



GRACE

Godly Response to Abuse
in the Christian Environment



Abuse in Your Church

10 Guidelines for
Responding Well

*“It's not a matter of if, but when, a church is faced with reports of [abuse] perpetrated by a member of their own community, whether it be pastoral staff, a volunteer, or a member of the congregation. How a faith institution confronts and responds to such a disclosure will not only have potential to save or destroy lives but will also speak volumes about whether it places the lives of individuals over the reputation and life of the institution.”**

Basyle J. Tchividjian, Founder of GRACE



*Basyle J. Tchividjian, “Responding with Excellence to an Allegation of Sexual Abuse with the Church.”
This article is available here: <https://currentsjournal.org/index.php/currents/article/view/134>

ARE YOU READY?



Abuse affects a significant number of adults and children in our churches. Studies indicate one in four women and one in six men experience child sexual abuse before age 18.* Many other forms of abuse impact those in our pews. It is crucial for churches to be prepared to respond to abuse in a godly way, prioritizing safety, justice, and healing.

This guide is intended to give leaders a framework for responding to abuse in a godly way.

Responding as Jesus would is not a simple checklist. These guidelines are not ten successive steps, but rather key principles that must be applied with care. Each situation is unique and the specific situation will impact how these principles should be applied.

*For more detailed statistics visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/about.html>

10 GUIDELINES FOR RESPONDING WELL

1
PRIORITIZE SAFETY

2
CENTER THE VICTIM

3
REPORTING
ESSENTIALS

4
TRAUMA-INFORMED
PRINCIPLES

5
CARE TEAMS

6
ACTIVE LISTENING

7
AVOID A RISK
MANAGEMENT
APPROACH

8
WISDOM TOWARDS
ALLEGED OFFENDERS

9
PROACTIVE POLICIES
AND PROCEDURES

10
KNOW YOUR LIMITS



Prioritize Safety

Leaders must respond as Jesus would by prioritizing the safety of others, especially the vulnerable. Jesus used the metaphor of the shepherd to show that a godly leader is one who protects the vulnerable, rather than using their position to serve themselves: “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.” (John 10:11-13) Jesus borrowed this metaphor from the prophets where God rejected the corrupt leaders who were abusing the vulnerable, domineering others, and using their position to serve their own interests and needs over the vulnerable sheep (Ez. 34; Jer. 23).



Trustworthy leaders keep the priority of safety at the forefront throughout the process of responding to abuse.

As a situation develops, leaders must assess safety as new information comes to light. Leaders have a primary obligation to attend to the safety of any victim of abuse. Leaders must listen and put themselves in the shoes of the vulnerable in response. Leaders must remember that safety is not defined by leadership or those with more power; it is defined by the person who experienced the trauma.* Reestablishing a sense of safety is the first priority for those helping survivors. Many factors contribute to whether the person feels safe. Often the most crucial factor in our initial response is assessing what boundaries or accountability (even if

temporary) should be put in place for someone in the community who is credibly accused of abuse.

Leaders also have a broader responsibility to safeguard the whole congregation, especially the vulnerable. Leaders should assess any information in an allegation with an eye toward the safety implications for others in the congregation. In addition to protecting the flock from physical and sexual abuse, leaders must also safeguard the emotional, psychological, and spiritual safety of congregants.*

*For more details on these ideas, see Pete Singer's, "Toward a More Trauma-Informed Church: Equipping Faith Communities to Prevent and Respond to Abuse." This article is available here: <https://www.netgrace.org/resources/toward-a-more-trauma-informed-church>

Center the Victim

Jesus calls us to center the victim and their needs in our response to abuse. For example, Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan to answer the question “Who is my neighbor?” and to speak to what it means to love our neighbor. Profoundly, to get to the heart of this, Jesus tells a story about abuse and how people responded to the abuse survivor. The story tells about those who looked the other way at an abuse victim, and one who stopped to bind up the person’s wounds and provide ongoing care. Jesus calls us to enter into the pain of others, despite discomfort and personal cost.

When we are trusted by a survivor with their story, it is important to keep a few key practical things in mind. It is important to stay calm when a survivor discloses abuse. Show with your body language that you are listening carefully and are there for them. There are no magic words that can “fix” the situation, but simple words that communicate support and belief matter. Words like “I’m so sorry” and “That should not have happened to you” are simple, and yet can be incredibly powerful words that impact healing.

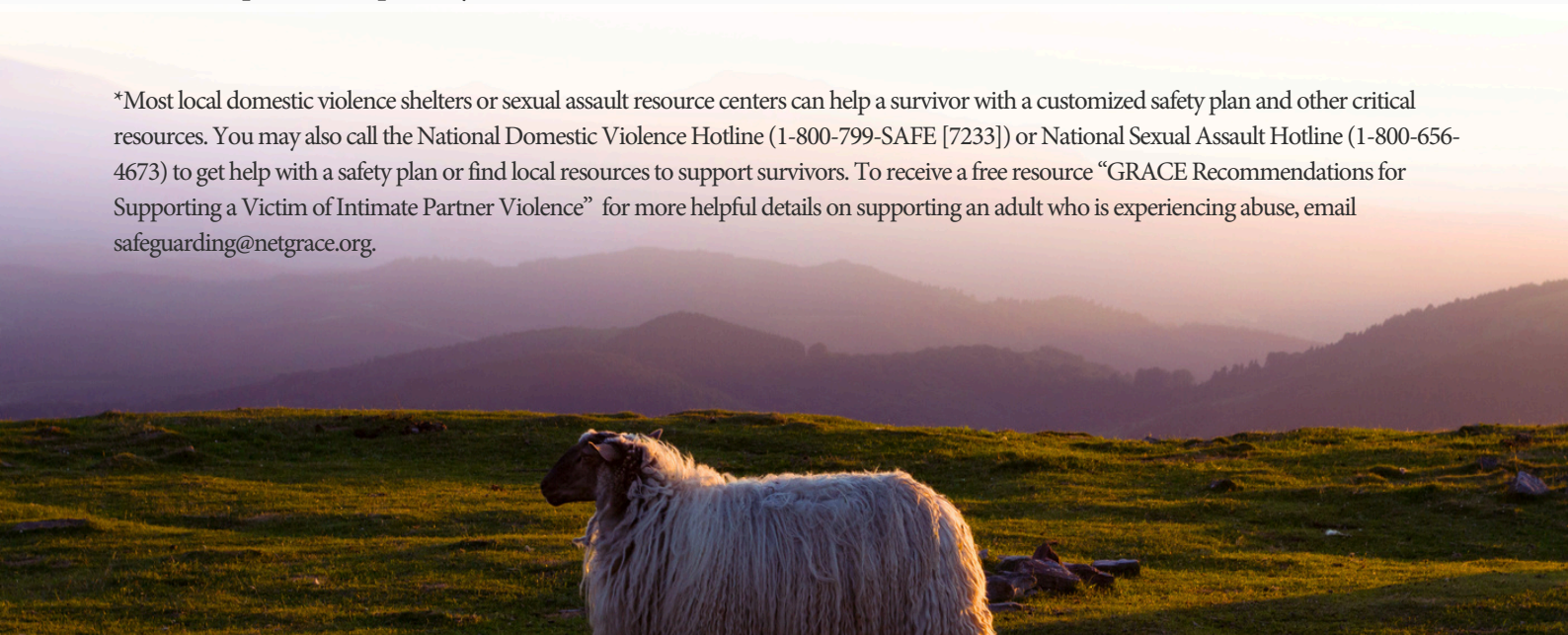
Many survivors are already struggling with blame and shame. It is important that we do not add one ounce of blame and shame, but rather try to help lift this burden, if we can. Words like “I believe you” and “This is not your fault” can also be important, especially if we can tell that

the survivor is concerned about being believed or blamed. Avoid words that can add shame or blame, such as: “Why were you there?” or “Were you drinking?” or “Did you text them first?” or “What were you wearing?” or “He/she doesn’t seem like the kind of person who would do that.”

It doesn’t matter what someone has or has not done, where they are, how late it is, or if they have been drinking. None of this gives anyone the right to abuse or assault another person, period.

There are further responsible actions after a disclosure that will be discussed below. In this initial disclosure, beyond belief and support, it is important to keep safety at the forefront. If the disclosure comes from a child, an immediate report to Child Protective Services and local law enforcement is the most important step that can impact safety for the child (see Guideline 3: Reporting Essentials). For an adult who may still be in harm’s way, asking if they feel safe is essential. Connecting an adult to resources who can help them make a safety plan is often an important next step.*

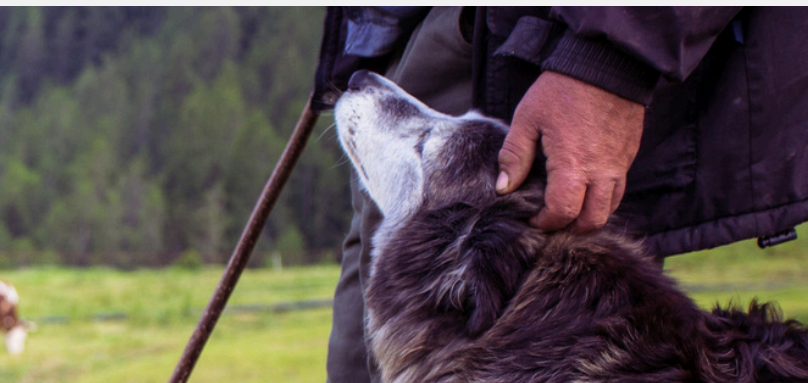
*Most local domestic violence shelters or sexual assault resource centers can help a survivor with a customized safety plan and other critical resources. You may also call the National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-SAFE [7233]) or National Sexual Assault Hotline (1-800-656-4673) to get help with a safety plan or find local resources to support survivors. To receive a free resource “GRACE Recommendations for Supporting a Victim of Intimate Partner Violence” for more helpful details on supporting an adult who is experiencing abuse, email safeguarding@netgrace.org.



Reporting Essentials

In some states, every adult is mandated by law to report child abuse and neglect and/or vulnerable adult abuse.* In other states, only certain professionals are required by law to report (and often this includes clergy). It is important to know your state laws and ensure your church policy has clear reporting guidelines. GRACE recommends your policy states potential abuse against children and vulnerable adults is reported immediately to social services and law enforcement. Regardless of legal requirements, GRACE recommends all Christians think of reporting on behalf of the vulnerable as an ethical obligation (e.g. Prov. 31:8-9).

Every Christian has an ethical obligation to report potential abuse against children and vulnerable adults.*



Reports should be made when there is any witnessing or evidence of abuse, disclosure of abuse, or a reasonable suspicion that abuse may have occurred. Reporting is simply giving information to the proper authorities so they can document it and decide next appropriate steps, such as whether to open a criminal investigation. Your report may be vital to help the authorities take action and protect the victim, or others, from further harm.

In these situations, your role is to first report promptly and allow the proper authorities to investigate thoroughly. Church leaders are not independent or trained to conduct criminal investigations (See Guideline 10: Know Your Limits for more on this important point).

When a non-vulnerable adult* discloses abuse, offer to support them if they wish to report to law enforcement. Be ready to connect them to local resources depending on the type of abuse (e.g. a domestic violence shelter or sexual assault center) so they can make a safety plan and access other essential resources. There are situations, such as abuse by a staff person, where a church will feel conscience-bound to report to law enforcement on behalf of a non-vulnerable adult, even when that survivor is not ready to do so. Depending on the circumstances, it may be important to ensure a safety plan is in place before we consider reporting on behalf of a non-vulnerable adult. If possible, try to communicate to the survivor the reason for the report (e.g. our concern for the safety of others in the church community).

After a report, leaders must continue to attend to four key areas:

1. Assessing Safety
2. Implementing Accountability
3. Providing Care
4. Seeking Outside Resources/Help

These areas are addressed in various ways in the rest of this Guide. Churches do well to prepare ahead of time to report. Utilize local training** and resources for reporting abuse effectively.*** Reach out to Child Advocacy Centers**** and law enforcement agencies. Professionals in these organizations are often eager to assist and collaborate with those in their community.

For information on training from GRACE on reporting, email GRACE at safeguarding@netgrace.org

*State definitions of vulnerable adults vary, but it typically means an adult with intellectual disabilities, or an elder adult who is past a certain age and/or dependent on others for care.

**Many states have a free training available, such as this training for WV: <http://www.handlewithcarewv.org/mandated-reporter-course.php>.

***For information on mandated reporting across the United States, visit <https://www.childwelfare.gov/resources/mandatory-reporting-child-abuse-and-neglect>.

****Child Advocacy Centers centralize the response to child abuse in over 900 locations nationally at <https://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org>.

Trauma-Informed Principles

Scripture speaks of trauma countless times throughout both the Old and New Testaments.* It places a clear priority on understanding how people can be harmed by traumatic events and the implications for how we interact with one another in the wake of trauma. When responding to an allegation of abuse, churches do well to utilize a trauma-informed framework to develop priorities in response. Safety is always the first priority in a trauma-informed and biblical approach to response (see Guideline 1: Prioritizing Safety).*

As a church responds to allegations of abuse, there will likely come a time when the church needs to inform the broader congregation or other groups about the allegations. Doing so proactively can send a message of trustworthiness and transparency. This may be essential in increasing the safety level of the whole community. Leadership should seek input from the victim or their caregiver (if the victim is a child) to develop this communication. When any announcements are made, they must protect the privacy of victims while providing necessary details to protect others.

Leadership should consider other factors as well when informing the congregation. They should be

careful to avoid minimizing terms, such as “affair,” and they should actively resist phrasing that creates distance, whether that is from the timing or the location of the misconduct. In the announcement, the church should describe safety steps being taken without conveying that the situation has been prematurely resolved and without appearing to praise themselves for the actions they have taken. They should also verify that the announcement will not compromise the integrity of a child/adult protection or law enforcement investigation. Presenting the information clearly and calmly will help people feel safe and may encourage others with important information to come forward.

Any communication must keep support for the survivor at the forefront, as well as remembering that likely many other survivors of abuse are listening intently to what leaders are saying about these realities.

As people become aware of allegations, they will likely talk about them. In some cases, members may disparage or rally against reporting victims. Leadership can set an example and encourage congregants to consider who is around them and to choose their words carefully. You generally do not know what those around us have experienced, and you may accidentally cause harm by how we discuss the allegations.

As events continue to unfold, it may be necessary to provide the congregation with further updates on the allegations. Ambiguity and silence may not appear trustworthy or transparent, and people will likely want to know if they should take further steps to protect themselves or others for whom they are responsible. Further communications should again take into account the input of the victim or their caregiver, as well as law enforcement or child/adult protection if they are investigating the allegations.



*For more details on these ideas, see Pete Singer’s, “Toward a More Trauma-Informed Church: Equipping Faith Communities to Prevent and Respond to Abuse.” This article is available here: <https://www.netgrace.org/resources/toward-a-more-trauma-informed-church>

Care Teams



When confronting abuse within a church or ministry, adopting a team-based approach in caring for others is wise. It is important that a care team stays within its role. A church-based care team are not therapists or counselors, legal counsel, or social workers. Care teams help provide for emotional, spiritual, and basic needs. This is sometimes done by directly meeting the victim's needs, and sometimes by referring them to another resource. As care teams engage with survivors and victims, they must do so in a collaborative way, allowing that person or their caregiver to help define the care that they need. Because abuse is a negation of a person's choice and agency, it is trauma-informed to empower choice at every step along the path in response.

Whenever possible, the victim or victim's caregiver (in the case of child abuse) should also be paired with a dedicated counselor who is well-versed in abuse dynamics and their traumatic impact on survivors. With the permission of the survivor, the care team may collaborate with the counselor to provide support that is specifically attuned to safety and other practical needs.*

It is important to avoid equating the care a church may provide to a survivor of abuse, and the interaction with a person who is credibly accused of abuse. Effective ministry to victims and offenders requires churches to see clearly the difference between ministry to a person who has perpetrated egregious harm and ministry to a

person who has been harmed in an egregious way. For an approach toward someone who is credibly accused of abuse, see more below under Guideline 8: Wisdom Toward Alleged Offenders.

Care teams can be essential to helping reestablish safety and monitoring that accountability and boundaries that have been instituted for others are indeed being followed. The team-based approach allows the team to share the weighty responsibility of care. Listen to a survivor's wishes on who will serve as the care team point of contact. The number and makeup of the team is a matter of practicality, taking into account the wishes of the survivor and/or their caretaker. If multiple victims are involved or if additional family members require support, a larger team may be warranted.

The team-based approach for care for the victim focuses on practical needs, as well as emotional and spiritual support.

Care teams must not encroach on the roles of other professionals that a survivor might need to rely upon.

There are others who may need to be cared for in the congregation after abuse comes to light. You might consider communicating clearly any options for support to the congregation or encouraging them to seek out help from their support system.

Active Listening



Active listening is a communication skill that extends to more than just hearing the other person's words. It involves actively processing and seeking to understand the meaning and intent behind the words. It requires both empathy and self-awareness.

Active listening is a skill for everyone, but especially for those in a leadership role, and especially in responding to abuse. It helps people feel understood, and it strengthens relationships.

According to Arlin Cuncic, active listening involves the following seven key techniques.* These are helpful as leaders respond and interact with different individuals in responding to abuse. Exploring these components helps us more fully understand active listening.

Being fully present means turning your focus to the other person. It involves limiting potential distractions. It includes not interrupting the other person, and it limits formulating your response while the other person is still talking.

Paying attention to nonverbal cues means that you are aware of communication on a deeper level than words. You must pay attention to your nonverbal cues and also those of the other person. This includes an open posture, being mindful of facial expressions, and watching the pace of verbal communication.

Keeping good eye contact is harder than it sounds. We often look away, especially during hard conversations. It takes discipline and planning to maintain solid eye contact. It helps to remember that good eye contact does not involve constant eye contact. Instead, look the person in the eye for some time, then take a break, then resume eye contact. There is no perfect proportion, but you should spend the majority of the conversation with eye contact.

Asking open-ended questions means keeping a framework of curiosity. This can help you listen for the purpose of understanding. Arguing your position will likely not persuade the person to change their position, and simple yes/no questions will not help you understand their view. Instead, try questions that encourage the person to talk and convey the message that you care about what they are saying.

Reflecting what you hear goes beyond paraphrasing. It includes safely mirroring their emotions as well. Focus on being a sounding board for the person as they convey what is on their heart. This assures the person that you are taking the conversation seriously.

Being patient can be difficult. It means that you are comfortable with silence and don't inject your voice when there is a lag in conversation. You stay focused during silence, and you resist the temptation to assume you know what the person has to say.

Withholding judgment involves listening to understand while maintaining an open mind. This can be hard if the person is making difficult or contrary statements, but it is essential to maintain and convey a non-judgmental attitude. Only then will the person feel safe enough to tell you all that is on their heart.

*Arlin Cuncic, 7 Active Listening Techniques For Better Communication. This article is available here: <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-active-listening-3024343t>

Avoid A Risk Management Approach

When representing a church, an attorney will have a fiduciary duty that is often different from, and potentially opposed to, the church's responsibility to prioritize the needs of the vulnerable and those who have been harmed. An attorney's duty is often centered around protecting the church's reputation, minimizing legal liability, and preserving financial resources.



An attorney's risk management focus could lead to harmful consequences in the context of abuse response. In Christa Brown's book, 'This Little Light,' she recounts experiencing severe abuse as a teenager by a church pastor. Seeking healing, Christa proposed creating a memorial garden for survivors of clergy abuse. However, the church denied her request. This and other requests were opportunities to provide healing and care, but instead increased the pain of survivors, their disillusionment with the church, and contributed to costly legal battles within the broader denomination.*

A liability-focused attorney may counsel a church not to grant any request, opining that it is an admission of the church's guilt. If the church follows this advice, they are more likely to inflict harm on the victim, whose pain continues to be ignored, and this may increase the likelihood of litigation.

Attorneys will often suggest a defensive legal strategy to churches, like denying or downplaying abuse allegations, to safeguard the "church's interests" or "mission." However, this choice is contradictory to adequately informing the community of safety concerns, practicing transparency, and meaningfully listening to victims.

Similar to attorneys, the primacy of financial considerations for insurance companies often results in advice that prioritizes limiting exposure. This often conflicts with victim needs. It also leads to abuse prevention policies that are selectively and narrowly focused on areas that may pose a liability, ignoring broader proactive policies that meaningfully cultivate a culture of abuse prevention.

Insurance is important, yet it cannot be the most important thing or what primarily drives our decisions about responding to abuse allegations. "Insurance companies are supposed to protect against accidents, not against known and recurrent patterns of evil behavior."**

Prioritizing the narrow advice of attorneys and insurance companies often causes deep pain to those who have already been hurt. It breaches individual and communal trust, and often results in the very reputational and financial impact that the church was originally trying to avoid. Churches should be clear with legal counsel that their representation should account for both their valuing of the vulnerable and commitment to reflecting Christ in their response to abuse.

**Remember Guidelines 1 & 2:
Prioritize Safety and Center the Victim**

*Christa Brown, *This Little Light: Beyond a Baptist Preacher Predator and His Gang*

**Joey Mangano, *Insuring Sin*. This article is available here: <https://www.netgrace.org/resources/insuring-sin>

Wisdom Toward Alleged Offenders

While leadership should not investigate allegations of abuse themselves, there will be times when those in authority at the church will need to respond to an alleged offender. This can be difficult, because those who abuse almost always are skilled at deception. This deception can be difficult to detect, especially when you are relationally close to the offender. In fact, many offenders direct grooming tactics at leaders and the whole community, in addition to any targeted victims. When an allegation arises, leadership needs to be aware of the possibility that they have already been groomed by the offender.

An alleged offender is likely to assert innocence. That assertion may include an attempt to discredit any reporting victims. Dr. Jennifer Freyd coined the term "DARVO" to describe a common response by offenders she observed in her research. When someone raised a question, concern, or allegation about an abuser's actions, the common response by many who abuse power falls under the acronym, "DARVO."

DARVO: Deny, Attack, and Reverse Victim and Offender

While an innocent person would be expected to deny an allegation, an offender who seeks to escape accountability will deny in ways that are "more indignant, self-righteous, and manipulative, as compared with denial in other cases."* The goal of DARVO tactics is to interrupt or discourage any process of accountability. The response may also include harsh and intimidating attacks against the credibility and character of any reporting victims or of others who are pursuing accountability. This then leads to a common response in which the alleged offender claims to be the one who is the true victim, thus reversing the victim and offender roles.



Church leaders do well to assess what boundaries are appropriate when a member of staff, a volunteer, or a member is credibly accused of abuse. This of course may only be a temporary measure, until an investigation is completed or until leaders have enough information to make further decisions about a person's employment or participation in the church or ministry.

It is important when setting boundaries to account for expectations in both formal and informal settings. While each case must be looked at on its own terms, most cases of suspected abuse will necessitate setting boundaries that prioritize the safety of others in the community (e.g. putting a member of staff on leave and restricting contact with vulnerable people). Reach out to GRACE, a Child Advocacy Center, or others who have more experience in making a solid plan for accountability.

Leaders must also step up and oppose deception and false narratives when needed. A faith community may be deceived into shunning or condemning survivors. This inflicts further injury, trauma and loss, including the devastating loss of community and peer support. The deception can fracture relationships within the congregation, making it more vulnerable to being exploited. Accepting the deception of an offender can also risk the safety of others who may be victimized in the future.

*Freyd, J. J. (1997). "Violations of power, adaptive blindness and betrayal trauma theory."

Proactive Policies and Procedures

The safety and well-being of children and all who are vulnerable are paramount concerns for churches and ministries. Establishing a comprehensive safeguarding policy is crucial to ensure that all activities and interactions within these organizations prioritize protection.

Developing such a policy can be a challenge, but a few key insights can greatly help this process.

*GRACE provides comprehensive policy development and review services, as well as consultation. Please reach out to GRACE for help at any point in the policy development process.**

Developing a policy is not a one-person job. The best way to write or revise a policy is to establish a team. This group can then work collaboratively to help your church take ownership of the policy. This is what an effective policy is at its heart. What you put on paper matters, and yet the real test of an effective policy is how we live it out together day by day. Think about a team that can speak to specific areas of ministry, or those within your church who may have expertise because of their professional role (social worker, law enforcement, trauma therapist, etc.). As the policy team begins its work, it will be important to draft policy that clearly states your commitment to protect all who may be vulnerable, including both children and adults. Defining abuse in various common forms is also essential.

Several major areas are important to address in policy. This includes screening for at least staff and



volunteers who work with the vulnerable. Background checks and other screening practices should be clearly outlined, including references, interviews/applications, and internet/social media checks. While background checks will not flag many possible offenders, they are a concrete step that must be taken and may catch or deter. The other measures listed above are needed to bolster the effectiveness of your screening. The interview and selection process should be defined, as well as confidentiality and data protection considerations.

Training and education must also be addressed in the policy. This includes mandatory safeguarding training for all staff, volunteers, and leaders. Training should help address signs of abuse and neglect, as well as appropriate behavior and boundaries. Reporting obligations and procedures must be in the training as well.

*There are other areas of policy that are important beyond the basic elements here. You may reach out to us for help with policy through our website: <https://www.netgrace.org/policy-review>

Most abuse and boundary testing occurs during unstructured times, so the policy and training must include boundaries for unstructured times and interactions off church property, such as small groups. Given that a significant amount of abuse occurs in unstructured times and homes, churches do well to promote thorough safeguarding training for all in the community, not only staff, volunteers, and leaders. The safest community is an educated community.

Policies should be in place before a crisis, as they provide a roadmap for people to follow, even amid a crisis.

Effective policies promote clear expectations for leaders, staff, volunteers, and the whole community (including minors). Clear boundaries for appropriate conduct deter concerning interactions and set the table for accountability when they do occur. This often interrupts bad actors from taking actions toward abuse. It is important to have a team to receive concerns and any information related to policy violations. Churches must not only have clear expectations for all, but a clear mechanism for speaking up so that leaders can then reinforce appropriate expectations and accountability. Documenting

any policy violations and concerns often allows leaders to see patterns of grooming or other concerns sooner and take action. GRACE recommends a safety team or a safeguarding team for this purpose. Such a team can also work proactively to further a culture of prevention within the community in various ways.

For more egregious situations such as allegations of abuse, the policy should clarify reporting and response procedures. It is essential to establish clear guidelines for reporting allegations of abuse and a framework for responsible action after a report. They should include specific contact information for reports to law enforcement or child protection. The policy should make it clear that an internal report of abuse must only be made after the external report to law enforcement and social services.

Implementing an effective safeguarding policy is hard work, but it is essential to demonstrate commitment to the highest standards of care. The policy serves as a testament to your organization's dedication to protecting the most vulnerable members of your community.

For further direction on the development of an effective policy, please reach out to GRACE or reference the Child Safeguarding Policy Guide for Churches and Ministries, by Basyle Tchividjian and Shira Berkovits.



Know Your Limits

Understanding professional boundaries in responding to abuse is not a sign of inadequacy, but of wisdom and responsibility.



Pastors and other ministry leaders often encounter limitations when confronted with the complexities of abuse allegations in their church. While pastors may perceive themselves as capable in various roles, acknowledging their own limitations, and seeking appropriate assistance is critical to ethically and effectively responding to abuse.

It is essential that church leaders refrain from personally investigating abuse cases. Pastors often lack both the specialized investigative skills and the in-depth knowledge of abuse dynamics required to handle such cases appropriately. Conducting an abuse investigation demands expertise in areas like forensic interviewing, evidence corroboration, legal procedures, and complex reporting requirements—skills that extend beyond traditional pastoral training.

Furthermore, pastors may not possess a necessary understanding of complicated abuse dynamics, such as recognizing grooming processes, navigating intricate power dynamics within congregations, and responding to survivors in trauma-informed ways. Even if church leaders have investigative experience and skills, it is not advisable to conduct internal investigations, since leaders are not independent, and often personally know the people involved. Remember, many on a church staff are groomed by offenders. Also, leaders may overestimate their ability to investigate and remain independent.

Recognizing when the complexity of an abuse issue surpasses one's expertise is essential, prompting the need to seek external resources for guidance and support. It is vital to promptly identify and address signs of overextension. Pastors may feel compelled to handle abuse cases, risking inadequate responses and further harm to survivors.

Collaborating with qualified organizations, such as GRACE, which specializes in addressing abuse within Christian contexts, can offer invaluable support, whether it involves conducting

- **independent investigations,**
- **cultural assessments, or**
- **real-time consultations with church leaders.**

By acknowledging limitations and seeking appropriate expertise, church leaders can effectively support survivors and cultivate safer church communities. Let us commit to working together, leveraging our collective resources, and prioritizing the well-being of those entrusted to our care.

There is a difference.

Investigation Comparison*

GRACE's seasoned team of investigators is skilled at handling intricate abuse cases within Christian contexts. Our survivor-focused, Scripture-aligned approach ensures unbiased investigations that prioritize transparency, accountability, justice, and healing. Please note that our investigations do not replace criminal or child protection inquiries.

	GRACE	LAW FIRMS	OTHER INVESTIGATION PROVIDERS	INTERNAL CHURCH LEADERSHIP
INDEPENDENT	Yes	No Fiduciary duty to client	Often Varies depending on contract structure and provider practices.	No Church leadership directly conducts or oversees investigation
OBJECTIVE	Yes Bias checks; both churches and reported victims receive copy of report	No Attorney-Client Relationship	Varies	No Exposed to community grooming. Relationship with alleged victim and alleged perpetrator
CULTURAL ANALYSIS	Yes Culturally-informed investigations including use of cultural consultants	No Focused on behavior and liability without in-depth cultural analysis	Rarely Will not typically examine cultural factors	Varies
SEASONED MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TEAM	Yes Nationally recognized former prosecutors and law enforcement officers evaluate each case	No	Varies	No
ANALYSIS OF TRAUMA-INFORMED PRINCIPLES	Yes	No	No	No
TRAINING IN TRAUMA-INFORMED INTERVIEWING	Yes Published experts in trauma-informed and forensic interviewing	Rarely	Rarely	No
THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS	Yes	No	No	Yes
INTEGRATED UNDERSTANDING OF ABUSE, TRAUMA & FAITH	Yes	No	No	Rarely
WITNESS/SURVIVOR CARE & SUPPORT	Yes Confidential witness debriefing provided	Rarely	Varies	Varies
INTERNATIONAL INVESTIGATIONS	Yes Global connections and experience	Varies	Varies	No

*This comparison chart represents the opinions of GRACE. We encourage everyone to explore these claims for yourself.



To learn more visit...
www.netgrace.org or email info@netgrace.org