Chapter 16

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION IN THE FAITH-BASED ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

Faith-based environments or houses of worship have the potential to be a significant positive factor in a child's life but have the potential to be abusive as well. This harm may occur directly from the actions of clergy, adults in the faith-based community functioning in an authority role, as well as from peers or children and adolescents who are older. The harm is compounded by the mishandling of the abuse by clergy, religious institutions, and their faith community. Several common factors contribute to this poor institutional handling, including a mistaken understanding or misapplication of religious doctrine, reverence for clergy and other faith leaders, and the instinct to protect the institution from outside interference. This chapter summarizes the progress that has been made within well-established faith-based organizations to confront and address the issue of child sexual abuse and highlights changes that continue to be necessary to bring faith-based environments into concordance with accepted child abuse prevention practices. The chapter also provides a framework of recommendations for child advocates and faith leaders in order to achieve increased safety and healing.

"Faith communities offer children wonderful opportunities to develop spiritually and to be part of a larger, caring community. Close caring relationships with adults are an important protective factor for children. … Unfortunately, as in all organizations where adults and older youth interact with children, faith communities can unintentionally provide opportunities for … sexual behaviors towards children." Stop it Now! 2020 (1)

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INTRODUCTION

A large and growing body of research documents that maltreated children are not only impacted physically and emotionally but also spiritually (2, 3). Faith-based environments can positively impact a child's life or enable maltreatment to occur. Such harm may be caused by clergy, adults in positions of authority, peers or older children. The harm may occur because an offender references religion, perhaps noting a child's biological reaction to sexual touching and then declaring, "You are equally sinful; God holds you as much to blame as me." A spiritual injury may also occur when a child prays that God stop the abuse, yet the maltreatment continues. This sense of betrayal can impact the child's view of God, understanding of the world, and sense of self (3).

Children may also experience spiritual injury separate from the abuse itself, caused by clergy, religious institutions, and faith communities mishandling the abuse. For some children (a term which, for our purposes, includes teens as well), this secondary trauma causes deeper spiritual injury than the original abuse, undermining core religious teachings of support for the victim, including Isaiah 1:17 and Leviticus 19:16, and leading to an awareness of betrayal perpetrated by those the child might have approached for help. In the words of one survivor, "the trauma of the abuse is nothing, absolutely nothing…compared to the trauma of not being believed" (4). Research on institutional betrayal supports this survivor's account, finding that an institution's failure to prevent sexual assault or support victims can exacerbate posttraumatic symptomology (5). At the same time, a growing body of research demonstrates that spirituality is a significant source of resiliency for maltreated children and that victims who turn to their spirituality fare better in the short and long term (6-8). One report found that clergy in particular have a central role to play in helping survivors cope with trauma: "during a trauma, victims are five times more likely to seek the aid of clergy than any other professional. Clergy are people they know and trust" (9). Unfortunately, though, the very institutions best equipped and most trusted to address the spiritual needs of children and adult survivors may have been involved in their abuse or in suppressing the crimes of abusers (10). This tendency has both damaged the credibility of faith communities and resulted in many survivors losing their faith or their connection to organized religion.

In recent decades, responses to the maltreatment of children by faith leaders has improved incrementally. However, much more must be done if houses of worship are to be places of safety and healing for children. This chapter summarizes some of the progress within well-established faith-based organizations and highlights necessary changes that will bring faith-based organizations into concordance with best practices in child abuse prevention. While houses of worship differ widely in world view and traditions, child abuse prevention efforts largely align. The authors of this chapter, from Christian and Jewish traditions, agree on the potential efficacy of these efforts despite their faiths' differences.

ABUSE BY CLERGY

Prominent in any discussion about child maltreatment in a faith-based environment is the US Catholic Church's clergy sexual abuse crisis, uncovered in the early 2000s. Prior media coverage of sexual abuse cases had episodically occurred in the 1980s and 1990s, but the series

of exposés in the Boston Globe beginning in 2002 catalyzed a vigorous public response that included outrage from lay members and leaders of the Catholic Church (11, 12). In a report commissioned by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), researchers concluded that from 1950-2002 child sexual abuse committed by priests or other Catholic leaders was "widespread," with more than 95% of dioceses impacted (13). The public outcry in America drew attention to abuse worldwide (14, 15).

Similar tragic situations have unfolded in Protestant communities. For example, the Southern Baptist Convention, the nation's largest Protestant denomination, issued a report in 2020 in response to what it called a "sexual abuse crisis" (16). Other Protestant denominations, as well as Jewish and Muslim communities, have also undergone scholarly analysis in this area (17-21). Although less extensive research exists on abuse in other faith traditions, there have also been high profile cases of abuse within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (22), Jehovah's Witnesses (23), and others. Despite the many positive aspects of faith-based organizations, it appears that no house of worship, regardless of faith tradition, is free of the risk for child maltreatment.

ABUSE IN THE HOME AND COMMUNITY

Although the focus on child sexual abuse perpetrated by faith leaders is justified, we must recall that most maltreated children are not abused by a faith leader but by a parent, family member, or an adult known to the family. Beyond adults in the child's environment, the US Department of Justice reports that approximately one-third of child sexual abuse is perpetrated by other youth (24), and a recent study puts this number at more than 70% (25). According to the Fourth National Incidence Study, more than 90% of physical abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect cases involve a parent or significant family member as the perpetrator (26). In cases of sexual abuse, a parent or other significant family member is the offender approximately 60% of the time (26).

This fact is critical for three reasons. First, when faith communities develop policies focused only on protecting children from sexual abuse in a house of worship, they may overlook their moral and, often, legal obligation to protect children from sexual abuse in the community at large, as well as from physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect and other forms of maltreatment. Second, because some individuals who abuse children are skilled at identifying signs that a child has endured the trauma of abuse or neglect and then abusing the child again, faith communities need to address abuse within the home in order to prevent abuse in a house of worship. "Poly-victimization research" demonstrates that a child who has been abused in multiple ways in his or her own home is at greater risk to be abused by others (27).

Third, although sexual abuse by church leaders requires specific prevention and response measures, focusing exclusively on clergy abuse ignores abuse among peers and by older youth (28). Preventing youth-perpetrated child abuse requires: a) an understanding of cultural factors within and outside the house of worship that may contribute to risk; b) prevention efforts that include children and center their voices in the initiative, incorporating developmentally and culturally appropriate messages of healthy sexual relationships, boundaries, and consent; and c) responses to sexual harm beyond the outdated "predator" model, recognizing, for instance, the numerous factors that can contribute to juvenile offending. We must move beyond teaching children to avoid harm and teach them to avoid causing harm and to intervene if they see other

youth causing harm; but even in teaching children this necessary knowledge, we must remember that the burden of responsibility falls firmly on adults and that children are not responsible for protecting themselves or each other. Furthermore, initiating direct dialogue on these topics need not be antithetical to religious doctrine; it can be centered on religious values and text, including grappling with difficult passages. For example, Heart Women and Girls, which works with Muslim communities, and the Our Whole Lives curriculum, designed by the Unitarian Universalist Association, work within faith traditions to provide developmentally appropriate sexuality education.

Attention to the risk of maltreatment in the US Catholic Church is mirrored by other national efforts to address child sexual abuse, including well-documented efforts in Australia and Ireland (29, 30). These prevention imperatives aim to establish "safe-environments," which focus on both training and on designing policies to protect children in the faith-based environment.

CONCERNS UNIQUE TO FAITH-BASED COMMUNITIES

Child maltreatment is not a religious phenomenon; it is a human one, often compounded by poor institutional response. Within faith communities, however, universal risk factors, including social and psychological impediments to responding appropriately to abuse, manifest in unique ways that must be explored and understood. Three factors that seem to be shared across faith traditions include: a) a mistaken understanding or misapplication of religious doctrine (31-34); b) reverence for clergy and other faith leaders (31, 35); and c) a cultural or religious instinct or even obligation to protect the institution or faith community, especially from outside interference (20, 34, 36, 37).

The first factor, mistaken understanding or misapplication of religious doctrine, can sometimes manifest as a concern for modesty that results in resistance to education for both adults and children and may impede reporting due to discomfort in discussing sexual matters (31). Some may even believe that such behaviors couldn't occur in their religious communities because of laws that limit contact between the sexes. Such a belief is mistaken both in fact and theology. Sexual abuse can be perpetrated against a child of the same sex and often occurs within the family unit. Religious sources, far from denying the existence of incest or other forms of abuse, name it, teach about it, and prohibit it. For example, Leviticus 18 enumerates and prohibits various permutations of incestuous and other abusive relationships and, far from a topic meant to be kept silent, this chapter is publicly read on Yom Kippur – the holiest day on the Jewish calendar. Other examples of misapplication of religious doctrine include pressuring a victim to forgive; looking the other way when faced with clearly abusive or grooming behaviors in order to judge favorably or not slander another; and permitting a person who has previously caused harm to have access to children due to mistaken notions of repentance (31). Similarly, safe environment training has been occasionally conflated with sex education, leading to concerns that the Catholic Church was interfering with the proper role of parents and family by providing developmentally appropriate abuse-prevention education to their children (38). A committee of theologians and child protection experts reviewed these concerns and clarified that the Church's efforts were consistent with Article 364 of the

Catechism of the Catholic Church, which states, "the human body shares in the dignity of the image of God" (39).

The second factor, reverence for clergy, appears as a central cultural, and even canonical, tenet in many faith traditions. In Judaism, this concept takes different forms, including *k'vod harav*, literally, the rabbi's honor, and *da'as torah*, interpreted by some as a requirement to seek guidance from a rabbi before making major life decisions (31). In the Catholic context, this enormous deference to the role of the clergy is referred to as clericalism, which Cannon lawyer Doyle describes as a concept "whereby the clergy consider themselves as somehow set apart, special, and above the laypeople" (35). The institutionalization of these values in a faith tradition's hierarchy can have implications for prevention efforts, such as the requirement, or at least encouragement, in some Jewish and Muslim communities that an individual consult with a clergyperson before reporting child maltreatment to governmental authorities (20, 31).

Reverence for faith leaders also impacts response efforts, such as when review boards tasked with making safety recommendations must defer to senior clergy who are vested with ultimate authority (40). Because some faith communities view clergy as representative of a higher moral authority, possessing some amount of divinity, they are provided with a level of trust and access not granted the average layperson and thus with more opportunities to abuse. In the Catholic Church, this view of leaders representing a higher moral authority is steeped in historical tradition:

> "In a hierarchical system, overladen with the trappings and values of monarchy, accountability is painfully difficult. Basically, it flows from the bottom up: the laity and lower clergy are accountable to the hierarchical leadership, the bishops to the pope, but there is no accountability to those whom the ecclesiastical leaders are supposed to serve." (37)

When clergy do abuse, a religious child's entire world view—including clergy as paradigms of virtue—may be shattered and the trauma compounded by damage to the child's connection to organized religion and spirituality (3). Faith leaders can use their power to cause harm, but, conversely, they can use it to support victims, prioritize communal education, and create opportunities for dialogue.

The third factor, a resistance to outside interference, stems, in some religions, from necessary self-protection. One such example is the Jewish prohibition against *mesirah*, reporting a fellow Jew to secular authorities, which has its roots in the Talmudic era, when reporting a Jew for even a minor infraction could mean persecution or even death (18). At other times, the protective instinct is reputational, a religious or cultural obligation to avoid bringing shame upon the community. Hutchinson et al. (20) explained that, in some Muslim communities, "Not reporting an offender to the authorities, for example, might be considered as protective if the matter is sufficiently dealt with by the family and local community because it would prevent the child from being blamed for bringing shame to the community and/or his family or kinship network" (20). In Jewish communities, causing a *chilul Hashem*, or a desecration of God's name, is considered a legal prohibition (41). All would agree that abusing a child constitutes a *chilul Hashem*, but it is not uncommon for communities to blame the whistleblower rather than the abuser. Moore, writing from a Southern Baptist perspective, argues that churches should welcome external scrutiny as a force for transparency and accountability:

"A church that excuses, say, sexual immorality or that opposes missions is deemed out of fellowship with other churches. The same must be true of churches that cover up rape or sexual abuse… No church should be frustrated by [a] media report, but should thank God for it. The Judgement Seat of Christ will be far less reticent than a newspaper series to uncover what should never have been hidden." (36)

Most frequently, especially in insular faith communities, there is a distrust of outsiders who may not respect values the community holds dear; this worry impedes collaboration with secular organizations and governmental agencies in both the prevention of and response to child maltreatment. This distrust is not unfounded, as child protection professionals from outside the faith community may be ill-equipped to support the community in protecting children. One solution is to better train outside professionals to interact in a culturally sensitive manner; a better option involves training those within the community in child protection.

RESPONSE AND PREVENTION EFFORTS

Houses of worship and their related entities (like day-cares, schools, camps, and extracurricular activities) can be envisioned as youth-serving organizations (YSOs). As such, the 2007 Centers for Disease Control (CDC) report, *Preventing sexual abuse within youth serving organizations: Getting started on policies,* provides a useful prevention framework upon which to build policies and procedures that can guide prevention efforts (42). Central to this approach is a focus on careful screening of adult employees and volunteers, training for both adults and children to create a culture of safety, on-going monitoring to ensure compliance with best practices, and procedures for responding to policy violations. YSOs ideally provide opportunities for children to grow and to engage in meaningful activities, but they may also be places where children experience harm.

US Catholic response and prevention efforts

The current framework for the US Catholic Church's response to the problem of sexual abuse perpetrated by clergy, referred to as "A promise to protect/pledge to heal," is contained in the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People (43). Over time and through multiple iterations, the Charter, a document outlining best practices in sexual abuse prevention, was developed in 2002 and took its current form in 2018 (43). The Charter contains 17 articles outlining how Church leadership will work towards protecting children from sexual abuse. Among the key elements is a commitment to:
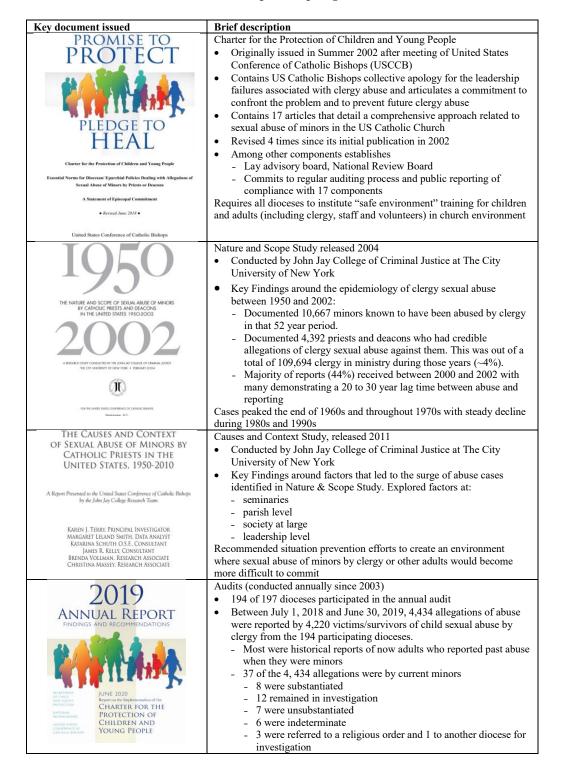
- Remove from ministry clerics who have credible allegations of sexual abuse against a minor (the so-called zero tolerance rule);

- Designate a non-cleric victim assistance coordinator in each diocese to receive initial disclosures of abuse and interface with the victim;
- Designate a safe-environment coordinator in each diocese to organize and oversee prevention efforts, including mandatory training for both adults who come into contact with children and for children who come into the Church environment;
- Report all reasonable suspicions of abuse to the appropriate civil authorities;
- Establish a local review board at each diocese composed primarily of lay Catholics who advise the bishop on child protection issues, investigations related to clergy accused of child sexual abuse within the diocese, and policies and procedures designed to keep minors safe;
- Establish the National Review Board (NRB) composed of lay Catholics working to ensure that minors are protected against child sexual abuse while in the Church's environment;
- Support two academic studies to determine, first, the epidemiology and baseline data concerning clergy-perpetrated child sexual abuse and, second, how best to use this knowledge of the causes of abuses to lessen the risk;
- Ongoing annual audits of compliance by each diocese (43).

Preventing abuse, the focus of this chapter, relates closely to how the Church responds to victims. The USCCB Charter aims to create faith-based environments where children are free from harm, both the harm of abuse and the harm of mishandled revelations of abuse. The enormity of this undertaking becomes clear when reviewing the annual audits of Diocesan compliance with training requirements. For example, in 2019 just under 99% of priests—over 33,000 individuals—participated in training, and similarly high percentages of deacons and ordination candidates participated in training as well (44). In addition, over three and a half million children participated in training, which represents almost 92% of children from Catholic dioceses nationwide (44).

The safe environment trainings vary from locally developed offerings to commercially available curricula. In response to concerns around the effectiveness of safe environment training programs, the USCCB commissioned a review of relevant research, which concluded that such trainings effectively teach children about sexual abuse, equipping them with skills to seek assistance, and increasing disclosure rates (45). The literature review also found that parents generally support sexual abuse prevention trainings, that programs tend to increase dialogue between parents and children on this topic, and, in cases where abuse has occurred, that children who have gone through training experience less self-blame and believe that they acted to protect themselves. Finally, negative emotional reactions to the trainings were short lived and favorably balanced by the positive effects (24, 38, 45-47). Surveys further confirmed that the majority of training programs incorporated the best practices; those that did not were provided with a checklist for future use (38). Table 1 summarizes key documents in the Catholic response to child sexual abuse within the church.

Table 1. Promise to protect/pledge to heal, 2002

Key document issued	Brief description

PROMISE TO PROTECT PLEDGE TO HEAL — Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. Essential Norms for Diocesan/ Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons. A Statement of Episcopal Commitment. • Revised June 2018 • United States Conference of Catholic Bishops	Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People
	• Originally issued in Summer 2002 after meeting of United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)
	• Contains US Catholic Bishops collective apology for the leadership failures associated with clergy abuse and articulates a commitment to confront the problem and to prevent future clergy abuse
	• Contains 17 articles that detail a comprehensive approach related to sexual abuse of minors in the US Catholic Church
	• Revised 4 times since its initial publication in 2002
	• Among other components establishes
	  - Lay advisory board, National Review Board
	  - Commits to regular auditing process and public reporting of compliance with 17 components
	Requires all dioceses to institute "safe environment" training for children and adults (including clergy, staff and volunteers) in church environment

1950 — THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF SEXUAL ABUSE OF MINORS BY CATHOLIC PRIESTS AND DEACONS IN THE UNITED STATES 1950-2002 — 2002. A RESEARCH STUDY CONDUCTED BY THE JOHN JAY COLLEGE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK • FEBRUARY 2004. FOR THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS. Washington. D.C.	Nature and Scope Study released 2004
	• Conducted by John Jay College of Criminal Justice at The City University of New York
	• Key Findings around the epidemiology of clergy sexual abuse between 1950 and 2002:
	  - Documented 10,667 minors known to have been abused by clergy in that 52 year period.
	  - Documented 4,392 priests and deacons who had credible allegations of clergy sexual abuse against them. This was out of a total of 109,694 clergy in ministry during those years (~4%).
	  - Majority of reports (44%) received between 2000 and 2002 with many demonstrating a 20 to 30 year lag time between abuse and reporting
	Cases peaked the end of 1960s and throughout 1970s with steady decline during 1980s and 1990s

THE CAUSES AND CONTEXT OF SEXUAL ABUSE OF MINORS BY CATHOLIC PRIESTS IN THE UNITED STATES, 1950-2010. A Report Presented to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops by the John Jay College Research Team. KAREN J. TERRY, PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR. MARGARET LELAND SMITH, DATA ANALYST. KATARINA SCHUTH O.S.F., CONSULTANT. JAMES R. KELLY, CONSULTANT. BRENDA VOLLMAN, RESEARCH ASSOCIATE. CHRISTINA MASSEY, RESEARCH ASSOCIATE	Causes and Context Study, released 2011
	• Conducted by John Jay College of Criminal Justice at The City University of New York
	• Key Findings around factors that led to the surge of abuse cases identified in Nature & Scope Study. Explored factors at:
	  - seminaries
	  - parish level
	  - society at large
	  - leadership level
	Recommended situation prevention efforts to create an environment where sexual abuse of minors by clergy or other adults would become more difficult to commit

2019 ANNUAL REPORT — FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS. JUNE 2020. SECRETARIAT OF CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION. NATIONAL REVIEW BOARD. UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS. Report on the Implementation of the CHARTER FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE	Audits (conducted annually since 2003)
	• 194 of 197 dioceses participated in the annual audit
	• Between July 1, 2018 and June 30, 2019, 4,434 allegations of abuse were reported by 4,220 victims/survivors of child sexual abuse by clergy from the 194 participating dioceses.
	  - Most were historical reports of now adults who reported past abuse when they were minors
	  - 37 of the 4, 434 allegations were by current minors
	    - 8 were substantiated
	    - 12 remained in investigation
	    - 7 were unsubstantiated
	    - 6 were indeterminate
	    - 3 were referred to a religious order and 1 to another diocese for investigation

Select Christian denominations' response and prevention efforts

In the early 2000s, Basyle Tchvidjian founded "Godly response to abuse in the Christian environment" (GRACE). As a former child abuse prosecutor and the grandson of Billy Graham, Tchividjian enlisted support from prominent experts in the field and across the faith community. GRACE conducted child abuse investigations at major Christian institutions, including Bob Jones University and New Tribes Mission. In addition to assessing past failures to address child abuse, GRACE launched an initiative called the "Safeguarding Initiative" which provides in-person training and direct assistance to churches in developing policies uniquely tailored to their ministries (48). GRACE's Safeguarding Initiative (www.netgrace.org/safeguarding-initiative) is a comprehensive process that includes:

- In-person, expert training for every level of the church: leadership, adults, youth, and children;
- Establishing a safeguarding team to help implement all policy "best practices" customized to the church's ministry;
- On-site building risk assessment;
- Implementing specific steps to create a healing environment for survivors.

In 2019, the Southern Baptist Convention launched an initiative called "Caring well," which includes free online training, a hiring guide for screening employees and volunteers, a listing of recognized training programs, and other resources (16). This report was commissioned by the President of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) to address the crisis of sexual abuse within its congregations. The report led to a "Caring Well" (https://caringwell.com/) initiative designed to provide education on child abuse, to assist congregations in implementing policies, and to address the spiritual needs of survivors of abuse. The report was published in 2019.

Table 2. Caring well

https://caringwell.com/

This report was commissioned by the President of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) to address the crisis of sexual abuse within its congregations. The report led to a "Caring Well" initiative designed to provide education on child abuse, to assist congregations in implementing policies, and to address the spiritual needs of survivors of abuse. The report was published in 2019.

❶ Commit
Commit to the Caring Well Challenge

❷ Build
Build a Caring Well Team to lead your church's effort

❸ Launch
Launch the Caring Well Challenge

❹ Train
Train your team

❺ Care
Equip leaders through *Becoming a Church that Cares Well for the Abused*

❻ Prepare
Enhance policies, procedures, and practices related to abuse

❼ Share
Dedicate Sunday services, on a date that works for your church, to address abuse

❽ Reflect
Reflect on the Caring Well Challenge

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the third largest Lutheran body in the United States, has developed a special ministry on child abuse called "Freedom for the Captives," a phrase drawn from the words of Jesus (Luke 4:18). The ministry includes a free online training as well as assistance to churches in receiving in-person training (49). The ministry has developed a number of resources to assist congregations not only in policy development but in ministering to the spiritual needs of abused children and adult survivors. Freedom for the Captives seeks to empower the Christian community to respond with excellence to the sin of child abuse. To this end, Freedom for the Captives: (https://freedomforcaptives.com/)

- Provides resources to pastors, teachers, and lay Christians that will deepen their understanding of child abuse and improve the Christian response to the physical, emotional and spiritual impact of maltreatment;
- Offers resources for survivors including recommended readings and guidance in selecting counseling or other services;
- Gives direct assistance to individual survivors who may have a spiritual question not addressed on the website or who need assistance in finding a counselor.

Victor Vieth, the Director of the Zero Abuse Project, offers a practical ten-step outline to faith-based organizations interested in developing and implementing policies to create a safe environment for children in their houses of worship (50):

1. Consult with at least one child abuse expert in developing policies.
2. Understand that insurance providers and some law firms have a vested interest in preventing future abuse as well as suppressing information about past abuse.
   a. Victims often want an explicit apology, and hearing only silence engenders anger and a sense that litigation is their only recourse.
   b. A thorough review of all potential abuse by an alleged perpetrator is essential in order to avoid overlooking other possible cases.
3. Limit the opportunity for sex offenders to access children through:
   a. Ensuring two-deep leadership; children should always be in the care of at least two church workers;
   b. Respecting the privacy of children and adolescents when in locker rooms, showers and restrooms;
   c. Separating sleeping accommodations for children and unrelated adults;
   d. Limiting or prohibiting events at workers' homes and, if these events are deemed necessary, implementing appropriate policies;
   e. Prohibiting employees and volunteers from wearing t-shirts or other apparel with sexually explicit language or images that may create opportunities for inappropriate sexual conversations or behaviors with or around youth;
   f. Prohibiting sexual jokes, comments and behaviors;
   g. Requiring windowed rooms and open doors, reinforcing that adults and children not be isolated or not visible to others;
   h. Prohibiting corporal punishment.
4. Conduct a background check and oral screening of workers and volunteers.
5. Teach personal safety to children in faith-based schools.
6. Don't investigate; report.

7. Develop church policies for sex offenders who wish to attend services or to join a congregation.
8. Be cognizant that some offenders are seeking "Cheap Grace:"
   a. Mouthing words of repentance may mask the manipulative intent of someone who seeks to take advantage of the church's desire to support those who are remorseful.
   b. Offenders must be willing to comply with accountability measures and appropriate notifications and safeguards to be permitted to be in the church environment.
9. Develop policies for responding to an allegation within a faith community.
10. Policies must be accompanied by training.

Each of these steps, when undertaken thoughtfully and with expert guidance, can help to ensure that faith-based organizations protect youth through education, transparency, planning, and policy-making.

Selected Jewish response and prevention efforts

Sacred Spaces was founded in 2016 to address issues of institutional abuse in Jewish communities across North America. Operating with a partnership rather than advocacy lens, Sacred Spaces supports Jewish institutions in developing comprehensive, culturally-specific, abuse prevention programs and in responsible and ethical handling of instances of abuse. In the Summer of 2017, "Institutional abuse in the Jewish Community" was published by The Rabbinical Council of America and explored three foundational categories of error in Jewish communal responses to reports of sexual abuse – psychological, legal, and *halakhic* (Jewish legal) – and provided recommendations for avoiding these common missteps (31). Also in 2017, a Jumpstart report focused on the state of child safety in Jewish Day Schools and summer camps noted that schools in particular lack robust training and comprehensive policies. In the spring of 2020, Sacred Spaces launched a cutting-edge child safeguarding initiative called Aleinu (www.AleinuCampaign.org), Hebrew for "It's on us," emphasizing the need for adults to take the lead in protecting children. By using an interactive web-platform, Aleinu minimizes costs to increase accessibility for individual institutions. Aleinu outlines ten best practices in child protection, providing step-by-step goals and resources for implementing them in Jewish communities, and provides participating organizations with a community of practice and biweekly office hours for expert consultation. Aleinu's Best Practices include:

- Form a child safety committee;
- Create opportunities for community dialogue;
- Screen employees and volunteers;
- Assess your space;
- Implement guidelines for interacting with youth;
- Train adults;
- Support victim-survivors;
- Develop protocols for responding;
- Empower youth;
- Maintain & evaluate your Child Safety Program (51).

Each best practice includes multiple user-friendly resources and opens with a Hebrew quote, framing that particular safeguard as a moral Jewish imperative. In addition, tools are tailored to provide specific, practical guidance within a framework of safeguarding and Jewish faith. For instance, Best Practice 2: Create Opportunities for Community Dialogue, includes Jewish text studies clergy can use to engage their congregations and root the work in Jewish values and tradition; Best Practice 8: Develop Protocols for Responding, includes rabbinic rulings addressing Jewish legal constructs (*halakhah*) that might hinder reporting, such as the prohibition against slander or the requirement to judge another Jew favorably. The online platform allows youth-serving organizations to extend their safeguarding work to virtual spaces to meet the challenges of increasing online programming for youth. In addition, in the spirit of ecumenism and sharing of best practices, two Christian organizations have begun to adapt some of Aleinu's resources (www.AleinuCampaign.org).

LOOKING FORWARD

Despite the profound need articulated at the outset of this chapter for more work to be done in confronting and eliminating child maltreatment in houses of worship, it is encouraging to see the range of efforts across faith traditions that have emerged from a concerted effort to address child maltreatment. Recognizing that houses of worship are indeed places where maltreatment occurs, we must remind ourselves and one another that the risk of "gaze aversion" remains. Coined by Krugman and Leventhal (52) in their description of society's general response to child maltreatment, gaze aversion is the intentional or inadvertent disregard of our moral imperative. "To directly look means tackling the problem head on, and that requires an effective" set of structures and response approaches "commensurate with the extent of the problem" (52). The approaches outlined in this chapter highlight faith-based communities' newfound willingness to look directly at the issue of child maltreatment, acknowledge its presence, and create the necessary tools to fight it.

Situational prevention approach

The content presented herein also demonstrates the relative complexity of this task, both within and across houses of worship, owing to faiths' varying traditions, worldviews, and governance structures. With such diverse organizational issues, embracing a paradigm that allows for broad application of principles to a set of varying contexts offers the most flexibility and pragmatism moving forward. Kaufman and colleagues (53-55) suggest such a paradigm, the Situational Prevention Approach, that focuses on refinements in children's environments. This approach is currently being modified and applied to YSOs that serve young elite athletes who are training and competing with the Olympic/Paralympic movement.

Situational Prevention strategies have also been explored by criminal justice scholars Terry and Ackerman in the context of the US Catholic Church (56). The components of the Situational Prevention approach have somewhat counterintuitive labels but are nonetheless promising in this field. The four components are: 1) increasing effort; 2) increasing risk; 3)

controlling prompts; and 4) reducing permissibility (56). Applying these four subcategories to the prevention of clergy sexual abuse produces these suggestions:

1) Increased effort (referring to reducing the opportunity for abuse): This component refers to increasing the effort an individual would need to expend in order to offend. It includes screening those with a known history or particular red flags as well as reducing situations where individuals will be alone with children.

2) Increasing risk (which means increasing the likelihood of detection): This step begins with education and training around risky situations as well as implementing policies and procedures that limit risk and enhance surveillance within the environment.

3) Controlling prompts (referring to identifying and removing situational triggers): This step reminds organizations to eliminate situations that may prompt an individual to offend, such as having access to an isolated area with a single child.

4) Reducing permissibility (which means enhancing accountability): This step teaches organizations to have codes of conduct that clarify clergy and adults' responsibilities, set clear rules, and clarify consequences for policy violations as well as for actual incidents of maltreatment (56).

These four components of the Situational Prevention model are general enough to be widely applicable and specific enough to guide action. Consistent with the various calls to implement safe environments in faith-based communities, this approach is worthy of further consideration. An overarching model guiding action can, over time, prompt additional improvements, with enough flexibility to allow for refinement.

Although the Situational Prevention model holds promise, this approach has its critics and is best viewed not as a panacea but as a first step. Given the need to also address physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect and other forms of maltreatment, as well as the need to address abuse in the home, we also include a broader approach in our recommendations below.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Faith communities can respond to the information contained in this chapter in a number of important ways. We have enumerated some of these steps below. While each of them is ultimately necessary, taking any first step may be the most difficult, so we encourage faith leaders to read the following recommendations and begin at the point that feels most immediately doable to you, committing to addressing additional suggestions gradually, ultimately leading to a safer environment for youth in your community.

Perhaps most broadly, faith communities must address and implement theological reform. Many faith communities overlook the significance of texts pertaining to children in each of the world's major religions (57). Equally important, faith leaders must analyze and apply these texts to instances of child maltreatment. Although there is some movement among theologians in this regard (58, 59), more can be done. A focus on the obligations towards children contained in sacred texts brings child protection to the forefront of the community's attention, making it an ongoing priority. Such analysis can also prove critical in addressing the spiritual needs of children and adult survivors, many of whom have profound questions about these writings.

Faith communities should create faith-specific initiatives to robustly support their institutions in safeguarding initiatives. The initiatives detailed above have begun to address abuse that may have seemed intractable at one time and can serve as inspiration to a wide range of traditions. Some faith structures include hierarchies, like the Catholic Church, through which large-scale change can be enacted. Less hierarchical systems may leave the protection of children and adolescents dependent on individual institutions, but programs like Aleinu can provide a manageable roadmap and critically needed support and fellowship for such communities.

Faith leaders can work across faith communities to learn from one another's efforts, building on successes and adapting to fit the unique culture, needs, and risks of each tradition. While significant theological differences exist between faith traditions, we also recognize many similarities in how faith communities discuss and respond to child maltreatment. The authors of this chapter have collaborated on such efforts, which can be replicated more broadly. In addition, houses of worship are implicitly YSOs, so innovations that emerge from YSO prevention work are likely applicable in faith-based environments.

Faith communities should be proactive in addressing the spiritual needs of maltreated children and adult survivors. Healing is a fundamental core value among most faith traditions. Prioritizing survivors means not only educating faith leaders about the spiritual impact of trauma, but teaching them how to deliver a trauma-informed sermon or Bible study as well as how to coordinate spiritual care with medical and mental health care (60, 61).

Child protection policies and safe environment training programs should focus on two areas: the risk of and harm from maltreatment within the faith-based environment AND the risk and harm related to maltreatment outside of the house of worship in the home, school, and community. An emphasis on protecting children only within the house of worship may have been a useful first step decades ago, but faith leaders and researchers in the field of abuse prevention now know more about maltreatment risk and harm. Simply stated, faith communities, which necessarily address the well-being of the whole person or family, should seek to address abuse in the home in all its forms, including sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect and witnessing domestic violence.

Faith-related institutions that prepare future spiritual leaders should implement undergraduate and graduate training that enables developing faith leaders to respond to all forms of victimization and to serve as community leaders in prevention. The national movement "Child Advocacy Studies" (CAST) has implemented intensive courses in 85 institutions of higher education (62). As of this writing, eight peer-reviewed studies have found that these courses dramatically improve the skills of professionals in responding to abuse (63). However, few faith-based institutions have implemented this reform and, as of this writing, only one seminary. The faith-based community is poised to lead others on this issue, and education of faith-based professionals as well as parishioners is a crucial step in this direction.

Faith communities can develop effective partnerships with child protection professionals, including Children's Advocacy Centers (CAC). Many abused children raise spiritual questions during the course of a child abuse investigation, and many CACs have developed loose connections with some faith leaders (64). Some CACs even partner with a full-time trauma-informed chaplain who advises child protection professionals in addressing the spiritual needs of abused children and their families (28). Joining this network and having partners on whom to call can advance faith-based organizations' prevention and response efforts.

Finally, faith leaders should improve their skills in ministering to sex offenders or other people who have harmed youth. Drawing on their belief in every individual's potential for repentance, many faith leaders have made harmful errors by permitting access to individuals with a known history of offending into their communities. Knowing more about sexual offending and risk, as well as coordinating spiritual care with a seasoned sex offender treatment provider, can play an important role in reducing the risk of re-offense and protecting and supporting all members of the community (65, 66).

In summary, this chapter calls for action to avoid the tendency to avert our gaze from the reality of child maltreatment in the faith-based setting. Such action requires an effective response to victims and survivors as well as prevention efforts to eliminate the harm before it ever happens.

In order to achieve both prevention and response, we must view the world through the lens of those who are hurting. Lutheran minister Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was executed by the Nazis because of his opposition to the government, called on the faith community to see the world "from below, from the perspective of the outcasts, the suspects, the maltreated, the powerless, the oppressed, the reviled, in short, from the perspective of the suffering" (67). Rabbi Avi Weiss writes, "The test of spirituality … is not how the community receives the most powerful, but how it welcomes the most vulnerable" (68). Faith leaders, regardless of faith tradition, are best poised to witness suffering and commit to reforms, engaging in the hard work necessary to make all houses of worship, and the communities that surround them, places of safety and healing for the children entrusted to their care. A path to this goal exists, as this chapter has demonstrated, and we encourage all faith leaders to begin walking that path in fellowship with one another and with their communities.

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