

1:1 project

5 THINGS THE CHURCH SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CHILD ABUSE



The Church is the Answer!

Psalm 68:5 declares a Psalm of praise that God is a “father to the fatherless, defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling.” In Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, the last verses declare that a day is coming when God would send a prophet named Elijah, whose “preaching will turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the hearts of children to their fathers. Otherwise, I will come and strike the land with a curse.” God is in the business of defending and caring and unfortunately, humankind too often goes down the road of oppressing and taking advantage of others. This is not the way of God’s image bearers. As Child Abuse Awareness & Prevention Month comes about, let us be a church that cares for all who are oppressed with the same heartbeat our Father has. Psalm 72:12-14 states, “He will rescue the poor when they cry to Him; He will help the oppressed, who have no one to defend them. He feels pity for the weak and the needy, and He will rescue them. He will redeem them from oppression and violence for their lives are precious to Him.”

5 THINGS THE CHURCH SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CHILD ABUSE:

1 Oklahoma is a mandatory reporting State.

Being a mandatory reporting State means that, “state law requires every health care professional, teacher, and every OTHER person who has reason to believe that a child under 18 years of age is being abused or neglected, or is in danger of being abused or neglected, must report the suspicion of abuse or neglect promptly to the Oklahoma Department of Humans Services.” You can do this by calling the 24-hour hotline at 1-800-522-3511. As a mandated reporter, the failure to report a suspicion of abuse can become a prosecutable offense. *We believe reporting to be one of the acts that all adults can do to care about children and families in crisis.* To understand more about this, click the link below to view the OKDHS publication on reporting child abuse:

<https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/health/health2/documents/18-01-reporting-child-abuse.pdf>

5 THINGS THE CHURCH SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CHILD ABUSE

Continued →



2 Instances of child abuse happen in every community.

Churches foster relationships and environments where children can feel safe and loved, and pastors are often sought after for spiritual guidance and counseling. Therefore, churches are often on the receiving end of reports of child abuse. It is highly likely that your church has been or will be confronted with an instance of child abuse, as 1 in 7 children experienced abuse or neglect in the past year, according to the CDC. It is also important to know that perpetrators of abuse are almost *always* known and trusted by the child.

3 How you respond to a child after abuse is disclosed is critical.

Whether you learn of an instance of child abuse, or a child discloses abuse first-hand, how you respond is critically important. Your response can influence how a child internalizes and processes the incident. A caring and supportive response will reduce secondary trauma and set a child on a path towards healing. Instances of child abuse are difficult and complicated, but it is crucial for churches to maintain the priority of responding to the child's needs before all else. Far too often, a child's voice and needs are trumped by concerns about how an allegation will negatively affect the organization or the perpetrator.

Questioning children can give off the impression they are not believed, or they are being accused of doing something wrong. Not being believed (and advocated for) can be even more emotionally damaging than the abuse itself. In their most vulnerable moment, churches have the opportunity to reflect to a child that he or she is valuable and worth defending. To reduce secondary trauma, limit the number of times a child has to tell their story and recount the details of the abuse. There are several ways questioning children can influence an investigation and its outcome, so the key is to remember that your *only* responsible is to report, not to investigate. Churches should leave the investigating to trained professionals who have the competence to respond to reports in a child-centered, legally-sound manner.

Ministry Safe has great resources for responding to and reporting allegations of abuse. They support the work of churches and help educate from the church perspective. To learn more from their resources, click the link below.

<https://ministrysafes.com/responding> and <https://ministrysafes.com/reporting>

5 THINGS THE CHURCH SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CHILD ABUSE



Continued —————→

4 What are the resources that help support a family experiencing Domestic Violence?

There are many cities across Oklahoma that have a Domestic Violence Shelter. Many are trusted partners with 111Project through CarePortal. To see a list of cities and shelters, click the link here: <https://domesticshelters.org/help/ok>

Additionally, there are child advocacy centers also located across our State. These centers provide services and resources for those suffering from abuse. To see a directory, click the link here: <https://cacok.com/directory/>

There are shelters that are requesting partners on CarePortal. Contact us by scanning the QR code at the bottom of this resource and our team can connect you to a shelter in your area.

5 Is there hope and healing after abuse?

YES! We believe that there is nothing outside the reach of redemption through Jesus. Healing can happen and hope can be restored. There are examples page after page in Scripture where we see stories of restoration after trauma.

Healing is a a journey and takes the support of healthy relationships and resources like counseling, pastoral care, medical intervention, and social support. The Church can play an important role in the path of healing. Psalm 34:18 says, "The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." May the Church be the physical representation of the nearness of Jesus to those who are broken-hearted from abuse!

Contact Us

📧 INFO@111PROJECT.ORG

🌐 111PROJECT.ORG

Scan Here

TO FILL OUT A →
CONTACT FORM
ON OUR WEBSITE

