

DO YOU KNOW THE MANDATED REPORTING LAWS?

www.sonoma.edu/cihs/mr



Children at risk of abuse need our intervention. If we do not help them, not only do the children suffer but also the church may face the trauma and ugly publicity that has plagued the Roman Catholic Church recently. Rather than silence concern or handle suspicions internally, we can call for professional help and advice. Both law enforcement and Child Protective Services (CPS) are specially trained to support children and families affected by abuse, and eager to collaborate with the faith community. In fact, clergy and any others working with or caring for children in your congregation are required by state law to report any suspicions of possible abuse to police or CPS (even suspicions raised by second hand information). But understanding the reporting law can be difficult.

The California Office of Child Abuse Prevention has developed a **FREE training** web site for those mandated to report abuse. The on-line training takes about two hours and can be discontinued and restarted at any point until finished, when a certificate of completion can be printed. To reduce risk of lawsuits for negligence, a training completion certificate should be in the personnel file of every church staff, including:

clergy
childcare providers
nursery school teachers
those paid to work in youth programs
custodians
secretaries and administrative staff if children are on-site during the week.

To report suspicions that a child
may be at risk in CA, call:
1-800-422-4453x1
or your local CPS or police department

Volunteers are not mandated reporters, but also may call CPS for advice or to report suspicions.

Dr. Kibbie Ruth at Kyros is the state specialist on how the reporting law affects religious bodies, so feel free to call (650) 343-3377 if you have any questions about how Penal Code 11166 affects you or want more information about protecting the children in your congregation.

SPECIAL NOTE:

Clergy are mandated reporters of **elder and dependent adult abuse** or neglect, as well as child abuse. Dependent adults are between 18 and 64 years of age, challenged mentally and/or physically and dependent on someone else for their care. The abuse may be physical, emotional, sexual, or financial. To get help, call the police or Adult Protective Services.

Adult Protective Services: 1-888-436-3600

For more information on adult abuse, go to www.safestate.org (choose "elder abuse" in the side bar) or check www.canhr.org/abuse/abuse_resources.htm.

WHO IS WELCOME AT CHURCH?

www.meganslaw.ca.gov



Ever since January 1 when the registry of sex offenders in California became available online, the information has stirred a flurry of concern. Gossip may fly through a congregation because of a surprise discovery of sexual offenses by a friend or church member. Or anxiety may be fueled by concern that an unknown child abuser might be attending services, but no one really wants to find out. Or frightened church leaders now may realize that their reluctance to create protective policies makes their congregation ripe for potential abuse.

This new web site raises two fundamental questions:

- How can we best safeguard our precious children from harm?
- How can a former child abuser participate in our church?

Currently, our children are more at risk of abuse in the church than in any other institution largely because we fail to

- create protective policies
- educate our congregation
- properly screen those who work with children and youth
- appropriately supervise our volunteers and staff
- respond effectively to concerns about behavior toward children and youth
- report suspected abuse.

If safeguards are in place, the safety of children is less likely to be threatened by a child abuser in the congregation (whether the offender is registered, or never discovered and prosecuted). Most Christians would argue that even former sex offenders are welcome in the body of Christ—if repentant. However, discovery of a member's name on the Megan's Law registry requires some additional protective and healing strategies. If your church has discovered a member's name in the registry, please give Kyros a call so we can let you know how other churches in California are responding. Or give us a call if your congregation has welcomed a former offender with compassion and accountability, and you think other churches might benefit from your approach.

Clergy:

We strongly recommend that you visit the Megan's Law web site to determine if any members or regular visitors to your church are registered. Your knowledge and appropriate response reduce potential conflict within the congregation. Better you find out directly than hear about a registrant through the grapevine or after your church borders on hysteria.

← INSIDE: THREE WEBSITES YOU SHOULD BOOKMARK

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

These are open to the public.

Check www.kyros.org or call (650) 343-3377 for more information.

PROTECTING GOD'S CHILDREN

Thursday, January 19, 2006
7:00-8:30 PM
San Mateo

SEXUAL VIOLATIONS AND THE CHURCH

Monday-Friday, January 9-13, 2006
9:00AM - 1:00PM
CDSP, Berkeley

MAINTAINING PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

Wednesday, February 15, 2006
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Berkeley

Saturday, May 6, 2006
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM
San Jose

An insert for your newsletter or bulletin

WHO CARES?

Sitting in the pew on Mother's Day, Elizabeth heard the priest pray for mothers who are battered in their own homes—where they struggle to raise their children. It was just a short collection of words, but they caught her attention. Elizabeth had assumed that the church was nowhere to discuss what was happening in her own life, much less ask for help. She interpreted the prior silence of the congregation's leadership as condoning the violence she was experiencing. Since no other church members talked about domestic violence she assumed that she was the only one traumatized by it. So before that Sunday she sat hunched in the pew ashamed and isolated. Now she knew the priest would understand.

Do you care about the brokenness in our families or the abuse of children and vulnerable adults? Then talk about it in your faith community. Your congregation can be a *sanctuary* only if each person is safe both at home and at church.

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FINALLY!!!



In hopes that abuse prevention information is more easily accessible to the faith community, Kyros is redesigning its web site. Currently you can find out about Kyros' services and training schedule, what faith groups we have served, and how to support our ministry, as well as view prior newsletter articles. But the site under construction will also include basic abuse prevention information, easy-to-use one-page handouts, and links to resources about identifying and preventing:

- child abuse
- clergy sexual abuse/misconduct
- domestic violence
- elder and dependent adult abuse
- sexual harassment.

As the web site expands, you will see more about

- enhancing appropriate pastoral boundaries
- strengthening congregational risk management
- complying with civil law related to congregations and their leadership
- reducing abuse in the community, by individual or congregational efforts.

Bookmark the Kyros web site to watch it grow. You might even find sample sermons and worship materials on it one day.



www.kyros.org

Kyros (Greek)
legitimate, limited, compassionate
power

For more information about preventing abuse, contact us at
KYROS
(650) 343-3377

