

Safe Reporting Policy Ideas

Safe Reporting Process

For Churches Committed to Integrity, Safety, and Biblical Accountability

Introduction

The Church is the Body of Christ and should be a place of worship, healing, community, and safety. Sadly, in a fallen world, there are times when trust is broken due to harmful behaviors within the church.

To maintain the Church's integrity and honor Christ, it is essential to have a clear and compassionate process for reporting misconduct or harm. This document outlines a safe, confidential, and biblically grounded process for reporting harmful behavior in any church setting.

Biblical Foundation

Jesus outlines a biblical approach to addressing sin and reconciliation in Matthew 18:15–17:

> “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along... If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church.” *(NIV)*

This passage guides our initial efforts toward resolution and reconciliation. However, we also recognize there are circumstances where direct confrontation may not be safe or appropriate.

Step-by-Step Safe Reporting Process

Step 1: Biblical Confrontation (When Safe and Appropriate)

Before initiating a formal report, consider whether the situation allows for following the Matthew 18 model:

Speak directly to the individual in a spirit of reconciliation, if it is safe to do so.

If they do not listen, bring one or two mature believers with you.

If the issue remains unresolved, bring it to church leadership.

Note: If the situation involves abuse, intimidation, fear, or danger, this step may be skipped to avoid further harm.

Step 2: Formal Reporting

If direct confrontation is unsafe or ineffective, or if the behavior involves serious misconduct, use the church's Safe Reporting Form or contact a designated Safe Reporting Leader (such as a care pastor, church board member, or external accountability team member).

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What Can Be Reported

- * Abuse (Emotional, Physical, Sexual, or Spiritual)
- * Harassment or Intimidation
- * Moral Failures (e.g., sexual misconduct, addiction)
- * Illegal or Fraudulent Behavior
- * Retaliation against someone who has spoken up
- * Leadership Misconduct or Cover-ups

Who Can Report:

Any individual with reasonable grounds to believe harmful behavior has occurred within or by a church leader, staff, or volunteer.

Who Can Be Reported:

Pastors, ministers, elders, staff, or volunteer leaders.

If the concern is about a layperson or congregant, the matter should usually first be directed to church leadership.

Step 3: Acknowledgment and Confidential Review

The Safe Reporting Team (a small group of trusted leaders committed to confidentiality and fairness) will receive and review the report.

You will receive a confirmation email or call that your report has been received.

Step 4: Initial Assessment and Inquiry

The Safe Reporting Team will assess the report.

If needed, an inquiry will be initiated. You may be asked to provide additional details or evidence, if available and appropriate.

In complex or sensitive cases, an outside professional or advisor may be brought in to assist.

Step 5: Follow-up and Care

A representative of the Safe Reporting Team will communicate the outcome of the inquiry and any next steps, as appropriate.

Follow-up support and care will be offered to those impacted, when needed.

Step 6: Accountability and Action

Based on findings, leadership will discern next steps, which may include:

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Counseling or care for the reported individual
Accountability or restoration processes
Church discipline
Removal from leadership or ministry roles
Reporting to legal authorities if necessary

Reporting Form Template

(Churches should provide a secure way to submit this form — printed, online, or through a private email.)

Confidential Report Submission

Nature of Report (Check all that apply):

- ☐ Abuse (Emotional, Physical, Sexual, Spiritual)
- ☐ Harassment
- ☐ Bullying/Intimidation
- ☐ Fraud or Illegal Behavior
- ☐ Moral Failure
- ☐ Retaliation
- ☐ Cover-up

Have you attempted the Matthew 18 process (if safe)?

- ☐ Yes (please explain below)
- ☐ No (please explain below)

Who is being reported?

Name:
Role in the Church:

Your relationship to this person:

Describe what happened:
(Include specific details, actions, words, or behaviors. Avoid vague or secondhand information.)

When and where did it occur?

Is this ongoing?

Who else is aware of the situation?

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What steps have you already taken? What was the result?

Do you have any supporting evidence? (Emails, messages, photos, etc.)

How has this impacted you personally?

Do you request confidentiality?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Do you need support or help navigating this?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Your Name:

(Anonymous reports may be submitted, but providing your name helps the church follow up appropriately.)

Your Contact Information (email/phone):

Commitment to Confidentiality and Protection

Reports made in good faith will be taken seriously.

All efforts will be made to maintain your confidentiality.

Retaliation of any kind will not be tolerated.

False or malicious reports may result in appropriate consequences.

Questions or Concerns?

Please contact a designated Safe Reporting Leader at your church or use the reporting form available \[here] (link or instructions for your church).

Final Note

We understand that reporting harmful behavior can be emotionally and spiritually difficult. Thank you for your courage and integrity in speaking up. Our desire is to promote healing, safety, and holiness in the Body of Christ.