

# WA-NID-AK Guidelines Scoring

By a Subset of the Safe Church Task Force  
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## Introduction

The Safe Church Task Force (SCTF) set out in 2023 to understand the specific policy elements, or features, that should be in an effective CSA/SA policy and also identified loopholes to avoid. The SCTF work product<sup>1</sup> can be used by teams developing a CSA/SA policy and also can be used as a measuring stick for gauging the adequacy of a developed policy for keeping a church safe.

The SCTF identified 36 policy elements, or features, that it feels must be in an effective safe church policy, termed “Essential” elements, as well as six other elements that would be in a more mature, likely generation 2.0, “Best Practice” policy. We also identified six potential loopholes to look for in a policy, which we called “Negative” policy elements.

Four members of the SCTF<sup>2</sup> scored both the draft policy from the WA-NID-AK Guidelines Team that were ultimately not adopted as well as the policy that was instituted in WA-NID-AK against the SCTF policy elements standard.<sup>3</sup> The purpose of this scoring effort was to provide an objective assessment of both policies.

## Method

The team read through each policy and scored them against both the “Essential” as well as the “Best Practice” policy elements and the “Negative” (or loophole) policy elements. We then sent the results of our scoring to both the ministry and to the Guidelines team so that they would have a chance to review and comment before we published the results.

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<sup>1</sup> The Safe Church Task Force work products are found here:

a) A slide deck overview that describes the team’s purpose, goals, approach as well as going into some detail on critical issues that must be considered:

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1ARtx-GKs8jLtfIK1\\_TOdyvGX6bDOCx6vU-pME-Ca4Ms/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1ARtx-GKs8jLtfIK1_TOdyvGX6bDOCx6vU-pME-Ca4Ms/edit?usp=sharing)

b) A Google Sheets file that contains five separate worksheet tabs, including the specific Safe Church Policy elements and the Safe Ministry Handbook elements plus an intro about the file, links to definitions, and resources:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1xbefbeak-uRLSq35w2MDRWJw5yOJzNZLqg0m0RfYxI/edit?usp=sharing>

NOTE: See the “Introduction” worksheet tab in this file, #7, about “scoring” policies against the developed standard.

c) A video of a Zoom call on Sep 11th, 2023 to present the SCTF’s preliminary findings, that gives the voice-over for the slides (note that tweaks were made to the final work product relative to what was presented, based on inputs from that Zoom call, and also edits that resulted in version 1.1). The link to the Sep 11th Zoom meeting is:

[https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/share/ONPwDvRpS6PwUEjXA0hjk2HofEwA\\_m53hoilQcd6efPJjma8zhQNw3eAIAaCUI7p.695aDvo8a13nbDiD](https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/share/ONPwDvRpS6PwUEjXA0hjk2HofEwA_m53hoilQcd6efPJjma8zhQNw3eAIAaCUI7p.695aDvo8a13nbDiD) and the passcode is e=AH&8xG

<sup>2</sup> The four SCTF team members involved in this scoring are Char Doland, Molly Bly, Steve Kloos, and Summer Nelson

<sup>3</sup> The documents from both the Guidelines team and the instituted policy can be found here:

<https://www.wanidakag.com/guidelines-safety-team>

## Scoring Results

The scoring results against the “Essential” and “Negative” (loophole) elements are in the below table, followed by the “Best Practice” elements that include the 36 from “Essential” plus the six additional elements.

The raw scores of each policy can be found in this spreadsheet:

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1buMQmadRIXK1U\\_4JOEDpXXu4hqSNEse\\_g43C4rDRdJg/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1buMQmadRIXK1U_4JOEDpXXu4hqSNEse_g43C4rDRdJg/edit?usp=sharing)

## Scoring WA-NID-AK Guidelines

### Implemented Guidelines

#### "Essential" Policy Elements

Has	11	31%
Missing	24	67%
N/A or ?	1	3%

#### "Negative" (Loophole) Elements

Doesn't Have	1	20%
Has	4	80%
N/A or ?	1	20%

#### "Best Practice" Policy Elements

Has Element	11	26%
Missing Element	30	71%
N/A or ?	1	2%

### Draft from Guidelines Team

#### "Essential" Policy Elements

Has	36	100%
Missing	0	0%
N/A or ?	0	0%

#### "Negative" (Loophole) Elements

Doesn't Have	6	100%
Has	0	0%
N/A or ?	0	0%

#### "Best Practice" Policy Elements

Has Element	38	90%
Missing Element	4	10%
N/A or ?	0	0%

## Scoring Summary

The Guidelines Team policy contains all 36 Essential elements and additionally includes two of the six additional Best Practice elements and has none of the common Negative, or loophole, elements. The Guidelines Team developed four sets of documents, including the policy (termed “guidelines”), a simple 3-page summary of the policy that would be an easy guide for the broader church members to use, a detailed 20-page FAQ document with scriptural references, and a one-page background document. The documents from the Guidelines Team exude professionalism, depth of thought, and broad consideration and are a joy and comfort to read. Our team finds them to be truly a best practice that we score an A+.

The implemented policy from the ministry is missing two-thirds of the Essential policy elements and includes none of the additional six Best Practice elements while also having four of the six Negative, or loophole, elements. While this policy does include care for victim survivors through the WaNIdAk Therapy Fund, raises awareness of CSA/SA in the ministry and the fellowship, and encourages reporting to the proper authorities, it is highly flawed. The policy gives the ministry significant latitude in decisions on abuse cases and investigations (which is a root cause of this crisis) and it will likely lead to under-reporting of abuse cases, ineffective investigations, insensitivity to victim survivors, and does not guarantee the separation of perpetrators from those that they might prey on. Our team finds it to be severely lacking and we give it the score of substandard.

## Discussion

In addition to a Safe Church policy, the SCTF identified the need for a Safe Ministry Handbook, which would have two core components: a Worker Code of Conduct and a Worker Integrity & Edification Policy<sup>4</sup>. Unlike a safe church policy that should be administered by a group other than the ministry, a safe ministry handbook should be administered by the ministry, for the ministry. The code of conduct section would serve as a simple, reasonable set of guidelines for worker behavior and conduct. The integrity & edification policy section would cover the vetting of prospective workers and their onboarding into the ministry, support and care for workers in their roles through regular check-ins and feedback as well as resources and support for their spiritual & emotional well being.

The policy from the Guidelines Team includes several elements that should be in a Safe Ministry Handbook while the implemented policy from the ministry includes none. For the care and support of a healthy ministry and the individuals in it, we strongly encourage the development of a safe ministry handbook.

Writing and instituting a safe church policy is a step toward becoming a safe, thriving fellowship. But a policy is only effective if it is lived and followed throughout the church without partiality or bias. A policy must be able to survive threats such as a new overseer who doesn't agree with the need for a policy or individual workers and elders that desire to opt-out of the policy. Policy access, communication, training, and governance are critical factors in determining the effectiveness of a policy. It's been well-shown that a policy itself does little to protect a church if it is not followed.<sup>5</sup> The first weeks and months of a policy launch are critical with onboarding, education & training, and enforcement of the policy.

Many churches, youth-serving organizations, and groups that include the vulnerable have successfully implemented policies and practices that have dramatically reduced abuse while providing care and support for victims and limiting future financial and legal liabilities. This church can achieve those same positive outcomes, and the policy documents from the Guidelines team provide an excellent framework to start that journey.

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<sup>4</sup> The elements of an effective Safe Ministry Handbook can be found on the Safe Ministry Handbook tab here: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1xbefbeak-uRLSqb35w2MDRWJw5yQJzNZLqg0m0RfYxl/edit?usp=sharing>

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, the case study of the Southern Baptist church, which had a weak policy that was not supported by the ministry, and the result was widespread abuse: [https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1ARtx-GKs8jLtfIK1\\_TQdyvGX6bDQCx6vU-pME-Ca4Ms/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1ARtx-GKs8jLtfIK1_TQdyvGX6bDQCx6vU-pME-Ca4Ms/edit?usp=sharing)