

UNDERSTANDING THE RISK OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

From "Reducing the Risk" by Church Law & Tax Report
and "The Kanakuk Child Protection Plan" by Rick Braschler

Why background and reference checks are so important - -

Some important facts you need to know:

- In over 90% of cases the perpetrator is someone known and trusted by the child.
- Victims are intimidated into silence (who will be believed - a child or a responsible adult?).
- Pedophiles (an adult with an abnormal sexual desire for children) migrate to a place where there is easy access to children.
- An estimate **7.9 % of men** and **19% of women** globally experience sexual abuse prior to the age of 18.
- In America, **1 in 4 girls** and **1 in 6 boys** are sexually molested to some degree prior to age 18.
- An average of **117 youngsters** will be molested before criminal prosecution. (Kids don't talk, comes out years later)
- The incidence rate of child abuse and neglect in this country is about **10x as high** as the incidence rate for all forms of cancer.
- Abusers are **adult males 90%** of the time and relate better to children than adults.

Every church is at risk for abuse and lawsuits, but there are steps that can be taken to reduce the risk. What follows is the strategy of Chapelstreet Church, Illinois to reduce the risk of child sexual abuse.

1. Screening process for paid & volunteer workers.
 - A. Ministry Application completed.
 - B. Reference and background checks are complete.
 - C. Workers trained.
 - D. Anyone with a sexual abuse conviction is not allowed to work with children.
2. Supervision
 - A. No worker is to be alone in a room with a child. This is a protection for the child and for the worker against false accusations.
 - B. Windows are in every room to provide sight lines from outside the room.
3. A reporting process has been established. (Detailed in Protection Policy).
4. A plan for response has been established.
 - A. Church leadership will take allegations seriously.
 - B. Church and other leadership will investigate the allegations – talk to the victim's family.
 - C. Church leadership will be sensitive to the victim – don't minimize or deny what's happened, even though you don't know if it's true.

Children are powerless to defend themselves. We must make every effort to ensure their safety.