



SAFE CHURCHES PROTECT KIDS

CHILD PROTECTION BEST PRACTICES

FOR FAITH COMMUNITIES



Churches and faith communities are not immune to abuse. Strong safeguarding helps prevent harm, supports survivors, and equips leaders to respond responsibly when concerns arise.

BEST PRACTICE STANDARDS FOR CHILD PROTECTION

1

Equal Rules

2

External Reporting

3

Screening and
Supervision

4

Ministry Boundaries

5

Training and
Accountability

Faith specific safeguarding priorities

- Safeguarding expectations should not change based on a leader's role, title, influence, or prominence.
- Spiritual authority should never be used to pressure someone into trust, silence, forgiveness, or access.
- Pastoral care, prayer, mentoring, counseling, and confession require clear, appropriate boundaries.
- Suspected child abuse or neglect should be reported through appropriate external channels; internal reporting alone is not a substitute when external reporting is required.
- When reporting is required, internal review should not replace or delay a report to CPS or law enforcement.
- Safeguarding rules should be applied consistently to clergy, staff, volunteers, prominent families, and visitors.
- Survivors deserve support without pressure to reconcile, remain silent, or protect the institution.

Selected sector-specific implementation resources

1

GRACE

Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment

Safeguarding Initiative

LEARN MORE

- Leadership and organization-wide safeguarding education
- Age-appropriate safety education for children and youth
- Safeguarding team development and tailored policy support
- Facility risk review
- Trauma-informed response and survivor support

Useful for survivor-centered culture, institutional response, and survivor care.

2

MinistrySafe

The Complete Child Safety System

LEARN MORE

- Awareness training and staff/volunteer screening
- Background checks as one layer in a broader safety system
- Written conduct rules for physical contact, private communication, restroom use, one-to-one access, social media, overnight activities, and reporting
- Ongoing monitoring and periodic review

Useful for practical day-to-day ministry rules and consistent implementation.

REPORT CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT

In Wisconsin, anyone may report suspected child abuse or neglect to local CPS or law enforcement. Mandated reporters have specific duties under Wis. Stat. 48.981.

WISCONSIN REPORTING CONTACTS

Reference only - not legal advice. External resources are informational; laws and resources may change.