

WHAT A CONGREGATION CAN DO... **to reduce violence in families**



INCREASE AWARENESS

- acknowledge all forms of abuse and family violence exist in the congregation (move from denial to being proactive)
- educate congregational leaders about the “real life” problem of family violence
- understand the larger context of family violence in the culture
- stop protecting abusers
- promote social action and outreach around family well-being
- establish a vision of *sanctuary* or the congregation as a safe place for the vulnerable;
- proclaim the congregation a “safe place”
- promote family strengths (with inclusive definition of “family”)
- create a committee on family violence to provide on-going leadership and oversight for congregational response
- provide resource information to clergy and other religious leaders

PREVENT HARM

- identify and utilize expertise within the congregation (therapists, social workers, law enforcement, etc.)
- bring in outside resources (professionals, services, information, etc.)
- develop policies for prevention and intervention, including protocols for leaders and clear linkage to denominational and legal policies
- screen all staff and volunteers
- supervise all staff and volunteers, including implementing internal disciplinary procedures when necessary

RESPOND TO INCIDENTS OF ABUSE

- train congregants to be available to respond to others
- know the limitations of leaders and the congregation, providing support for clergy and other responders and establishing procedures for situations when limits are reached in time, energy, resources, etc.
- provide safety for disclosure of abuse
- respond appropriately to allegations (following the CA reporting law accurately)
- identify differences between spiritual support (such as praying) and practical support (such as developing an escape plan)