

FOLLOW THE PROTOCOL

THESE ARE IMPORTANT STEPS TO TAKE AFTER A DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE BUT SHOULD BE ADOPTED PRIOR TO AN INCIDENT.

The following serves as an example and a template but should be reviewed by your church leadership and legal team.

Any member of [THIS CHURCH], staff, volunteer, parent, child, member, or regular attendee, who witnesses or becomes aware of abuse, is expected to respond appropriately and immediately. The state of CA believes defines abuse as:

- (1) To intentionally or recklessly cause or attempt to cause bodily injury.
 - (2) Sexual assault.
 - (3) To place a person in reasonable apprehension of imminent serious bodily injury to that person or to another.
 - (4) To engage in any behavior that has been or could be enjoined pursuant to Section 6320.
- (b) Abuse is not limited to the actual infliction of physical injury or assault.

We believe that all forms of abuse, physical, emotional, sexual, spiritual, and neglect deserve our care and attention. We further state that no one is exempt from this policy, whether they are a one-time volunteer or a member of pastoral staff.

[Some churches may wish to add a Biblical foundation for protecting the vulnerable.]



A SAMPLE DECISION TREE

Does the reported incident involve a child, a disabled person, or a senior citizen?

YES

NO

-Report to the local police department.
[phone number]
-Report incidents regarding children to the department of social services.
[phone number]

Visit

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/state/> for your state guidelines

-If the abuse occurred within the family, ensure the child's safety. Stay with them until the police arrive. Do not send them home with family.

-If the abuse occurred within the church but NOT family, make sure the parents/guardian are made aware immediately.

Safety is key. Reports should be made immediately.

-Does the victim wish to file a police report? If so, offer to make that report with them.
-Document the allegation.
-Inform the appropriate church leaders. *Decide ahead of time who this is: a safety team, leadership/ elder board, insurance representative, pastoral staff.*
-Provide the victim a church liaison, someone who is a trusted member of the church and familiar with trauma-informed care.



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Is the accused a pastor?



YES

NO

-File a police report. Be sure to get a file or case number and a name of the person taking the report. Keep a dated copy of the report and share with church leadership.
-Inform appropriate church leadership.
Decide ahead of time who this is: a safety team, leadership/ elder board, insurance representative, HR representative.
-**Immediately** suspend the pastor pending further investigation.
-Assign a church liaison to both the victim and the offender. Liaisons should be trusted members of the church with some understanding of trauma-informed care.
-Remove all access and prohibit communication between the pastor and the suspected victim.
-Communicate clearly and quickly to the congregation. (*You may wish to consult GRACE www.netgrace.org or another qualified organization to help with this.*) Your communication should include basic facts without speculation and should be victim-centered.
-Establish a contact person or email address or external team where people with further information or other allegations can report.
The victim's identity should always be protected.

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-Inform appropriate church leadership.
Decide ahead of time who this is: a safety team, leadership/ elder board, insurance representative, HR representative.
-**Immediately** suspend the individual from any ministry or leadership positions they may hold pending further investigation.
-Assign a church liaison to both the victim and the offender. Liaisons should be trusted members of the church with some understanding of trauma-informed care.
-Remove all access and prohibit communication between the alleged offender and the suspected victim.
-Inform any ministry or church members who may be impacted. Remember that protection is the goal. Be sure others are aware of reporting procedures and contact information if they have any further information.
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