



PROTECTING CHILDREN

1. Does your congregation's **mission** include providing a safe environment for children's spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual growth?

SAMPLE "SANCTUARY" STATEMENT

In recognition of the spiritual and public trust given to this faith community, ____ (congregation) is committed to being a true sanctuary, both nurturing and protecting its members and visitors. Worship of God requires openness, trust, intimacy, vulnerability and a safe, supportive community. Abuse and harassment are, therefore, violations of the faith shared by this congregation. Accordingly, the congregation will maintain official policies and procedures that assure prevention of future instances of abuse, appropriate intervention into alleged incidence of abusive behavior, and care for all involved. These procedures will be reviewed by the ____ (governing body) annually to correspond to changes in civil law and the congregation community.

2. Would your congregation pass legal scrutiny for **no-negligence**?
Annually 2% of America's churches file child abuse insurance claims.

Negligence is "conduct that creates an unreasonable risk of foreseeable harm to others" and may include both action and inaction.

- a) Do you have **policies, procedures, and practices** to protect children?
- b) Do those policies cover each of the critical **high-risk areas** listed in the box below?
- c) Do your staff and volunteers receive **training** to implement the policies and to respond appropriately to children's personal safety issues?

Critical High-risk Areas

- √ **Screening** of Employees and Volunteers
reference checks, interviews, background check
- √ **Supervision** of Employees and Volunteers
personnel policy (w/sexual harassment section)
behavioral covenants
- √ **Reporting** Obligations
(see EEOC guidelines and state mandates)
- √ **Response** to Concerns

