

# Preventing and Responding to Abuse in Ministry



**Southwestern Minnesota Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.



As we seek to protect children and vulnerable adults in the name of Christ, there are four things we must do:

1. Create guidelines or policies for Child Protection including:
  - appropriate boundaries between adults and youth
  - abuse prevention
  - clear procedure for high risk situations
2. Create a screening process for volunteers and staff
3. Provide training on how to prevent, identify and respond to/report abuse
4. Monitor and follow up on behavior

In this packet you will find recommended resources to help you protect others and the ministry through which you serve.

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## 1. Create Guidelines or Policies for Child Protection

See examples on synod website. [www.swmnelca.org](http://www.swmnelca.org)

## 2. Create a Screening Process for Volunteers and Staff

Screening processes will vary by congregation or ministry. Background checks will most likely be a part of that process. We recommend you perform the following searches:

- multi-state or national criminal search
- national sex offender search
- Social Security number validation
- name and address history
- alias search
- County Courthouse Criminal Search

If staff or volunteers are driving minors, a Motor Vehicle Registry record check is advised.

Include an application and interview in your screening process.

Recommended background check companies are listed in the recommended background check companies document which also provides education and training options. The companies will advise you through ministering to people whose background checks reveal history which limits their service in your congregation or organization. Use them as a resource.



### 3. Provide Training on How to Prevent, Identify and Respond to and Report Abuse

Training of this sensitive nature is complicated. You must be thorough in your education for the sake of kids, adults and the ministry through which you serve. While you may do in-person trainings led by a pastor, youth minister or resource person presenting their own material or sharing a DVD, it is increasingly difficult to provide comprehensive training to all the people you want to train. Scheduling conflicts and varying curriculum are factors. We recommend you use a trackable online training that people can complete on their own schedule which is reinforced by notetaking and a test.

#### Online training may be utilized many different ways.

- With online training, individuals participate in a class that uses video, powerpoint and interactive features. At the end the training they take a test to show what they have learned. Successful completion of training is reported to the congregation or ministry.
- You may want to ask individuals to do the online training within a 2 week window, then get the individuals together in person to address questions and concerns, lift up key points and go over congregation's/organization's reporting process.
- If you choose to do an in-person training, online training can be used for individuals who could not attend that training or for individuals you want to train mid-year.
- You may choose to use one of the following online trainings:
  - Safeguard from Abuse by Secure Search, documentary style video, 75 minutes
  - Child Safety Training by Protect My Ministry, moving powerpoint with voice narration, 90 minutes
  - Armatus Training, including a suite of courses by Praesidium, interactive training with embedded videos, typical course is 25 - 35 minutes

#### If you choose to do an in-person training, here are some resources:

- In person training led by pastor, youth minister or resource person
  - Design your own training
    - Resources:  
<https://www.childwelfare.gov>  
<http://www.stopitnow.org/learn>
    - You may also consider inviting someone from your county's child protection services to come speak to your group.
- In person training facilitated by pastor, youth minister or resource person, using a DVD
  - You may choose to use one of the following video trainings:
    - Safeguard from Abuse by Secure Search (DVD format, 75 minutes)
    - Safety Tips on a Sensitive Subject: Child Sexual Abuse by Church Mutual (DVD format, 14 minutes, free from Church Mutual) *More appropriate for council members than volunteers working with kids*



#### 4. Monitor and Follow Up on Behavior

Use what you've learned in training to monitor and follow up on behavior including:

- document and report suspicious behavior and abuse
  - contact your county's Child Welfare or Child Protection department
- communicate with your supervisors about red flags
- provide annual training for staff and volunteers
- repeat background checks every 3 years or when a person changes context of ministry



## **Recommended Background Check Companies which also Provide Education and Training Options**

*All of these companies will advise you on which checks to run based your risk tolerance and the state(s) of residence of the people being screened. They will also walk you through ministering to people whose background checks reveal history which limits their service in your congregation or organization.*

After thorough research The SW MN Synod has chosen to work with Safeguard From Abuse and SecureSearch to protect others and the ministry through which we serve. As resources are continually changing we invite you to decide which of the following companies would work best for your congregation/organization.

### **Safeguard From Abuse (training) and SecureSearch (background checks)**

*two companies, same owner*

[www.safeguardfromabuse.com](http://www.safeguardfromabuse.com) or [www.securesearchpro.com](http://www.securesearchpro.com)

- ELCA Rate for Background Check\*: \$11
- ELCA Rate for County Courthouse Search: \$8 (plus courthouse fees if any)
- ELCA Rate for Motor Vehicle Registry Record: \$5 plus state fee
- Additional searches available.
- ELCA Rate for Online video training, 75 minutes with test and certificate if passed: \$6
- ELCA Rate for Training DVD \$225 (if you want to watch the training in person with a group, you do not need to order this unless you want to)
- When ordering online, use "ELCA" as coupon code to receive ELCA discounts

\*Background Check includes multi state criminal search, national sex offender search, Social Security number validation, name and address history, alias/maiden name search (all names receive their own search)

### **Praesidium**

[www.praesidiuminc.com](http://www.praesidiuminc.com)

- ELCA Rate for Background Checks\*: \$15
- Armatus, online interactive reading training with embedded videos
  - \$500 one time setup fee plus \$15 per user per year
- Church Care, a comprehensive package of resources, specifically designed to keep your children, clergy, employees and volunteers safe. Prices based on congregation/organization size. Church Care includes:
  - Know Your Score Online Self-Assessment
  - Armatus eLearning library of courses
  - Model Abuse Prevention Policies
  - Screening and Selection Tool Kit
  - Telephone Helpline
  - Crisis Management
  - Criminal Background Check Package

\*Background Check includes multi state criminal records search, national sex offender search, Social Security number validation, name and address history and alias search.

### **Protect My Ministry**

[www.protectmyministry.com](http://www.protectmyministry.com)

- ELCA Rate for Background Checks:
  - Basic Package\* \$8-10 plus \$39 one time enrollment fee (use this if you want to do background checks without Child Safety Training)
  - Plus Package\*\* \$16-20 plus \$39 one time enrollment fee (use this if you want to do background checks without Child Safety Training)
- Yearly ELCA Rate for unlimited Child Safety Trainings (online moving power point training with voice narration, 90 minutes with test and certificate if passed): \$149, no enrollment fee
  - Background checks are purchased individually in addition to the \$149 fee for unlimited Child Safety Training.
- ELCA Rate for Motor Vehicle Registry Record: \$5 per state plus state fees if any

\*Basic Background Check includes Social Security verification and address history, national criminal database search with re-verification of positive records, national sex offender registry search

\*Plus Package Background Check includes Social Security verification and address history, national criminal database search with re-verification of positive records, national sex offender registry search PLUS one county or statewide court search (some counties charge additional fees)