

## Resources – Child Protection

From “We Won’t Let It Happen Here,” a PCUSA resource available at:

<http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/phewa/pcan/>

A “Safe Church” policy needs to address:

- Insurance coverage;
- Selection and screening for volunteers;
- and gender of volunteers in different capacities (nursery, youth group);
- Number of volunteers necessary in various situations;
- Safety precautions and procedures which will be put in place;
- Physical arrangements when children and adults are in classes or events;
- Procedure for reporting abuse;
- Plan for training staff and volunteers.

### **Developing a Training Plan**

It is important that congregations develop a training plan to educate staff and volunteers who work with children about the realities of child abuse, how to prevent abuse, how to recognize signs of abuse, and what to do in cases of suspected abuse. In the planning process, the following issues need to be taken into consideration:

1. Any training should be built on a theological base and the acknowledgement that abuse is a criminal act and needs to be treated as such. Make scriptural references available about the treatment of children and orphans. Become acquainted with the teachings about children in our Confessions and in the historical actions of the denomination. You may also want to use this resource and the Sexual Misconduct Policy of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as references.
2. The goals of training are to ensure that staff and volunteers who work with children understand the nature of child abuse and how to respond in the event that abuse is suspected. Training is also useful in the review and modification of church policy, as volunteers, who have had experience working with the policy, share their experience.
3. At least part of the training should be provided by someone knowledgeable about child abuse and about the laws of your state. Attorneys, child protective service caseworkers, counselors with experience in the field, and school social workers are among those who benefit your training and overall program.

Topics to be covered include:

- What is child abuse?
- How do we recognize child abuse?
- What is the church policy about volunteers working with children and youth?
- Why are an application and references necessary and how will they be used?
- How do we keep children safe?
- What are the state laws concerning reporting?
- How is a report made?

- How can we talk to children about child abuse without scaring them?
- What are the community resources available?
- Any topics which may be specific to your congregation;
- Specific information for paid staff;
- Specific information for volunteers.

Training would ideally occur annually, perhaps at the beginning of the church school year. This allows new volunteers to be trained, and returning volunteers to provide coaching and evaluate the effectiveness of the policy.

The training should involve all employees and volunteers who will be working with children and youth as part of your church program. This may include people who are not members of your church, but who work in a church-housed daycare program.

Video and other Resources:

Church Mutual free video about preventing abuse and other safety issues:

<https://www.churchmutual.com/98/Safety-Resources> (the resource kit also available from the PEVA resource center)

Protect My Ministry: online training course available for volunteers who cannot attend a training event.

<http://protectmyministry.com/> This agency also can do background checks, and offers a web-based management system.

Virginia State Police: <http://www.vsp.state.va.us/FormsPublications.shtm>

National Sex Offender Public Website: <https://www.nsopw.gov> Can look up any person for free – absolute bare minimum for a background check