



SafeConduct™

Abuse Prevention in the Church

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## What Are We Talking About?

- Physical sexual contact
- Improper sexual relationships
- Verbal comments
- Pornographic videos/photos
- Obscene phone calls
- Exhibitionism
- Allowing children to witness sexual activity

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## What Are the Odds?

- About  $\frac{1}{4}$  of girls suffer some type of sexual abuse by age 18.
- About  $\frac{1}{6}$  –  $\frac{1}{8}$  of boys suffer sexual abuse by age 18.

\*According to Praesidium, Inc.

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## Who Does it? It Can't Happen in Our Church!

- Not a “Catholic issue” – 70% of the allegations in the ‘90s were made against Protestants. (*Christian Science Monitor*)
- In 1999, 42% were volunteers, 25% clergy & paid staff, 25% were other children.
- Usually someone the victim knows or trusts – 89% are a family member or is known by the family.
- Not just men:
  - 5-10% are performed by women, but could be as high as 40%
  - Children can and do victimize other children! Recent report suggest that 30-40% are committed by adolescents.

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## It ~~Can't~~ Can Happen in Our Church!

- Pastor was taking photos of children to “document abuse”
- Minor exposed himself to another minor
- Adult leader wore sexually revealing clothing or exposed himself to youth
- Pastor had a sexual relationship with a congregant
- Pastor had a sexual relationship with custodian
- Sexual harassment to employee by member
- Sunday School teacher molesting child in bathroom

**These are all real cases that occurred in the Indiana-Kentucky Conf.**



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## Why is the Church a Target?

- Churches typically are more trusting institutions.
- Churches usually need more volunteers and are anxious to welcome them.
- No one wants to offend potential volunteers.
- Many churches have volunteers that are spread thin.
- People typically trust church volunteers with their children more readily (thus a predator can gain more access).

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## Those Generally at Higher Risk

- *People with disabilities* – they are usually less able to protect themselves and may already exhibit “different” behavior.
- *Children that are shy or different* – They may be more likely to respond more to an adult than the other children.
- *Children with behavioral problems* – typically are more isolated from the group & may be less credible when accusing someone.

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- *Single parent kids* – They may be seeking attention from other adults and/or the parent may welcome help from another adult.

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## Areas at Higher Risk

- Restrooms
- Changing Rooms
- Swimming pools
- Vehicles
- Places with lots of people or a chaotic environment (e.g. amusement park, fair)



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## Power Levels as a Tool

People at different levels of perceived power in a relationship require special attention to observing proper boundaries and interactions. Those in the lower position are more vulnerable.

Adults > Children

Supervisors > Employees

Clergy > Congregants/members

Counselors > Counselees

Lay Leaders > Employees & non-leaders

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## Grooming

Grooming is a technique used by intentional abusers to achieve both access and ability to not get caught.

A molester/abuser will often take time to build the trust of a child and/or the family and church. This disables natural defensive reactions and also makes it tougher to report the person. It can occur through casual conversation, email, chat sessions, Facebook, and text messages.

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## Gaining Access to Abuse

An abuser needs access and some privacy to perpetrate abuse. This can be done by offering to tutor, coach, or baby sitting, camping, rooms with no windows, or a ride home.

It often starts with innocent actions to test/push boundaries using acceptable touches, side hugs, sitting next to a child, pats on the back, then will gradually increase frequency and add unacceptable contact – massages, tickling, long hugs.

Other may use spur of the moment opportunities in bathrooms, locker room and maintain their privacy by anonymity.

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## Boundaries to Observe

- Acceptable touches – high fives, side-hug, brief pat on back
- Conversation – must be appropriate. No dirty jokes, suggestive discussion/innuendo, age appropriate
- Don't be alone in a room with a single child – instead use an open area or otherwise in full available view.
- What's in view? No pornography or suggestive material in view of children, sexual activity, romance books?
- Driving – try to avoid 1 adult / 1 child situations in cars – combine cars or take your own child along.

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## Boundaries to Observe Electronic Interactions

- Adults should not text with children/youth unless including others (incl. Instant Messaging or texting)
- Facebook/Google+ – Adults should not send “friend requests” to minors and strongly consider whether to accept requests from minors (Use a “group” instead)
- Emails between adults and minors or different “power levels” should include a “cc” to another person/staff-member.



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## Access by Those not in Activity

- Contractors / Service Providers - can they roam halls unescorted? Access everywhere?
- Vendors
- Parents – Can they wander through areas where they can gain access to lone children?
- Coaches / Activity Staff – do they have special privileges that allow access (e.g. private fittings?)
- Board members – If they have access, have they been screened the same as workers/volunteers?
- Casual Visitors – are they seen when entering? Do they need to be escorted?

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## Red Flags

1. Know your rules well
2. Notice adult / child interactions – giving gifts? Linger with a child? Wrestling or horseplay?
3. Observe high risk locations – bathrooms, locker rooms, showers, spas, areas with obstructed views
4. Watch high locations more – transition times, hectic times, places of potential partial/full nudity, mixed age groups, off-site or non-regular activities, lights out time – videos, naps, overnights.

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## Red Flags – Signs of Abuse

1. High Risk behaviors: smoking, substance abuse, unsafe sex/promiscuous, self-destructive behavior
2. Physical/Mental Illness: anxiety, depression, eating disorders, chronic pain, irritable bowel, chronic fatigue, PTSD
3. Low Self esteem
4. Impaired social behavior or psychological development
5. Difficulty with physical closeness
6. Aggression or anger
7. Isolation from family or friends
8. Suicidal thoughts, gestures or attempts

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## What to Do?

1. Interrupt the activity in a non-confrontational manner and remind the of the rules.
  2. Explain your concern.
  3. Suggest an alternative method of activity.
  4. Document what you saw.
  5. Report observations to a designated person or to authorities (Child Protective Services: 1-800-800-5556)
  6. Make certain that activity doesn't get repeated.
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## Mandatory Reporting

### Professionals Required to Report (Citation: Ann. Code § 31-33-5-2)

Mandatory reporters include any staff member of a medical or other public or private institution, school, facility, or agency.

### Reporting by Other Persons (Citation: Ann. Code § 31-33-5-1)

Any person who has reason to believe that a child is a victim of abuse or neglect must report.



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## Mandatory Reporting

### Inclusion of Reporter's Name in Report

(Citation: Ann. Code § 31-33-7-4)

The written report must include the name and contact information for the person making the report.

### Disclosure of Reporter Identity (Citation: Ann. Code § 31-33-18-2)

The report shall be made available to the person about whom a report has been made, with protection for the identity of:

Any person reporting known or suspected child abuse or neglect

Any other person if the person or agency making the information available finds that disclosure of the information would be likely to endanger the life or safety of the person

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## Mandatory Reporting

### Immunity from liability:

Any person, other than the accused, who reports child abuse or neglect or is involved in the investigation or disposition of child abuse or neglect reports is immune from criminal or civil liability, unless the person acted maliciously or in bad faith.  
(IC31-33-6-1)