

**GUIDELINES FOR
 DEVELOPING
 A SEXUAL MISCONDUCT
 POLICY FOR YOUR
 CHURCH**

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WHY CREATE A POLICY?*
 It sets a moral example and functions as a witness of faith.

It sends a message to parents of children and youth: "We care that our church is a safe place".

It is wise stewardship-it protects the church concerning legal and insurance liabilities.

It creates a tool to be used by one who has been victimized.

It is an opportunity to affirm the faith, values and convictions of the church.

It lessens the likelihood of sexual misconduct occurring.

It can engage and educate a congregation about difficult issues we prefer to avoid.

It acknowledges a sad reality that has occurred in the past and exists in the present.

It provides a very useful tool to the leadership if a sexual boundary violation is discovered.

Three phases to be addressed in a Session Policy on Sexual Misconduct

PHASE I - Training and Education
 Definitions & Terms
 Incidence & Prevalence
 Code of ethics, values, standards
 Rationale

PHASE II - Prevention of Misconduct and Abuse
 Background checks
 References
 Dissemination

PHASE III - Response to an Allegation or a Violation
 Reporting
 Sequence of steps

* From presentations by James S. Evinger and Mel Oliver:
 "Planning and Implementing a Church Policy on Sexual Misconduct: Prevention and Intervention," a workshop sponsored by Committee on Ministry, Presbytery of Genesee Valley in Rochester, N.Y., on October 1, 2005.

WHAT SHOULD GO INTO A POLICY?

Prologue

A Scriptural foundation
Purpose

Prohibited behavior

Definitions
Standards of conduct

Prevention

Leadership screening and training
Minimizing the risk

Reporting

Who, what, when, and where

Response to allegations

Aftercare / Healing

HOW SHOULD A POLICY BEST BE USED?

TRAINING

It is vitally important to have a policy on sexual misconduct incorporated as part of the Policies and Procedures Manual and By-Laws of the church.

It is of little use, however, if it does not become an integral part of leadership education.

The council (session) should provide annual training on the policy to council members and staff annually.

The policy should be an integral part of the orientation of new council members.

The goal should always be to help raise awareness of the issue to aid in prevention and procedures to follow if an incident occurs.

DEVELOPING A TRAINING PROGRAM

Review of the ministry's sexual misconduct policy

Recognizing the signs and symptoms of abuse

Maintaining healthy boundaries

Guidelines for appropriate use of technology

Procedures for reporting suspected abuse

Training should be biblically based, using Scripture to remind participants of God's call for justice and compassion. (Some relevant passages such as Exodus 22:21-23, Micah 6:8, Psalm 77:1-2, Amos 5:24 and Matthew 19:14.)

Source: Presbyterian Mission Agency: ["Creating Safe Ministries](#) menu: Click on [Create Policies](#)"

Other Helpful Websites:

From the United Church of Christ Insurance Board (pdf):
[Sample Template and Definitions](#)

From the United Methodist Church: [UMSexualEthics : *Local Church Policy Guidelines and Samples](#)
