



Caring Well

SUNDAY

“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

MICAH 6:8, ESV

5 Ways to Make Your Church Safe from Abuse

BY ERLC STAFF

To make our churches safe from abuse, we must be proactive. Developing policies and procedures ahead of time, training and educating staff and volunteers, as well as partnering with abuse experts will set your church up well to be a safe place for your community. Here are five essential action steps you can implement to care well for survivors of abuse.

1. Train: Statistics tell us 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys (though many believe this is much higher) are sexually abused before they turn 18.¹ Only a small percentage of these victims ever reveal their abuse. Church leaders must help our churches understand that the mission to prevent sexual abuse and our response to it is a clear and compelling gospel issue.

2. Screen: In order to make your church safe from abuse, it is critical to implement a thorough screening process for anyone who will have access to children, youth, and vulnerable adults. A careful process ensures that individuals are suitable and compatible with your church's policies and procedures.

3. Protect: One of the ways you can protect children, youth, and vulnerable adults is by having solid policies and procedures in

place at your church. These protect those you are serving while also protecting those that serve them. Once developed, being intentional about following policies and procedures is imperative for the protection of everyone involved.

4. Report: Every state has laws identifying those required to report child abuse. Even if you believe you are not legally required to report child abuse in your state, you are still encouraged to report suspected or known abuse. As followers of Jesus, we are charged with protecting the vulnerable, and reporting known or suspected abuse is part of that mandate.

5. Care: Abuse violates the dignity of our God-given image and disrupts our voice, sense of identity, and sense of trust and safety in relationships. Our response in supporting survivors of sexual abuse has the opportunity to accurately reflect the mission and character of Jesus Christ.

To make your church safe from abuse, church leaders must become informed about the impact of abuse and how to find the necessary supportive resources to come alongside survivors, for the sake of the gospel.

¹ <https://cachouston.org/prevention/child-sexual-abuse-facts/>