

SAFE SANCTUARY TRAINING

Opening Activity: Remembering (10 minutes)

Invite participants to think back to their childhood and youth. School, church, Scouts, camp, sports. Who were the adults who were important to them, who cared about them, who helped them be the people they are today? Why did these adults? What qualities made these people important to you, helped you to know you were valued as a person? Discuss in small groups.

Allow several minutes and then come back together in large groups. Invite participants to share words that describe the qualities of these important adults in their young lives and record on flip chart.

Encourage participants to consider that in essence this is what we are about here today: to think intentionally about how we create space and opportunity within the church for youth and children to be nurtured safely by adults who will care for them, mentor them, and provide an example of God's love in action.

A Biblical Mandate (5 minutes)

Read **Matthew 18: 1-6**

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. If any of you put a stumbling-block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.'

Invite participants to spend a few minutes talking to those around them about how this text might connect to our purpose here today. Invite responses as a group.

Points to Cover:

- *Tragically, churches have not always been safe spaces for children. Child sexual abuse occurs in churches both large/small, urban/rural and the problem cuts across economic, cultural, racial lines.*
- *We must assume that every congregation has within adult survivors of sexual abuse.*
- *The Safe Sanctuary training to promote the safety of children in our churches is grounded first and foremost in a theological understanding of Christ's ministry of justice and care for all people. We are all called to that same ministry.*
- *But it safety doesn't happen without thoughtful attention and effort. And we can't assume that "those things don't happen in our church."*
- *Safe Sanctuary program was developed in the Methodist church due in large part to a discovery that a beloved pastor who had been leading church camps for years had been abusing children during his entire tenure.*

Facing Facts about Abuse – (10 min)

Invite participants to stand and imagine a continuum running down the middle of the room, one end representing TRUE and the other FALSE. As you read each statement, invite them to respond by positioning themselves somewhere on the continuum. ¹

1) In 20074, an average of 2 children were sexually abused in Missouri every day. (FALSE – Between 5-6 children are sexually abused every day.)

ASK: Why might the true number of incidents be higher? Because not all are reported.)

¹ These statistics based on most recent report provided by Missouri Dept of Social Services at: <http://www.dss.mo.gov/cd/cani.htm>

2) In 2007, more than 75% of Missouri children who were sexually abused were females. (TRUE – 1689 females @ 80.4% vs. 413 males @ 19.6%.)

ASK: Why might the number of males be lower? (Because of the social stigma that discourages boys from reporting instances of abuse).

3) Girls and boys in Missouri are victims of physical abuse in approx. the same percentages. (TRUE – 47.5 % male and 52.5% female of 2331 children in 2004).

4) In the U.S., over 7000 children are reported abused or neglected every day. (TRUE – an avg. of 7,123 reports daily.)

5) In the United States, one in six boys are sexually abused before the age of 16. (TRUE – Additionally, one in four girls will be sexually abused).

6) About 50% of abuse against children and youth is perpetrated by strangers. (False: Less than 25% of abuse is by strangers. In more than 75% of reported incidents of abuse, the victim is related to or acquainted with the abuser)

7) The Mid-America Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has had clergy convicted of child physical or sexual abuse in the past 10 years. (True).

- These statistics point to a reality that many churches do not deal with simply because they don't feel they need to or they think they are already being careful enough without needing an official Abuse Prevention Policy.
- But if we take seriously the call to provide places of safe sanctuary for our youngest brothers and sisters, we have to be willing to do more than just assume we are safe enough.

What is Safe Sanctuary? – (10 minutes)

Brainstorm around the word "Sanctuary." What images come to mind when you think of the word "sanctuary." What words, thoughts, ideas come to mind? (ex: a place we feel secure, unthreatened, free to be who we are). Realize that what is "sanctuary" for one person may be just the opposite for others. (e.g. some love crowds/some hate them)

Ask: *Why would we want to apply the ideas of "sanctuary" to places where adults and youth/children come together?*

- Some youth live in situations where sanctuary is scarce
- As Church, we are called to protect the oppressed and weak
- As Church, we are called to practice justice

Ask: *Why might persons who have been abused by the church often experience lifelong spiritual struggles/emotional trauma comparable to those abused at hands of family member/friend?*

- Church may be only place a person felt safe.
- Church forms person's understanding of God.
- Church leaders are often seen as example of God nature
- Church is supposed to offer an alternative to the ways of the culture/world.

Abusers: Who Are They? (5min)

To prevent the abuse of youth in our churches, we need not only to recognize signs of abuse but also realize that the abusers are more often familiar adults who are trusted by the children/youth.

So who are the abusers?

What racial groups might they come from? (all)

What economic conditions might they come from? (all)

Will they likely be introverts or extroverts? (both)

They may be married or.....(single)

They could be female or...(male)

They may have no children of their own or they may(be parents)

They may be old or they may be....(young)

They may be coaches, teachers, music directors, youth ministers, pastors.

They may be persons who are quite sociable with youth/children, invite them into their lives, are sympathetic to their troubles?

BUT ISN'T THIS EXACTLY THE KIND OF ADULT YOU WANT WORKING WITH CHILDREN/YOUTH?

The point is, the variety is unlimited and no one is ruled out because they fall into one category or another. Since you can't know just by looking, having policies in place to keep kids safe is a must.

Identifying Abuse – (10 min)

Introduce this section by reviewing the terms on the "Safe Sanctuary Reference Sheet" included in the participants' packet. Highlight each term and invite questions for clarification or further discussion.

Read the situations below aloud and inviting the group to determine whether or not the situation would be defined as "abuse," and if so, what "type" of abuse. For each scenario, read it aloud, then invite the participants to turn to 1 or 2 persons around them to discuss. Allow a minute, then bring the group back together and solicit responses.

1) During youth group, some male adult leaders begin to whistle when Sue shows up in a pair of short shorts. You hear them whisper and laugh. Sue blushes and leaves the room. **(hostile environment, sexual harassment)**

2) During playtime in the nursery, several young children are running around and playing tag. You watch one of your fellow adult volunteers reach out, stop a child, and pull him into her lap. The child begins to squirm in her embrace. The volunteer continues to hold the child. **(sexual imposition)**

3) You are walking behind a group of youth. You overhear one of the students using the word "gay" in a derogatory way, and laughing. **(hostile environment)**

4) After a days' work on a mission trip, several teens head to the showers. While they are drying off, some boys begin to try to grab another boy's towel. They won't let him out of the shower area. Soon other boys crowd into the room and begin jeering at him. The boy feels embarrassed and frightened. An adult leader, upon hearing from you what happened, responds, "That's just boys being boys." **(hostile environment)**

5) During Wednesday night activities at your church, one of your young children refuses to participate in group activities. The supervising adult tells the child that he has to finish the project before he will be allowed to eat dinner. **(neglect)**

6) Bill, a teen in your youth group, has asked you to talk to adult leader Mary. Every time that Bill sits down, Mary cuddles up beside him and lays her head on his shoulder, or she tries to sit on his lap. You also learn that Mary has lately been offering to give Bill a ride home after youth group and regularly shows up at the sandwich stop where he works and offers to buy him lunch on his break. **(sexual imposition, seductive behavior, possible grooming)**

7) At VBS, one third grade boy is particularly wound up. You know that he has ADD. He has spent much of the time running around the room and making noise. The church member working with him is getting increasingly frustrated. Finally, he grabs the boy tightly by one arm, jerks him off to a corner of the room and shoves him forcefully into a chair. **(physical abuse)**



Talking About Touch – (20 min)

*** See Touch handout in participant's packet**

There are times when we must wonder if it is every okay to touch a child or youth!

The gift of touch is one that can offer healing, peace, and support.

Touch can also cause confusion, fear, and shame. As person committed to creating sanctuary, it is important that we honestly examine our own patterns of touching...and consider the message we send with our hands.

ASK: *How many of you consider yourself a "toucher?" How many of you are not comfortable with touching?*

ASK: *What sorts of things influence your comfort with touching?*

- Personal history
- Relationship between "toucher" and "touched"
- Motivation of "toucher"
- Location of touching
- The setting
- Person's age
- Cultural heritage
- Who initiates the touching

ASK: *What are signs that tell us whether or not someone is comfortable with touch?*

In this group, we represent a full range of comfort and discomfort with touching. We can be sure that this is also the case with the children and youth to whom we minister.

CONSIDER: *Why do you touch?*

- *Do you touch to share God's compassion and care? (In ministry with children and youth, this should be our only motivation for touch.)*
- *Does your need to touch stem from a personal hunger for affirmation? (Remember: Children and youth are not present to meet OUR needs...We are in ministry to meet THEIR needs.)*
- *What are "bad" touches? What makes some touches bad?*
- *What are "good" touches? What makes a touch good?*

- *What are some of the places on the body which are sensitive "hot spots" when it comes to touch? (Different for different people.)*

We live in a society where children are often considered "property" of parents and adults. We teach them to be polite by "shaking the lady's hand," or "give him a hug," or "kiss Grandma" and so on. Often this leads to a dehumanization of youth and children. We forget that their bodies are THEIR bodies. Youth and children should always be allowed to opt out of touching!

ASK: *How might a child/youth/adult show that they are opting out of touching, besides simply saying "No!"?*

- Folded arms in front of chest
- No eye contact
- Rigid body
- Turning to the side

Demonstrate for the group ways to offer the gift of touch that are appropriate in a ministry setting:

- A-Frame hug
- Sideways hug
- Touch on shoulder
- "high five"
- handshake
- Standing or sitting in close proximity

Any others the group might suggest?



Recognizing/Reporting Abuse – (10 min)

*** See handout in participant's packet**

Review the signs that a child or youth has experienced abuse:

- Sexual acting out (may include public masturbation, sex play/ language/drawings, lang. Indicating a non-age appropriate awareness of sexual activity)
- Withdrawal

- Nightmares
- Bedwetting
- Fear of the dark
- Aggression
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Fear of a particular person
- Bruising
- Genital irritation or discharge
- Self-mutilation
- Fear of "going home" (not to be confused with the sadness a child or youth may express at the close of camp or mission trip experience)

NOTE: While any one of these may indicate an internal struggle, it does not necessarily mean a child or youth has been abused.

Review the steps for responding to suspected abuse (whether you observe possible signs or the youth/child reports abuse directly to you):

- Be honest – Don't promise to keep it a secret but assure child you will do what is in his/her best interest
- Don't deny allegations made by child. Simply listen.
- Control your emotion response. Just listen.
- Don't prolong the conversation. Just listen. (If necessary, ask only open-ended, rather than leading, questions.)
- Provide emotional support and take the child or youth to the pastor (pastors are required to report suspected abuse).
- Document your recollection of the conversation in writing as soon as possible.

Supervision and Care of Youth/Children – (5 min)

*** See handout in participant's packet**

Present the following Safe Sanctuary suggestions for supervision of children and youth. In particular, highlight the following:

- Two adult rule (with exceptions)

- When only two adults present, they should not be related or married.
- Five year older rule – No workers under 18
- Must have been active in church for 6 months.
- Background checks on all leaders.
- Windows in all classrooms
- Open door counseling
- Two adults in room at events where youth are divided up for sleeping. Adults sleep in same space but separated from youth/ children
- Separate shower times for youth/adults
- When on outings, mixed gender groups should have adult supervisors of both genders
- No sharing of hotel rooms by youth and adults
- On mission trips/service projects, youth should not be left alone with clients or outside agency personnel.
- Limited use of internet social sites.
- Limited information about youth/children on church website

Safe Sanctuary Scenarios (10 min)

*** See participant's handout.**

Invite participants to read through the various scenarios with you and then discuss, first with those around them, and then as a group how you might respond using the Safe Sanctuary principles that have been covered in this training.

1) You are outside on the church playground with the youngest children when a 6-year old says she is cold and needs to go inside to get a sweater. What do you do?

- **Send her with two adults**
- **Take the whole group inside**
- **If possible, one adult stays with children, other adult watches from church door as child goes inside to get sweater (as long as child is visible at all times)**

2) While at a worksite on a mission trip, one of your youth becomes ill and needs to leave the site. There are 8 youth present, yourself, and one other adult. What steps would you take to follow the Safe Sanctuary guidelines?

- **Have more adults present to begin with**
- **Call for more adult help**
- **Whole group leaves**
- **Call 9-11**

3) At youth group one night, a 17-year old is not feeling well while the whole group is together in the sanctuary. You observe that s/he is going back to the youth room alone, presumably to lay on a couch. You know that one of your adults is alone in the youth room setting up for the next activity. What steps can your or the other adult take to follow the Safe Sanctuary procedures?

- **Other youth leader can remain in hallway and visible to others until another adult arrives.**
- **Have two adults accompany the youth.**

4) You are supervising a group of upper elementary-aged children during an event. One of your helpers, John, is 15 years old. Ben, an 11 year old, has difficulty participating in group activities. He hangs around John, who responds positively to the attention. You notice Ben touching John in ways you consider inappropriate. When you speak to John about it, he states that is okay and not to worry. What steps can you take to follow Safe Sanctuary guidelines?

- **Talk more to John about who takes responsibility for setting boundaries**
- **Help John better understand his role**
- **Move John to a group of younger children in order to follow the 5-year-older rule.**
- **Talk to child about his behavior (as sexual acting out by children can be sign of abuse).**

5) A teen in your youth ministry discovers that his parents are going to be an hour late giving him a ride home after an evening youth meeting. There are other youth at the meeting with cars but your church has a policy about not allowing youth to ride with other

youth unless they are siblings. What steps can you take to follow Safe Sanctuary guidelines?

- **Recruit another adult to wait with you until the teen's parents arrive.**
- **With parents' permission, recruit another adult to help you drive the teen home.**

6) You are supervising the pre-schoolers in a separate room during worship. One of the children appears to be sick and you need to notify the parents who are in the sanctuary. What can you do to follow the Safe Sanctuary guidelines?

- **This is a tricky one because for one person to leave the nursery, it means you would really need three people present in order to leave two with the children.**
- **Your church could develop a way to contact parents during worship either through a text message or a buzzer system like some restaurants utilize.**



Closing –

Close by forming a circle and leading the group in sharing the Safe Sanctuary Liturgy found in the participant's packet.

For more information see:

Melton, Joy Thornburg. Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1998).

Child abuse and neglect statistics for Missouri: <http://www.dss.mo.gov/cd/cani.htm>

SAFE SANCTUARY

BOUNDARIES TRAINING

SOUTHEAST GATEWAY AREA
THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)

Welcome and Introductions

Why are we Here?

Facing the Facts About Abuse

What is Sanctuary?

Break

Identifying Abuse

Talking About Touch

Recognizing Abuse/Reporting Abuse

Safe Sanctuary Scenarios

Closing Comments



TALKING ABOUT TOUCH

Do you touch to share God's compassion? As we are in ministry with and youth, this is to be the ONLY motivation for touch.

- Do you consider yourself a "toucher?"
- Are you comfortable with touching?
- What sorts of things influence your comfort with touching?
- Does your touch stem from a personal hunger for affection?

What are "good touches" or some ways to give good touches?
What makes a good touch good?

What are some "bad touches" or some ways to give bad touches?
What makes a bad touch bad?

What are some of the places on the body which are sensitive to touch and are thus "hot spots?"

What are some of the non-verbal signals that can give us clues to a person's response to being touched?

SAFE TOUCHES

- A-frame hug
- Sideways hug
- Touch on shoulder
- "high five"
- handshake
- standing or sitting in close proximity

Recognizing/Reporting Abuse

A child or youth who has experienced abuse MAY express the trauma in SOME of the following ways:

- Sexual acting out (may include public masturbation, sex play/ language/drawings, language indicating a non-age appropriate awareness of sexual activity)
- Withdrawal
- Nightmares
- Bedwetting
- Fear of the dark
- Aggression
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- Provide emotional support and take the child or youth to the pastor (pastors are required to report suspected abuse).
- Document your recollection of the conversation in writing as soon as possible.

Supervision and Care of Youth & Children

- 1) **Two Adult Rule** – At least two adults must be present with youth or children at all times and within sight of one another. Two adults related by blood or marriage should not be left alone with children or youth.

- 2) **Five Years Older Rule** – Those supervising young people should be at least five years older than those in their care.

- 3) **Background Checks** – required for every counselor or mission trip adult volunteer. These checks are paid for by SEGA.

- 4) **Sleeping Rules** – When sleeping in separate rooms at an event, two adults must be present in each space but in a separate part of the room.

- 5) **Outside Adults** - On mission trips/service projects/camps, youth should not be left alone with clients or outside agency personnel or adult visitors.

- 6) **Shower times** – in the event of open showers, separate shower times for youth and adults are a must.

- 7) **Adult supervision on Outings** – When travelling, mixed gender groups should be supervised by both male and female adult leaders. Additionally, adults and youth should not share hotel rooms.

- 8) **Safe Church training** – All adults working with youth and children should participate Safe Sanctuary training plus yearly refresher training.

9) **Appropriate Discipline** – All children and youth are to be treated with respect, including following these discipline guidelines when a young person is misbehaving:

- No physical punishment or physical coercion.
- No degrading or disparaging remarks.
- Respond to the misbehavior individually and away from the group.
- Use “I” messages when talking with a young person (“I need you to stop what you are doing.” “I don’t like the way your behavior is disrupting our activity” “I need you to help me out by sitting down and listening. Will you do that for me?”)
- Focus on the use of positive reinforcement rather than negative attention.
- Provide options (“Would you rather sit over there and wait until we are done or would you rather do this other activity instead?”)
- Focus on logical consequences of misbehavior rather than punishment.
- Utilize “time out.”
- In the event of child or young person will not respond, contact the director.

SAFE SANCTUARY SCENARIOS

- 1) You are outside on the church playground with the youngest children when a 6-year old says she is cold and needs to go inside to get a sweater. What do you do?

- 2) While at a worksite on a mission trip, one of your youth becomes ill and needs to leave the site. There are 8 youth present, yourself, and one other adult. What steps would you take to follow the Safe Sanctuary guidelines?

- 3) At youth group one night, a 17-year old is not feeling well while the whole group is together in the sanctuary. You observe that s/he is going back to the youth room alone, presumably to lay on a couch. You know that one of your adults is alone in the youth room setting up for the next activity. What steps can your or the other adult take to follow the Safe Sanctuary procedures?

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- 6) You are supervising the pre-schoolers in a separate room during worship. One of the children appears to be sick and you need to notify the parents who are in the sanctuary. What can you do to follow the Safe Sanctuary guidelines?

SAFE SANCTUARY LITURGY

Adapted with permission from Raymond Community United Church of Christ

Leader: We join together as people of faith, seeking to create a more secure and loving environment for our beloved children.

ALL: We join together as people who love the church, follow Jesus Christ, and hope for a world where people would not intentionally hurt others.

L: We do this with confidence in the new life found in Jesus Christ, who invited the children to come to him.

Mark 10:13-16 (NRSV)

People were bringing little children to Jesus in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.' And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them and blessed them.

L In all we do, all we say, all that we are, there is God's Spirit of hope.

All: In times of challenge and fear, we hold onto the light of God's grace.

L: When we move through times of transition as people and as the Church, God's gentle guidance grants us strength and vision.

All: As people who care about our children and our churches, we acknowledge the reality of hurt and pain that can be inflicted.

L: As the Body of Christ, we stand ready to affirm our role in teaching and protecting all of our children.

All: As we take steps to make our Church safe, we remember the gospel call to love God and serve God - to help those who are least among us.

L: And so, we call upon God's wisdom to grant us strong voices and clear actions that will help to make the Church a place of safety, teaching and inspiration.

All: Thanks be to God for gathering us together this day, challenging us to be a reflection of Christ's compassion, love, peace, and grace for all. Amen

