

INTRODUCTIONS

for policies



This introductory section of your policy is **uniquely yours**. Talk with clusters of church members, include parents and staff in the discussions, brainstorm with church leaders....until the vision that cradles the policy is clear. What do people mean when they say they want a safe church for their children? What does “sanctuary” feel like to them? How do they plan to balance Christ’s radical hospitality to all sorts of people with Christ’s equally strong teachings about caring for and protecting the vulnerable? Below are some introductions from several churches. Keep the commentary tight. Long rambling explanations lose the audience. What’s the most inspiring foundation can you create for the policy and procedures that follow?

This section can be called *purpose*, *introduction* or whatever best expressed your intention for establishing the policy.

SAMPLES OF POLICY TEXT BELOW



Church One: A Commitment to Safer Community

In recognition of the spiritual and public trust given to this faith community, *Church One* is committed to being a true sanctuary, both nurturing and protecting its members and visitors. Worship of God requires openness, trust, honesty, intimacy, vulnerability and a safe, supportive community. Abuse and harassment are, therefore, violations of the faith and commitment shared by this congregation. Accordingly, the congregation will maintain official policies and procedures that assure prevention of instances of abuse, appropriate intervention into alleged incidents of abusive behavior and care for all involved. These procedures will be reviewed by the Congregation Council annually.

Church Two: Purpose

The members and staff of *Church Two* intend to provide a safe and secure environment for all, for adults as well as for preschoolers, children, youth and vulnerable adults entrusted to our care. A safe and secure environment includes formal, written policy and procedures to help prevent the occurrence of abuse or harassment of any person. While it is unlikely that we can completely prevent every possibility of abuse, we can greatly reduce the risk by following this policy to provide a safe and supportive

environment for children, youth, and vulnerable adults, and the persons who work with them.

Church Three: Theological Foundation

We are engaged in a spiritual growth process grounded in a desire to live out our twin values of radical hospitality and true sanctuary.

Striving to achieve this balance between radical hospitality and true sanctuary is a spiritual practice that invites us into a deeper understanding of God's grace, human need, and healthy boundaries.

Church Four: Introduction

Church Four seeks to create a safe and healthy environment in which children and youth can learn about and experience love of God and neighbor. We are committed to:

- treat all children and youth with respect and consideration.
- treat all children and youth equally regardless of sex, race, religion, or culture.
- use positive techniques of guidance such as redirection, positive reinforcement and encouragement rather than competition, comparison, and criticism.
- have age appropriate expectations and establish guidelines and environments that minimize the need for discipline.
- discourage, refrain from and address any behavior that could be considered abusive to children or youth.

Church Four is strongly opposed to any form of abuse, exploitation and/or harassment of any kind and that such behavior is prohibited by church policy. It is the intention of *Church Four*, through its Safe Church Policy, to take action to prevent and correct behavior that is contrary to this policy.

This policy establishes guidelines and procedures for the screening, selection, training, supervision, and conduct of all persons who work with children and youth at our church. Adequate screening of employees and volunteers who work with our children and youth is intended to address the concerns of parents and the general public regarding the safety of children at *Church Four* and to discourage and deter individuals with histories of inappropriate conduct with children. Adequate training and supervision of employees and volunteers who work with our children and youth are intended to alert volunteers and employees to the fact that *Church Four* is mindful of potential for abuse and will respond promptly and clearly to allegations of abuse and care for all involved. Training of volunteers and employees will also educate them about what constitutes abuse so that they can more adequately supervise the program activities,

fulfill the requirements of the Safe Church Policy, and help promote and enforce it.

The policy also establishes reporting requirements and a response plan in the event that an allegation of child abuse is made. By taking steps to formalize strategies of prevention and response, we not only create a safer environment for our children and youth, we also protect our caregivers and volunteers from unfounded accusations and our church from the accusation that it has failed to take reasonable steps to prevent abuse.

Church Five: Mission

In recognition of the spiritual and public trust given this faith community, *Church Five* is committed to being a true sanctuary, both nurturing and protecting all participants in its activities, including members and visitors. Worship of God requires openness, trust, intimacy, vulnerability, and a safe, supportive community. Recognizing the many intentional and unintentional ways that we may harm ourselves and others, we commit ourselves to maintaining policies and procedures to create a safe environment for all who participate in our programs. Accordingly, the congregation will establish policies, screen and train staff and volunteers, and educate the congregation in the following areas:

- Sexual misconduct and physical abuse, including legal reporting requirements
- Other forms of harassment (based on race, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, or physical ability)
- Accessibility for all people
- Emergency response and disaster planning

These procedures will be reviewed annually (or as prudence merits) by the Cabinet to correspond with changes in civil law and progress toward addressing these policies in our congregational community.

As a community of Christian faith, *Church Five* is committed to creating and maintaining programs, facilities, and a community in which members, friends, staff, and volunteers can worship, learn, and work together in an atmosphere free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. All persons associated with *Church Five* should be aware that the church is strongly opposed to sexual exploitation and sexual harassment and that such behavior is prohibited by church policy. Also prohibited is discrimination, harassment, abuse, exploitation, or intimidation based on race, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, or physical ability. It is the intention of the church to take action to prevent and correct behavior which is contrary to this policy and, if necessary, to discipline those persons who violate this policy, in accordance with both this policy and applicable laws.