

FIRST STEPS TO A SAFE SANCTUARIES POLICY

1. Develop a Safe Sanctuaries Task Force. Include persons who work with children, youth, older adults, a representative from the Staff, Trustees, Staff Parrish, Finance Committee, parents. Members who are doctors, lawyers, educators or law enforcement officers are also good persons to include on the task force.
2. Read and discuss the book, “Safe Sanctuaries – Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for Children and Youth” by Joy Melton. It will take you step by step through the process. It also has sample forms for you to use.
3. Begin educating the congregation – allow time for congregational education and discussion. Let the congregation feel ownership in the process.
4. Use a “Local Church Self-Evaluation Form” to help the congregation assess its policy needs for the prevention of abuse in the church. (NOTE: A Sample Evaluation Form can be found in Joy Melton’s book).
5. Develop a policy statement that includes the what (keeping children, youth, and vulnerable adults safe) and the why (theological statement).
6. Develop implementation procedures for Safe Ministry that support the policy.
Examples include:
 - Appropriate Interpersonal Boundaries
 - Two Adult Rule
 - First Aid/CPR Training
 - Annual Orientations
 - The Five Years Older Rule
 - No Workers under 18
 - Windows in all doors
 - Open Door (and limited) Counseling
 - Ministry Participation Covenants
 - Clear Communication and education with Parents
 - Appropriate Equipment and Supervision
 - Adequate Insurance
 - Screening and Background Checks
 - General Internet Safety: Email, Websites, Instant Messenger
 - Transportation options – the 15 passenger van issue
 - Plans for responding to allegations and reports of abuse
 - The 6 month (or 1 year) rule – a potential volunteer needs to be actively involved or a member of the congregation for a set length of time before working with children or youth.
 - Use of the church grounds and facilities by outside groups.

7. Present Policy to the appropriate Church Council for approval. It is a good idea to let an attorney look over the policy if possible.
8. Plan a training session and refresher courses about the new policies for all church workers with children and youth.
9. Celebrate - plan a time of commitment and rejoicing. Give special recognition to the Task Force Members and express the congregation's gratitude for the work they have done.
10. Continue finding ways to make your church a safe and sacred place in which all can encounter the love of Christ.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

"Safe Sanctuaries – Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for Children and Youth" by Joy Thornburg Melton. Discipleship Resources, 2008. Available through Cokesbury bookstores.

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