

Recommendations for Implementing A Child Protection Policy In Your Local Church

The key to implementing a Child Protection Policy in your local church is communication with the congregation regarding (1) the need for a policy, (2) to whom it applies, and (3) how you plan to implement it.

The policy should be created by the Staff Parish Relations Committee or designated Task Force from the committee and the Administrative Council. The process for adoption needs to be completed prior to Annual Conference, 2004 and implemented by December 31, 2004..

Here is a suggested process that was used by a local church in Florida as it implemented a policy:

1. Determine whether the entire SPR Committee or a Task Force from the committee will develop the policy. You may consider adding a person, such as a Human Resources or Child Protection Services or Day Care Director to be a part of this task group.
2. Send a letter to the congregation stating that the policy has been mandated by the 2003 Annual Conference, and that the members will be hearing more about it in the near future. Explain in the letter, the need for the policy, to whom it will apply, and how it will be implemented.
3. Have the SPR chairperson write newsletter articles and speak to it from the pulpit.
4. Post the policy statement all over the church: in classrooms, bathrooms, etc.
5. Prior to the screening process, have a question and answer time, led perhaps by someone in the church such as a Human Resources or Child Protective Services or Day Care Director.
6. Provide times for people to receive their screening packets and ask questions about filling out the applications. Have the educational events separate from this meeting.
7. Provide training events for your people or insure that they attend a district or sponsored training event.
8. Either send or provide training for all adult volunteers and staff who are working with children and youth. As a part of implementing the process insure that all who have been working with children and youth participate.

Issues

Keeping the records safe & secure is of paramount importance in this process. Limit the number of persons who know the outcomes of the background and criminal checks to the appointed clergy person, the SPR chairperson, and perhaps one other designee. Copies of the applications and the actual reports should be kept in a locked file cabinet.

No Exceptions: No one is exempt from the screening, even the elderly lady who has been working with children for years. The key to explaining this need is the reality that the procedure is designed to protect not just the children, but also the adults from false accusations.