



Healthy Church Solutions

PROTECTING CHILDREN AND YOUTH ENTRUSTED TO US

Is your church providing a safe and secure environment for children and youth ministries?

Churches and church leaders continue to be challenged to provide a safe and secure place for preschoolers, children and students. Our goal is to provide the best possible assistance. The following information is intended to broaden your understanding of available resources and how to access them.

Background: It is not uncommon to see a report about sexual abuse at churches in America, and California is not an exception to these tragic situations. Our news media often reports about abuse at schools, community organizations or churches and church leaders have become suspect in many people's minds.

To protect the children and youth entrusted to us, churches must take steps to provide a safe environment. Unfortunately, many churches still believe it could never happen to them. Here's how you can help!

Know the Law:

Clergy Become Mandatory Child Abuse Reporters

As of January 1, 1997, Clergy in California are mandatory child abuse reporters, who face criminal penalties for not reporting. Abuse or reasonable suspicions of child abuse are to be reported to your county Child Protective Services immediately and a written report filed with Child Protective Services within 36 hours. An attorney should be contacted about any doubts or concerns you may have. However, you are required to comply with the law within the allotted time.

Note: The clergy member is not subject to this new law when a parishioner is sharing confidential information of a "penitential" nature, and it is shared in the context of his work as a church minister.

Insurance companies actually set the requirements for churches. Churches are not able to get insurance without policies and procedures in place.

Know Who Can Help:

- Policies, Procedures, FAQs, Consultation and Training – Tom Belew, Small Groups & Childhood Specialist
- Crisis Response and FAQ's – The church's insurance agent or company
- Legal Assistance – An attorney

Know About Helpful Resources:

- Steps to Making Your Church Child Abuse Safe, available in English, Chinese and Spanish. For a copy visit www.csbc.com/children or call 559.256.0835.
- Safety and Security Checkup, available in English and Spanish. For a copy visit www.csbc.com/children or call 559.256.0835.
- Interviewing Volunteers – For a copy visit www.csbc.com/children or call 559.256.0835.
- Childhood Policies and Procedures Packet – Call 559.256.0835.
- The Southern Baptist Convention has posted resources at www.sbc.net under the "Sex Abuse Prevention" tab in the "Resources" sidebar.
- Policy and Prevention Resources from other publishers – CSBC model policy has been developed using *Reducing the Risk* resources. Many excellent resources are available from Christian publishers.
- Church Insurance Companies have resources and Websites dedicated to helping churches develop and maintain policies and procedures.

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