non-members, explaining why a child safety program is necessary. You'll find a sample letter in the back of this manual.

Lead the church in adopting a resolution that outlines the church's position on sexual abuse and child safety, and the steps the church will take to prevent such abuse from occurring on church premises and at church functions. This positions the church on solid ground and authorizes the development and implementation of the preventive measures outlined in this manual. A sample resolution can be found in the sample section of this booklet.

Educate your Community

The public often has a negative view of churches and child sexual abuse. And why shouldn't they? There have been dozens of well publicized cases of sexual misconduct by priests, pastors, and lay people. The church is known for its negligence and failure to take preventative steps to minimize the potential of abuse. The media loves to sensationalize cases of misconduct in churches, but seldom mentions the constructive steps churches are taking to overcome this scourge. You can change that image by publicizing your child safety guidelines through news releases and by mentioning it in your literature.

People in the community need to know that your church is different, and that it takes the issues of child safety and sexual abuse seriously.

Glossary of Terms

Definitions vary from state to state, so it is important that church planters and pastors become familiar with the laws governing sexual misconduct in the state in which they minister. The modified generic list of terms below, however, is helpful.²⁷

Child Abuse - is defined by state law, but generally includes 1) non-accidental physical injury, 2) sexual contact or exploitation, 3) neglect, and 4) emotional distress. In most states child abuse may be inflicted by an adult, teenage or even another child. However, in some states the definition of child abuse is limited to abuse inflicted by a parent caregiver.

Child Sexual Abuse - is defined as any form of sexual contact, interaction, activity or exploitation between a child and an adult in which the child is used for the sexual stimulation of that adult or another person. It includes such physical acts as genital or oral stimulation, fondling, digital penetration, anal or vaginal intercourse, and such non-physical acts as indecent exposure or being used sexually in photographs, films, or videos. Any sexual activity with anyone under the age of eighteen is considered exploitation, and therefore constitutes sexual abuse.

Ephophobia - an exclusive sexual interest in adolescents usually of the same gender.

Exhibitionism - sexual perversion marked by a tendency of indecent exposure of genitals.

Felony - a serious criminal offense as defined by state or federal law. Child abuse and child sexual abuse are felonies in most states.

Guarantor - a person or organization that is legally responsible for the actions or debts of another.

Homosexual Contact - is any form of sexual involvement with another person of the same sex.

Liability - legal responsibility for the action in question. It often involves monetary damages.

Molestation - improper sexual advances or activity with a child.

Negligence - a failure to exercise reasonable care.

Negligent Selection - a failure to exercise reasonable care in hiring or selecting either paid employees or volunteer workers.

Negligent Supervision - a failure to exercise reasonable care in the supervision of either paid employees or volunteer workers.

Pedophilia - an exclusive sexual interest in children who are under the age of puberty.

Perpetrator - a person who commits an act of child sexual abuse; the one responsible for initiating or perpetrating the behavior in question.

Punitive Damages - money damages that can be awarded by a court against a person or organization that engages in reckless or negligent behavior.

Policy - a rule which describes or structures the proper working behavior of a church staff member or volunteer.

Promiscuity - the tendency towards indiscriminate frequent sexual behavior.

Reasonable Care - the care that would be exercised by an ordinarily prudent person under the same or similar circumstances.

Respondent Superior - a legal principle by which an employer is legally responsible for the negligence of its employees committed within the scope of their employment.

Seduction - inducing another person to engage in sexual contact.

Section 5 – Samples and Forms

This section contains samples of the various forms and policies recommended throughout this manual. Please feel free to alter them and utilize them in your church-planting ministry. They are included here for your use, and to help prevent the tragic abuse of children under your care.

Sample Letter Explaining the Need for a Child Safety Program

Date

New Life Baptist Church
Any Town, USA

Dear Church Family,

At New Life Baptist Church, we value children as treasured blessings from God. We take seriously our responsibility to help parents in bringing up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). Should the Lord tarry, our children will carry the saving message of the gospel to the next generation. Our goal and purpose is to help better equip parents for imparting to their children a sense of that awesome responsibility.

This is why we provide a variety of children and youth programs for our children. These programs begin with a nursery for infants and toddlers during our morning services and extend to Sunday School, Children's Church, and Youth ministries. These activities are held because we place a high priority on children and believe that today's children are tomorrow's leaders.

Regretfully, some individuals prey on innocent children in today's society. This knowledge troubles each of us. The daily news tells us this form of conduct is often repeated over and over. At New Life Baptist Church, we desire and intend to do what we reasonably can to protect the children to whom we minister. God expects no less from us, and neither should you. We have adopted a screening process that will help avoid possible abuse situations. This policy will affect everyone who works in our children's ministries in any capacity.

Your understanding and approval of these policies are essential to the safety and spiritual health of our children and the church body. Our Child Safety policy utilizes the *"Individual Child Safety Survey"* developed by MARGET Systems International of Matteson, Illinois and is consistent with the laws of our State and is compatible with other such policies used by churches and schools.

Thank you for your support, cooperation, and prayers.

In HIS dear name,

(Pastor's Name)

Sample

Resolution on Child Abuse and Child Safety New Life Baptist Church Any Town, USA

WHEREAS children are the heritage of the Lord (Psalm 127:3) and are God's gifts to parents, and constitute a vital ministry of New Life Baptist Church, we declare that the lives of the children entrusted to us as a local church are very precious to us. We value children as treasured blessings from God.

THEREFORE, because we place a high priority on children and believe that today's children are tomorrow's leaders, we provide a variety of programs for our children. These programs begin with a nursery for infants and toddlers, and extend to Sunday School, Children's Church, and Youth ministries.

WHEREAS, some individuals in today's society prey on innocent children by abusing them physically, emotionally, and sexually, all efforts must be taken to prevent emotional, physical, or sexual abuse of the children under our care.

THEREFORE, recognizing that such behavior is sinful and abhorrent to God and man, we condemn all interactions between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of that adult or another person, including such physical acts as genital or oral stimulation, fondling, digital penetration, anal or vaginal intercourse, and such nonphysical acts as indecent exposure.

At New Life Baptist Church we must do what we reasonably can to protect the children to whom we minister.

THEREFORE, a screening process, background checks, and written policies shall be put in place to govern the selection, conduct, and supervision of all who minister in the nursery, children, and youth ministries of this church so as to protect our children and to minimize possible abuse situations.

Adopted (date)

Sample

Policies and Procedures for Nursery and Children's Ministries New Life Baptist Church Any Town, USA

The safety, welfare and nurture of the children entrusted to the nursery and children's ministries of New Life Baptist Church are of utmost importance. This is a sacred trust given to us by God and the parents of the children involved.

Courts have ruled that churches must use reasonable care in selecting and supervising all individuals who work with children to ensure that misconduct does not occur. Failure to do so can result in charges of negligence, and can result in huge financial penalty and the loss of the church's testimony in the community.

In light of the growing incidents of child abuse in homes, schools, communities, and churches, the following policies and procedures are to be followed at all times to protect the children entrusted to our care from potential abuse as well as to protect our workers and church from accusations of abuse.

I. Purpose.

This policy sets forth the procedures to be employed by the NEW LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH in screening and selecting persons who will minister to our children in the nursery, children's church, Sunday School, youth, and related ministries of this church.

II. Introduction.

- A. Objectives** - There are three objectives of this policy. It is intended to protect the safety of the children to whom we minister; it is intended to ensure that only reasonably qualified people work with our children and that their reputations are protected from false accusations; and it is intended to safeguard the witness and effectiveness of this ministry and our church.
- B. Motivation** - The motivation for this preventive policy is to protect our children and this ministry from allegations of and actual child abuse. Although in America in 1996 there were nearly four million cases of actual or alleged child abuse reported to various Child Protective Services, child abuse is a relative new problem for churches. It is a serious matter, and our church should initiate a policy for its prevention.
- C. Background** - We acknowledge that GOD is our REFUGE. We have an obligation to HIM and to the people of this congregation to take some practical steps which nourish and enhance the security of this ministry. This policy is not a legal treatise. Nonetheless, a part of the encouragement for its implementation comes from legal considerations.

III. Practical Information.

A. What is Child Abuse?

Child abuse is any form of mistreatment or exploitation inflicted upon a child.

B. What is Child Sexual Abuse?

Child sexual abuse is any form of sexual contact or exploitation in which a minor is used for sexual stimulation of the perpetrator. Child sexual abuse is also any sexual activity with a child. Child sexual abuse includes any contacts or interactions between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of that adult or another person. It includes physical acts - genital or oral stimulation, fondling, digital penetration, anal or vaginal intercourse - and non physical acts such as indecent exposure or being used sexually in photographs, films, or videos.

C. What Is the Legal Definition of Child Abuse or Neglect?

The legal definition of an "*abused or neglected child*" refers to any child less than eighteen years of age:

1. Whose parents or other person responsible for his care creates or inflicts, threatens to create or inflict, or allows to be inflicted upon such child a physical or mental injury by other than accidental means, or creates a substantial risk of death, disfigurement or impairment of bodily or mental functions;
2. Whose parents or other person responsible for his care neglects or refuses to provide care necessary for his health. However, no child who is in good faith under treatment solely by spiritual means through prayer in accordance with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination shall for that reason, alone, be considered to be an abused or neglected child;

(This provision means that parents and guardians cannot be charged with neglect for failing to provide medical care for a child if their religious convictions prohibit them from doing so.)

3. Whose parents or other person responsible for his care abandon such child;
4. Whose parents or other person responsible for his care commit or allow to be committed any act of sexual exploitation or any sexual act upon a child in violation of the law, or;
5. Who is without parental care or guardianship caused by the unreasonable absence or the mental or physical incapacity of the child's parents, guardian, legal custodian or other person standing in LOCO PARENTIS.

D. Why Introduce Child Abuse?

1. In recent surveys of adults, 27% of the females and 16% of the males revealed that they had been abused or molested before they were eighteen. Many of the respondents state that these acts took place before they were nine.

2. There is no TYPICAL CHILD ABUSER or MOLESTER. They come from all segments of society. More than 80% of the victims know the offender. In the church, tragically, the offender is likely to be a respected member. Child abusers are often married and have children of their own.
3. Nearly one percent of all churches in America have been sued for actual or alleged child abuse. The good news is that in churches which have active screening plans for their workers, most of the allegations have proved to be unfounded. Typically, when cases of child abuse involving churches have come to court, the question asked of the church is, "*WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO PREVENT THIS TRAGEDY?*" If the response is, "*NOTHING,*" all that remains is a determination of the amount of damages to be paid.

IV. This Ministry's Approach to the Problem of Child Abuse

A. Practical and Biblical Considerations

This ministry trusts GOD for salvation and protection. We are to obey the laws of man where such laws do not conflict with the laws of GOD. In so doing, we recognize that there are practical steps required of us. They include the prevention of infractions of both laws. We consider the civil government as a terror to evil doers. And, even though all men are sinners, we are not to excuse or protect evil doers.

B. Legal Consideration

This is not a legal treatise. We do consider the provisions of man's law where appropriate. The legal profession of America believes that WITHOUT A REASONABLE SCREENING PROCEDURE a church or ministry could be found liable for negligence and the resulting consequences of child abuse. Respecting the civil law, three legal theories were considered in formulating this policy. The first such legal theory, that of NEGLIGENT SELECTION (of personnel), has a direct application. The other two legal theories, those of NEGLIGENT SUPERVISION and NEGLIGENT RETENTION (of personnel) are considered in other policies.

V. New Life Baptist Church's Screening Policy and Procedure

A. Application

All persons considered for ministry to children will submit the "*Application for Nursery and Children's Ministries*" form required by this church. Prospective workers must be 15 years of age or older and shall have attended this church regularly for a period of at least three months.

B. Screening Test

All prospective childcare workers shall voluntarily complete the "*Child Safety Survey*" developed by MARGET Systems International of Matteson, Illinois. The results of this screening tool will be taken into consideration when accepting or placing workers in the children's ministries of this church.

C. Authorization for Criminal Records and Child Abuse Checks

Persons seeking to work in our children's ministries may be asked to authorize the church to do a criminal and/or a sexual offender background check. Failure to provide such authorization upon request could result in the individual being denied permission to work with children.

No one who has ever been charged, convicted or pled guilty to either physical or sexual abuse shall be allowed to work with any of the children's ministries of this church.

D. Supervision

This ministry will select an individual or committee that shall be charged with overseeing the screening procedure. That person or committee will be the custodian of all instruments, files and records that are part of the procedure. That supervisory person or committee shall interview all persons submitting applications, screening tests and supporting instruments provided for him, and assure that all information resulting therefrom is secured. **ANY UNAUTHORIZED DISCLOSURE OF ANY INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THE RESULTING INSTRUMENTS, FILES AND RECORDS COULD RESULT IN CRIMINAL AND CIVIL LIABILITY.**

The application and any other records pertaining to a person **NOT UTILIZED** in this ministry must be retained for **NO LESS THAN THREE YEARS**. The records of all those who are selected to minister to children **MUST BE RETAINED PERMANENTLY**. The pastor of this church has the prerogative to interview any or every person considered for working with or ministering to children in this ministry. He is the final authority for selecting those who shall minister to our children.

Everyone who is approved to work in any children's ministry of this church shall be required to read the church's sexual abuse guidelines and sign an agreement to abide by those guidelines. This signed agreement shall be kept in the individual's personnel file.

All children's workers shall attend an annual safety seminar which shall include a review of the church's sexual abuse guidelines.

E. Guidelines and Procedures for Nursery and Children's Ministries

1. There shall be two approved workers present in the nursery and in all children and youth ministries (including classrooms) at all times.
 - a. At least one of the approved workers in the nursery shall always be an adult female.
 - b. Teenage girls from age 15 may work in the nursery when accompanied by an adult female.
 - c. Unmarried men may not work in the nursery program.
 - d. A rotating schedule shall be maintained so the same people do not work together in the Nursery on a regular basis.
2. The nursery program of New Life Baptist Church shall be for children between birth and _____ years.

- a. Older children and siblings are not to be allowed in the nursery since the church could be held liable for any injuries that might occur.
 - b. An information sheet must be completed for each child placed in the nursery.
 - c. Each child must be signed in and signed out each week on an appropriate form used for that purpose.
3. Young children must be supervised by a responsible adult whenever they are taken to a restroom outside the nursery/classroom area.

F. Procedures for Workers

1. Be present in the nursery at least 10-15 minutes BEFORE the start of the service, and stay in the nursery until your replacement arrives or the last child is picked up by its parents. NEVER leave one worker in the Nursery alone.
 - a. Do not work in the nursery if you have been sick within the past twenty-four hours or if you have a sore throat.
 - b. If you cannot work in the nursery at the assigned time, it is YOUR responsibility to arrange to switch dates with another approved worker AND to notify the Nursery leader.
2. Do not bring any food or beverages into the nursery and do not give children anything to eat or drink unless it has been provided for them by their parents.
 - a. Wear shoes with low heels and dress comfortably. Do NOT wear necklaces, bracelets or dangling earrings that babies or small children might grab and swallow.
 - b. Do not get involved in detailed conversations with other adults (including co-workers). **Remember that your first responsibility is to the children.** They need your full attention. For the same reason, do not turn on a loud speaker to listen to the church service.
3. Two people must be present whenever diapers are changed or children are using the rest room.
4. All nursery toys must be washed each week. Remove any broken or damaged toys.
5. All electrical outlets in the nursery area should be kept covered.
6. Plastic bags and trash liners should be kept out of the reach of small children at all times. A child can suffocate by pulling the bag over its head.
7. If a child falls, bumps his head, is scratched by another child or is injured in any way, report the incident immediately following the service to the nursery leader and to the parents.
 - a. You are also required to notify your supervisor and the appropriate officials of the church if you observe any marks or signs that might indicate child abuse has occurred.

G. Procedures regarding babies:

1. Greet the parents and children with a warm, friendly smile.
2. Be sure each child is properly checked in.
 - a. Place a name tag on each child and its belongings (diaper bag, coat, etc.)
3. Use the same crib for the same baby each week, if possible.
4. After giving a baby a bottle and burping him, place the bottle in the baby's diaper bag. If a baby spits up, clean up immediately.
 - a. Replace lids and caps on bottles, cups, and jars securely. Mothers dislike sticky bags and their contents.
 - b. To avoid choking, never put a baby to sleep alone in a crib with a bottle or food.
 - c. Do not allow children to share food they brought from home with other children.
5. Change diapers immediately as needed. Do not give a baby with soiled diapers to his parents.
 - a. Two people must be present whenever diapers are changed. Diapers should be changed in full view of the other workers in the room.
 - b. Only female workers are to change diapers or help toddlers in the bathroom
 - c. Always keep one hand on the baby at all times while changing his diapers.
 - d. Be sure to wash the baby's posterior with a wet nap.
 - e. Wet or soiled diapers should be placed in a plastic bag and taken home for disposal. Do not leave them in the nursery or restroom. Wet clothing should be placed in a plastic bag and sent home with the parent.
 - f. Wash your hands after changing a child's diaper or clothing.
 - g. Sanitize the changing table area and wash your hands after EACH diapering!
 - h. Be sure small children wash their hands after they use the restroom.
6. Do not administer any medications to children under your care. If a child is required to take medication while under your care, the parent **MUST** come to the nursery and give the medication.
7. Keep sides of cribs up at all times.
 - a. Do not wake babies in cribs unless the parents request it or it is time for babies to leave.

8. Do not give a baby or toddler to anyone but his parent or to a predetermined adult. Children are not to be given to older siblings under any circumstances.
9. NEVER shake or spank an infant or young child under your care. Use a firm "no" and physically remove the child from the problem area. If a problem persists, call for the parent.
10. Straighten up nursery before leaving. Change the crib sheets after EVERY SERVICE or EACH TIME a different baby uses it (whichever comes first). Leave the room clean and ready for the next use.

H. Check in Procedures

1. If a baby is new to the nursery or no information is on file, have the parents complete the "ALL ABOUT ME" form and place it in the appropriate file. (Regular attenders should update their forms every three to six months.)
2. Every baby's parents must register on a sign-in/sign-out sheet EACH TIME the baby is brought to the nursery. This will let nursery workers know any special needs the baby may have on a given day.
3. Only parents or a predetermined adult may pick up babies from the nursery. Babies and small children will NOT be given to older siblings, relatives or friends. Whoever picks up the baby needs to sign the baby out on the designated sheet.

I. Reporting Procedures

The following reporting procedures are to be followed whenever an incident of physical or sexual abuse is suspected or witnessed:

1. All incidents or suspected incidents of physical or sexual abuse should be reported immediately. You should file a report if:
 - a. A child tells you that he/she has had sexual contact with another person.
 - b. A child tells you he/she has been tricked or forced into sexual contact with another child or adult, or that they have been used in sexually explicit photographs, films, or videos.
 - c. A friend or acquaintance of a child reports to you that the child has reported such abuse to them.
 - d. Physical evidence of sexual abuse is discovered such as lacerations and bruises, irritation, pain or injury in the genital area, difficulty in urinating, discomfort when sitting or the presence of blood on diapers or underpants.
 - e. An adult openly admits to you that they or someone they know has committed an act of sexual misconduct with a child.
2. Incidents or suspected incidents of abuse should be reported to one's immediate supervisor or directly to the pastor.

- a. A written, detailed description of the alleged abuse including times, places, events, and people involved should be compiled and signed by the person making the allegation.
3. The supervisor should immediately report the abuse allegations to the pastor.
4. The pastor should report the alleged abuse to key church leaders.
 - a. If the alleged abuse occurred on church property or during a church function, immediate steps should be taken to remove the child from the situation.
 - b. The accused perpetrator should be removed from all leadership and ministry positions while an investigation is conducted by the proper authorities.
5. The pastor should notify the church's legal counsel and insurance company of the alleged abuse.
6. The pastor and a key church leader should meet with the parents or legal guardians of the child and notify them of the alleged abuse.
 - a. Ask the parents to have the child examined by a doctor within twenty-four hours to determine if there are any injuries or signs that might confirm that abuse did actually occur.
7. The pastor should report the alleged incident of abuse to the proper state authorities within 36 - 48 hours.
 - a. Cooperate fully with the ensuing investigation.
 - b. Appoint one person to act as spokesman for the church.
 - c. Prepare a position statement for release to the news media.
8. The pastor should inform the congregation of the abuse allegations without giving the details.

J. Statement of Intent

This Policy Statement is intended as a guide for those working or volunteering with the church. It is a guide only, and is not to be construed as a comprehensive document intended to deal with all situations. When dealing with situations not addressed in this Policy Statement, workers or volunteers should use appropriate discretion under the circumstances, and promptly refer any questions or concerns to the pastor. The church reserves the right to make changes in this Policy Statement and implement those changes from time to time with or without notice.

Sample

Positional Statement on Child Sexual Abuse for Release to the Media New Life Baptist Church Any Town, USA

Psalm 127:3 tells us that *"children are an heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is his reward."* They are God's gifts to us and are therefore very precious in the sight of the Lord and of New Life Baptist Church. Their safety and welfare are of utmost importance to us.

Recognizing that we live in a society in which some individuals prey upon children for their own selfish gratification, and that churches are not immune from such acts, our church enacted a Child Safety Program in ____ (year) ____ to minimize the potential for abuse within our ministry.

To ensure that only qualified people come in contact with our children, all workers are required to complete a rigorous screening process that includes a formal application with references, a screening test, criminal and sexual offender background checks, and personal interviews. All workers are required to read and sign the church's Child Safety Guidelines and must attend an annual safety seminar which includes a review of those guidelines.

Supervisory personnel are on hand at specified times, and randomly visit the areas under their supervision. Monitors patrol the halls during service hours. At least two approved workers are required to be present with children at all times, unless express written consent is provided by the parent or guardian.

In spite of the precautions taken by our church, an accusation of misconduct has been received against one of our members. The parents of the child have been notified, as have the proper civil authorities, and an investigation is now under way with which we are cooperating fully. The person in question has been removed from all ministry responsibilities and leadership positions until the investigation is concluded and his innocence or guilt is established. The alleged victim is safe and is being properly cared for.

We are sorry that we cannot give you additional information at this time, but it would be inappropriate for the church or anyone representing it to divulge that information while the investigation is in progress. Our primary concern is for the safety and welfare of the child in question, and for the privacy of his or her family as well as that of the accused.

Thank you for your understanding, patience, and prayers as we work our way through this painful process.

(Consult with a lawyer before releasing this or any other information to the media.)

Sample

Appropriate Behavior Guidelines

Boundaries are important because they define what is acceptable, safe, and appropriate. While not exhaustive, the following guidelines establish the parameters within which all children and youth workers of this church are expected to function. Your behavior at all times is to be Christ-like, honorable, and pure. Anyone violating these guidelines on one or more occasions may be removed from his/her ministry role in the church.

1. Adults should avoid unsupervised time alone with children and teens without the express written consent of the child's parent or guardian.
2. In the absence of permission from a parent or guardian, any individual meetings with a child or teen should be held in public areas of the church or in a room with the door left open.
3. No child or group of children or teens should be left alone without adult supervision.
4. No teacher, supervisor, mentor or other person should take children on field trips without the written consent of the parent and notification of the pastor.
5. Teens and adults should refrain from transporting a child or teen anywhere alone without the express written consent of the parent or guardian.
6. All teachers, workers, supervisors, youth leaders, ministers, and other adults should refrain from inappropriate physical contact with children.
7. Any touching of breasts, buttocks, genitals or pelvic areas should be strictly avoided.
8. The use of sexually suggestive language, pornographic materials or other sexually explicit materials should be strictly avoided.

Sample

Child Sexual Abuse Knowledge Inventory New Life Baptist Church Any Town, USA

Circle the "T" if you think the statement is true, and "F" if you think it is false.

- T or F 1. Child sexual abuse always involves physical contact with children.
- T or F 2. Most child molesters are males.
- T or F 3. Child molesters are usually strangers.
- T or F 4. Victims of sexual abuse suffer no long-term effects.
- T or F 5. One out of five molesters begins his activity before age eighteen.
- T or F 6. Only a small percentage of victims are male.
- T or F 7. Most churches screen workers for potential molesters.
- T or F 8. Church leaders cannot be held liable for child sexual abuse.
- T or F 9. Some child sexual abuse victims have won settlements of over \$1,000,000 from churches.
- T or F 10. A child molester who has experienced a religious conversion no longer presents a threat to children.
- T or F 11. Child sexual abuse is a criminal offense in all 50 states.
- T or F 12. A child molester may have over 500 victims in a lifetime.
- T or F 13. Churches have in the past been supportive of victims of child sexual abuse.
- T or F 14. Child molesters are seldom known by the victim.

Sample

**Application for Nursery and Children's Ministries
New Life Baptist Church
Any Town, USA**

CONFIDENTIAL

Please attach a
current photograph
of yourself

Please complete this application form if you are planning to work with minor children in any capacity (paid or volunteer) within the church. This is not an employment application. Persons seeking a position in the church as a paid employee are required to complete an employment application in addition to this screening form. This form is part of a comprehensive effort to provide a safe and secure environment for the children entrusted to the care of this church.

Date: _____

PERSONAL

Name: _____

Present Address: _____

Phone Numbers:

Home () _____ - _____ Cell () _____ - _____

E-mail address: _____

Driver's License #: _____ Social Security #: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Please indicate the type of children's ministry you prefer: _____

Have you attended the church's training session on sexual abuse prevention? yes no

Have you been convicted of a traffic offense in the past 5 years? yes no

Have you ever been convicted of a felony or criminal offense? yes no

Do you now or have you ever used illegal drugs? yes no

Were you a victim of emotional abuse while a minor? yes no

Were you a victim of physical abuse while a minor? yes no

Were you a victim of sexual abuse while a minor? yes no

Have you ever been charged with or convicted of child abuse or a crime involving actual or attempted sexual molestation of a minor? yes no

To your knowledge, have you ever had a positive test for HIV, AIDS, or Hepatitis B? yes no

CHURCH ACTIVITY

Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? yes no

If "yes," please write a brief account on the back of this sheet of how you came to know Christ as your Savior, and describe your relationship with him now.

How long have you attended New Life Baptist Church? _____

Are you a member of our church? yes no

If "no," please give the name and address of the church where you are currently a member:

List other churches (names, addresses & phone) you have attended regularly during the past five years.

List all previous children's and youth ministries you have been involved in during the past five years (Nursery, Sunday School, Children's Church, Day Care, etc.)

Type

When?

Where?

List all previous non-church work involving children or youth. List each organization's name and address, type of work performed, and dates.

Type

When?

Where?

List three personal references (not including relatives) of people who are familiar with your work with young people.

Reference: _____ Phone _____

Address: _____

Reference: _____ Phone _____

Address: _____

Reference: _____ Phone _____

Address: _____

APPLICANT'S STATEMENT

The information I have given in this application is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that false information or significant omissions may disqualify me from further consideration for service and may be considered justification for dismissal if discovered at a later date.

I understand and agree that I will voluntarily take an Individual Child Safety Survey screening test as part of the application process for working with children and youth at New Life Baptist Church. In addition, I also understand and agree that my name may be submitted by the church to the proper authorities for criminal and sexual offender background checks as part of the screening process to determine my suitability for working with the children and youth of this church.

I authorize any references or churches listed in this application to give any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my character and fitness for children or youth work. In consideration of the receipt and evaluation of this application by this church, I hereby release any individual, church, youth organization, charity, employer, reference, or any other person or organization, including record custodians, both collectively and individually, from any and all liability for damages for whatever kind or nature which may at any time result to me, my heirs, or family on account of compliance or any attempts to comply with this authorization. I waive any right that I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any person or organization identified by me in this application.

If I am accepted for nursery, children or youth work with the church, I agree to follow the church's policies and procedures for children and youth ministries and to sign and abide by the "*Children and Youth Worker Agreement*," and to refrain from activities that are illegal or unethical while I am working in any capacity within the church.

I fully understand that the information I have provided may be verified. If such verification is necessary, I hold New Life Baptist Church harmless from any liability in so verifying it. Likewise, I hold harmless any person who shall provide factual information to the church. Moreover, I hold the church harmless in its proper use of the information provided by me and references.

I further state that I have carefully read the foregoing release and know the contents thereof and I sign this release of my own free will. This is a legally binding agreement which I have read and understand.

Applicant's Signature _____ Date _____

Witness _____ Date _____

For Office Use Only

Screening Test date _____ UR LM RD

Interview date _____

Sample

Reference Contact Form #1
New Life Baptist Church
Any Town, USA

Confidential

Name of Applicant: _____

Reference or Church contacted (if a church or other organization, please identify both the church, organization, and person contacted),

Date and Time of Contact: _____

Person Contacting the Reference or Church: _____

Method of Contact (telephone, letter, personal conversation, etc.)

Summary of Conversation: _____

Signature: _____

Position: _____

Date: _____

Sample

**Reference Contact Form #2
New Life Baptist Church
Any Town, USA**

_____ is applying to become a volunteer worker in the children's (or youth) ministry at New Life Baptist Church, and has given your name as a personal reference. This position means being in close contact with children, and we want to ensure that this relationship will be a healthy and safe one. Please complete the form below and use the enclosed envelope to send us your evaluation of this person's character and integrity. Your response will remain confidential.

1. Describe your relationship with this person.

2. How long have you known this person, and in what capacity?

Please use the following scale to respond to questions 3 through 6:
 1 - low 2 - below average 3 - average 4 - very good 5 - excellent

How would you rate his/her ability at each of the following:

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3. Emotional maturity? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Following through with commitments? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Ability to relate to children? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Spiritual maturity? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
7. What are this applicant's greatest strengths? _____

8. Do you have any concerns regarding this person working with children? yes no

Your Name: _____ Today's Date: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Thank you for taking time to complete this reference form. Please return it in the enclosed envelope to:

Sample

Criminal History Record Name Search Request Form

Name Information to be Searched:

Last Name First Name Middle Name Maiden Name

Race Sex Date of Birth Social Security Number

_____ M F _____ _____

Affidavit for Release of Information:

I hereby give consent and authorize the (name of State) State Police to search the field of the Central Criminal Records Exchange for a criminal history record and report the results of such search to the agent or individual authorized in this document to receive the same.

Signature of Person

State of _____, County/City of _____, to wit: Subscribed and sworn to before me this _____ day of _____, 20 _____.

My Commission expires _____, 20 _____.

Signature of Notary Public

Signature of Person Making Request:

I hereby request the criminal history record of the individual named above and swear or affirm I have the consent of the individual to obtain their record and will not further disseminate the information received, except as provided by law.

Signature of Person

State of _____, County/City of _____, to wit: Subscribed and sworn to before me this _____ day of _____, 20 _____.

My Commission expires _____, 20 _____.

Signature of Notary Public

Name and Mailing Address of Agency, Individual or Authorized Agent Making Request:
Mail Reply To:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Fee for Service:

- \$15.00 Criminal History Search
- \$20.00 Combination Criminal History & Sex Offender Search

*** Fees for Volunteers with Non-Profit Organizations**

- \$8.00 Criminal History Search
- \$16.00 Combination Criminal History & Sex Offender Search

*To be entitled to reduced price, services must be on volunteer basis for a non-profit organization with a tax exempt number. Attach documentation to form which supports volunteering status and include the organization's name, address, and your tax exempt identification number.

Method of Payment:

Business or Certified Check or Money Order

Master Card Visa Card

Account Number: _____

Expiration Date: _____

Signature of Cardholder: _____

For State Police Use Only - Do Not Write Below This Line

Response based on comparison of name information submitted in request against a master name index maintained in the Central Criminal Records Exchange only.

- No Conviction Data - Does Not Preclude the Existence of an Arrest Record
- No Criminal Record - Name Search Only
- No Criminal Record - Fingerprint Search
- No Sex Offender Registration Record
- Criminal Record Attached

Date: _____ Signature of Officer: _____

Sample

Instructions for Completing the Criminal History Request Form

This form must be TYPED or NEATLY HAND-PRINTED.

| | |
|--|--|
| Purpose of this Request: | Primary reason for request. |
| Name Information to be Searched: | Name, race, sex, date of birth, and social security number of the individual on whom the criminal record name search is to be conducted. Providing the social security number is voluntary; however, it is a screening tool that is used for this request to be processed in a more timely manner. Failure to provide this number may result in an inability to process this request due to multiple records with similar names and demographics. Without this additional identifier, the form may be returned to the requestor unprocessed, and the applicant will be required to submit a set of fingerprints along with this request form to determine if this applicant has a criminal record. Numbers provided will be used to help identify the proper record and will be used for no other purpose. |
| Affidavit for Release of Information: | Signature of individual on which the search is to be conducted. The signature indicating consent must be notarized for the search to be conducted and mailed to the individual or authorized agent (if applicable). |
| Signature of Person Making Request: | Affidavit must be signed by authorized agent and notarized to receive the search results. |
| Name and Mailing Address of Agency, Individual or Agent Making Request: | Name and complete mailing address of the individual, agency or authorized agent to receive processed criminal record search must be completed. |
| Fees for Service: | Indicate fee that is submitted, based upon the type of request. Fees for volunteers of non-profit organizations must be accompanied with their tax exempt number. Attach to the form documentation which supports volunteering status and include the organization's name, address, and your tax exempt identification number. |
| Method of Payment: | Indicate method of payment. |

Mail the completed "Criminal History Record Request" to:

Your State Police Headquarters

Sample

**Alternate Request for Criminal Records Check
and Authorization**

I hereby request the _____ Police Department or Law Enforcement Agency to release any information which pertains to any record of criminal convictions or criminal investigations involving me contained in its files or in any criminal file maintained on me whether local, state or national. I hereby release said police Department or Law Enforcement Agency from any and all liability resulting from such disclosure.

Signature: _____

Print Name: _____

Maiden Name: _____
(if applicable)

Print all Aliases: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Social Security Number: _____

Today's Date: _____

Record to be sent to:

Name: _____

Address: _____

State of _____, County/City of _____, to wit: Subscribed and sworn to before me this _____ day of _____, 20 _____.

My Commission expires _____, 20 _____.

Signature of Notary Public

Sample

Determining My Ministry S-H-A-P-E

We believe God in his sovereign wisdom has uniquely shaped every believer for ministry. The Bible teaches that he equips each one with different gifts, skills, and insights, and then places him into a ministry slot where those skills can be utilized to the fullest.

Please complete the form below to help us (and you) determine your God-given ministry S-H-A-P-E so we can place you in a ministry where you will find the greatest satisfaction and fruitfulness.

S - What are your spiritual gifts? _____

Have you completed a spiritual gift inventory test? yes no

H - What areas of ministry stir your heart? What do you enjoy doing? What are you passionate about?

A - What aptitudes, skills or talents do you possess? What kinds of things can you do? What are you good at doing?

P - What is your personality type? Are you an extrovert or introvert? Are you outgoing and jovial around people or are you more quiet and withdrawn? Are you a "people-person" or are you project oriented?

E - What major life events have you experienced? What triumphs, achievements, tragedies, and heartaches has God taken you through that have prepared you for the ministry role you are seeking?

Sample

Below you'll find 20 questions randomly selected from a typical Child Safety screening test. They are included here only as a sample of the types of questions used in such tests. Several such tests are available from various companies. Consult with your insurance company or other pastors for information concerning where to purchase screening materials.

Applicant: _____

Date: _____

Individual Child Safety Survey New Life Baptist Church Any Town, USA

The following questionnaire is a screening test developed by Marget Systems International of Matteson, Illinois. It is designed to enhance the safety and welfare of the children in our nursery, children, and youth programs as well as providing our workers with protection against possible false accusations. The information contained in this screening test is confidential and after computer evaluation will be kept in a confidential file as a means of further protection to those who work with children in our church.

Please respond to each statement below. At the left of each statement, circle the letter that best represents you. If the statement is generally true, mark the letter "T" . . . if the statement is sometimes true or you don't know, mark the "?" . . . if the statement is usually false, mark the letter "F."

1. T ? F I believe my mother was overprotective.
2. T ? F Past hurts affect the way I relate to people today.
3. T ? F It is hard for me to maintain meaningful relationships.
4. T ? F Fear disrupts my eating habits.
5. T ? F I don't like when people question what I'm doing.
6. T ? F I make decisions quickly.
7. T ? F I do my own thing.
8. T ? F I am easily frightened.
9. T ? F I don't have any close friends.
10. T ? F I have fears that I cannot explain.
11. T ? F I sign up for things and then don't follow through.
12. T ? F I have a need to work with children because I have been a victim of abuse.
13. T ? F I have a hard time sharing joy in other people's success.
14. T ? F I have an emotional need to work with small children.
15. T ? F I get headaches easily.
16. T ? F Because of my past experiences, I feel a need to work with small children.
17. T ? F I am divorced.
18. T ? F Most people are "hiding" something.
19. T ? F I panic easily.
20. T ? F I don't share much of myself with others.

Sample

Applicant: _____

Date: _____

Personnel Screening - Child Safety Interview New Life Baptist Church Any Town, USA

These questions should be used only as a guideline for the interview session. All or a portion of these may or may not be used, based on the responses given to questions asked on the "*Application Questionnaire*," and during the interview itself. Additional questions may need to be asked. Remember to watch body language, voice tones, avoidance of the questions, etc.

Motivation:

(Indicators to look for: Reasons not well thought out. Does the person have a sense of purpose, a "*what can I give*" rather than "*what can I get*" attitude? Is he/she too eager to be a parental role model? Would he keep serious issues a secret? Is she too emotional towards working with children?)

1. What interests you most about working in a children's ministry?
2. What age group interests you the most? Why?
3. What "*rewards*" - feelings do you get from working with children.
4. If a child came to you and said they had a secret to tell you and asked that you not tell anyone, then they proceeded to tell you that they are being abused (physically, emotionally, etc.), how would you handle the situation?

(The respondent should never agree to keep such secrets, but should immediately report the incident to church leaders. The church leaders should then contact the appropriate legal authorities. Do not inform the parent if the parent is the abuser since doing so may endanger the child even more.)

5. If you disagreed with the church's policy on children and abuse, how would you address the issue? (You're looking for a biblical response here.)

Experience / Background

(Indicators to look for: Difficulty holding jobs, difficulty with authority, extensive dealings with children to the exclusion of adult relationships or an over involvement of one age group. Does the applicant use this time to complain? Does he avoid giving details? Has he had disciplinary problems? These are character issues that can lead to problems.)

1. Tell me about your employment history - a brief overview.
2. Have you ever been terminated from a job? For what reason? (Again, this addresses character. If a person has difficulty keeping a job and always blames the employer, he may have an issue with authority.)
3. Have any of your jobs involved dealing with children?
4. Have you ever been in the military?

What age did you join?

Why did you join?

What type of discharge did you receive? (If someone joined to get away from family relationships, get an explanation)

5. How long have you been associated with this local church?
6. How long have you worked in children's ministries? In what capacities?
7. Have you ever been asked or forced to resign from ANY church related or non-church related children's groups?
8. Is there anything in your past that would cause this ministry concern with regard to your working with children?
9. Are you physically and emotionally able to perform the functions as a children's ministry worker without endangering the health and safety of the children?

Friends and Socialization:

(Indicators to look for: Lack of long term adult friendships, overly involved with certain children, inability to keep friends, relationships are exclusively with one sex, involvement in a children's ministry is not consistent with rest of lifestyle.)

1. What do you do for recreational time?
2. Without names, describe your friends. (Looking for friends same age, interests, etc.)
3. How long have you known your best friend (excluding your spouse)? Do you speak or see them regularly?

4. Do you have any ongoing relationships or friendships with children? Explain. What is your relationship to that child's parent(s)? Do you have their consent? (This could be legitimate such as "Big Brothers," etc. EXPLORE!)

Spiritual Background:

1. Tell me about your conversion. How did you come to know Christ as Savior?
2. Have you been scripturally baptized by immersion?
3. What churches have you belonged to since being saved? Where is your current church membership? Are you willing to unite with this church and support its ministry?
4. How often do you read the Bible? Do you have a regular prayer time?
5. How have you grown spiritually in the last year?
6. What changes have taken place in your life during that time?
7. When was the last time you shared your testimony or witnessed to an unsaved person?
8. Do you tithe or give regularly to the church?
9. If married, does your spouse support you getting involved in children's ministry?

Miscellaneous:

(Indicators to look for: Irresponsibility for other's safety. Have steps been taken to correct or change violations or actions?)

1. Have you had any serious motor vehicle violations or accidents?
2. Have you ever been convicted of DWI or DUI? How long ago?
3. Have you ever been arrested or convicted of a criminal offense? Explain. How long ago?
4. Have you ever been suspected of, charged with, or convicted of any type of assault or abuse? Explain

Interviewer's Comments:

Interviewer's Signature

Sample

Children and Youth Worker Agreement New Life Baptist Church Any Town, USA

1. WHEREAS children are the heritage of the Lord (Psalm 127:3), and are born as the result of the direct creative act of God, and constitute a vital ministry of this church, we declare that the lives of our church children are very precious to us.
2. THEREFORE, all efforts must be taken to prevent emotional, physical, or sexual abuse of our church children.
3. As a worker in the Children's Program, I understand it is completely outside the scope of my ministry to engage in any practice that would intentionally harm a child emotionally or physically.
4. As a worker, I also agree not to engage in any behavior that would involve sex or sexuality with any child. That includes inappropriate touching, intimate sexual contact, sexual gestures, sexual jokes and statements, exhibitionism, actions or speech designed to arouse sexually, and actions or speech designed to encourage sexual experimentation.
5. I agree not to discuss sexual issues or sexuality with any child under legal age without written permission from a parent or legal guardian.
6. I understand that sexual abuse of a minor child is a crime, and that this church, its workers, and its members (including myself) are expected to cooperate fully with any and all law enforcement agencies when such abuse is alleged to have occurred.
7. I have read the church's sexual abuse guidelines and agree to abide by them.

Signature

Date

Witness

Date

All About Me

My name is: _____

My address is: _____

My parents are: _____

I was born: _____

My phone number is: _____

I like to sleep on my:

- back
- stomach
- side

When I take my bottle, please:

- hold me in your arms
- place me in a carrying seat with my bottle
- _____

Mother says I may:

- be held and rocked
- creep on the floor
- play in the playpen
- eat crackers

Special care and allergies;

In case of an emergency, please contact: _____

Phone number (if different from above): _____

Medical Release Form

In the event we cannot be reached during an Emergency, I (we) the undersigned give permission for our child to be treated by a licensed physician, and for said physician to administer whatever care is necessary, including anesthesia, for their safety and care.

_____ Date

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Please note below any medical allergies, problems, medications being taken or other information that is pertinent.

Are there any concerns or special circumstance of which we should be aware in order to best meet the needs of your child?

In order that we might locate you as quickly as possible should the need arise, please answer the following questions:

- Where would we find you during the Sunday School hour?
- Where do you usually sit in the sanctuary?
- Where would we find you on Wednesday evenings?

| | | | |
|---|--------------|------|--------------|
| For Parents of children younger than first grade: | | | |
| My son/daughter _____ may be released to the following person(s): | | | |
| Name | Relationship | Name | Relationship |
| Signature of Parent or Guardian | | Date | |

| | | | |
|---|--------------|------|--------------|
| For Parents of children first through sixth grade: | | | |
| My son/daughter _____ has my permission to leave the classroom after Sunday School or Children's Church (parents should instruct their child where to meet them). Child will otherwise remain in their classrooms until picked up unless this permission is signed. | | | |
| Name | Relationship | Name | Relationship |
| Signature of Parent or Guardian | | Date | |

Field Trip Permission

For Parents of children age four through sixth grade:

Occasionally teachers arrange field trips as an enhancement to the curriculum. Every effort will be made to make sure that parents are informed of the specifics of such outings as they occur. Signed permission will be assumed effective for the school year. Children without signed permission slips will not be permitted to leave the church building.

My son/daughter _____ has my permission to attend field trips as part of the church's related activities.

| | | | |
|------|--------------|------|--------------|
| Name | Relationship | Name | Relationship |
|------|--------------|------|--------------|

| | |
|---------------------------------|------|
| Signature of Parent or Guardian | Date |
|---------------------------------|------|

For Parents of children from birth through sixth grade:

I give permission for photos of my child _____ to be used in church publications.

Name

| | |
|---------------------------------|------|
| Signature of Parent or Guardian | Date |
|---------------------------------|------|

Sample Nursery Book

The following pages (87-97) contain a sample booklet that can be given to the parents of nursery-age children concerning nursery guidelines and the church's sexual abuse prevention program.

Get To Know Your Nursery



**A Ministry of
New Life Baptist Church
Any Town, USA**

... Our Purpose



The Purpose of our Nursery Ministry

The nursery program at New Life Baptist Church is designed to help each child:

- Associate God, Jesus, and the Bible with positive, happy feelings;
- Know that Jesus is a very special friend who loves him or her;
- Think of our church as his or her church - a place where people love him and help him have happy experiences;
- Think of home as a place of love and security;
- Have positive feelings about himself or herself and a healthy sense of appreciation and worth;
- Begin to show love, respect and acceptance of others;
- Make progress in sharing, communicating, and responding to others in appropriate ways.

A Word to Nursery Parents

Thank you for entrusting your precious little one to our care. We want our nursery to be a safe and happy place for your baby while you attend the worship and teaching times.

The CRIB NURSERY and TODDLER FACILITIES of New Life Baptist Church are designed to serve infants and toddlers (**birth to 24 months**), their parents, and the church as a whole. By providing loving care for little children, we are helping them form the impression that church is a pleasant place.

In order to achieve our purpose, we ask that you please honor the following guidelines which have been designed with the welfare of your child in mind.

1. For the protection and safety of our children TWO workers are required to be in the nursery at all times. We would ask that you please stay with your child in the nursery until BOTH workers are present. Do not leave your child in the nursery unattended or if there is only one worker present.
2. On your baby's first visit to the nursery, please complete the "ALL ABOUT ME" form, giving any special instructions you feel might be helpful and return it to the nursery workers.
3. Please sign in your baby on the sign-in sheet each time you bring your baby to the nursery. Note any special instructions the workers should follow.
4. Make sure your diaper bag is tagged with your baby's name on it. In addition, all your child's belongings (bottles, clothing, pacifiers) should be marked with his/her name.
5. Equip your baby's diaper bag with the following items: diapers, plastic bag (for wet clothing or cloth diapers), extra training pants, extra plastic pants and a complete change of clothes. Also include a pacifier and enough bottles for the baby's stay in the nursery.
6. Bottles brought by the parents will be given to babies in accordance with the parent's instructions, but please do not ask workers to otherwise feed your child. Workers are never to give crackers, cookies or any other type of food to children (without parental permission). Some children are allergic to certain foods.
7. Please do not bring your child to the nursery if he has signs of any contagious illness such as: fever, cough, runny nose with colored mucous, "pink" eye, etc. Nursery workers may NOT give any medications. If your child requires medication, you must come to the nursery and administer it.
8. For safety and health reasons, please leave your child at the nursery door and wait at the door for your child to be brought to you when you return. Do not linger in the nursery area. Your baby will adjust to his new surroundings more quickly if you leave the room as soon as you have signed the sign-in sheet. If crying persists, a nursery worker will come for you.
9. When the service is over, return for your baby as soon as possible. Your baby will be returned ONLY to YOU or to another adult designated by you in writing in advance. Please do not send older siblings for the baby.



10. Only babies and toddlers under 24 months of age, nursing mothers, and scheduled nursery workers are allowed in the nursery.
11. Mothers of babies in our nursery are asked to assist in the nursery once or twice each month and must complete our application and screening process.

Take a few minutes to check over the above instructions. You can help us immensely by following these guidelines. Thank you for your cooperation in enabling us to provide the best care possible for your child.

Our nursery staff thanks you for your help
in making our nursery a safe place where babies receive loving care!

(Proverbs 22:6)



From Home Every Child Needs:

Love

Every child needs to feel

- . . . that his parents and teachers love, want, and enjoy him
- . . . that he matters very much to someone
- . . . that there are people near him who care what happens to him

Security

Every child needs to know

- . . . that his home is a good safe place where he can feel secure
- . . . that his parents will always be on hand, especially in the times of crisis when he needs them most
- . . . that he belongs to a family or group

Acceptance

Every child needs to believe

- . . . that his parents and teachers like him for himself, just the way he is
- . . . that they like him all the time, not only when he acts according to their ideas of the way a child should act
- . . . that they always accept him, even though often they may not approve of the things he does
- . . . that they will let him grow and develop in his own way

Independence

Every child needs to know

- . . . that both parents and teachers want him to grow up and that they encourage him to try new things
- . . . that they have confidence in him and in his ability to do things for himself and by himself

Faith

Every child needs to have

- . . . a set of moral standards, based on his belief in God and understanding of the Bible as the inspired Word of God
- . . . a belief in the human values of kindness, courage, honesty, generosity and justice

Guidance

Every child needs to have

- . . .friendly help in learning how to behave toward persons and things
- . . .grown-ups around him who show him by example how to get along with others

Control

Every child needs to know

- . . .that there are limits to what he is permitted to do and that his parents and teachers will hold him to these limits
- . . . that though it is normal to feel jealousy or anger, he will not be allowed to hurt himself or others when he has these feelings



Guidelines for Nursery Workers

(These guidelines are included in this booklet so that you as a parent can be familiar with the standards and procedures our nursery workers are to follow in caring for your children.)

Working with nursery age children is a ministry to the Lord, and to parents with small children as well as to the entire church family. The safety, welfare, and nurture of the children entrusted to the nursery and children's ministries of this church are of utmost importance. This is a sacred trust given to us by God and by the parents of the children involved.

In light of the growing incidents of child abuse in homes, schools, communities and churches, the following policies and procedures are to be followed at all times to protect the children entrusted to our care from potential abuse as well as to protect our workers and church.

Procedures for Workers:

1. Nursery workers must be at least 15 years of age and must complete the Child Safety screening process adopted by this church.
2. There are to be two approved workers present in the nursery at all times, one of which must be an adult female. Parents must wait with their child until both workers are present before they may leave their child.
 - a. Be present in the nursery at least 10-15 minutes BEFORE the start of the service, and stay in the nursery until your replacement arrives or the last child is picked up by its parents. NEVER leave one worker in the nursery alone.
 - b. Do not work in the nursery if you have been sick within the past twenty-four hours or if you have a sore throat.
 - c. If you cannot work in the nursery at the assigned time, it is YOUR responsibility to arrange to switch dates with another approved worker AND to notify the nursery leader.
3. Only children under 24 months of age should be permitted in the nursery. Older children should not be allowed to play in the nursery or to help care for the smaller children since the church could be held liable for any injuries which might occur.
4. Greet the parents and children with a warm, friendly smile.
5. If a baby is new to your nursery or no information is on file, have the parents complete the "*ALL ABOUT ME*" form and place it in the appropriate file. (Regular attenders should update their forms every three to six months.)
6. Every baby's parents must register on a sign-in/sign-out sheet EACH TIME the baby is brought to the nursery. **Make sure the sign-in sheet is filled out completely each time the child is brought to the nursery.**
 - a. Place a name tag on each child and its belongings (diaper bag, coat, etc.)
 - b. Use the same crib for the same baby each week, if possible.

7. Children must be picked up by the parent who signed the child in or by an adult designated in writing at the time of sign in. Do NOT allow older brothers, sisters or friends to pick up the children from the nursery.
 - a. Whoever picks up the baby needs to sign the baby out on the sign-out sheet.
 - b. Remain in the nursery until all children have been picked up by their parents. **Do NOT** allow the children to leave the nursery nor to wander about the church during or after the service.
8. Wear shoes with low heels and dress comfortably. Do not wear necklaces, bracelets or dangling earrings that babies or small children might grab and swallow.
 - a. Do not get involved in detailed conversation with other adults (including co-workers). **Remember that your first responsibility is to the children.** They need your full attention. For the same reason, do not turn on a loud speaker to listen to the church service.
9. Check each child during the service and just prior to the close of the service for wet or soiled diapers. Change diapers immediately as needed. Be sure every child is clean and dry before returning the child to the parent.
 - a. Two people must be present whenever diapers are changed. Diapers should be changed in full view of the other workers in the room.
 - b. Only female workers are to change diapers or help toddlers in the bathroom
 - c. Always keep one hand on the baby at all times while changing his diapers.
 - d. Be sure to wash the baby's posterior with a wet nap.
 - e. Wet or soiled disposable diapers should be placed in a plastic bag and taken home for disposal. Do not leave them in the nursery or restroom. Wet clothing should be placed in a plastic bag and sent home with the parent.
 - f. Wash your hands after changing a child's diapers or clothing.
 - g. Sanitize the changing table area and wash your hands after EACH diapering!
 - h. Be sure small children wash their hands after they use the restroom.
10. If a child falls, bumps his head, is scratched by another child or is injured in any way, call the parent immediately and report the incident to the nursery leader right away.
 - a. If one child bites or scratches another, breaking the skin or causing a bruise, call the parents of both children. A child who becomes sick may not remain in the nursery. Summon the parent to come and get the child.
11. Do not bring any food or beverages into the nursery and do not give children anything to eat or drink unless it has been provided for them by their parents. After giving a baby a bottle and burping him, place the bottle in the baby's diaper bag. If a baby spits up, clean up immediately.
 - a. Replace lids and caps on bottles, cups and jars securely. Mothers dislike sticky bags and their contents.
 - b. To avoid choking, never put a baby to sleep alone in a crib with a bottle or food.
 - c. Do not allow children to share food they brought from home with other children.
 - d. No food should be left in the nursery.
 - e. Do not administer any medications to the children under your care. If a child is required to take medication while under your care, the parent **MUST** come to the nursery and give the medication.

12. Keep sides of cribs up at all times.
 - a. Do not wake babies in cribs unless the parents request it or it is time for babies to leave.
13. NEVER shake nor spank an infant or young child. Use a firm "no" and physically remove the child from the problem area. If a problem persists, call for the parent.
14. Straighten up nursery before leaving. Change the crib sheets after EVERY SERVICE or EACH TIME a different baby uses it (whichever comes first). Leave the room clean and ready for the next use.
15. Notify the nursery leader of any incidents out of the ordinary (ex. worker not showing up, complaint from parent, injury to child). Inform her about supplies that need replenishing.

Child Abuse Guidelines

Child abuse is defined as contact or interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of that adult or another person. It includes physical acts such as genital or oral stimulation, fondling, digital penetration, anal or vaginal intercourse, and nonphysical acts such as indecent exposure or displaying pornographic pictures to the child.

A worker who suspects child abuse could be held liable (along with the church) for failure to report suspected abuse. Because nursery workers care for the basic physical needs of young children, they are in a position to see signs of child abuse. You must report any suspicion of abuse if:

1. A child tells you that they have had sexual contact with a person over 18 years old.
2. A child tells you they have been tricked or forced into sexual contact with another child or adult, or that they have been used sexually in photographs, films or videos.
3. A friend or acquaintance of a child reports to you that the child has reported such abuse to them.
4. Physical evidence of sexual abuse is discovered such as lacerations and bruises; irritation, pain or injury in the genital area; difficulty in urinating; discomfort when sitting; blood on diapers or underpants.
5. An adult openly admits to you that they or someone they know has committed an act of sexual misconduct with a child.

If you suspect child abuse has occurred (at home, school, church, etc.), inform the nursery supervisor immediately. The supervisor will then inform the pastor or pastoral staff and they will notify the parents and the proper authorities.

Children Learn What They Live

*If a child lives with criticism,
He learns to condemn.*

*If a child lives with hostility,
He learns to fight.*

*If a child lives with ridicule,
He learns to be shy.*

*If a child lives with tolerance,
He learns to be patient.*

*If a child lives with encouragement,
He learns confidence.*

*If a child lives with praise,
He learns to appreciate.*

*If a child lives with fairness,
He learns justice.*

*If a child lives with security,
He learns to have faith.*

*If a child lives with approval,
He learns to like himself.*

*If a child lives with acceptance and friendship,
He learns to find love in the world.*

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- ¹ Irene Loewen, *Child Sexual Abuse in the Church* (online: www.directionjournal.org)
- ² Patrick M. Moreland, *You Can Help Prevent Child Sexual Abuse at Your Church* (online: www.churchbusiness.com)
- ³ *Policy Guidelines for Ensuring the Safety of Children in the Church* (Spring Arbor Free Methodist Church, Spring Arbor, Michigan), p. 3.
- ⁴ Mark Clayton, *Sex Abuse Spans Spectrum of Churches* (The Christian Science Monitor, April 05, 2002, online: www.csmonitor.com)
- ⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶ Moreland.
- ⁷ Richard R. Hammar, Steven W. Klipowicz, and James F. Cobble, Jr., *Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church* (Matthew, NC, Church Law & Tax Report, 1993), p. 19.
- ⁸ Hammar, Klipowicz, and Cobble, p. 20.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- ¹⁰ C.L. Barnhart, editor, *The American College Dictionary* (New York, NY: Random House, 1959), p. 813.
- ¹¹ Hammar, Klipowicz, and Cobble, p. 22.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 45.
- ¹³ Steven W. Klipowicz, *Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse Training Manual* (Matthews, NC: Church Law & Tax Report, 1993), p. 30.
- ¹⁴ *Policy Guidelines for Ensuring the Safety of Children in the Church*, p 3,4.
- ¹⁵ Hammar, Klipowicz, and Cobble, p. 15.
- ¹⁶ *The Report of the Winter Commission*, 1990, Vol. 1, p. 118.
- ¹⁷ *The Effects of Child Sexual Abuse* (taken from the Internet, no address available)
- ¹⁸ Roger Katz, *Psychosocial Adjustment in Adolescent Child Molesters* in *Child Abuse and Neglect*.
- ¹⁹ *Sex Abuse Spans Spectrum of Churches* (The Christian Science Monitor, April 05, 2002, online: www.csmonitor.com)
- ²⁰ Salter, A.C., *Predators: Pedophiles, Rapists and other Sex Offenders: Who they are, how they operate, and how we can protect ourselves and our children* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), p. 36-37.
- ²¹ *Eight Common Myths about Child Sexual Abuse* (www.leadershipcouncil.org)
- ²² *Ibid.*
- ²³ Hammar, Klipowicz, and Cobble, p. 42.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 51,52.
- ²⁵ Loewen, p. 7.
- ²⁶ Hammar, Klipowicz, and Cobble, p 65.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 91.