

Genesee Valley Toolbox for Session Sexual Misconduct Policies

Presbytery of Genesee Valley

#6 in a series (2017, September)

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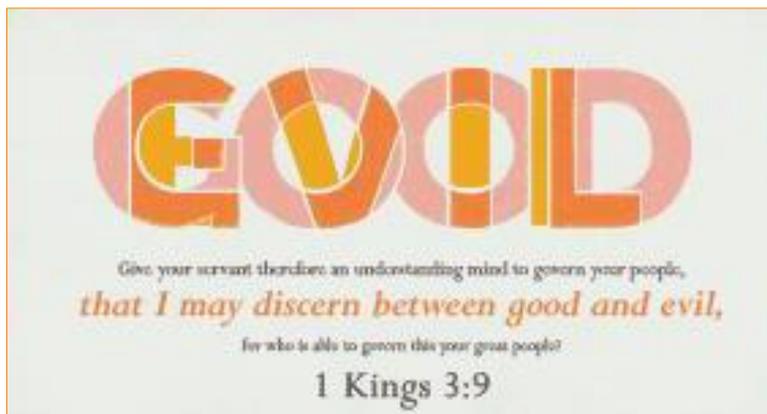
from the Resource Center

This edition of *Genesee Valley Toolbox* continues our series of support for Sessions in the Presbytery of Genesee Valley as they develop, adopt, implement, and update their sexual misconduct policies. The series offers practical information, recommends best practices, and identifies reliable sources on numerous topics. The intent is to deepen knowledge, encourage right behaviors, and achieve important outcomes.

This edition addresses a situation in which some of our pastors have found themselves:

The pastor receives information from a credible person in the congregation regarding what may constitute the abuse of a child or an adolescent. However, the pastor is unsure whether all the information is accurate or if the story is complete, unsure how to assess the situation, only vaguely aware of her/his options, and uneasy about the possible consequences of acting on the options.

The pastor's prayer echoes that of Solomon's to God:



God answered Solomon's prayer for wisdom "to discern what is right" by speaking directly and personally to him in a dream (1 Kings 3:3-15). And sometimes the answer to prayer for wisdom to know what is right is revealed through others: "Iron sharpens iron, and one person sharpens the wits of another." (Proverbs 27:17)

In matters related to the abuse of minors, we care deeply that the wisdom to discern what is right comes from well-qualified and very knowledgeable sources. This *Toolbox* edition identifies human service providers, both local and national, who are trained, experienced, and available to provide an independent review of situations which pastors and congregational leaders experience as a dilemma. We commend these sources to you to fulfill our goal:

**...to equip the saints for the work of ministry,
for building up the body of Christ...** Ephesians 4:12

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we care about congregations. This means that when we think about Sessions adopting and implementing their sexual misconduct policies, we are thinking about more than documents, procedures, and forms. We are thinking of people. Our sisters and brothers in Jesus Christ.





Introduction to the Sources within the Presbytery of Genesee Valley

Within the bounds of our Presbytery, the primary source for seeking independent and reliable advice regarding a situation involving the possible sexual abuse of a child or youth is the 3 Child Advocacy Centers (CAC) serving our communities (see pg. 3). We are truly blessed: in 2016, all 3 were fully accredited by the National Children's Alliance; in contrast, the entire state of Nevada had 1 fully accredited CAC and 1 affiliate.¹

¹National Children's Alliance. Accessed 08/29/17: https://maps.esp.fl/maps/_2016-NCA-Member-CAC-Locations-&-Coverage/pages/map.jsp?geoMapId=208043&TENANT_ID=132538

NATIONAL
CHILDREN'S
ALLIANCE®



What is a Child Advocacy Center?

The CAC is a national model of how best to respond to a child who has, or may have, been sexually or physically abused. Housed in a safe, child-focused environment, each CAC is staffed by a multi-disciplinary team which typically includes medical professionals, law enforcement representatives (police and county district attorney), mental health providers, child protective services staff, and victim advocates, all who support the child and the child's family, and are supplemented by volunteers.

CACs conduct child-sensitive forensic interviews and medical evaluations, offer support through legal investigations and prosecutions, and provide prevention and education services to their communities.

First Presbyterian Church of Batavia & the Justice for Children Child Advocacy Center

As part of its mission in the community, the First Presbyterian Church of Batavia leases for \$1/year a building it owns to Justice for Children Child Advocacy Center. The return on this investment? Priceless!



Introduction to the Source Provided by the PC(U.S.A.)

In 2017, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) established a relationship with Praesidium, Inc., to operate a toll-free Abuse Prevention Helpline for any Presbyterian congregation. Praesidium, Inc. is a prominent and highly-regarded national organization with extensive experience and expertise regarding sexual boundary violations in faith communities.¹

¹Accessed 08/30/17: <https://website.praesidiuminc.com/wp/>

We present the PC(U.S.A.)'s tri-fold brochure, front and back, describing the Abuse Prevention Helpline.² Praesidium's Helpline is another independent source of credible advice regarding potential sexual or physical abuse of minors. Note well how many services are offered to Presbyterian congregations!

²Accessed 08/30/17: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/Is-Your-Church-Safe-Brochure.pdf>

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The 6 editions of the **Toolbox** series are posted on the PGV website in the dedicated folder of the Committee on Ministry:

<https://pbygenval.org/committees/committee-on-ministry/sexual-misconduct-policies-resources/genesee-valley-toolbox/>

Sources of Independent Advice within the Presbytery of Genesee Valley

If you have a **reasonable concern** that a child or youth may have been maltreated or harmed, or is in danger, immediately call the NY State Child Abuse Hotline at **1-800-342-3720** (24 hours/day & 7 days/week).

If you are uncertain about calling civil authorities, you may review the situation with trained human services providers serving communities within our Presbytery.

During standard business hours, if your concern regards a child or youth in:

Monroe County	Genesee, Livingston, Orleans, or Wyoming County	Ontario County
<p>Bivona Child Advocacy Center 585-935-7800 Rochester</p>	<p>Justice for Children Child Advocacy Center 585-344-8576 Batavia (satellite offices in Albion & Warsaw)</p>	<p>Child Advocacy Center of the Finger Lakes 585-394-2573 Canandaigua (satellite office in Geneva)</p>

24 hours/day & 7 days/week, if your concern regards a child or youth in:

Livingston, Monroe, or Ontario County	Genesee or Orleans County	Genesee, Orleans, or Wyoming County
<p>Lifeline (Finger Lakes Region) 211 or 585-275-5151</p>	<p>Care and Crisis Helpline 1-844-345-4440 or 585-344-4440 (based at YWCA, Batavia)</p>	<p>2-1-1 WNY 211 or 1-888-696-9211 (based at Olmsted Center for Sight, Buffalo)</p>

Tip: Also add these to your Session’s Child and Youth Safety Policy.

“The need for strong policies regarding child abuse cannot be exaggerated. We know abuse still happens, all too frequently. We need to say, ‘Absolutely we need this’ instead of, ‘It doesn’t happen here.’”

– Mary Kuhns
Retired clergy/therapist, Claremont, CA

“We have an obligation to make church and church events safe places for all children.”

– Grady Parsons
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
2008-2016

“Not only does abuse destroy lives, families and congregations, it destroys people’s ultimate faith and trust in God and the Church.”

– Donna Wells
Stated Clerk, Greater Atlanta Presbytery

“The protection and nurture of every child is a sacred trust we accept as we baptize children, a trust we confirm in our vigilance to prevent the sexual abuse of any child.”

– Nancy Ramsey
Presbyterian Mission Agency Board

Is your church safe?

“Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.”

– MARK 10:14

Toll-free Abuse Prevention Helpline
866 607-SAFE (7233)

This service is provided for all PC(USA) congregations and members by:

Insurance Board
Praesidium Inc.
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

InsuranceBoard.org/abuse_prevention



INSURANCE BOARD
Partners in Protection
UCC + Disciples + Presbyterian

PRAESIDIUM

for Faith and Freedom



How safe is your church?



- One out of four girls and one out of six boys will be abused before the age of 18.
- 80 percent of abuse does not get reported.
- Abuse destroys a child's well-being and sense of trust.
- Sexual predators seek out trusting environments where children are present.
- Churches are vulnerable because of close relationships, trusting environments and immediate access to children.
- Allegations of abuse threaten the church's mission and reputation.
- Court awards in abuse cases can cost churches millions of dollars.

866 607-SAFE (7233)

Toll-free Abuse Prevention Helpline

The Helpline is staffed by Praesidium experts, the national leader in abuse prevention.

Callers receive expert advice on how to best respond to suspicious behaviors, suspected abuse, as well as prevention and receive guidance on:

- Responding to suspicious interactions between employee and child.
- Responding to an allegation of abuse.
- Determining when and how to report to authorities.
- Learning to respond compassionately to victims, families and the congregation.
- Responding to media requests.
- Identifying risks in programs.
- Screening employees and volunteers.
- Managing high-risk activities such as monitoring bathrooms and interacting with youth on social media.
- Developing a safety plan for an offender in the congregation.



What can you do to prevent abuse in your church?

Abuse Prevention Resources available to PC(USA) churches

- The 24-hour toll-free Helpline provides expert staff to assist churches in managing concerns and incidents of abuse.
- Discouraged criminal background checks search millions of records nationwide to provide the most accurate information on criminal history.
- Free Armatus online abuse prevention training offered through the Insurance Board and developed by Praesidium effectively helps church leaders manage the risk of abuse.
- A policy template is provided for churches to create their own Child Protection Policy.
- Online Self-Assessment Tool allows churches or youth conference sponsors to accurately and confidentially identify potential gaps in the abuse risk management practices across the entire church.
- Churches get a report providing direct links to resources, helping them build an action plan for closing risk gaps.