

West Chowan Baptist Association Seminar

Preventing Sexual Abuse in the Church

July 8, 2019

Please note: We cannot make assumptions regarding sexual abuse

3 R's

Regardless of the size, age, location or leadership model ... each church needs to apply the 3 R's to preventing sexual abuse in the local church

Recognize

1. Recognize sexual harassment, sexual abuse and sexual neglect (child neglect must also be reported)

- a. When you see it
- b. When you hear about it
- c. Recognize you can be held accountable for either one if you don't report

2. Recognize grooming when you see it

- a. Grooming of children and adults
- b. Review policies, procedures and processes to prohibit grooming
- c. Don't assume grooming is not taking place in your community and is not possible in your church

2. Recognize gaps in your protection policies, procedures and processes

- a. Review you protection policies
 - i. Make sure policies do not contradict church constitution/bylaws
 - ii. Clearly written and consistently followed policies provide all of the legal protection the church needs
 - iii. Make sure policies are covered by insurance providers; sometimes additional "riders" are needed
- b. Review your protection procedures
 - i. When harassment/abuse/neglect is discovered ... what steps are taken?
 - ii. What is documented, who is contacted, when is the information shared?

- iii. What information is shared with the congregation, when is it shared and how is it shared?
- c. Review your protection processes
 - i. How do you train your volunteers?
 - ii. How do you communicate with parents?
- d. Recognize that policies, procedures and processes for volunteers must be different than those for employees
 - i. There are differences in how a church must treat employees (labor law)
 - ii. There are differences between how ministerial and non-ministerial employees are treated
 - iii. There are differences in the legal protections provided an ordained employee and an non-ordained employee
 - iv. We must make sure our churches are not “hostile workplaces”

Note: The Convention provides the following individuals to help you develop policies/procedures/processes for your church’s various ministries

1. General Policies – Eddie Thompson
2. Personnel Policies – Pamela Bills
3. Children’s ministry – Cheryl Markland (think within the church)
4. Children’s missions – Dollie Noa (think of camps/conferences)
5. Student ministry – Merrie Johnson (think within the church, camps/conferences)
6. Student missions – Tom Beam (think missions trips across the US and internationally)
7. Emergency childcare – Keith Henry, Baptist Children’s Homes
8. Emergency counseling – Bryan Hatcher, CareNet

Do NOT make the mistake of saying, “It can never happen in our church” ... make your preparations now

Report

NC is a must report state ...

Reports of sexual abuse/neglect of minors must be reported; minors are individuals below age 18

Reports are made to either Child Protective Services or Law Enforcement

NC has a law that protects individuals that report suspected sexual abuse “in good faith”

Do NOT make the mistake of conducting an internal investigation first; report alleged abuse of minors

Do NOT make the mistake of dismissing an allegation of abuse/neglect; report abuse/neglect of minors

Do NOT make the mistake of assumptions ...

i. Do not assume someone else will make the report

ii. Do not assume that someone else has already reported

You cannot assume that “they” reported exactly what you’ve been told

Respond

1. Develop a crisis ministry team to provide timely, Christ-honoring responses to victims and families

Cheryl Markland has great resources to help develop this for children’s ministry

Merrie Johnson is glad to assist you in developing this for student ministry

Ashley Allen is glad to assist you in developing this for women’s ministry

2. Prevent further harassment/abuse/neglect to take place within the church (if this has been where the alleged events took place)

3. Prevent further access to children by the offender (if the offender is within the church)

4. Engage counselors to assist victims and their families

5. Cooperate fully with the investigation by Child Protective Services or law enforcement