



ABUSE PREVENTION & RESPONSE GUIDE



**COLORADO
BAPTISTS**

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ABUSE PREVENTION & RESPONSE GUIDE 2023

(Colorado Baptists recognize a great debt to Oklahoma Baptist for allowing us to utilize and modify your model and work found in Oklahoma Baptist's Abuse Prevention and Response Guide)

"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock."

1 Peter 5:2-3

Sexual abuse is widespread and permeates every aspect of our society. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that one of every three women and one of every four men have experienced sexual violence involving physical contact. While these statistics are staggering, they only begin to tell the entire story. Actual incidents of sexual abuse far exceed the number of reported incidences because most survivors never report their abuse. Out of every 1000 incidents of sexual abuse, only 25 abusers ever face incarceration.

Churches are not immune to these statistics. A sexual sin saturated American culture is the milieu of the local church. 68% of churchgoing men and 50% of pastors view porn on a fairly regular basis (Barna, 2016). An American Psychological Association survey found that nearly one in four men and one in five women had committed adultery. Sexual sinners are part of the local church. Sexual sin breeds sexual sin. Consequently, church leadership is often overwhelmed by the scope of the problem and how to deal with it. Leaders are further confused on best practices and how to best implement them in church settings. Areas to address include abuse prevention, abuse response, and survivor care and advocacy. How can a church develop better policies to better protect its most vulnerable members? How can a church screen and train its volunteers and employees to improve safety and security of its ministries? How can church leadership shepherd survivors through the devastation of abuse and promote healing and restoration? While the answers to these questions are complex, this guide is designed to provide **general** structure and guidelines that can be a **starting point** for church leaders who are working to implement effective prevention and response policies and practices.

Disclaimer: The information contained in this entire guide and supplemental material is **general** in nature and is **NOT** intended to provide neither clinical nor legal advice. Colorado Baptists encourage each church to consult with licensed mental health and legal counsel when implementing policies and practices in their ministry settings.

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Disclaimer: The following suggested best practices are provided for informational purposes only and are not a substitute for professional advice specific to your facts and circumstances. Furthermore, each Colorado Baptists affiliated church or ministry is different and unique and the suggested best practices guidelines should be considered with your particular ministry or church circumstances and facts in mind. Please note, not all of the suggested best practices are currently feasible for all Colorado Baptists affiliated ministries and churches. We hope a sincere effort to evaluate a Colorado Baptists affiliated church or ministry's capabilities and resources is considered to implement best practices that are lasting and effective.

No one viewing or reading the suggested best practices should act or refrain from acting based solely on the content herein of the suggested best practices without seeking professional legal counsel and professional consultation regarding the affiliated ministry or church's specific needs. The Colorado Baptist General Convention, known also as Colorado Baptists, expressly disclaims all liability relating to actions taken or not taken based solely on the content herein of the suggested best practices.

To make our churches safe from abuse, we must be proactive. Developing policies and procedures ahead of time, training and educating staff and volunteers, as well as partnering with abuse experts will set your church up well to be a safe place for your community. It is up to the pastors and leaders of a church to lead this charge. Here are Five Essential Action Steps to begin to protect your church from predators who seek to prey on the vulnerable among you and to care for victims and survivors of abuse:

THE FIVE ESSENTIALS

"But you, God, see the trouble of the afflicted; you consider their grief and take it in hand. The victims commit themselves to you; you are the helper of the fatherless."

PSALM 10:14

1

2

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ABUSE-RELATED EDUCATION

Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. (Proverbs 3:13-14)

ABUSE PREVENTION

Keep me safe, Lord, from the hands of the wicked; protect me from the violent, who devise ways to trip my feet. (Psalm 140:4)

CRISIS RESPONSE & CARE

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. (Psalm 147:3)

ASSESSMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. (Ephesians 4:25)

CONTINUING CARE

The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. (Psalm 9:9)

STEP 1

ABUSE RELATED EDUCATION

"Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you." - Proverbs 2:11

Abuse prevention is the goal of church preparation. In keeping with the Gospel mandate, churches are welcoming places and rely on volunteers to effectively run ministries. These two factors make churches a soft target for predators. Pastoral staff and volunteers don't become sexual predators; sexual predators become pastors and church volunteers to provide opportunities for victimization. Therefore, it is essential for church staff and congregation members to become aware of the methods of predators to best protect every member of, and visitor to, the church body.

TRAINING ALL STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Church staff and volunteers should regularly attend training to help identify and prevent sexual abuse. The time and energy invested in abuse related education is well worth the potential victims you will help protect. There are many excellent ministries and online resources willing to train your staff and volunteers. Sample Online Training Resources (not exhaustive but a suggestive sampling):

- ◆ **Becoming a Church That Cares Well for the Abused (SBC)** - This training curriculum handbook, introductory video, and 12 lesson videos bring together top experts from various fields to educate and help leaders implement best practices for handling a variety of abuse scenarios at church, school, or other ministry.
- ◆ **Darkness to Light Online Training Modules** - D2L has six different online child abuse training modules for a fee. They can be accessed anytime.
- ◆ **Freedom for the Captives 4 hour Training:** This free training can be viewed by any church if you simply fill out a form on the FFTC website. The viewer can view the videos at their own pace, and each video has an online test so a church can know that a volunteer or staff member working with students has completed the video and understood the information.
- ◆ **Reducing the Risk online video training:** This 5 session online video based training discusses creating a safe environment, recognizing child sexual abuse, screening and selection of volunteers, principles of supervision, and dealing with an allegation. Created by legal expert Richard Hammar, JD, LLC, CPA. There is a fee for this resource.
- ◆ **Brotherhood Mutual: Child Protection in a Ministry Environment** - Guidelines for Ministry Workers offers a host of ideas to help churches develop policies and practices to prevent and deal with abuse in ministry settings. A church simply completes a form and can then download the PDF version.

- ◆ **MinistrySafe:** This comprehensive child abuse prevention and response online service is accessed for a fee. However, they have extensive online video trainings in areas such as sexual abuse awareness training, screening volunteers and employees, provide a background check service, child safety training, how to create and implement ministry policies and procedures, protecting vulnerable adults, and many others.
- ◆ **GRACE Valued Conference Videos:** On the GRACE (Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment) website there are many videos that address child abuse in faith communities and can be accessed free of charge.
- ◆ **Protect My Ministry:** This background screening and abuse related training for volunteer service is accessed by churches for a fee. They provide background checks, online volunteer training, and other associated child abuse prevention ideas.

The protection of vulnerable populations is well worth any time and money spent on equipping members to serve as protectors. "Speak up for those who have no voice; seek justice for those on the verge of destruction." - Proverbs 31:8

It is equally advisable for the congregation as a whole to receive awareness and prevention training. Personal training is not sex education. It teaches what is and isn't appropriate touching and behavior, and how inappropriate behavior should be reported in a multitude of settings (not just in the church).

AWARENESS OF GROOMING PRACTICES

The Gospel of Matthew tells us to beware of wolves in sheep's clothing. This verse directly speaks of false prophets, however sexual predators may easily fall into this category. 90% of child sexual abuse victims know their abuser, and up to 93% of abusers self-identify as religious. Unfortunately, churches are fertile ground for perpetrators as there is often a high degree of trust placed in volunteers and staff. While churches cannot forsake the high level of trust, there must be an equal level of accountability.

Sexual perpetrators use positions of trust and authority to create opportunities where they are alone with potential victims. These offenders gain the trust of parents and others to allow for environments of compliance where little to no physical force is needed to coerce victims. A grooming behavior is one that psychologically or relationally moves potential victims into a position of trusting and needing the potential abuser which allows him to abuse that trust and violate the victim. **Here are several grooming behaviors of which to be aware:**

- ◆ Gifts or special attention given to a specific child/victim
- ◆ Offering activities intentionally devoid of parents, in order to gain access to victims (for example, a coach has a sleepover for children to give parents "a night off")
- ◆ Attempts to get a child/victim alone, giving them one-on-one special time and attention
- ◆ Increased physical touch to a child/victim
- ◆ Helping a child break rules (many offenders will hold the guilt [for breaking the rule] over the child's head in order to keep them submissive and fearful)

- ✦ Shaming or blaming of a child/victim
- ✦ Inappropriate communication with a child/victim over the phone, internet or social media
- ✦ Focusing on a situation of need to capitalize abuse opportunities: (for example a family with more than one child, one of whom has cancer, the abuser will often give special attention to a sibling of the sick child in order to use the vulnerable situation to the abuser's advantage.)

Profile of an Abuser: Some or a combination of these may be present.

- ✦ Seek control
- ✦ Are prideful and blame others for their sin
- ✦ Are deceitful and highly manipulative
- ✦ Are driven by selfishness and their behaviors benefit them
- ✦ Often play the victim
- ✦ Can appear as the most helpful or friendly person "on the block"
- ✦ Constantly push the boundaries of set policies, or ignore them (they often have to be reminded of the safety protocols)
- ✦ Exploit confused young people exploring their sexuality (the offender can also be a youth who is confused about their sexuality and "experiments" with younger children)
- ✦ Exhibit the traits of minimization, rationalization, justification and denial

PERSONAL SAFETY TRAINING FOR CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS

The church and the family should provide appropriate training for children and teenagers. It is our responsibility to protect them by training staff, volunteers, and the children themselves. Young people should be made aware of what is appropriate and inappropriate touching and behavior. They should also be told how and when to report such behavior. This training helps to protect a child not only within the church setting, but also in other settings (home, school, sporting activities, etc.). Abusers are experienced manipulators who often twist scripture. Arming children with information helps them to spot lies which will ultimately protect them from the spiritual damage that accompanies sexual abuse. Perpetrators seek to normalize deviant behavior in order to condition victims (and others) to trust them.

When designing or choosing training programs for children and adults, it is important to seek professional advice. Those with experience in the area of sexual misconduct know best which curriculums and protocols to follow.

THE BEST DEFENSE AGAINST SEXUAL ABUSE

Adequate training and rigidly enforced policies are the best way to prevent sexual abuse within the church setting. If exceptions are made to regulations and policies, it opens the door for sexual abuse as well as church liability. When volunteers and staff are on alert for the signs of grooming and potential abuse, as well as applying safety policies to everyone (without exception) it will be difficult for a predator to gain unsupervised access to exploit children and other victims.

MANDATORY REPORTERS

In the state of Colorado there are over 40 categories of mandatory reporters (see Colorado Revised Statute 19-3-304, hereafter known as CRS). The following categories of mandatory reporters may directly relate to any church setting:

- ✦ Clergy members (pastors, elders, and all ministers)
- ✦ Employees in private or public school
- ✦ Childcare providers
- ✦ Any medical or mental health professional
- ✦ Law Enforcement employee
- ✦ Director, coach or assistant coach (athletics) within private institutions

If a mandated reporter has reasonable cause to know or suspect any form of abuse or neglect** (see below), **they are mandated by law to report** to the county department of human services, local law enforcement agency, or through a child abuse reporting hotline system. If it is an emergency, 911 should be contacted immediately. If it is not deemed an emergency call : 844-CO-4-KIDS (844-264-5437) within 48 hours. Up to 75% of actionable cases in Colorado come from mandatory reporters. *There can be legal consequences for mandatory reporters who do not report.*

**Categories of victims required within mandatory reporting are: Minors under 18, elderly, and at risk adults. See CRS 18-6.5-108

STEP 2

ABUSE PREVENTION

*Keep me safe, Lord, from the hands of the wicked;
protect me from the violent, who devise ways to trip my feet.*

PSALM 140:4

A. IMPLEMENT CHURCH-WIDE SAFETY POLICIES AND PRACTICES

All churches should formulate policies for employee and volunteer behavior that seeks to protect against potential abuse.

- ✦ Formulating good policies, requiring practices that match those policies, and responding well to violations of policies are all ways to protect and shepherd your congregation.
- ✦ Policies are often seen as a way to protect an organization from future liability.

As God's people we should prioritize protecting the vulnerable over risk management, people over the organization.

- ✦ Liability should not be our motivation in creating or avoiding good safety policies and practices. We must change this mindset and understand that good policies are a means to love and care for people well by keeping them safe from harm.
- ✦ Making and following good policy for abuse prevention is God-honoring and a way to protect the individuals within your church, not just the church itself. In protecting individuals, we are also protecting the church. We honor Christ by caring for His people.
- ✦ While liability is not our motivation, having a policy and following it will reduce church liability.

Conversely, having a policy and not following it will likely result in greatly increased liability exposure.

SAFETY POLICIES AND PRACTICES

When determining specific policies and practices, it is important to understand the church's increased responsibility when working with children, youth, and vulnerable populations. Some safety policies and practices include:

- ✦ **Children Check In/Out Policy** – Ensure children are only allowed to leave with an approved adult.
- ✦ **Hall Monitor Policy** – Designate a volunteer to circulate throughout the building during service times to ensure that no adults are alone with a child, youth, or vulnerable persons.

- ✦ **Two Adult Policy (two is good, three is better)** – Require at least two adults to be present when a child, youth, or vulnerable person is present in all circumstances. Volunteers under the age of 18 do not count towards this rule because background checks on them cannot be efficiently conducted.
- ✦ **“Know Your Church” Policy** – A volunteer should be known to your church for a specified length of time and by a specified number of leaders in order to be eligible to volunteer. However, this rule should not be used as a substitute for adequate screening. A minimum of six months attendance in your church is a ministry recommended standard.
- ✦ **Respect for a Child’s Privacy Policy** – Ensure that children, youth, and vulnerable persons are guaranteed privacy when they are changing or going to the bathroom. This applies to giving them privacy from both adults and minors. Not only should privacy be maintained in the church setting, but also at off-site activities like retreats and church camps.
- ✦ There should be a diaper changing policy that requires the diaper changing to be in line of sight, public, reflecting improved supervision, reducing isolation, and enhancing accountability.
- ✦ Preschool aged children should use group restroom time where one adult is in the restroom with them and the other adult is supervising the other waiting children and can visually see the other adult.
- ✦ **Open Doors Policy** – Have an open-doors policy at your church (unless the door is outfitted with an unobstructed window). This applies to all doors (except bathroom/restroom/shower doors), not just doors in the children and youth areas. This prevents private areas that could easily be utilized for abuse while still allowing for confidential, but not secluded, conversations.
- ✦ **No Sexual Jokes or Behaviors Policy** – It is never appropriate to permit anyone to engage in sexual jokes, innuendo, or behaviors. This is just one more avenue that predators can use to groom and begin to break down the defenses of the community.
- ✦ **Transportation Policy** – It is important to establish a policy with respect to transportation to/from church events to prevent one-on-one settings and opportunities for predators to gain access to victims under the guise of being “helpful” and offering rides.
- ✦ **Online/Social Media Policy** – Social media policies should include all online and mobile platforms and should specifically address all forms of communication involving minors or vulnerable adults. These policies should be published, clearly communicated, and updated regularly as online and social media options change. For examples of several church policies visit churchmarketinguniversity.com/social-media-policies-churches-ministries.
- ✦ **Overnight Policy** – The two adult policies should be followed for all overnight activities. Additionally, chaperones should be provided for each gender. Children, youth, and vulnerable persons should never share a bed with an unrelated person.
- ✦ Further church resources, including sample policies and procedures, can be found at <https://www.brotherhoodmutual.com/resources/safety-library/publications/guidelines-for-ministry-workers/guidelines-for-ministry-workers/>.
- ✦ **Camera/Recording/Electronic Measures** – Some churches will have the capability and resources to add another layer of protection and assist in prosecution by adding monitoring cameras in each room for preschoolers, children, and teen ministries. Hallways should be camera monitored also. A recording device, such as a high terabyte DVR or other comparable system allows you to go back and see what has happened and to what person by whom. Additional color and recording of sound also allows

additional levels of protective monitoring. These systems can never be used in restrooms/bathrooms/showing areas and not with direct exposure of children in diaper changing areas. Investment in these measures potentially increases supervision, decreases isolation, and provides increased accountability to volunteers and staff. These actions should be carefully considered as to the appropriateness and potential liability the church may incur.

B. FORM A SAFETY TEAM TO DEVELOP, REVIEW, AND IMPLEMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES

No matter the size of your church, it is helpful to put together a safety team to help develop, review, and implement safety policies and practices to prevent abuse.

- ◆ The team should include both male and female members.
- ◆ The team should be made up of both church employees and church members whose background could contribute expertise or a unique perspective to the area of abuse prevention. For example, consider members of your congregation with background in law enforcement, social work, counseling, law, medicine, and education.
- ◆ All team members should go through a screening process and abuse training prior to serving on the team with ongoing training.

If your church needs advice in forming a safety team, or if your church does not have adequate resources to form a team, please contact Colorado Baptists for assistance at (303) 771-2480.

C. SCREEN ALL CHURCH EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS FOR POTENTIAL RISK

It is critical that churches have a methodical process for recruiting and screening employees and volunteers to ensure they are suitable for service and compatible with the church's safety policies and practices. Best practices around recruitment of employees and volunteers will lower the risk of abuse and increase safety for everyone within your church.

In today's climate, it is not sufficient to select employees and volunteers because they are "known" within the church or to skip screening steps in a hurried effort to quickly fill vacant positions. Instead, a formal screening process should be used for all employees and volunteers, regardless of personal connections or length of church membership.

Depending on the position, a formal screening process could include a combination of the following:

- 1. Written Application:** A written application allows you to gain a lot of information about a person in an efficient manner. The application should contain the standard questions necessary to run a background check.
- 2. Background Check:** Background checks must be conducted on all employees and volunteers on a regular interval (or example, annually). Background checks are critical, but they are never a guarantee that a person is safe. When choosing a background check provider, it is important to choose a provider that requires several points of information. Background check resources for Colorado can be found at cdec.colorado.gov/background-checks

3. Reference Check: Reference checks are a tool when screening for new employees or selecting volunteers. However, references are not helpful unless you follow through and talk to the references. A reference check should always occur prior to hiring or volunteer service. It is recommended to gather a few references and to ask those references for more references.

4. Interview: An interview is a time to be face-to-face with the potential employee or volunteer. Direct questions about prior jobs and volunteer service may be helpful. It is also a time for you to educate the applicant about your church, ministry areas, and safety policies and practices. You should ask the potential employee or volunteer if they have any questions or concerns about the safety policies and practices. The applicant's reaction may be a helpful indicator of the level of buy-in the applicant has regarding the safety policies and practices. It is best practice that the applicant signs and dates a Safety Policy and Practice document after they have read it and had an opportunity to ask questions.

5. Internet Check and Social Media Review: In an era in which most people have an online and/or social media presence, it is helpful to review an applicant's social media history for concerning content that could indicate improper behavior. Red flags that are often found on social media are inappropriate pictures, suggestive or even explicit comments, and excessive commenting and interest in children or students by someone older. You may find some of these red flags, or you may come across other information that indicates this person is not a good fit for ministry service.

D. CONCLUSION

Being thorough in our hiring of staff and volunteers for children's and youth ministries requires effort—it takes seriously the duty of the shepherd to protect the flock. It also heeds Jesus' words in Matthew 18:6, "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea."

Increasing our levels of awareness and consistency for abuse-related prevention will not only help us in hiring staff or volunteers but also in making it much more difficult for abusers to have access to children. Screening staff and volunteers, especially those who work with children, teenagers, and vulnerable adults should go beyond a simple background check. We should also require an application process, reference check, interview, internet and social media search, and orientation and training. Working with children, teenagers, or vulnerable adults is not a right.

There may be potential volunteers who walk away and don't go through the process because of the added hassle, but we must do our very best to protect access to those who are susceptible to abuse and ensure their safety.

Please contact Colorado Baptist General Convention at (303) 771-2480 for assistance related to abuse prevention, abuse response, or survivor care.

STEP 3

CRISIS RESPONSE AND CARE

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

Psalm 147:3

Church leaders are often called to the difficult and sensitive task of shepherding victims through the devastation of abuse. This section of the guide seeks to aid church leadership among Colorado Baptists with a biblically-grounded, victim-centered approach to responding to disclosures of alleged sexual assault, abuse, and/or domestic violence.

A. SAFETY FIRST: REPORTING ABUSE WHEN THE VICTIM IS A CHILD, TEENAGER, OR VULNERABLE ADULT

While pastors have the responsibility to protect and ensure the safety of victims regardless of the age or capacity of the person being harmed, the responsibility they have to the civil authorities' changes depending on the age of the victim. When the victim is a minor or vulnerable adult, the following guidelines are critical.

Definition

Sexual abuse is any sexual activity or harassment, with perpetrators exerting power over the other, making threats, or taking advantage of victims not able to give consent. It also includes non-contact acts such as exhibitionism, exposure to pornography, voyeurism, and communicating in a sexual manner by any means. The absence of force or coercion does not diminish the abusive nature of the conduct.

CRISIS RESPONSE AND CARE

1. Reporting to Civil Authorities

Reporting to civil authorities is mandated in Colorado when the victim is a minor or vulnerable adult.

Who Must Report?

▶ Every staff member or church leader who has reason to believe, has observed, or has been told that a child or vulnerable adult has been abused is mandated by law to report suspected abuse.

IF YOU SUSPECT ABUSE OR NEGLECT, TAKE THE FOLLOWING ACTION:

Contact the Colorado Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline: 844-CO-4-Kids (844-264-5437).

If the child is in imminent danger, contact 911 or local law enforcement.

- ✦ Failure to report is a misdemeanor.
- ✦ A person reporting in good faith will not be held criminally liable.
- ✦ The name of the person reporting is always kept confidential.

When to Report?

- ✦ A report should be made when there is reasonable cause to believe that a child or vulnerable adult has been abused, neglected, or is in danger of being abused. When in doubt, report to the local Child Protection Services and/or law enforcement and allow them to decide whether to investigate or not.
- ✦ A report of suspected abuse is only a request for an investigation.
- ✦ These investigations are handled by the Colorado Department of Human Services.
- ✦ When determined that a crime may have been committed, the Colorado Department of Human Services will work with law enforcement.

Facts About Reporting:

- ✦ Understand that it is the law to immediately report any allegation of abuse.
- ✦ It is not the church leader's responsibility to determine the validity of the claims.
- ✦ Church leaders often hesitate to report allegations of abuse for fears of damaging relationships with members of the congregation or making a false report. Neither of these concerns should prevent individuals from following the law and putting victims or potential victims' safety and security first.
- ✦ When the Colorado Department of Human Services is notified of the alleged abuse, the church leadership can immediately shift its focus to victim care and the safety of the church body.

B. CARING FOR THE VICTIM(S) OF ABUSE IN THE MOMENT OF CRISIS

1. Receiving a Disclosure Regarding a Minor or Vulnerable Adult

EXAMPLE OF HOW TO RESPOND IF SOMEONE REPORTS AN ALLEGATION OR REPORT OF SEXUAL ABUSE AGAINST A MINOR:

Reply:

"Thank you for having the courage and integrity to come forward with this information. You have done a good thing that allows us to ensure that the children in our care are safe and protected."

Action Step:

Record the name, phone number, mailing address, and e-mail address of the person giving the report. (From Brad Hambrick's "[Response Plan for Sexual Abuse Against a Minor in Church](#)")

ABUSE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE GUIDE | Responding with Care and Honor

2. Receiving a Disclosure from a Minor or Vulnerable Adult

- ✦ Communicate that what has happened to the victim is not ok. Do not express anger or shock.

Provide confidentiality. Make sure the conversation is not overheard.

Listen to them with humility, empathy, and compassion. Stay present with them (and don't jump ahead too quickly.) Express deep remorse about what happened to them.

Provide suggested responses to express care, honor and assurance:

"Thank you for telling me what happened. I believe you. It took great courage for you to share this. What happened to you is NOT okay and it's NOT your fault. I am so sorry you have suffered this way. This grieves the heart of God. He loves you and cares deeply about you. He will carry you through this and we're going to walk through this with you. We're going to do whatever we can to keep you safe. I'm going to call people who will help make sure you're safe."

Listen to what he/she voluntarily shares. It's best not to ask the child specific questions. Best practice is for the child to be interviewed by someone certified in forensic interviewing. Asking questions, pressing for, or suggesting information may compromise the investigation and compromise prosecution of the perpetrator.

Look for opportunities to ask questions designed to give the survivor choices, a voice, and the ability to control the situation, for example, whether they would like someone else in the room.

- ✦ Let the victim know you are required to share with someone who can help.
- ✦ Do not prod or investigate further. Your role is NOT to act as an investigator.
- ✦ A report to the Colorado Department of Human Services must be made in all cases involving a minor or vulnerable adult.

If a competent adult makes the disclosure of victimization, encourage them to file the report themselves or offer to do it together. However, you are NOT a mandated reporter for a competent adult.

- ✦ A report can be made anonymously.
- ✦ Assure the adult or minor that it is not necessary to remember every detail or to provide proof to file a report.

Provide a list of local law enforcement, qualified counselors, and attorneys well versed in sexual abuse situations to provide additional emotional support to the child and/or caregiver.

End the conversation as soon as information is gathered.

After the conversation has ended, write down what the child expressed, using his or her own words.

Documentation is important.

3. Select a Church Liaison for the Victim and Victim's Family

- ✦ Consistent and transparent communication between the church leadership, the victim, the abuse liaison, and the authorities (if applicable) is essential.
- ✦ Church leadership should select a trustworthy member of their church body, preferably one trained in victim advocacy and ministry safety, to be the primary contact for the victim and family of the victim.
- ✦ This designated individual needs to keep the victim informed of all the church leadership's actions prior to and during all steps of the process.
- ✦ This victim's liaison should not be a spokesperson for the victim, but a source of communication to and from the church leadership.
- ✦ The liaison will also communicate updates regarding the victim's progress, and how the victim's needs (both spiritual and practical) are being addressed.

4. Responding To the Alleged Perpetrator

This assumes the alleged offense happened on church property, at a church-sponsored event, or involves a victim that is an attender or member of the church.

Safety of victims and the vulnerable is a priority.

When possible, meet with the alleged abuser and communicate clear rules and expectations for attendance, participation, and communication. When determining a policy for how to deal with an accused perpetrator, it is crucial to remember our first priority is always to the survivor of abuse and protecting potential victims. It is wise for us to receive all disclosures as credible until outside professionals demonstrate otherwise.

- ✦ Ideally, the alleged perpetrator should not be allowed on campus until cleared by the proper authorities. If the allegations are unsubstantiated, the church leadership needs to carefully consider the victim's needs when they consider the alleged perpetrator's return or participation in worship and ministries. Err on the side of safety and security.

In order to protect survivors and the congregation, churches should consider immediate action to set strict and immediate boundaries when dealing with accusations of child sexual abuse, including:

- ✦ Restricting access to church property and events during the deliberative process.

Our standard of access should be at least as strict as a school's standard would be during this period.

- ✦ Assigning the accused a church leader to act as their liaison to the church.
- ✦ Encouraging the accused to listen to sermons and or teaching online or in podcasts, taking them the Lord's Supper, and sending prayer requests through their liaison are all encouraged (in other words meet their spiritual need so off the church campus).
- ✦ It is wise to have law enforcement and other local experts help you make these types of decisions.
- ✦ Under no circumstances should church leadership ask the survivor and perpetrator to participate in a "reconciliation" or any other meeting involving both parties.

Communication

- Share this situation in person with people on a need-to-know basis in order to protect the survivor's privacy to the maximum extent possible. That would include the Security/Safety Team, Children's Minister, Student Minister, Senior Leadership, and, depending on the situation, parents of minors who came in contact with the perpetrator.
- Designate a point person (staff member or lay leader) to respond to questions that arise.
- When you do talk about it (per above bullets), use the opportunity to reiterate the church's commitment to safety of minors and vulnerable others.

Counseling

- Encourage/recommend biblical counseling (ideally with someone experienced in this area) for the perpetrator given our commitment as the Body of Christ to discipleship and care.
- If the perpetrator's family is part of the church, suggest counseling for them as well.

NOTE: When a victim has a Protective Order/ Restraining Order in place, it is inappropriate for the alleged abuser to be at church or church-related events.

B. ASSESSING AND REPORTING ABUSE FOR COMPETENT ADULT VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE OR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

While there are many types of domestic abuse including verbal, emotional, spiritual, and financial abuse, this guide deals primarily with illegal domestic abuse.

*Recommended Resource on how to handle other types of domestic abuse: Strickland, Darby A. *Is It Abuse?* (New Jersey: P&R Publishing: 2020).

Adult victims of sexual abuse and domestic violence usually disclose to church leadership because of a pre-existing relationship, an expected level of trust with her or his church, and the need for support and care. We must be good stewards of this trust and responsibility.

Reporting Domestic Abuse:

- Reporting abuse to law enforcement is the competent adult's choice.
- Allowing the competent adult victim to choose to report or not restores the victim's voice.
- The decision to take legal action against an abuser is difficult and one that should be made under advisement from a counselor or abuse advocate who has experience with abuse cases.

Regarding Disclosures of Sexual Abuse:

- Victims have most likely been threatened not to tell.
- Victims often experience great shame.
- Victims fear what they will have to endure if they tell someone.
- Victims fear that they won't be believed.

Disclosures of Domestic Violence:

- ✦ Victims often bring their story to a pastor or church leader they trust only after seeking counseling repeatedly, reading every marriage book, and praying fiercely for change and relief (see Strickland, *Is it Abuse?* 105).
- ✦ Victims know something is terribly wrong but may fail to even recognize that the oppression they have experienced is abuse.
- ✦ Victims may even defend the abuser and blame themselves.

The most dangerous time for a victim of abuse is when they are considering separation for safety and the time period just after they leave.

ABUSE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE GUIDE

An Important Note about Counseling: Best practices are not to begin with marriage counseling but rather to individually help each person work on their own issues with separate counselors. In marriage counseling the healthier spouse will be self-reflective and accept personal responsibility for his or her personal failures. This becomes problematic when abusive behaviors are going on. Why? Because oftentimes the victim is blamed for the abuser acting out both by the abuser and sometimes by the counselor or pastor (see Hambrick, *Becoming a Church That Cares Well for the Abused*, 110-112).

DO NOT Investigate the Allegations; Believe the Adult Victim:

- ✦ You may find it hard to imagine what the victim is alleging—especially if the alleged abuser’s public presentation is deceptive.
- ✦ The victim may even tell an incoherent story and use language that is not normally used in a church setting.
- ✦ Regardless of your underlying assumptions, a victim’s small disclosures should sound a warning signal.

Do not underestimate the danger facing a victim and a victim’s children. You must take the abuse seriously, taking care not to put anyone in the path of more danger.

After Disclosure, Avoid Unintended Revictimization of the Adult Victim:

- ✦ After an initial disclosure, church leadership should in no way investigate, question, or seek to find any other information from the victim.
- ✦ Church leadership should not request or require the victim to disclose to a different audience (elders, other church members, etc.). Again, it is the competent adult victim’s choice whether or not to report.
- ✦ The victim has disclosed something very sensitive, and questioning can often infer disbelief or blame.

After a disclosure, a church leader should become a comforter and protector.

For more information, see *Developing a Safety Plan for Domestic Violence Victims* (Appendix III: Domestic Violence Safety Plan).

C. FURTHER STEPS WHEN THE ACCUSED IS A PASTOR OR CHURCH LEADER

1. If the abuse is against a minor or vulnerable adult, the abuse is illegal. Report to the Colorado Department of Human Services immediately. Contact The Colorado Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline: 844-CO-4-Kids (844-264-5437).

If the child is in imminent danger, contact 911 or local law enforcement.

2. All allegations of abuse to a minor or vulnerable adult should also be reported to Colorado Baptists when a pastor, a church employee, or volunteer is accused.

c. The most updated database of alleged abusers is public and can be found at

<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/22040155-list-of-alleged-abusers-sbc>

d. The SBC Hotline for reporting abuse by pastors, church employees, or church volunteers can be reached directly at 202-864-5578 or SBChotline@guidepostsolutions.com.

3. Access resources provided by Colorado Baptists to help guide you in caring for the victim(s).

4. Put the minister, employee, or volunteer on a leave of absence. Though every person is “innocent until proven guilty” in our legal system, when reports of abuse are levied against a church leader, that person should be placed on a leave of absence until the legal process is complete.

A credibly accused pastor, denominational worker, ministry employee or volunteer includes one who has confessed in a non-privileged setting, who has been convicted in a court of law, or who has had a civil judgment rendered against them. Additionally, an independent third party who has been hired by any church or other Baptist body, may determine, by preponderance of the evidence following an inquiry, that a pastor, denominational worker, or ministry employee or volunteer is credibly accused. A “preponderance of the evidence” is the legal standard required for a civil judgment.

5. Confiscate church technology from the alleged abuser immediately. Though private property cannot be confiscated, any technology owned by the church can be reclaimed. This step prevents altering or deleting any of the information relevant to the investigation. Law enforcement may want to review these items as well.

“A common and potentially lethal mistake is a church leader who decides to take matters into his or her own hands and investigate or confront the abuser. This is unwise and dangerous in so many ways—it puts the victim in great danger and may negatively impact a criminal investigation.”

-SAMANTHA KILPATRICK

Responding with Care and Honor

- a. Provide a list of local law enforcement, qualified counselors, and attorneys well versed in sexual abuse situations to provide additional emotional support to the child and/or caregiver.
- b. Listen to them with humility, empathy, and compassion. Stay present with them (and don't jump ahead too quickly.) Express deep remorse about what happened to them.
- c. Provide suggested responses to express care, honor and assurance:

"Thank you for telling me what happened. I believe you. It took great courage for you to share this. You're bringing something dark and evil out into the light. What happened to you is NOT ok and it's NOT your fault. I am so sorry you have suffered this way. This grieves the heart of God. He loves you and cares deeply about you. He will carry you through this and we're going to walk through this with you. We're going to do whatever we can to keep you safe. I'm going to call people who will help make sure you're safe."

- d. Ask open-ended questions: "Would you like to tell me more?" or "What happened next?" If it's a child, simply listen to what he/she voluntarily shares. Don't prod further. It's best not to ask the child-specific questions. *Best practice is for the child to be interviewed by someone certified in forensic interviewing.*
- e. Look for opportunities to ask questions designed to give the survivor choices, a voice, and the ability to control the situation. Even simple questions like whether they would like someone else in the room.

It is the responsibility of each affiliated church to select which resources are utilized in creating safe environments for attendees. Below is the list of some of the more helpful resources discovered during the research of the task force.

Education/Awareness/Training

- ✦ *Becoming a Church That Cares Well for the Abused Handbook*
- ✦ Darkness to Light Training, www.d2l.org
- ✦ *How Much is a Little Girl Worth?* by Rachel Denhollander
- ✦ Ministry Safe, ministriesafe.com
- ✦ Praesidium Academy, www.praesidiuminc.com
- ✦ Protect My Ministry, www.protectmyministry.com
- ✦ *On Guard: Preventing and Responding to Child Abuse at Church* by Deepak Reju
- ✦ *The Child Safeguarding Policy Guide for Churches and Ministries* by Basyle Tchividjian & Shira M. Berkovits
- ✦ ECAP (The Evangelical Council for Abuse Prevention), www.ecap.net
- ✦ *Responding Well - A Guide to Women's Ministry Leaders*
- ✦ *GRACE: Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment*, www.netgrace.org
- ✦ DSS Published Mandatory Reporting Guidelines: A list of further resources, as recommended by the National Task Force, can be found at sataskforce.net.

STEP 4

ONGOING RESPONSE AND EVALUATION

"Therefore, each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body."

Ephesians 4:25

Our churches should be taking the proper steps to prevent abuse because it is the right thing to do for any organization. Following proper reporting procedures when abuse occurs is required by the law, even legally mandated for ministers, teachers, and pastors. Churches have a biblical responsibility to go well beyond the minimum required to ensure the safety and security of its attendees and members, especially the most vulnerable. Churches are called to be institutions of Christ that must exhibit both a high level of trust and accountability.

"The church is called by God to tend to His lambs. We are not called to protect our institutions nor do we protect the Name of God or truth of truth by covering up sin and/or crime. TO do so is to 'protect' the cancer- the cancer kills. We honor God by caring for the wounded and by dragging sin into the light and calling it by its right name."

—DIANE LANBERG

Our final two steps take us past the immediate point of crisis and helps us develop habits of continual assessment and care of survivors of abuse. The primary goals of Step 4 are to ensure each of the following responsibilities are addressed on an ongoing basis:

1. Maintaining safety and care of the victim(s) and family
2. Ensuring the safety and care of the church body
3. Communicating appropriately about the abuse inside and outside the church body

A. MAINTAINING SAFETY AND CARE OF THE VICTIM(S) AND FAMILY

1. Continue to consider and care for the needs of the survivor. Each survivor walked through a unique nightmare of abuse. Some may need ongoing medical treatment to heal from physical damage. Certainly, most will need ongoing mental health treatment. Others may simply need a listening ear as they process

what has happened to them. Some may need assistance discerning legal options for reporting and holding the perpetrator responsible and accountable for their actions of abusing another. Others may need further steps of care and assistance to protect them from a still dangerous situation.

NOTE: If you are talking to an adult who was abused as a child, a question that needs to be raised with the victim is, "Does your abuser have any access to minors, elderly, or vulnerable adults at this time?"

2. Be diligent to protect survivor's confidentiality. Protecting the identity, story, and family's identity of the survivor is paramount. A survivor should always be consulted about who they want to be told about their abuse and when. Timing and delivery is everything. Although it is important to communicate with the congregation when abuse occurs (see below), it is NOT necessary to identify the survivor or break their trust by identifying enough details that others could figure out who is the victim. DO NOT BREAK THEIR TRUST BY IDENTIFYING THEM! Include only those people who are absolutely necessary and have been welcomed by the survivor and/or those they give permission to tell. It might even be advisable to have them give you written permission as options in writing are more clear and well communicated.

B. ENSURING THE SAFETY AND CARE OF THE CHURCH BODY

Abusers are master manipulators and are often able to abuse many victims before getting caught, if they ever do get caught and held accountable for their crimes. Because of this, there may be other victims in your church or ministry setting who have not reported their abuse. In church contexts, we often know the accused abuser. Often their own spouses will fail to recognize that what is being done to them or their children is abuse. We cannot rely on what we think we know about a person or outward appearances of spiritual and good behavior. Abusers are often the BIG FOUR: control-seekers, selfish, deceitful and highly manipulative, and prideful, often blaming others for their sin (Darby Strickland, *Is It Abuse?*).

A. A SPECIAL NOTE ON ABUSERS WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH

- a. Statistics show that abusers are often well spoken, well liked, and more often believed than the victim.
- b. Church support and pastoral care often rally around the abuser.
- c. An abuser is often an exemplary church and/or community member.
- d. If an abuser is married, he is often working hard to reconcile his marriage while the victim may be resisting efforts towards reconciliation.
- e. Many times, the abuser immediately and sorrowfully repents when confronted with the truth. Abuse is still evil and a crime; he needs to be held legally and relationally accountable. Report the abuse as mandated by law!
- f. Church leaders and/or the church body may prematurely accept the abuser's repentance without accountability and watching for long term fruit like repentance and turning oneself into the proper authorities, seeking and actively participating in professional treatment and finishing those treatment plans, staying away from vulnerable adults and children as well as their victim(s) over the long term, and being willing to accept the legal consequences for their abusive behavior of others.

g. NOTE: It is critical to remember to not prioritize repentance and reconciliation over safety and security of victims and potential victims. Maintain rigid protections of the survivors and shepherd them carefully. Always prioritize safety and security!

B. RED AND YELLOW FLAGS (INDICATORS) OF ABUSE:

RED Flags (Very Serious Warning Signs)

1. Providing alcohol/tobacco/drugs, and/or pornography to a minor or vulnerable adult
2. Voyeurism ("peeping Tom") - likes to watch others without them knowing
3. Contributing to the delinquency of a minor
4. Criminal solicitation of a minor
5. Public indecency
6. Exhibitionism
7. Assault of any kind
8. Sexual assault (or any sexual in nature crime, no matter how minor in your thinking)
9. Homicide
10. False Imprisonment
11. Kidnapping
12. Injury to a child/elderly/disabled/vulnerable adult
13. Abandoning or endangering a child
14. Matters related to interference with child custody
15. Failure to stop or report the aggravated sexual assault of a minor/child

YELLOW Flags (Serious Warning Signs)

Any of the following felony or misdemeanor offenses within the last 10 years.

1. Driving under the influence or while intoxicated by any mind altering substance
2. Possession/Distribution of a Controlled Substance
3. Making a firearm accessible to a child without supervision or training.
4. Theft, including identity theft

On average, a child molester will have between 50-100 victims before getting caught (Hambrick)

ACTION STEPS TO TAKE WITHIN THE CHURCH

1. Examine the list of roles and positions the alleged abuser held and determine if and where he had access to other potential victims.
2. If the alleged abuser had access to any other children, minors, or vulnerable adults, consider having members of the response team, along with one staff member present, help facilitate communication with the parents of other children in the church.

3. Give an overview of what happened without mentioning any names or giving any identifying information that would assist others from figuring out who the victim(s) were.
MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY OF THE VICTIM(S) BUT PROTECT OTHERS. THAT IS THE BALANCE.
4. Give helpful ideas of how to talk with children.
5. Explain the response plan of the church.
6. If other abuse victims disclose their abuse, initiate safety planning and care with the response team.
7. Inform Colorado Department of Human Services (Specifically Child Protective Services reporting hotline) of both the plan to contact other victims and the results of the investigation.
8. If there are any parachurch or other ministry or community organizations affiliated with your church, or using your facilities (i.e., Celebrate Recovery, MOPS, AA), make sure the abuse allegations are shared with them. They need to check with their membership to investigate potential victims or harm to their membership. Coordinate your church response plan with them and CDHS as necessary.

COMMUNICATING THE ABUSE WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE CHURCH BODY

1. In all communication protocols, be open and transparent with your church body.
2. As with any situation within an organization, it should be expected that some information and/or awareness will become public knowledge with some of the members or staff of the church congregation and can cause unnecessary grief and added victimization.
3. The church leadership should decide what needs to be communicated to the church body in general and what needs to be only communicated to smaller segments of the church body.
4. The information should be communicated to involve the staff, the victim's family, and the alleged abuser's family AT A MINIMUM before anything is communicated to the full congregation.
5. A statement should be prepared in writing to inform any involved staff, even if it is decided that no statement be made to the church congregation.
6. The congregation should hear only the truth and facts of the case while showing evidence of caring for the victim (while protecting their confidentiality), the alleged perpetrator, and the congregation members. Many in the congregation may have their own abuse stories.
7. It may be prudent to prepare a media statement. One individual should be designated by the church leadership as the spokesperson to speak on behalf of the church to the media. All staff should be advised to direct all media inquiries to the designated spokesperson.
8. Do not hide nor fail to disclose important and vital information about what has occurred. Open and transparent disclosure of all the facts of the alleged abuse and abusers, minus the names and identities of the victims, will help facilitate other potential victims to disclose potential abuse and to warn other parents/caretakers of the alleged abuser. Church members and staff may know other roles the alleged perpetrator may have fulfilled outside the church with minors or vulnerable adults. Your staff and church body are your allies and it is biblical to protect them with information.

STEP 5

CONTINUING CARE FOR SURVIVORS AND OTHERS AFFECTED BY ABUSE

"The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble."

Ps. 9:9

"Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to Him, for God is our refuge."

Ps. 62:8 NIV

Ministry to all who are affected by an abuse situation will be a long and challenging process. One of the hardest realities our churches must face is that survivors of sexual abuse and abuse-related trauma will likely carry wounds their entire lives. Thankfully, through Christ's love and strength, survivors can experience levels of comfort and healing that only God can give. This makes the responsibility of the church to offer care even more important. We must continue to walk alongside victims, survivors, and all who are affected by abuse for as long as God gives us opportunities.

"When a congregant shares the deep wound of abuse, she will need to hear that she is clean and covered because of the blood of Jesus (Heb 10:22). She will need to hear that Jesus was a man of sorrows and is acquainted with the deepest grief (Isa 53:3). She will need to hear that she can draw near to the throne of grace and receive mercy and help in her time of need (Heb 4:16). She'll need to be reminded that Jesus and God, the Father, love her."

—TRILLIA NEWBELL

A. Important Statistics on Survivors of Abuse:

Adult women who were sexually abused as a child are more than twice as likely to suffer from depression as women who were not sexually abused.

1. One out of three women and 1 in 4 men have experienced sexual violence involving physical contact in their lifetimes. Additionally, 1 in 3 women and about 1 in 9 men experienced sexual harassment in a public place. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
2. Adults with a history of child sexual abuse are more than twice as likely to report a suicide attempt.
3. Females who are sexually abused are three times more likely to develop psychiatric disorders than females who are not sexually abused.

4. Among male survivors, more than 70% seek psychological treatment for issues such as substance abuse, suicidal thoughts, and attempted suicide (Caring Well).

B. Continued Follow-Up with the Victim and Church Integration: *As shepherds of the congregation, it is the church leadership's responsibility to ensure care for the victim and the victim's family.* One of the most important tasks of a shepherd is to keep track of the sheep.

1. Long-term ministry to survivors of abuse should involve more of a church's resources than just the work of paid staff. Churches should seriously consider assisting and possibly helping procure mental, physical, and spiritual health services to aid in their healing and recovery. Churches should be familiar with and help survivors find and access appropriate counseling for survivors as necessary.

2. Survivors need to be seen, heard, and understood, repeatedly over the long haul of their recovery. They need Christians who are willing to walk beside them in their process of healing however long it takes. Love, patience and perseverance to advocate for the ongoing healing and recovery process for survivors communicates God's love and care for them. Enduring as witnesses to their abuse and suffering validates their disclosure and ongoing pursuit of their recovery.

3. The church leadership, the victim's liaison, and the response team should be in constant contact with one another and the victim.

4. It is advisable to have weekly check-ins and written communication between all involved. Personalized texts and emails are good opportunities to communicate care and concern for survivors.

5. All involved should offer consistent prayer support, both in personal prayer times and with all involved when appropriate.

6. A trustworthy and compassionate brother or sister in Christ (*of the same gender as the victim*) should check in regularly on the person's levels of sleep/rest, eating habits, exercise, overall mental health, spiritual life, and spiritual practices.

7. Ongoing care for survivors of abuse need to experience repetition by church leaders and the "Care Team" of the following message: "What happened to you is not ok, and we're committed to doing everything reasonable and in our power to protect you and others from it ever happening to someone else." It's critical that church leadership takes active steps to follow through and advocate for institutional and systems change. This communicates care and concern for victims and aids in their recovery as it honors their courage and work to heal.

8. Survivors need churches that are dedicated to repairing the institutional cultures that enabled violations to initially, and sometimes, continue to occur.

9. Church leaders need to create, recreate, and seek to maintain a safe space for survivors to continue to tell and retell their stories. This means maintaining a long term pastoral posture of nonjudgmental listening, empathy, confidentiality, and empowerment of what they do with their stories. Church leaders and churches need to honor their decisions and offer ongoing, long term support as they seek healing and restoration from abuse.

C. Providing Education and Maintaining Protection Protocols Long-Term: *The 5 Essential Steps must be followed in our churches for as long as we exist.* As a result, we must maintain our commitment to these regular routines of ministry:

1. Renew backgrounds checks and training certifications at least annually.
2. Participate in and provide additional abuse-related training on a regular-basis when offered through Colorado Baptists or other trustworthy providers.
3. When possible and advisable, speak publicly and preach and teach on the biblical issues of social justice and care for the oppressed and abused. Proclaim God's concern for the plight of the abused and neglected and our need to protect and care for those maltreated.
4. Consider organizing a "Care Team" for the purposes of:
 - a. Continually walking alongside victims/survivors within the church.
 - b. Continually assessing the church's strengths and weaknesses in abuse prevention and care.
 - c. Church leaders and the "Care Team" need to be prepared to address survivors' spiritual questions like: "Why did God allow this to happen to me?", "God, do I matter to you?", and "How could a loving God and His servants allow me to suffer like this?", and "Do you care how much this hurt me?" Spiritual leaders need to carefully negotiate the "hearts' hurts" of survivors and gently lead them towards the healing and answers that only God Himself can provide.
 - d. Make space for survivors to lament over grievous harm done to them. Honor their courage and lament (Psalms and Lamentations in particular are filled with God's people lamenting the brokenness of this fallen, imperfect world).

NOTE: This team should be made up of both men and women to provide a broad range of perspectives. Members of the team should include church staff but should also include church members who work in counseling, mental health, medical professions, elementary or secondary education, law, or other related fields whenever possible.
5. Utilize trustworthy local partnerships when possible. This might include local trauma-informed mental health providers, counselors, physicians, social workers, law enforcement resources, child services, domestic violence advocacy groups, or others with expertise in abuse prevention and care.

REMEMBER: The goal of the church's response to abuse is to care well for the victim(s) and ultimately, to integrate the victim(s) into the church body for continued healing, growth, and the glory of God.

APPENDIX I 3 TIER APPROACH

TIER 1

PREVENTION

- Review existing and/or establish policies within your affiliated church
- Mandatory background checks for any person working with or supervising minors
- Train leaders and volunteers specifically about sexual abuse education, prevention, and proper care for survivors
- Offer clearly written guidelines for appropriate interactions, touch, and relationships

TIER 2

- Require written application for volunteers working with minors
- Require members or attendees to be actively involved for six months before serving minors is permitted
- Review law changes annually and inform leaders and volunteers of applicable changes to policies and procedures
- Plan a sexual abuse recognition, lament, and healing day for the entire affiliated church

TIER 3

- Require leaders to provide character references and speak with those references
- Utilize local Child Protective Services personnel to provide further training for leaders and volunteers

MONITORING

- A minimum of two volunteers always be in every setting when overseeing minors
- No adult and child alone together in a bathroom
- Follow Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) diapering guidelines

RESPONSE

- Clear mandatory report policy in place and understood by all leaders
- Leaders are trained to properly respond to an accusation by caring first for the survivor

- Volunteer safety team and/or paid uniformed officers present
- Manned check-in stations for parents
- Only parents and approved volunteers are allowed in areas where minors are being supervised

- Up-to-date list of local law enforcement and other authorities on hand and distributed to leaders
- Detailed reporting process given to all leaders

- Cameras monitoring all public spaces and classrooms
- Adults are not permitted to use designated bathrooms for children

- Form, equip, and empower a sexual abuse task force liaison team

APPENDIX 2

INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA CHECK GUIDELINES

In an era in which most people have an online presence, it is helpful to review an applicant's online information for red flags or any content that could indicate improper behavior. A general Google search may yield helpful information. Are there any news articles written that include their name?

By searching the applicant online, you may be able to ascertain what the applicant values, their level of discernment, and how they interact with children. Red flags that are often found on social media are inappropriate pictures, suggestive or even explicit comments, and excessive commenting and interest in children or students by someone older. You may find some of these red flags, or you may come across other information that indicates this person is not a good fit for ministry service.

Some questions to consider:

- ◆ Do the applicant's posts contain language/content that would be deemed inappropriate for a volunteer/staff serving with minors in a church setting?
- ◆ Who are the applicant's friends? Does that raise a red flag? For example, if the applicant is in his 30's or 40's and a large portion of his friends are young teenage boys, this might be a red flag.
- ◆ What sites is the applicant affiliated with? Are the movies, music, and other items of interest on their social media telling in some way?

All of these items provide a profile of the applicant's personal life that help to determine if the applicant is the type of person the church would consider to be a positive influence for minors.

Potential inappropriate social media posts could include:

- ◆ Inappropriate pictures
- ◆ Suggestive or explicit comments or affiliations
- ◆ Language or content that would be deemed inappropriate for service in a church setting

APPENDIX 3

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SAFETY PLAN

1. DANGER ASSESSMENT FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS

- Help a domestic violence victim recognize danger.
- Help a victim develop a safety plan for herself and her children.
- If she wants to go to law enforcement, aid her in these efforts (Hambrick, 81).

ENCOURAGE THE VICTIM TO WORK WITH EXPERTS EVEN IF THE EXPERTS AREN'T BELIEVERS. THESE "PERSONS OF PEACE" CAN BE ASSETS, JUST LIKE THE NON-BELIEVERS IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES WHO WORK ALONGSIDE MISSIONARIES (HAMBRICK, 28).

- Local law enforcement: _____
(local phone numbers)
- District attorney's office: _____
- Abuse advocacy organizations: _____

If she feels more comfortable working alongside the church, begin with the Danger Assessment below.

FOLLOW THE ACRONYM "DANGEROUS" TO ASSESS FOR COMMON RISK FACTORS OF VIOLENCE IN YOUR LIFE.

Below are nine indicators that increase your risk of danger. Check all that apply.

- D**ivorce or Separation
- A**lcohol or Drug Use
- N**arcissistic tendencies or disordered personailty of the abuser
- G**uns or weapons in the home
- E**ntitled attitudes and behaviors
- R**ebellious - history of being unwilling to obey authority figures
- O**ther history of violent behavior
- U**nstable mental health history
- S**uicidal or homicidal threats or history

(This assessment is outlined in more detail in the book, *Becoming a Church that Cares Well for the Abused*, Hambrick, 81).

"[Safety Planning] is essential when physical abuse has occurred—but even if it has not yet happened, plan for a victim's safety. Sin intensifies over time, and controlling people can change their tactics, if needed, to maintain their domination. We do not know when an abuser will become dangerous, so a safety plan is always required."

DARBY STRICKLAND (STRICKLAND, 114)

2. DEVELOPING A SAFETY PLAN FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- A victim is often struggling with her own feelings about the abuse and may be unwilling to take immediate steps towards safety.
- Abuse tends to escalate in frequency and severity over time.
- When there is a history of physical violence or even threats of violence, no matter the perceived severity, it is important to develop a safety plan with the victim.
- Handle these situations with great care and patience.
- A hasty intervention or pressuring a victim to act can tempt a victim to become defensive of her abuser and even shut out Church Leadership (Hambrick, 87).

A SAFETY PLAN DOES NOT INVOLVE TAKING ANY IMMEDIATE ACTION OTHER THAN PLANNING.

Use the following guidelines when coaching a victim through the development of a safety plan.

(These principals come from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services "Crisis Line Handbook," 10-20).

BE EMPOWERING

Recognize that the victim will ultimately have to implement the safety plan herself.

BE ENCOURAGING

We will serve victims well by locating places in Scripture where God's people fled danger.

BE PATIENT

It is common for it to take months for the abused person to be ready to act.

BE RESOURCEFUL

Remember that an individual usually needs resources beyond what a church can provide.

SAFETY PLAN

This safety plan, provided by Darby Strickland in *Is It Abuse?*, is a practical way for you to stay safe while you remain in your home, as you are planning to leave or asking your spouse to leave, and even afterward.

The plan provides a variety of steps you can take to safeguard yourself and your children. It is important to remember that abuse is unpredictable and planning ahead can be very helpful. As you fill out the

form, check the boxes of the steps that you are willing to take and fill in the blanks with the needed information.

The National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-7233) provides help for victims, their friends, and their families. Use this resource for assistance in safety planning (Strickland, 307-317).

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS TO TAKE WHEN AN ARGUMENT OCCURS AT HOME

Sometimes arguments escalate, and it is hard to predict when violence might start or reoccur. Here are some ways I will protect myself. I do not need to wait until physical violence occurs during an argument in order to take action.

- If an argument with my husband begins, I will attempt to move to a room that does not have weapons and has at least one exit—preferably two. I will avoid rooms such as the kitchen, where there are knives, and enclosed rooms such as bathrooms. Safe rooms that fit these criteria are:
 - 1.
 - 2.
- I will keep my purse and car keys in this location:
(one that allows me to grab them and go).
- If I am concerned for my safety, I can leave my home using a door or a window. My way out of my home will be: _____.
- If I have to leave my home, I will go to _____
or _____.
- I will remember that I am free to call the police any time I have concerns.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS TO TAKE IF I REMAIN AT HOME

- I will keep my phone charged and accessible.
- I will make and hide a spare car key and place it in this location: _____
_____.
- I will practice using my chosen escape route.
- If my husband uses drugs or alcohol, I can _____
and protect myself and children by _____ while he is using them.
- If I sense that an argument is brewing, I can _____.

- I can tell _____ about the abuse and ask them to call the police if they overhear a fight or violence.
- I will choose _____ as a code word and let my children, as well as trusted contacts such as: _____ and _____ know that they are to call the police if I use the code word.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS TO TAKE IF THERE ARE CHILDREN IN THE HOME

- Children are often around and want to help when abuse occurs. Teach them how to get help safely while staying out of harm’s way.
- I will teach my children how to call 911 and give the dispatcher our address.
- When I teach my children how to call 911, I will explain that they might need to use the number for help in an emergency—for instance, if Mommy falls and hurts her leg.
- When violence is escalating, I will not go to where my children are.
- I will instruct my children not to get verbally or physically involved in any arguments, fights, or danger. But I will empower them to help me in other ways (such as calling 911 or getting out of harm’s way).
- I will locate a safe room for the children.
- I will remind my children of the code word: _____ and teach them to call the police and to leave the house when they hear it.
- I will explain to my children that when they leave the house they should go (for example, to a neighbor’s mailbox) or should call _____.
- I will help my children practice escaping. We will identify and rehearse how to use a way out of our home, such as a door or a window. Their way out of the home will be _____.
- I will ask my children who they are comfortable talking with for support.
- I will ask my children if they are aware of the abuse.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS TO TAKE WHEN I LEAVE OR PREPARE TO LEAVE

- A victim is in the most danger when she is leaving or planning to leave—so I will need to be careful.
- If it is safe for me to do so, I will begin to gather essential items and documents—making copies if necessary—and can leave them with _____. (See chart on page 35 for necessary documents.)

- I will begin to establish financial independence by opening a line of credit or a bank account by this date:
- I will keep emergency cash or gift cards on hand and easily accessible.
- I will call the National Domestic Violence Hotline and have them review this safety plan (1-800-799-7233).
- I will keep essential numbers in my phone at all times (see chart) and can give a backup list of these numbers to
- I will keep my phone charged and carry a charger with me.
- I will ask _____ if I can stay with them and leave extra belongings with them.
- I will pack an escape bag for my children and me and can keep it hidden in this location:

- I will keep records of the abuse. I can use the DocuSAFE app at www.womenslaw.org/laws/general/restraining-orders.
- If I cannot go somewhere that allows me to keep my pets, I can ask _____
_____ to provide for them by _____.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS TO TAKE WHEN I FLEE DANGER

- I will come up with a specific place where I can go.
- I will not tell people where to find me or leave any records about my location.
- I will use cash or gift cards so that my purchases cannot be tracked.
- I will get a new cell phone to ensure that I can not be located.
- If I have obtained a Victim’s Protective Order (Oklahoma’s version of a restraining order) I will tell:
 1. My employer: _____
 2. My children’s school: _____
 3. My friends: _____
 4. My family members: _____
 5. My neighbors: _____

- If the Victim's Protective Order is breached, I will call:
 1. The police: _____
 2. My attorney: _____
 3. My support person: _____
- I will work with someone who can help me to see if I have been monitored electronically and will take steps to ensure that I cannot be tracked, stalked, or harassed. (For tips on how to do this and on who can help, visit: www.Techsafety.org).

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS TO TAKE AFTER SEPARATION

- If I remain in my home or a new one, I will need to take steps to secure the home. I will secure my home by:
 1. Changing the locks
 2. Fortifying the windows
 3. Buying surveillance cameras or a security system
 4. Adding outdoor lighting
 5. Other: _____ .
- I will tell my neighbors that my husband no longer lives at home and to contact me or the police if they see him around the home.

TECHNOLOGY SAFETY MEASURES

Many victims are monitored or stalked electronically, so I will take the following precautions:

- I will change my passwords and usernames.
- I will make a new email account that does not use my name.
- I will check my devices' privacy settings and confirm that other devices are not connected to mine.
- I will confirm that Bluetooth is turned off when I am not using it.
- I will make sure that there is no monitoring software on my devices.
- I will make sure that I know what each of my apps is and does.
- I will delete any apps that I do not use.
- If I think I am being monitored, I will do the safest thing and get a new device, without linking it to my old account through the cloud.
- I will limit the information that I share about myself online and on social media platforms.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS TO TAKE IN PUBLIC AND AT WORK

- During a separation, victims are at an increased risk of experiencing potentially life-threatening violence. I will think about other places where my abuser might try to make contact with me and will be prepared.
- I will work with _____ to think through how I can protect myself and keep my children safe during a custody exchange.
- I will let _____ at work know about my situation and will ask them to screen my calls or escort me to my car.
- I will take a new route home.
- I will change the stores that I regularly shop at (or will shop in a different town).
- If I take public transit, I can deviate from my usual commute by _____.

STEPS FOR CARING FOR MY EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL HEALTH

- It is equally important to plan for my emotional and spiritual health. I will think through some ways that I might handle the stresses that I am continually facing.
- When I am feeling overwhelmed or down, I can _____.
- I can call _____ and _____.
- I can start or continue counseling.
- I can ask God for _____.
- I can read _____.
- I can also _____.
- Because many of the factors of my situation can change over time, it is good for me to revisit my plan every couple of months. I will revisit my plan on _____.

THINGS TO TAKE WITH ME WHEN FLEEING ABUSE

DOCUMENTATION

FINANCIAL

- Tax documents
- Financial records
- W2s
- Pay stubs
- Working papers
- Bank account information

MEDICAL

- Health insurance cards
- Immunization records

PERSONAL

- Social Security cards
- Birth certificates
- Car title, registration and insurance documents
- Rental agreement or house deed
- Custody documents
- School records
- Driver's license
- Passports
- Immigration papers
- Pet records

RELATED TO ABUSE

- Journals or photo evidence of abuse
- Records of police reports you filed
- Victim's Protective Order

ITEMS

FINANCIAL

- Cash
- Prepaid credit cards (untraceable)
- Checks
- Bank or credit cards

MEDICAL

- Medication and prescriptions for you and your children
- Devices such as eyeglasses and hearing aids

PERSONAL

- Car and house keys
- Pet supplies
- Clothing
- Toys and books for kids
- Keepsakes

RELATED TO ABUSE

- Prepaid cell phone with new number and contract
- Address book and phone numbers



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