

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

A child protection policy that attempts to help a congregation comply with the new legislation will be a large document. A number of issues will need to be addressed that must fit your particular parameters as a church. After the policy explains the purpose of your child protection program, the following items will likely need to be addressed:

1. A good policy will define terms in a way that is consistent with the current law and explain special terms used in the policy. The *Child Protective Services Law* defines nine categories of child abuse. The definitions for these nine categories should be defined either in the body of the policy or in an Appendix.
2. The policy should present the make-up and duties of the child protection team.
3. The policy should name the specific background clearances required, clarify who pays for them, and how often they must be renewed.
4. The process for approving an adult to have direct contact with children in congregational programs and activities should be explained in detail, including who makes that decision to approve each person. Copies of all the clearance forms and detailed instructions for obtaining clearances should be provided.
5. Recordkeeping procedures should be spelled out as well and indicate who is responsible to maintain records and who is responsible to insure adults with direct contact to children and youth meet policy criteria.
6. The best practices policies that you will employ should all be explained in detail for each type of child and youth activity or program as well as provide guidance for what to do when a best practice can not be followed (For example, the teacher in a Sunday School class falls ill on short notice. What do you do?).
7. Training for adults with direct contact with children and youth, more general training for the congregation as a whole, and education for children and youth should be spelled out in detail and the frequency of training should be specified.
8. The policy must provide detailed instructions for how to report “out” (to state and local authorities) of the congregation any suspected abuse as well as how to report “up” (to church leaders) within the congregation.
9. Consequences for adults in the children and youth programs who do not adhere to the child protection policy should be noted.
10. If your congregation will knowingly welcome a sexual offender into your community, your policy should include a section that states the congregation will develop and implement accountability practices and structures for the particular sex-offender on a case-by-case basis.
11. A complete list of contact information and copies of required forms should be included.