

# **CSA/SA Safe Church Task Force**

Work Product v1.0

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Feedback welcomed: [safefellowshipfeedback@gmail.com](mailto:safefellowshipfeedback@gmail.com)

# Task Force Team

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## Team includes:

- CSA/SA survivors
- PhD psychologist, in field of trauma, and a lawyer
- Several senior corporate leaders, experienced with legal, HR, governance, policy, communications, documentation systems, change management
- All care deeply about the survivors, want to end the abuse, and volunteered to be on this team

# Team Purpose

**Vision:** A sound, effective, & living nationwide Safe Church CSA/SA policy

**Mission:** Develop framework for an effective, CSA/SA policy and begin to work collaboratively towards implementation

- Our work product can:
  - Assist efforts to develop Safe Church policies
  - Be used as a benchmark for assessing the adequacy of church policies

## Hoped-for Outcomes:

- 1) Healing and recovery for victims/survivors
- 2) Minimize CSA/SA abuses by the church going forward
- 3) Restore confidence of church members in the church
- 4) Minimize financial & legal exposure from further CSA/SA abuses

# Problem Statement & Our Solution

**Problem Statement:** CSA/SA is a crisis in the church. Current efforts to develop CSA/SA policies are fragmented, regional, and possibly inadequate for a safe church.

- 1) Incomplete understanding of what should go into a policy & policy management
- 2) Resistance by some against having policies or anything formal in place (“the Bible in our policy”). [But this is a natural issue, not spiritual.]
- 3) Posture that’s not fully acknowledging the problem, the victims, and the root causes

**Solution Needed:** An independent task force to benchmark best practices and identify the critical core policy elements for an effective Safe Church CSA/SA policy. Then, work collaboratively to improve the fragmented regional efforts in the short term and ideally help develop a sound national (global?) policy framework.

# Why Policies are Needed

- Following the Bible, being Spirit-led, should mean that abuses don't happen
  - But some humans have a dark, evil side that results in abuse to others
  - Abuse has flourished in our fellowship
- So we need to work in the natural realm (ie, have policies)
- Written policies provide a framework to define appropriate behavior and consequences in order to help prevent abuse from happening

Policies also:

- Make things clear
- Help prevent partiality toward certain people
- Help us focus on protecting vulnerable people

# CSA/SA Safe Church Effort

**Goal:** Identify the core policy features, or elements, that enable our transformation to a safe & healthy church

## Approach

- Identify best practices in effective CSA/SA policies through research, benchmarking, and listening
- Understand why some policies are effective and why some fail
- Listen to the voices of survivors

## Resources Include

(partial list)

- Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF): “Clergy Sexual Abuse Recommendation for Churches”
- Prof. Sandy Wurtele: “CSA Prevention Evaluation Tool for Orgs.”
- Lutheran Church: “Sample CSA Prevention Policy”
- USA Gymnastics: “Safe Sport Policy” (+ associated procedures)
- Boy Scouts of America: “Youth Protection Overview”
- Girl Scouts (WAGGGS): “Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy”
- United Methodist Church: “Safe Sanctuaries” (three documents)
- CDC: “Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Within Youth-Serving Orgs.”
- Church of England: “Parish Safeguarding Handbook” + “Code of Safer Working Practice”
- Regional policies in development, or under development in our church
- WINGS 2013: “CSA Code of Conduct” (draft)
- Southern Baptist Church: “Report of the Independent Investigation” 2022

# Case Study: Southern Baptist Convention

## The Church

- 13.2 million members
- Decentralized model: the 47,000 churches are independent of the SBC, but need to follow doctrine and guidelines
- Annual meetings held with “Messengers” from the individual churches

## The Problem

- Widespread CSA/SA abuse in the church over a 20 yr period: 400 perps and 700 victims
- Church leaders took no action, covered-up, shamed, changed stories, said that victim reporters were “the devil being successful”
- At 2021 annual meeting, the members forced the ministry to agree to an [independent investigation](#)

## Selected Findings

- The CSA/SA policy they had in place was highly flawed
  - Ministry was managing liability and image, not the safety of its members
- Changes recommended:
  - Can't have ministry in charge of policy. Instead, have Independent Commission oversee reforms.
  - Need perpetrator database that's available to churches
  - Need to improve governance (including background checks, codes of conduct)
  - Church needs to acknowledge the abuse, give sincere apology, and make provision for “compassionate care to survivors”

## Take-Aways

- Just having a policy doesn't solve the problem
  - It needs to be a good policy
  - The fox can't guard the hen house
- Change can happen through the church members when the ministry won't listen
- Abuse in our church is likely way worse on a per capita level than in this “worldly” church that had a crisis of abuse

# CSA/SA Has Legal and Financial Implications

## Legal

- Failure to report CSA/SA may be criminal
- Church leaders may have a legal responsibility to ensure safety in the church
- People who host meetings in their home (including conventions) may have a legal responsibility to ensure safety through the implementation of controls

## Financial

- Clergy sexual abuse payouts to survivors average ~\$350K<sup>1</sup>
- If our church has 3,000 survivors, then the liability potential could be ~ \$1 billion

1) Sources for the average \$350K payout per survivor:

- <https://apnews.com/article/new-york-ny-state-wire-sexual-abuse-sexual-abuse-by-clergy-lawsuits-621efb9528384f278c71a97308404531>
- <https://www.millerandzois.com/sex-abuse-victim/clergy-sexual-abuse-lawsuits>



# What About State Law Differences?

- Each US state makes its own laws, so CSA/SA policies must meet those local laws
- An effective CSA/SA policy should meet or exceed all local laws

**Zero Tolerance**

# OUT OF EVERY 1,000 SEXUAL ASSAULTS, 975 PERPETRATORS WILL WALK FREE

**310** are reported to police<sup>i</sup>



**50** reports lead to arrest<sup>ii</sup>



**28** cases will lead to a felony conviction<sup>iii</sup>



**25** perpetrators will be incarcerated<sup>iii</sup>



**RAINN**

National Sexual Assault Hotline | 800.656.HOPE | [online.rainn.org](https://online.rainn.org)

Please visit [rainn.org/statistics/scope-problem](https://rainn.org/statistics/scope-problem) for full citation.

**Only ~2.5% of  
perpetrators will be  
locked-up**

**We can't rely on  
law enforcement  
alone to keep our  
church safe**

# What Zero Tolerance Means

- All of us are against CSA/SA and we want future cases to go to zero
- The church should have zero tolerance for future abuse
- But what does “zero tolerance” mean?
- In this case it means:
  - Actively working to prevent abuse through effective CSA/SA policies
  - Defining the meeting privileges for CSA/SA perpetrators so that they can't reoffend and where survivors aren't triggered by their presence

Zero Tolerance is a **Public Safety** Issue

# Perpetrators' Motivations/Behaviors Differ From Most Adults

- It is dangerous to apply the same rules to perpetrators/pedophiles as one would apply to non-offenders because their mindset, motivation and behaviors are different
- Pedophilia is generally not considered to be a “curable” condition
  - Treatment approaches rely on helping perpetrators manage symptoms in order to prevent reoffending but the urges to offend (e.g. sexual attraction to children) do not go away
  - Putting a pedophile in an environment where children are present can increase their urges to abuse (increasing risk of reoffending)
- Restricting access to children or other potential victims protects immediate safety of children and vulnerable adults; it also gives perpetrators the best chance of managing their symptoms
- One must always assume that a pedophile has both the capacity and the urges to perpetrate abuse if given the opportunity

**Pedophiles are sexually attracted to children**

# Risk Assessments Often Fail in Recidivism Risk

- Risk assessments involve psychological assessments of the perpetrator and have limitations
  - Risk assessments are typically conducted when perpetrator's guilt has already been established and are used to determine degree risk of future offending (typically informing forensic recommendations)
- Quality of risk assessments varies significantly across providers and methods and even the most thorough assessment can fail to adequately detect risk
  - A bad risk assessment is worse than no risk assessment at all
- Assessments that rely on interviews alone are no more predictive than chance
  - Perpetrators are often adept at creating a positive impression which can lead to even skillful clinicians having difficulty accurately determining risk
- Risk assessments cannot “clear” a perpetrator or determine if a offender is reformed or safe to be around

**Risk assessments cause anxiety in the church and can further abuse**

# Ensuring Emotional Safety of Those in Our Church

- Knowing that a CSA/SA perpetrator could be in a meeting can lead to anxiety
  - Anxiety can be intense and debilitating
  - Can occur in those of who have experienced sexual abuse and those who have not
  - Does not have to be the perpetrator of one's own abuse in order to be triggering
- Even if a CSA/SA perpetrator is not physically present in a meeting, the uncertainty of visitors can also be triggering
- Any participation, such as saying a prayer or giving a testimony, even virtual, by a CSA/SA perpetrator can be triggering to some
- Survivors of CSA/SA, who exist in large number in our church, can experience a lack of physical and emotional safety when perpetrators have the ability to attend meetings
  - Survivors can also experience distress related to the appearance of support for perpetrators (despite the profound and negatively impact perpetrators have had on lives of victims)



# Abuse Reporting and Investigations Must be Done Right

- Reporting by parents or loved ones of child sexual abuse and by sexual assault survivors can be extremely traumatic and tolling
- CSA and SA victims and their families may understandably not want to have themselves or their children go through multiple investigations over extended periods of time, including preparing and going to trial
- Having safe reporting “intake” of CSA/SA is vitally important
  - Safe reporting will help victims find their voice, which is necessary to identify the perps
  - Safe reporting, if done right, can be a positive first step for the victims and their families
- Proper investigations require the expertise of professionals to evaluate the case and provide a fair and fact-based evaluation

# Options for Intake Reporting of CSA/SA

1

## Report to Workers

**What:** The “intake” is done by the workers

### Positives

- Unclear

### Negatives

- It's a huge conflict of interest for the ministry, leads to slow actions, victim shaming, continued abuse
- Survivors may not feel safe reporting to workers
- Likely will lead to significant underreporting

2

## Report to Trained Friends

**What:** The “intake” is done by a group of trained friends

### Positives

- Victim survivors may be more willing to report abuse vs option 1

### Negatives

- May be a conflict of interest for church members to manage intake
- The victim survivor may be concerned about confidentiality issues of reporting into the friends
- Could lead to underreporting, anxiety

3

## Report to Professionals

**What:** The “intake” done by qualified 3<sup>rd</sup> party professionals

### Positives

- Professionals will dispassionately follow the process (minimal bias)
- Should be the safest, most trusted path for reporting
- Will encourage reporting (which is what we want)

### Negatives

- May involve a financial cost

**We Recommend Intake by 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Professionals**

# Options for Investigating Allegations of CSA/SA

## 1 Investigations by Workers

**What:** Investigations done by the workers (ie, what's been done historically)

### Positives

- Unclear

### Negatives

- Large conflict of interest for the ministry, has led to inaction and victim shaming
- Clearly hasn't worked to date
- If continued, can expect continued abuse and anxiety in the church

## 2 Use Risk Assessments

**What:** Use risk assessments to estimate likelihood of perpetrator to reoffend

### Positives

- Utilizes trained professionals
- Seemingly gives appearance of attempting to do the right thing

### Negatives

- Risk assessments:
  - Can't clear perpetrators
  - Aren't meant to take place of investigation
- Would lead to re-placing some perps in meetings, deepening anxiety and furthering abuse

## 3 Investigations by Pros

**What:** Investigations done by qualified 3<sup>rd</sup> party professionals

### Positives

- Trained professionals are skilled to confirm or clear perpetrators
- 3<sup>rd</sup> party pros are compassionate during investigation
- Removes bias
- Minimizes anxiety in the church

### Negatives

- May involve a financial cost

**We Strongly Recommend Investigations by 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Professionals**

# Why the Zero Tolerance Standard Needs to Apply to “Convicted” and “Confirmed” Perpetrators

- **Conviction** requires law enforcement and public prosecution to put time and effort into the process, which can take years
  - As noted, only ~2.5% of likely CSA/SA cases result in incarceration
- An independent investigation by qualified 3rd party professionals is able to **confirm** allegations:
  - Removes bias and instills trust in the process
  - To a trained investigator, the credibility of allegations tend to be pretty obvious, even decades later. Often a perpetrator will admit their own guilt when properly investigated.
  - Confirming allegations provides impartial clarity about allegations and does not rely solely on a legal decision
- Note: alleged perpetrators should be under zero tolerance stance while their investigation is underway

# Reporting & Investigation Stages & Outcomes\*



\*A Child Safe policy that focuses on preventing abuse will also have **clear processes for reporting habitual breaches of policy and grooming behaviors.**

# Clearly Defining Consequences for Perpetrators *and* Individuals who Disregard Safe Policies

- Attending meetings with others is a privilege, not a right
  - And a privilege that the church can legally restrict for acceptable reasons
- Uniform consequences need to be defined for:
  - Alleged perpetrators
  - Confirmed/Convicted perpetrators
  - Individuals who disregard Child Safe Policies and exhibit inappropriate and/or grooming behaviors
- Clear guidance reduces bias and partiality, increasing confidence for those who must enforce consequences.
- Getting this right will reduce uncertainty and anxiety in the church around safety for themselves and their loved ones and reduce future abuse.

# Zero Tolerance Standard Options

## Option 1 - No Restrictions

- No meeting restrictions

## Option 2 - Meeting Consent

- Allowed to attend in-home meetings with the consent of the meeting
- Not allowed to attend worker-led meetings in person
  - Worker-led meetings include gospel meeting, special meeting, or convention

**Note:** People may feel pressured to say “yes” when asked by the workers about allowing a perp into their meeting

## Option 3 - Limited Virtual Participation

- Not allowed to attend in-home meetings in person
- Allowed to participate virtually in some or all meetings

## Option 4 - No Participation

- Not allowed to attend in-home meetings either in person or virtually

We strongly recommend Option 4



# Mercy for the Perpetrator

- We all believe in repentance and the power of the Spirit to work in hearts
- In-person meeting attendance is not a requirement for salvation
- Safe options exist for the perpetrator to have fellowship, including
  - Private meetings with the workers
  - Private meetings with friends
- The desire for reconciliation or to show mercy to the perpetrator must be balanced against the safety of the church
- Restricting access to meeting also helps the perpetrator manage their addiction

# CSA/SA Policy Elements for a Safe Church

# What Policy Elements are Needed

- Our team tried to find the fewest number of policy elements that are essentially needed, and noted those as “Essential”
- Some other policy elements might take longer to implement or be important but maybe not “Essential”, and we noted those as “Best Practice”

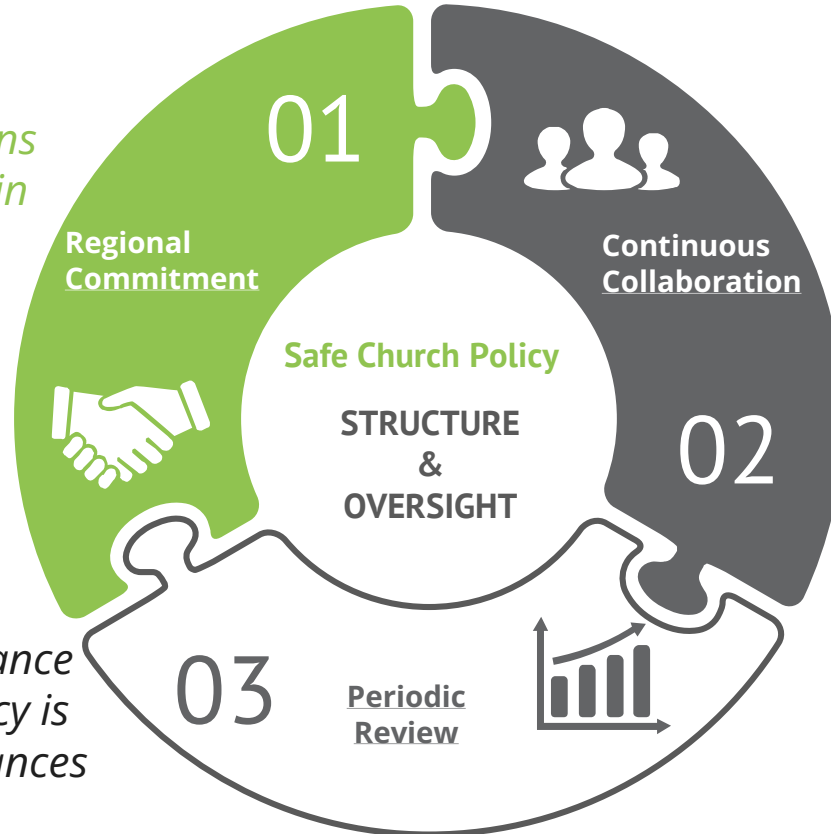
# The Importance of Policy Oversight

Why is oversight good?

- a) Creates an **atmosphere of transparency**
- b) Ensures **consistency across our church**
- c) Allows for better tracking of “adherence to the policy” that leads to  
**protecting the people of the church**
- d) **Identifying** current and potential **risks**

# Safe Church Policy Structure & Oversight

*Establish owners/champions for the policy to drive buy-in and commitment*



*Setting up collaborative groups to share the load in adopting the policy*

- *Training group*
- *Monitoring group*

*Periodic review for compliance and ensuring that the policy is up-to-date with latest guidances*

# Essential Policy Element Findings

Have **two** separate policy frameworks - one run by the friends and one by the ministry

## 1) CSA/SA Safe Church Policy

### Oversight

By church members, not the ministry

### Purpose

Keep our church safe

## Policy Element Sections

1. Introductory Statements
2. Policy Oversight
3. Resources
4. Communications
5. Training
6. Zero Tolerance Stance
7. Definitions
8. Reporting & Investigation
9. Restorative Justice & Reparations
10. Negative Policy Elements

# Essential Policy Element Findings

Have **two** separate policy frameworks - one run by the friends and one by the ministry

## 2) Safe Ministry Handbook

### Oversight

By the ministry, not church members

### Purpose

Maintain a safe, trusted ministry

## Safe Ministry Handbook Sections

1. Transparency
2. Worker Code of Conduct
3. Worker Integrity & Edification Policy

See the [worksheet](#) with the Safe Church Policy elements and the Safe Ministry Handbook elements



# Call to Action

1. Enlist your support in making positive change
  - a. Please ask your region's action team to engage with the Safe Church Task Force - Char Doland can be the point of contact
2. Begin engaging in region on developing sound CSA/SA policies
  - a. Can share learnings, best practices
3. Use a scorecard for measuring policies against these core elements
  - a. For example, determining that XY region's policy has:
    - i. 24 of the 42 Best Practice Safe Church Policy elements and 2 of the 6 negative elements
    - ii. 9 of the 24 Best Practice Safe Ministry Handbook elements

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