



## Sexual Misconduct Policies and Resources

Seeking to protect youth and other congregation members from sexual misconduct or harassment should be an aspect of each congregation's ministry. No congregation is immune from the possibility of sexual misconduct but steps can be taken to address those concerns.

A written policy statement is an important first step toward preventing sexual misconduct or harassment. Make sure all persons concerned are aware of the policy and understand the content. When misconduct occurs, the entire congregation suffers emotionally, spiritually and financially.

1. Have a written policy regarding sexual misconduct and sexual harassment.
2. Instruct all adults who work with children and youth in what is, and is not, appropriate behavior.

Make it clear to the staff, volunteers, and members that following the guidelines you have established are to protect the children and youth of your congregation.

No congregation is immune from the possibility of sexual misconduct but steps can be taken to address those concerns.

### Resources to help you develop your congregation's policy:

Resources are available to you on the Internet to assist you in developing screening and other risk management policies to best suit the needs of your congregation. It is always important to seek legal advice when drafting policies relating to employment and misconduct issues. Here are links to some resources.

- [ELCA Safe Place](#) prepared by the Domestic Mission unit of the ELCA
- [Youth Safety and Your Congregation](#)  from Church Mutual Insurance
- [Creating Safe Ministries](#) from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
- [Preventing Child Sexual Abuse within Youth-Serving Organizations : Getting started on policies and procedures](#) 
- [Model Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse](#)  from the Episcopal Church



- [We Won't Let it Happen Here : Preventing Child Abuse in the Church](#) (second edition)  from the Presbyterian Church U.S.A.
- [Annual Conference Policies](#) from The United Methodist Church
- [Keeping Children Safe in Congregations](#) from the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
- [Employment application](#)
- [Volunteer application](#)
- [Reference check form](#)
- [Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church](#), by Joy Thornburg Melton
- [Safe Sanctuaries for Children and Youth DVD](#)
- [Safe Sanctuaries for Ministers](#)

Some congregations have policies dealing solely with sexual misconduct relating to youth. Others have combined a policy addressing sexual misconduct with youth with one covering adults. What's important is to have policies in place for both youth and adults in the congregation and then to implement such policies.

When drafting any policy, there need to be specific provisions that detail reporting of misconduct. For ELCA congregations, it is crucial to include in those policies requirements for reporting any allegations of misconduct by rostered leaders to the synod bishop. For example, such a provision could read:

*Cases involving allegations of misconduct by a rostered member of the ordained clergy or rostered lay person in this congregation shall be promptly reported to the Bishop of the local synod. (Provide contact information such as synod name, bishop's name, synod address, phone number and email)*

See also: [Report Misconduct](#)

After congregations put policies in place, the leadership should, on a regular basis, review and update their existing policies as necessary. The above resources provide excellent tools to use for reviewing and possibly updating current policies.

#### **Legal Disclaimer**

Information on this document does not constitute legal advice to anyone. In addition, the use of this document, and the sending or receipt of information through elca.org does not create attorney-client relationship of any sort. Visitors to elca.org should be aware that communication in this manner may not be considered as privileged or confidential. Individuals requiring legal assistance should engage a qualified attorney, licensed to practice law in the particular state or jurisdiction where the legal issues have arisen. Members of the ELCA, pastors, congregations, synods, and others affiliated with this church should always consult their own attorneys, accountants, or similar professionals whenever legal issues or problems arise. Neither the churchwide organization nor the general counsel is responsible for any loss, injury, liability, or damage related to your use of this document, whether from errors or omissions in the content of this document or any linked sites, from the site being down, or from any other use.