

# Child & Youth Safety Policies for Churches

- Introductions:

Name

Congregation and membership size

How are children present in your church?

Do you currently have a misconduct or  
child safety policy?

One question you bring to this time  
together

Two  
mandatory  
session  
policies

# Child / Youth Safety & Sexual Misconduct

Differences, overlaps, barriers

Church Leadership Development February 11, 2017

Presbytery of Genesee Valley

Rev. James S. Evinger

# What is the catalyst?

*Book of Order (2015-2017)*

- Form of Government, G-3.0106, Administration of Mission, p. 44

“ All councils shall adopt and implement a sexual misconduct policy and a child protection policy.”

*Effective:  
July, 2015*

# Is that 1 policy or 2 policies?

From the 2014 General Assembly's rationale for the amendment

A child / youth protection policy and procedures "are completely separate from sexual misconduct policies..."

2,  
*dos, duo,*  
*two,*  
*deux,*  
*zwei,*  
*neshwa,*  
*tolu, rua,*  
*twa*

# 2 policies? Are we sure about that?

2016 General Assembly (Item 05-09)  
adopted a proposed amendment to  
edit & refine G-3.0106. Currently  
before all presbyteries.

“ All councils shall adopt a  
sexual misconduct policy  
and a child and youth  
protection policy.”

2,  
*dos, duo,*  
*two,*  
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*zwei,*  
*neshwa,*  
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# What is the **purpose** of this mandate?

2014 General Assembly's rationale for (Item 05-09) as an amendment to the *Book of Order*.

“The focus of child / youth protection policies is to ensure a safe, thriving, and nurturing environment for children and youth...”

# What are the desired outcomes?

- From the PGV perspective, the outcome desired is not a session's compliance with a mandatory rule.
- G-3.0106 is a means to an end. The end is the well-being of people – God's people

## Outcomes we care about

1. Vulnerable people – children & youth – are safe in the life of our faith community, our programs, & our mission / ministry.
2. The integrity of our mission / ministry is preserved.
3. We practice wise risk management, & fulfill our fiduciary responsibilities as trustees of our church as a non-profit corporation.

How are the 2 policies different?

## Sexual Misconduct Policy



Covers everything related to a sexual boundary violation, including prevention & intervention



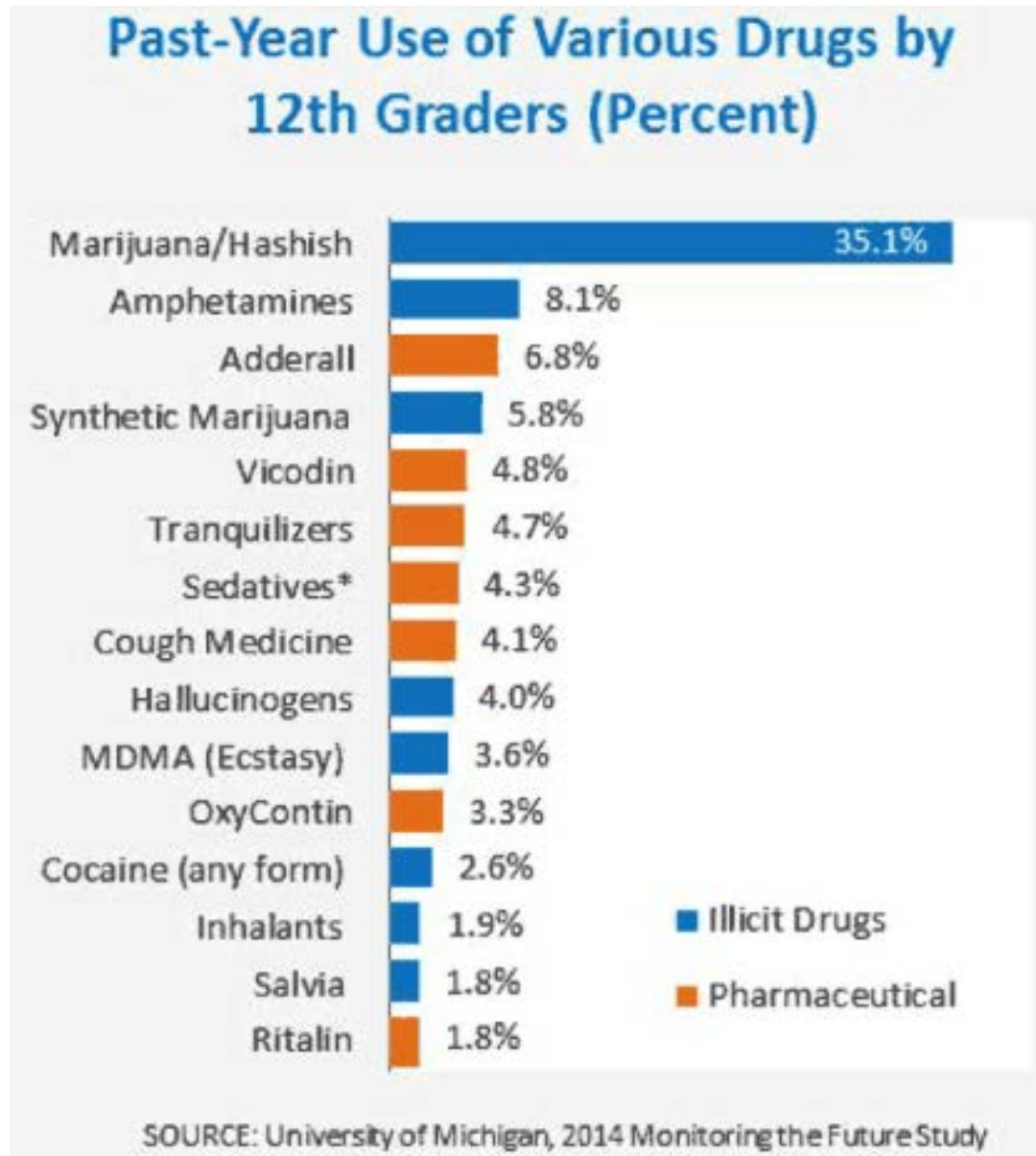
How are the 2 policies different?

## Child / Youth Safety Policy



Covers items not covered by a  
Sexual Misconduct Policy

# Some topics do not overlap



*Youth group  
covenant  
promising to not  
use illicit drugs or  
misuse  
pharmaceuticals*

# Some topics do not overlap



*Work-related  
safety  
procedures on  
a senior high  
mission trip.*

# Some topics do not overlap



*Chaperone on a youth group's retreat dispensing a minor's medication.*



*Transportation safety on an out-of-state youth group trip.*



*Parent/guardian permission forms.*



# Some topics do not overlap



*Does your church operate a pre-school or daycare program?*



*How do you deal with the presence of children who are not vaccinated?*

Runquist, Lisa A. (2015). Churches, schools, and the unvaccinated movement. *Church Law & Tax Report*, 29(5, Sept./Oct.): 1-2, 4-7.

# Some topics do not overlap

*Do you use waiver of liability forms?*



Hammar, Richard R. (2016). Assumption of risk forms: A legal blind spot for many churches. *Church Law & Tax Report*, 30(4, Jul./Aug.): 1,3-14.

# A topic may overlap, but context & behavior require differentiation



*social media*

■ sexting



■ cyber bullying



# A topic may overlap, but context & behavior require differentiation

A background check of a volunteer applicant discovers a conviction...

PGV church example:

*Endangering the welfare of a minor*

- sexual acts 
- serving ETOH to a minor 





# A topic may overlap, but context & behavior require differentiation



a PGV church  
example:

*transgender*

■ behavior

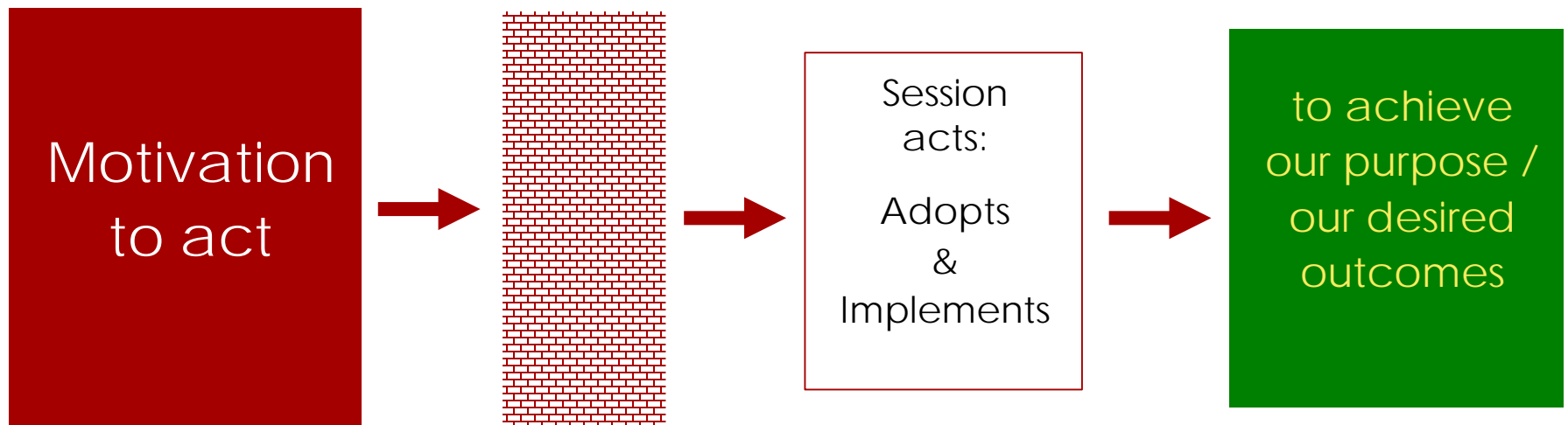


■ bullying



# Barriers & resistance

1. **Informational** barrier: Willing to act, but lacking resources or guidance or support...
2. **Attitudinal** barrier: Not relevant and not necessary; no urgency and not a priority. (Forms of denial & avoidance. Elevates perceived *low probability* of an incident over the reality that there is always a *possibility*.)



# Barriers? Brick walls? Let's talk!



Informational:  
Deficit



Attitudinal:  
Resistance

# Barriers? Brick walls? Let's talk!













Informational:  
Deficit

Attitudinal:  
Resistance

1. **Informational Deficit**: Easiest to overcome. Results in adoption of a policy. (fulfills **mandate to comply**)
2. **Attitudinal Resistance**: Most difficult to overcome. Is **adoption** of a policy followed by its being **implemented**? What is the result over time? Are people educated? Do behaviors change? Is the result a new **culture** committed to protecting children and youth? (achieves the **Desired Outcomes**)

# Risk: Most frequent reasons that churches went to court

Source: Richard J. Hammar, *Church Law & Tax Report*, annual report.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
#1	 Sexual abuse of a minor	 Sexual abuse of a minor	 Sexual abuse of a minor	 Sexual abuse of a minor	 Sexual abuse of a minor	 Sexual abuse of a minor
#2	 Personal injury	 Property dispute	 Personal injury	 Insurance dispute	 Personal injury	 Property dispute

Safeguarding God's children, whom we baptize and promise to nurture as disciples of Jesus Christ, is not an extra burden, an uncomfortable extra, or a hindering distraction from our real mission.

This policy initiative is a necessary and intrinsic part of our ministry. Safeguarding vulnerable people enhances, rather than diminishes, our ministry.

Welcome the requirement to adopt/implement this policy as a teachable moment, a gift from God.