



**CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE**

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GUIDELINE FOR ESTABLISHING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR  
PROTECTING MINORS AND PREVENTING SEXUAL MISCONDUCT.

**NAZARENE**  **SAFE** <sup>TM</sup>  
Creating a safe environment  
for God's family

**[www.nazarenesafe.org](http://www.nazarenesafe.org)**



## DISCLAIMER

The purpose of this publication is to raise abuse awareness and provide a resource for developing appropriate guidelines and procedures for protecting minors and preventing sexual misconduct in the church.

As relevant laws vary, districts and local churches are responsible for ensuring compliance with the specific legal requirements for their locality and situation. NazareneSafe™ resources are made available as a starting point only. The resources NazareneSafe™ provides are not warranted to comply with the legal requirements of any particular state or locale and are not intended to be used “as is” without appropriate adaptation to ensure material compliance with applicable law.

The *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene* states that the business of the local church board shall be: “To adopt and implement a plan to reduce the risk that individuals placed in positions of authority within the church will use the position of trust or authority to engage in misconduct. The plan for each local church must take into consideration its own unique circumstances” (Paragraph 129.30).

## An Important Message to All Local Church Leadership

The mission of the Church of the Nazarene that drives everything we do is to make Christlike disciples in the nations. We recognize that in order to fulfill this mission, the discipling ministries of our local churches must take place in safe and nurturing environments that strive to protect all of God’s family from harm, especially those who are most vulnerable.

We understand that no dynamic community of faith seriously engaged in this mission can ever be fully insulated against the scourge of sexual misconduct with minors. Despite the inescapable reality of evil, we recognize that He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world.

Creating this safe environment requires awareness, diligence, and monitoring on a consistent and systematic basis. With an even greater commitment to the mission, we must develop sound policies and preventative practices which, when earnestly and vigilantly enforced, offer the best protection possible to the most vulnerable among us.

To that end, we strongly urge all local churches to adopt and implement the policies and procedures presented here and in the additional resources available through Nazarene Safe.

### **ZERO TOLERANCE OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT WITH MINORS**

The Church of the Nazarene has adopted a zero tolerance policy for sexual misconduct and inappropriate behavior with minors. All workers, leaders, and pastoral staff are to be above reproach in their conduct and to act in the best interest of others. This requires not only that they themselves refrain from engaging in any abusive or suspicious behavior involving minors; they will also be required to report without delay to the proper authorities anyone seen engaging in such behavior.

—The Board of General Superintendents



## Dear Pastors and Ministry Leaders:

God calls us to make our churches places where everyone is protected from abuse and can experience the love of God through healthy relationships. The Church of the Nazarene is committed to zero tolerance of sexual misconduct with minors, with the goal of eliminating every such hindrance to the Holy Spirit's transforming work. Nazarene Safe™ was created to make that goal a reality.

Nazarene Safe™ is your portal to valuable information, tools, and educational materials. With the Nazarene Safe™ system, churches of every size can establish an effective prevention program, implementing proven guidelines and practical procedures tailored to their specific needs. Nazarene Safe™ offers access to video training for staff and volunteers. Churches using the Nazarene Safe™ system will enhance their ability to recognize potential victims and abusers quickly, to respond appropriately, and to report confidently.

Our desire is that implementing these procedures will not be burdensome and that you will find the added assurance well worth your investment in our most precious resource of all. May God bless your efforts in protecting those entrusted to your care.

Serving Him together,

Leslie M. Hart, Global Director

NAZARENE SAFE™ AND CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

"Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2).



# Understanding Sexual Misconduct

While all abuse is harmful, the impact of sexual misconduct involving minors is particularly devastating, far-reaching, and long-lasting. You may be thinking, “Sexual abuse could never happen in our church.” When it comes to sexual abuse, what we don’t know can hurt us. Worse yet, our stereotypes and misconceptions can be tragically harmful. The problem cuts across all lines: economic, cultural, racial, denominational, and gender. According to child protective service agencies:

- 1 in 3 girls and 1 in 5 boys will be sexually abused by the age of 18.
- Over 80 percent of sexual abuse of minors is perpetrated by a known and trusted person.
- Approximately 20 percent of reported sexual abuse cases involve a female perpetrator.

Although no standard “sexual abuser profile” exists, abusers are usually perceived as genuinely “nice” people that most would never suspect of sexual misconduct. A recent survey of registered sex offenders reveals the average sexual abuser to be well-educated and *active in church*.

The problem is real, and we clearly need to do something. But what?

The terms “sexual abuse,” “sexual misconduct,” “inappropriate sexual behavior,” and “inappropriate sexual conduct” are often used interchangeably. The terms themselves do not make a distinction between prohibited sexual activity between adults and prohibited activity between adults and minors.

Since our focus here is on bringing greater clarity to the issue of protecting minors from sexual exploitation, the phrase “**sexual misconduct**” is used here as an umbrella term for all sexual misconduct involving minors, defined as follows:

**Sexual misconduct shall be understood to mean any sexual activity between an adult and a minor or between minors with significant developmental or chronological differences. Sexual misconduct can be physical, verbal, or visual and need not involve penetration, sexual intercourse, or actual physical contact. However, sexual misconduct does not include acts intended for a valid medical purpose or age-appropriate caregiver interactions without a sexual purpose or sexual component.**

Consult local laws for a comprehensive list of prohibited acts, and be certain to include those definitions in your church’s documents.





## Creating Nazarene Safe™ Churches A Systematic Approach

We believe the best protection comes from effective prevention that is proactive and systematic. The best way to avoid a tragic incident is to implement proven practices *before* the incident occurs. Proactive, systematic, effective . . . that's the Nazarene Safe™ approach. Prevention is our best protection.

Three components must exist before sexual misconduct occurs: motive, ability, and opportunity. Removing any one of these three can prevent a tragedy. The one factor we can control is opportunity. Awareness and action can eliminate the opportunities created by ignorance and apathy.

It is recommended that immediate measures be taken by Nazarene churches to implement an effective sexual misconduct prevention system. Nazarene Safe™ models such a system. With components that can be tailored to the needs of your local church in your town and your setting, Nazarene Safe™ provides an effective framework built upon five key elements:

- Awareness Training
- Staff and Volunteer Screening
- Policies, Procedures, and Practices
- Accountability: Monitoring and Evaluation
- Reporting and Responding



## Additional Nazarene Safe™ System Defined Terms

Consult local authority for definitions specific to your location, and be certain to include those definitions in your church's documents.

**Adult** – any person 18 years or older.

**Minor** – any person birth up to 18 years.

**Child** – any person birth through 6th grade.

**Adolescent/Youth** – any person in grades 7-12 and under 18 years old.

**Vulnerable Adult** – any adult with developmental disabilities, physical impairments, or learning disabilities, or who cannot protect himself/herself.

**Church Leader** – a pastor or member of the church board.

**Staff Member** – any pastor or layperson employed by the church in any capacity, full- or part-time, and persons performing regular, compensable work for which they choose to receive nominal or no monetary compensation.

**Volunteer Children's/Youth Worker** – any person involved in programs or activities serving children or youth who is not monetarily compensated for services. References to “volunteer” in this booklet shall be understood to mean volunteers working with children/youth and not volunteers in general (e.g., adult choir members).

**Sexual Grooming** – behavior that increases a minor's susceptibility to sexual misconduct or reduces the likelihood of reporting. It includes anything that weakens a person's resistance to exploitation or manipulation, or interferes with the ability to say “no.”







# Components of the Nazarene Safe™ System

## I. AWARENESS TRAINING

The pastor and church leaders can help reduce the risk of sexual misconduct by raising and maintaining an appropriate level of awareness within their church. Resources designed for this purpose can be found through [www.nazarenesafe.org](http://www.nazarenesafe.org).

Reducing the risk of sexual misconduct requires effective training. Raising awareness provides a foundation for the culture of safety needed in each local church. There is no visual profile for sexual abusers. They look like average persons. Since no one can recognize a sexual abuser visually, staff members and volunteers must understand how abusers create and exploit opportunities for abuse through the sexual grooming process, keeping in mind that sexual grooming behaviors target both caregivers and potential victims. The goal of these behaviors is to lower defenses and increase opportunities to engage in sexual misconduct.

While providing awareness training is important, making it mandatory for all staff members and volunteers could increase its preventative impact significantly. The fact that it is required of all applicants puts potential abusers on notice that staff members and volunteers are trained to recognize their tactics. This can serve as a powerful deterrent to abuse and lay a strong foundation for creating a safe church.

## II. STAFF AND VOLUNTEER SCREENING

Screening all staff members and volunteers can reduce the risk of sexual misconduct. As with awareness training, the benefit is two-fold. Screening can yield evidence of prior misconduct or raise flags that can lead to rejection of the application. Additionally, the fear of being discovered through screening can lead potential abusers to “select out” of consideration for ministry in order to avoid the closer scrutiny generated by an effective screening program. Effective screening should include the following components:

**Waiting Period**

**Written Ministry Application**

**Valid References**

**Criminal Background Check**

**Formal Interview**

**Mandatory Training**

**Documented Personnel File**

**Confidentiality**

Legal requirements regarding privacy, appropriate subjects of inquiry, and release of information vary. Consult local counsel and your church insurance provider for best practices in your area.

## III. POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND PRACTICES FOR WORKING WITH MINORS

Although detailed policies, procedures, and practices are beyond the scope of this booklet, samples are available through Nazarene Safe™. Local churches are encouraged to tailor these resources to create their own church safety manual. The following components are recommended:

**Definitions**

**Written Job Descriptions**

**Identification (name tags)**

**Check-in and Release Procedures**

**Child-to-Worker Ratios**

**One-on-One Counseling Procedures**





Overnight Supervision  
 Classroom Supervision  
 Handling Privacy Concerns  
 Restroom Procedures  
 Visibility  
 Two-Person Rule  
 Appropriate Touch  
 Transportation  
 Training  
 Reporting  
 Supervisory Practices

#### IV. ACCOUNTABILITY: MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Systematic accountability is crucial to maintaining the integrity of the Nazarene Safe™ system long term. The goal is to deny potential abusers opportunity. All ministries, activities, programs, and personnel involved with minors should be monitored on an ongoing basis and evaluated regularly.

##### Monitoring

Monitoring should be an intentional feature of all ministries involving minors.

Attendance by church leaders at children's and youth activities can serve to increase compliance with safety guidelines.

Departmental leaders should be encouraged to monitor classroom ratios, supervision, and compliance with safety guidelines through periodic and unannounced visits.

Monitoring reports can be helpful for training and performance reviews.

##### Evaluation

Evaluation and training for all volunteers and staff members should be conducted annually. Training should include a review of the effectiveness of existing policies, procedures, and practices and discussion of proposed additions or modifications.

Compliance with safety policies, procedures, and practices should be a part of all performance reviews.

Intentional monitoring and evaluation encourage safe practices and can decrease opportunity for sexual misconduct.

#### V. REPORTING AND RESPONDING

##### Reporting Sexual Misconduct

State law governs all aspects of sexual misconduct involving minors, including reporting requirements and penalties for failure to report. Church leaders should publish and distribute to all staff members and volunteers current state and local reporting requirements, defining the criteria for reporting (who, what, when, where, and how), as well as state agency contact information.

Incidents reported to local and/or state agencies or law enforcement should also be immediately reported in writing to:

- Senior pastor and local church board secretary of each church involved
- District superintendent of each district involved
- The General Secretary of the Church of the Nazarene
- The Board of General Superintendents
- The dean of students (if a Nazarene university is involved)

All church leaders, staff members, and volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of church policies regarding sexual misconduct. Violations of these policies or failure to enforce them diligently shall be grounds for immediate removal, dismissal, or other disciplinary action. All allegations of sexual misconduct must be taken seriously and handled

forthrightly, with due respect for privacy, confidentiality, and due process of law.

### **Responding to Allegations**

Responding to allegations of abuse is never easy. The atmosphere is always emotionally charged, and important procedures can be overlooked. The most appropriate and effective response is therefore the one planned in advance.

For everyone's protection, once an allegation of sexual misconduct has been made, the alleged abuser should be immediately relieved of all duties involving minors and insulated from further contact with the alleged victim or the alleged victim's family pending the outcome of a thorough investigation. Conversations and contacts with witnesses as well as the alleged victim and alleged abuser should be documented and preferably recorded on video/audio.

How the church responds to an incident is crucial. The response can initiate healing or cause further damage. Care and protection of the alleged victim and prayer and accountability for the alleged abuser are important components to a healthy Christian response.

**Response to the alleged victim:** Take allegations seriously. The care and safety of the alleged victim is top priority. Protect confidentiality to the degree possible.

**Response to the alleged abuser:** The accused should be relieved of all responsibilities involving minors promptly and respectfully, protecting confidentiality to the degree possible.

**Response to the congregation:** Respond to the congregation by reading from a prepared, written statement without revealing details or identities. Assist the congregation in dealing with the crisis through support groups, individual counseling, and/or parent meetings.

**Response to the media:** Appoint a designated spokesperson as named by the church board. This spokesperson should speak from a prepared written statement on behalf of the church to the media.

The congregation should be made aware that all inquiries by the media should be directed to the media spokesperson.

**Response to the minors:** Gently affirm and rebuild trust by responding to questions while maintaining confidences and addressing the need for counseling.

Recommended guidelines for handling allegations of sexual misconduct can be found through Nazarene Safe™. Local churches and districts are encouraged to acquire the necessary tools and training for handling incidents of sexual misconduct prior to encountering an actual incident.

Churches should consult their insurance carrier, local law enforcement, and legal counsel for guidance when developing policies and procedures. E-mail questions and concerns to [nazarenesafe@nazarene.org](mailto:nazarenesafe@nazarene.org), or call 913.577.0700, extension 2823.

