

Creating Safe Sanctuaries

Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Local Church

Populations We PROTECT

- Children – Birth through age 12
- Youth – Age 13 to 18
- Trustees and other church leadership
- Stephen Ministry Care Receivers
- Home Bound or Hospitalized Persons
- Vulnerable Adults - May be a person age 18 or older, or an elder, defined as 65 or older who is mentally, physically or psychologically unable to make responsible legal decisions about his or her own welfare

Populations Who SERVE

- Nursery Workers
- Children's and Youth Ministries Workers
- Leisure Ministry Workers
- Stephen Ministry Volunteers
- Hospital and Homebound Visitors
- Church Trustees / Church Business Administrators
- Scout Leaders
- Pastors

Anyone who serves in ministry with people

Protection is required of us:

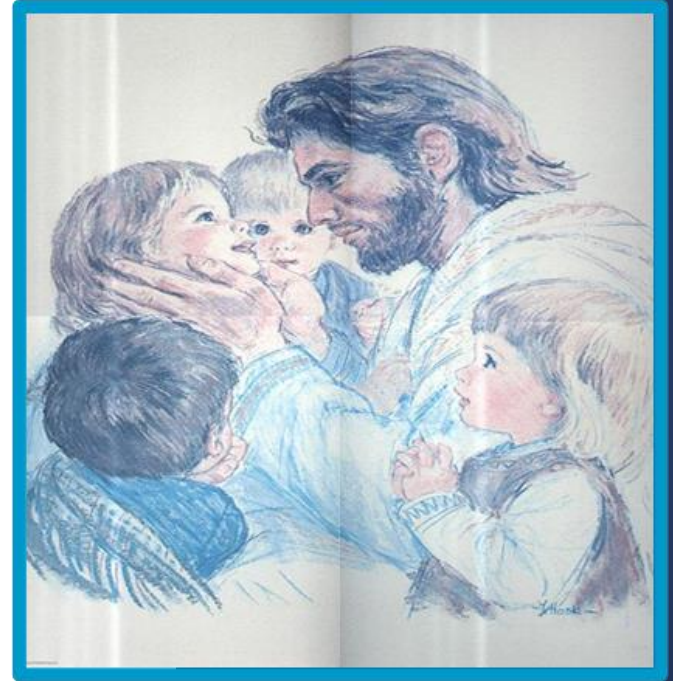
- By the General Conference mandate of 1996, 2000, 2004 and Paragraph 256 in The Book of Discipline 2016
- For the protection of our children, youth and vulnerable adults
- For the protection of all workers, paid or volunteer who work with our children, youth and vulnerable adults
- For the protection of the church reputation and finances

But more importantly, it is required in...

Scripture - Mark 9:37

Jesus said

*Whoever welcomes
one such child in my
name, welcomes me...*



Scripture - Matthew 18:6

If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.



1 Timothy 5: 1-2

Show respect for all...

Do not speak harshly to an older man, but speak to him as to a father, to younger men as brothers, to older women as mothers, to younger women as sisters – with absolute purity.

**WE
PROMISE...**

With God's help
we will so order our lives
after the example of Christ,
that this child, (of God)
surrounded by steadfast love,
may be established in the faith
and confirmed and strengthened
in the way that leads to life
eternal.

Baptismal Covenant United Methodist Hymnal, p.44

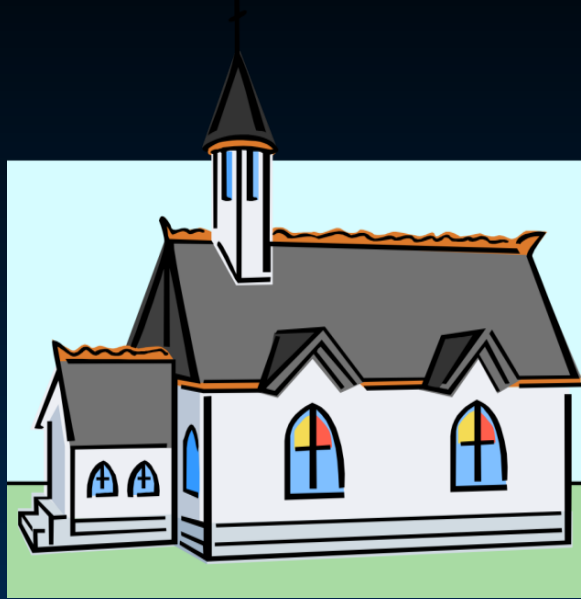


The Risk

Spiritual Crisis

**Financial
Costs**

**Victimized
Persons**



Litigation

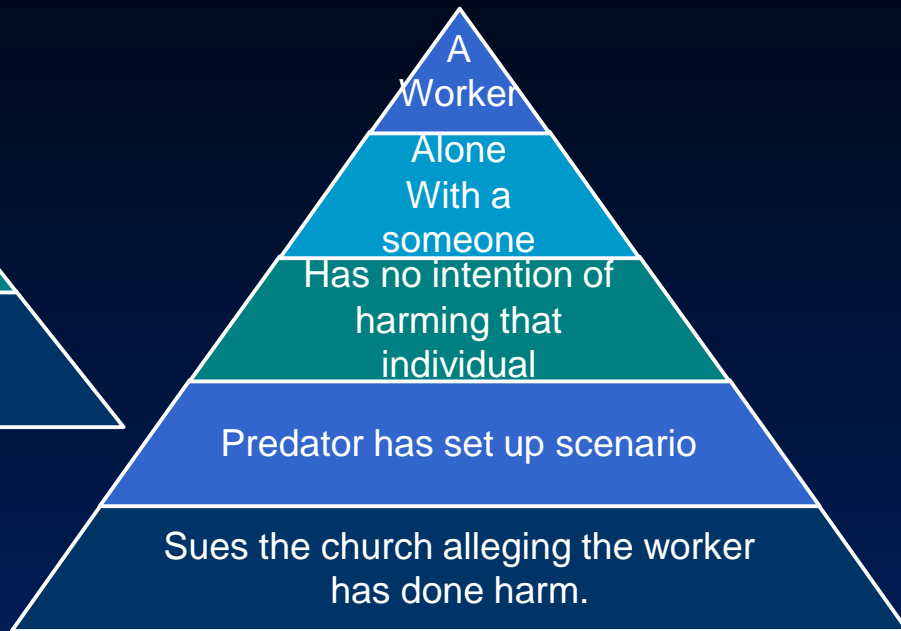
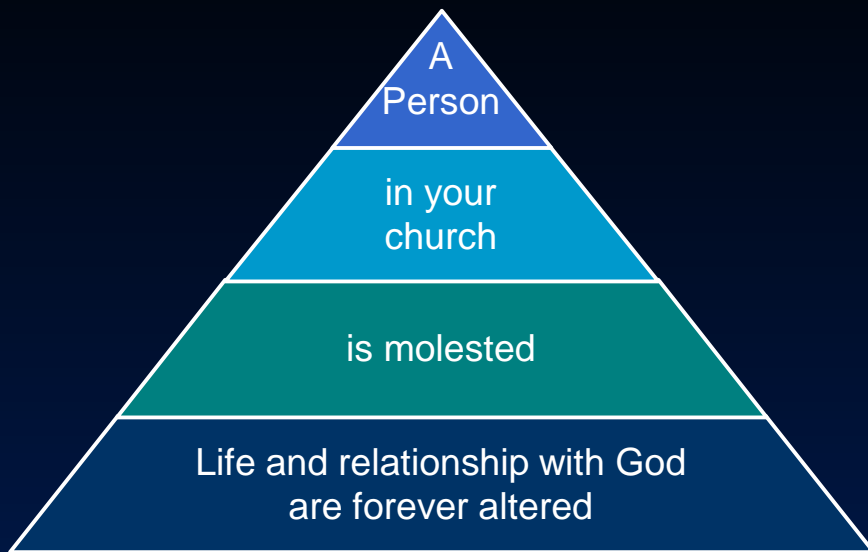
**Damaged
Families**

**Media
Coverage**

**Congregational
Disunity**

Shattered Trust

The Impact



Why are churches at risk?

- We trust.
- We are ignorant of the facts about the prevalence of abuse in communities.
- We provide easy access to children, youth and adults who cannot make sound judgments.
- We don't screen workers as other agencies do.
- We don't do enough training concerning appropriate interpersonal boundaries.

What if we don't agree this is necessary?

- Many insurance companies no longer insure churches who don't have a risk reduction strategy.
- “Entitlement” mentality in today's society: lawsuits for allegations – true or false
- In a lawsuit, your church can be considered negligent if an incident should occur and no plan is in place.
- Your church loses members, unity of its membership, reputation and thousands of dollars
- If you don't have a plan and something awful happens...

What will your church do then?

Abuse can happen here!

Roman Catholic Church:

- In 2008, church leaders paid \$436 million in settlements, attorney fees and other abuse-related costs
- \$2.6 billion paid to U.S. victims since 1950
- 2021 Cardinal McCarrick first US Cardinal to be criminally charged with a sexual crime against a minor

Tennessee Conference of the United Methodist Church:

- Case settled for \$3 million – for two victims
- Insurance coverage was inadequate to pay settlement and property was put at risk

Elder Abuse can happen here!

- In 2010 Virginia the over 60 population was approximately 1,450,000.
- 2-10% of our elder population may be victims of abuse
- Only 1 in 5 victims will be identified!
- Possibly as many as 5 million victims , nationally, of financial exploitation each year. Only 1 in 25 cases will be reported.
- In 2020 Virginia Adult Protection Services reported 37,398 reports of neglect and/or exploitation
Location of incidents were 58% in homes, 11% in Nursing facilities and others (ncea.aoa.gov)

What if it DOES happen to us?



Let's Get
Educated!

Abuse
can be

Physical, Emotional
Sexual, Ritual
Neglect, Financial

Abusers
can be

Adult vs. Child or Youth
Minor Vs. Minor
Adult vs. Vulnerable Adult

Physical Abuse

Physical – Deliberate or intentional bodily harm, non-accidental

Indicators of Physical Abuse

- Hostility and aggression towards others
- Destructive behavior toward self, others and/or property
- Unexplainable fractures or bruises - particularly on upper arms (from being shaken) or around wrists/ankles (from being tied down)
- Fearfulness of parents and/or other adults
- Burns, facial injuries, head trauma

Sexual Abuse

Sexual - Non-consensual sexual contact between child and adult, minor and minor or adults, such as fondling, intercourse, incest, pornographic exploitation or exposure

Indicators of Sexual Abuse

- Advanced sexual knowledge and/or behavior
- Depression
- Promiscuous behavior
- Difficulty sitting or walking
- Bruising/bleeding in vaginal or anal areas
- Frequent headaches, extreme fatigue
- Sexually transmitted diseases

Emotional Abuse

Emotional – Infliction of mental anguish by threat, intimidation or humiliation - spoken and/or unspoken, violence or emotional cruelty

What about Bullying?

A conscious, willful and deliberate hostile activity intended to harm, induce fear through the threat of further aggression, and create terror. Includes both “in-person” or cyber-bullying

Indicators of Emotional Abuse

- Depression and/or withdrawal
- Lack of self esteem
- Threatens or attempts suicide
- Speech and/or eating disorders
- Extreme passive/aggressive behavior
- Excessively seeks adult approval

Neglect and Abandonment

- Neglect – Endangering an individual’s health, safety, or welfare
- Abandonment – the desertion of a child or vulnerable elder by one who has assumed responsibility for care or custody of that person

Indicators of Neglect

- Failure to thrive - malnutrition
- Inappropriate dress for climate
- Chronic hunger
- Depression
- Untreated medical conditions
- Poor hygiene – soiled clothing
- Signs of being over- or under-medicated
- In children, indicators that education is neglected

Ritual

Ritual – Regular, intentional physical, sexual or psychological violations of an individual to appeal to a higher authority or power

Indicators of Ritual Abuse

- Disruptions of memory
- Unexplained mistrust and mood swings
- Flashbacks
- Fear of Dark
- Nightmares or sleep disorders
- Any of the sexual abuse symptoms

Elder Abuse Specifically

- Financial Abuse or Exploitation –
Unauthorized or misuse of funds or property or assets belonging to elder by force, misrepresentation or illegal means

Indicators of Elder Abuses

- Sudden changes in financial situation
- Caregiver belittles, threatens, exerts excessive power and control
- Strained relationships, frequent arguments between elder and caregiver
- Bruises, pressure marks, abrasions, burns, broken bones
- Bedsores, unattended medical needs, poor hygiene, unusual weight loss

“Caregiver” can be family member or paid worker.



Hear the Facts

Elder Abuse Facts

Elder defined as anyone over 65 years old.

2008 – 39 million

2030 – 72 million (1 in 5 will be 65 or older)

REPORTED abuse: 1 in 9

11% of Americans over 60

For each report, 5 are unreported

Source: Dept. Of Justice

Who are the abusers?

In 90% of incidents with a known abuser, abuser is a family member, with 2/3 being adult children or spouses.

Elder Abuse Facts

2013

20,700 reported cases of adult abuse
in Virginia

55% substantiated cases

62% in own homes

10% nursing facilities

5% assisted living

2020 numbers increased to 37,398 reported
cases

Hidden Problem in Elder Abuse

Abusers are caregivers elderly depend on for care or protection and may or may not be family.

- Do actions or inactions constitute abuse?
- Are elders neglecting their own care?

Church Leaders –

Keep a watchful eye on vulnerable adults in your congregation. See it. Stop it. Prevent it!

Facts

Abuse often occurs in ongoing relationships

Reported victims of child sexual abuse have been infants, but incidence of abuse peaks with victims between ages 8 and 12

Facts

2020 in Virginia there were 33,880 reported child abuse cases.

52,554 children were involved in reports that received a family assessment.

More Facts !

By age 18

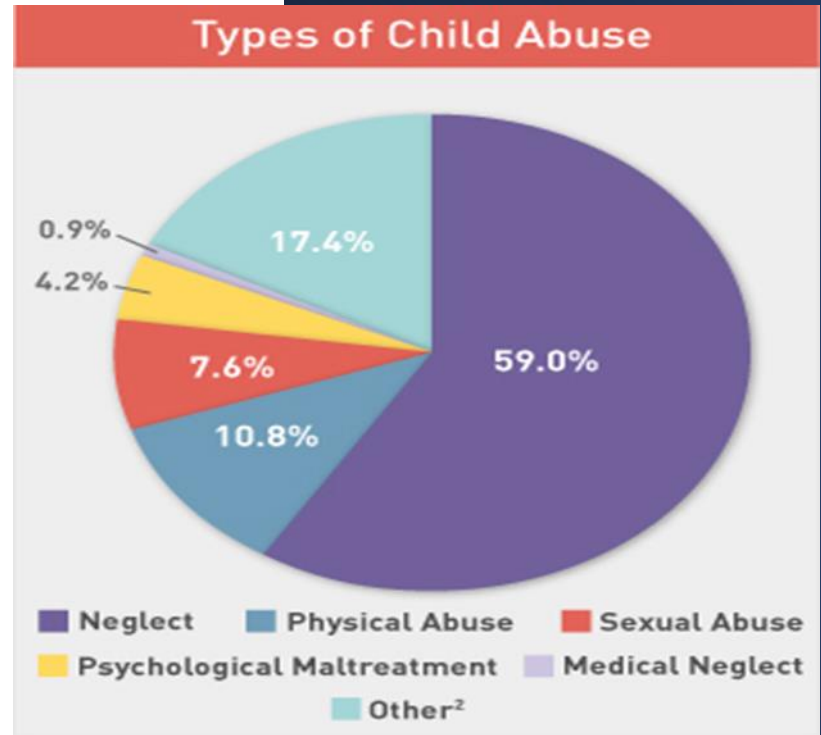
1 in 3 girls is sexually abused

1 in 7 boys is sexually abused

By some estimates, the actual amount of abuse may be 3 times the number of incidents reported to authorities.

“Other” includes:
Abandonment,
Threats of Harm,
Congenital Drug Addiction
or Multiple Maltreatment

Source: ChildHelp USA



Child Abuse Happens

Search the Web

<http://sex-offender.vsp.Virginia.gov>

Click Sex Offenders

Type in City, Zip Code or select County

Click on individual

Note the crime and where he/she lives



CRIME:
INDECENCY
W/CHILD
BY EXPOSURE

Registered Sex Offenders – Crimes Against Children



See also: www.familywatchdog.us

Statistics

- 36% of women and 14% of men in prison were abused as children.
- 60% of people in drug rehabilitation reported being abused or neglected as children.
- 30% of abused and neglected children will later abuse their own.

Types of Molesters

- Preferential – Prefers sexual activity with the child or youth victim and seeks him or her out
- Situational – Takes advantage of a particular situation to sexually abuse

Profile of a Child Molester

- Known by the victim 80% of the time
- Generally identified between 20-30 years of age
- 20% abuse before age 18
- Often married with children
- 1 in 4 offenders is a member of the individual's family or one entrusted with care of the person
- About half are friends of child or family
- 2 out of 3 who are caught and punished abuse again

Signs Abuse Occurred at Church

- Unusual anxiety about going to Sunday school
- Reluctance to participate in activities that were previously enjoyed
- Comments that one does not want to be alone with a given person
- Nightmares of a frightening experience with a worker
- Unexplained hostility toward worker

See it...Report it!

Reporting:
Documentation

What to Report

- Accidents – when an unintentional act occurs and an individual is hurt
- Incident – When an action is observed that does not require reporting to DFCS, but does require attention
- Suspected Abuse – When one sees, has been told of, or suspects child has been abused in some way

Church staff should have forms readily available.

Reports should be filed with church staff ASAP.

Information should only be discussed with church staff

Reporting Child Abuse— VA Law

The purpose is to provide protection of individuals whose health and welfare are adversely affected and further threatened by the conduct of those responsible for their care and protection.

Reporting Child & Elder Abuse

In Emergencies:
Call 911

CALL CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE
1-800-552-7096

CALL ADULT ABUSE HOTLINE
1-888-832-3858

Church Reporting Plan

- Record details of accident, incident or suspected abuse and discuss with appropriate church staff.
- Incidents are handled by staff, who offers alternatives to person in question, and records follow-up.
- For suspected abuse, DFCS needs to investigate. The reporter places the call with knowledge and support of Ministry Director and Senior Minister (or SPR Chair). Insurance Company and the DS are notified. Attorney is contacted.
- Keep information confidential. Talk only with appropriate authorities.

**Consult with the DS before ANYONE
speaks to the media.**



What Do We Do Now?

Prevention is Possible!

1. What can each local church do?
2. Establish a Safe Sanctuary Task Force.
3. Evaluate what is being done currently.
4. Determine areas of weakness.
5. Write a policy statement. **THE COVENANT**
6. Write procedures to support the policy. **THE COMMITMENT**
7. Implement the plan.

The Task Force

Should include:

- Nursery, Children, Youth, Older Adult, Special Needs and Leisure Ministries staffs
- Chairs of Nursery, Children's, Youth, Older Adult, Special Needs and Leisure Committees
- Church leadership – members of SPRC, Trustees, Finance Committee
- Members who are doctors, lawyers, educators and law enforcement officers
- Pastors and Parents

What should our church do?

- Put your task force to work.
- Create a policy the whole church will stand behind.
- Write recruiting and screening procedures.
- Write operating procedures that support that policy.
- Train all workers – implement the plan.
- Supervise to see that the plan is being followed.

Sample Covenant Statement

Our church promises to:

- Screen all paid and volunteer workers.
- Establish operating procedures.
- Train all workers.
- Have a reporting strategy.

Recruiting and Screening

- Use a written application for prospective workers.
- Interview prospective workers.
- Check personal references.
- Complete criminal background check.
- Determine what crimes disqualify worker from serving.
- Keep all forms confidential and in a secure location

Sample Procedures

1. Two adult rule / Floater
2. Windowed and open doors
3. 6 month hospitality rule
4. Age requirement – over 18, 5 years older
5. Nametags and / or identifying clothing
6. Age appropriate check-in and release

More Sample Procedures

7. Appropriate touch
8. Appropriate Adult Behavior
9. Supervision of workers and children
10. Parent/Guardian Permission
11. Adequate ratios of adults and children
12. Information to and from parents

More Sample Procedures

13. First aid /CPR

14. Annual Orientation for
Workers

15. Safe Sanctuaries Covenant

More Sample Procedures

Computers and Cell Phones

17. Websites, Photos and E-mails

- Do not post pictures without parent permission
- Get parent permission before email, cell, IM or text messaging a minor.
- Send “Broadcast” emails by Bcc
- Tell youth to use privacy settings on social networking and post safely.

Emergency Procedures

On-site or off-site emergency procedures for accident or illness

- Medical information on file
- **Luke Registry** forms signed prior to trip departure for older adults. Information in a sealed envelope will be given to medical personnel, should the need arise.

In all ministries...

Model and teach participants about appropriate interpersonal relationships and boundaries, mutual respect and compassion for others.

Especially with children and youth, incorporate anti-bullying curriculum in all age-level activities.

Do unto others as you would have them do to you. Luke 6:31

Think about YOUR
church...





Questions?

Be a Safe Sanctuary

for all who come to worship
in your church:

Children

Youth

Vulnerable Adults

Those who serve in ministries
with them.