CHUPP INSURANCE AGENCY

STRIVING TOWARDS EXCELLENCE

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Volume 22, I1
January 2022

6 Tips to Preventing Child Abuse

Churches are not immune from incidents of child abuse, such as the sexual abuse of a child. As you start off the new year, check that your church has measures in place to minimize the risk of an incident of child sexual abuse.

- Six-month waiting period - Require that volunteers be actively involved with your congregation for six months before being allowed to work with children and youth. This should serve as a deterrent to predators who want quick and easy access to children, while also allowing your church time to observe and get to know the prospective volunteer before placing them in a position of trust with minors. (cont. on next page)

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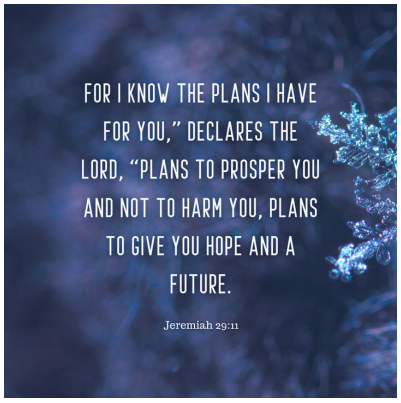
6 Tips (cont.)

- **Screen volunteers** - Screening starts with having prospective workers or volunteers complete an application form that provides information about their experience working or volunteering with children, references, criminal convictions and prior church involvement. Follow up to contact the references and document those conversations. Finally, get the person's authorization and conduct a criminal background check.
- **Avoid Isolation** – Most child abuse at church occurs when one adult is allowed to be alone with one child. Establish guidelines so that no adult is alone with one child (except in **very limited** circumstances, such as counseling or mentoring where there is parental permission and other safeguards in place). Some churches strictly follow the "two adult rule," which provides that two unrelated adults must always be present when minors are cared for at church.
- **Supervise Children and Workers** – Make sure that an adequate number of workers or volunteers are present in ratio to the number of children. To determine what's an appropriate ratio, you might want to check to see how local daycares and schools staff similarly aged classes and provide at least as many workers as they do. In this way, your church can be said to be following the community standard of care. Also, make sure that the workers/volunteers are under some form of supervision themselves. **This is especially important if your church utilizes teens or other minors to care for younger children, as these workers should always be under adult supervision.**
- **Response Planning** – Have a plan in place in case an allegation of sexual abuse arises. Some basic response steps include:
  - Removing the alleged perpetrator from their position with minors until an investigation is complete



  - Notifying authorities and your insurance company
  - Keeping the lines of communication open with the victim and his/her family
  - Following your state's law on mandatory reporting of child abuse
  - Cooperating with an investigation by law enforcement and/or your jurisdiction's child protective services agency
- **Training** - Provide training which should consist of specific information on your church's policies and procedures, as well as general information on abuse prevention at church.

CHUPP INSURANCE AGENCY

70380 S. M-66
P.O. Box 718
Sturgis, MI 49091

www.chuppinsurance.com

Phone: 269.651.8400
Fax: 269.659.8520

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