

Valleybrook Community Church

The Risk of Child Sexual Abuse

“A 6 year old boy became disruptive during Sunday School story time. Trying to maintain order, the teacher allowed a teenager volunteer to take the child to color in another room. The male volunteer allegedly abused the boy and threatened to hurt him if he told anyone.”

“In 1984 a church youth choir was traveling on a summer concert tour. During the tour the youth minister fondled a 13 year old girl while on the bus. The church and youth minister were sued. A judgment of \$10.2 million was awarded in damages.”

Child sexual abuse is a reality and can have a devastating impact on its victims and the church. Wherever there are children, there are opportunities for abuse, and the church is a prime target.

Some important facts you need to know:

- In over 80% of cases the perpetrator is someone known and trusted by the child.
- Victims are intimidated into silence (who will be believed – a child or a responsible adult?)
- Church is supposed to be a place where we can trust and be safe.
- Pedophiles (an adult with an abnormal sexual desire for children) migrate to a place where there is easy access to children.

There are 3 kinds of victims:

- Primary – the one abused
- Secondary – families of the abused
- Church body – sexual abuse can ruin the ministry of the church and the church can be torn apart

Every church is at risk for abuse and lawsuits, but there are steps that can be taken to reduce the risk. What follows is the strategy of Valleybrook Community Church to reduce the risk of child sexual abuse.

1. Workers are screened, both paid and volunteer.
 - a. Ministry Application and Statement of Faith are completed.
 - b. Workers are interviewed.
 - c. Reference and police checks are done for all workers.
 - d. Workers are trained.
 - e. Workers need to have been attending VBCC for a minimum of 6 months (exceptions taken to the Board of Elders).
 - f. Anyone with a sexual abuse conviction is not allowed to work with children.
2. Workers are supervised.
 - a. No worker is ever alone with a child without written parental permission. This is a protection for the child and the worker against false accusations.
 - b. There are windows in every room.
3. A reporting process has been established. (Detailed in Protection Policy)
4. A plan for response has been established.
 - a. Church leadership needs to take allegations seriously.
 - b. Church and other leadership needs to investigate the allegation – talk to the victim’s family.
 - c. Church leadership needs to be sensitive to the victim – don’t minimize or deny what’s happened, even though you don’t know if it’s true.

Children are powerless to defend themselves. If we’re not willing to do it, who will?

I have read and understand the risk of child sexual abuse.

Date

Name