

# **Big Bundle of Helpful Handouts from The Sexual Ethics and Boundaries Committee**

These Handouts are meant to be helpful advice. They are not legally binding.

# When and How do I report Child Abuse?

Everyone including Pastors and church staff in all states inside Holston Conference are required to report suspected child abuse. This does not mean you have absolute proof. If you have reason to suspect child abuse you are required to report it.

## What is child abuse?

**Physical abuse** (bruising, slapping punching, etc)

**Mental abuse** (child lives in constant fear),

**Sexual abuse**

**Neglect** (lack of food, water, shelter, or clothing).

**What if others are already reporting the case?** You are still required to report. Often it takes multiple people reporting abuse to save a child.

**What if the law or other groups are already involved?** You are still required to report.

## Signs of child abuse:

- **Physical signs:** Bruising, broken bones, unexplained marks, or bleeding
- **Behavioral changes:** Aggression, withdrawal, hyperactivity, or changes in sleep
- **Emotional signs:** Depression, anxiety, fear, or low self-esteem
- **School problems:** Frequent absences or changes in performance
- **Medical concerns:** Untreated medical or dental problems, or unexplained pain
- **Signs of neglect:** Lack of food, clothing, shelter, or education

**How to report:** (Some surrounding states included in case the child lives there.)

**Alabama:** Reporting is handled on the county level. All the info can be found at <https://dhr.alabama.gov/county-office-contact/>

**Georgia:** Call the DFCS centralized intake at 1-855-GACHILD (1-855-422-4453)

**Tennessee:** Call the Tennessee Department of Children's Services at (877) 237-0004

**Virginia:** Call the Virginia Department of Social Services' 24-hour, CPS Hotline at (800) 552-7096

**West Virginia:** Call the West Virginia Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at (800) 352-6513

## What else do I need to know?

- You have 24 or 48 hours to report depending on the state.
- Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, and West Virginia: Ministers are required to report all suspected child abuse. Reporting makes you immune to civil and criminal prosecution. You can also report anonymously, but make sure to get a case number.. Failure to report abuse is a Class A misdemeanor.
- Virginia: Ministers are required to report suspected child abuse unless it is a case where confidentiality is required by their denomination. This may not include United Methodists. DON'T BE A TEST CASE. It is better to report.
- The Discipline requires compliance with local laws regarding child abuse.
- YOU CAN REPORT ANONYMOUSLY. Make sure you get a case number. Also be aware that sometimes case workers have revealed who reported.

## Welcoming a Woman Pastor

A great resource for welcoming a female pastor is found at <https://www.welcomingawomanpastor.org> This was put together by the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women.

Here is a sample from that website:

### WELCOMING A WOMAN PASTOR

#### Clergy Transition Checklist

##### ☐ Prepare Your Congregation and Both Clergy for Day One

Initiate a conversation with the incoming clergy well before they arrive. While they may be eagerly anticipating a new appointment, they may also have concerns or anxiety about integrating into a new congregation or community. A proactive dialogue by everyone involved in the appointment process can help ease concerns or challenges and assist with their orientation. This is especially important when a relocation is involved. Having persons familiar with the community to provide information on local resources is important. Outgoing clergy and the district superintendent can lead these discussions.

S/PPRC should prepare the congregation for the departure of their current pastor by hosting a reception or another way to say thank you. Helping the congregation prepare for the departure of their current pastor is needed. This person may be well-loved, and their plans to move to another congregation may be upsetting to some.

##### ☐ Acclimate Your Incoming Pastor

First impressions count. The first-day experience in a new congregation sets the tone for much of a new clergyperson's tenure. Lead an office and facility tour. The first day in a new position can be disorienting, especially if the clergyperson does not know the congregants. One way to welcome your new pastor is for a member of the S/PPRC or the staff to begin by familiarizing your new pastor with the office and facilities and introducing them to other team members and ministry leaders along the way. Seek feedback. End the first day by asking what went well and what could have been better. Invite outstanding questions or concerns, too.

##### ☐ Provide Your New Pastor with a Mentor... or Two

During their new pastor's first few weeks, S/PPRC members should spend quality time helping the incoming pastor get settled into their new role. Connect with them to show that leaders and other members are invested in their role as pastors. Showing support early will help acclimate the incoming clergyperson with knowing who they should connect with on various matters, such as who the lay leaders are for areas of ministry, who the staff is, what roles different leaders play, etc.

#### Tips for Success

Schedule a team lunch. Gather for a meal outside the church environment to allow new clergy to feel comfortable getting to know their colleagues. Rely on seasoned team members who are valuable resources as a new pastor assimilates to the team's cadence and church culture.

Plan one-on-one introductions for all staff with whom the pastor will work. Host introductory meetings during the first week. Incoming clergy should also schedule meetings with the congregation's leadership to help them begin learning the congregation's primary concerns and needs.

Engage a mentor. New pastors will gain more value when able to seek mentoring relationships outside the congregation. This is especially helpful when there is a relocation involved.

## **What can a Male Pastor do to help a Church Transition to Female Pastor?**

This was put together by the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women.

<https://www.welcomingawomanpastor.org/#/lessons/H6gx5tbQzU1U9NLM0DvLY3sAomIL5s2S>

### **Keep the Cross Central:**

Changes in pastoral leadership often expose existing fault lines within a congregation, so make the cross central in your words and witness. Most members will probably be excited to receive a woman pastor, and some members may be anxious about the “new thing” the church is about to experience. Yet every person will no doubt benefit from being reminded that they should pattern their lives after the cross as their new pastor comes on board.

### **Talk about a call to pastor ministry:**

Tell, or retell, the story of your own call to pastoral ministry. As God called you in the mystery of God’s electing work, so God has called their new pastor. The presence of a woman pastor in their midst can be sacramental, “an outward and visible sign” to the church and larger community that God is creating a new community led by both women and men.

### **Speak positively of your successor:**

Encourage people to regard their new pastor as a “steward of the mysteries of Christ” (I Cor. 4:1).

Assure them that the ‘charism’ of preaching and pastoral care will be enriched as she and other women wear the mantle of pastoral leadership in generations to come.

### **Rejoice in your successors gifts:**

While worldly categories which divide people should not be granted favored status in the church, rejoice publicly in the different gifts and presence that your successor will bring to the church. How good that her faith and gifts will be embodied within her life as a woman!

### **Address concerns:**

Give voice to any concerns, whether spoken or unspoken. Speak to them from the pulpit and address them in your conversations.

### **Pray for her:**

Pray for her by name every Sunday in worship. Pray, too, for her family. Place their names prominently in any circulated prayer list.

### **Meet and share information:**

Meet with her in person and/or online several times before the move. Share any information with her that will be helpful in her first months, without breaking confidence. Welcome any assistance your bishop or cabinet may offer.

### **Lead worship together:**

If logistically possible, invite her to come to your church and to participate with you in leading one of your final worship services. If she can be present, consider using “An Order of Farewell to a Pastor” in The United Methodist Book of Worship (p. 598) and including her in some fitting way. For example, the lay leader can remove your stole from your shoulders and place it on hers. Such a symbolic act can be beautiful and powerful in the eyes of those who are present that day.

## How to do a Background Check

There are a lot of places to get background checks done online. Expect to pay less if you do a bunch at once.

What they verify:

- **Criminal Records:** Check for arrests, convictions, and other legal issues.
- **Employment History:** Verify dates of employment, job titles, and sometimes provide reference checks.
- **Education:** Confirm the legitimacy of degrees and certifications.
- **Reference Checks:** Contact individuals who can provide information about the candidate's character and work ethic.
- **Identity Verification:** Confirm the candidate's identity and address.

Why they're used:

- **Hiring Decisions:** Help employers make informed choices about who to hire.
- **Safety and Security:** Protect employers and their employees by verifying the background of those they work with.
- **Compliance:** Ensure compliance with Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) and other relevant regulations.

Some popular services:

- **HireRight:** A global provider of background screening solutions, offering various packages and services.
- **GoodHire:** A popular service for employers and individuals, offering a variety of background check options.
- **First Advantage:** Known for its comprehensive background screening solutions and global reach.
- **Sterling:** Offers a range of background screening services, including global solutions and verticalized approaches.
- **DISA Global Solutions:** Provides a wide range of background screening services, including criminal record checks and employment verifications.

Looking up Sexual Offenders:

Almost every state lists Sexual Offenders in a public database. Often you can just look up your town and sexual offenders and get a lot of information. However this does not count as a full background check. I recommend looking up sexual offender databases in addition to a background check.

## **Domestic Violence Help Services in Holston Conference as of April 2025**

### **Notes:**

- **You do not have to live in the service area of a domestic violence shelter to get help from them. Sometimes a victim may be better served by a different shelter.**
- **If you are helping a victim of domestic violence, the program will not want to meet you at their shelter. They will likely want to meet you at a neutral location and then take the victim to the shelter from there.**
- **Counseling an abuser is a process that takes years to see positive changes (if any). Many pastors have attempted counseling with disastrous results.**
- **Most domestic violence Help Services are happy to answer questions.**

### **Southwest Virginia Domestic Violence Help Services**

Abuse Alternatives  
104 Memorial Drive  
Bristol, TN 37620  
Hotline: 8009876499  
TTY: 4236529750  
Email: abalter1@preffered.com

Amherst County Commission Against Domestic Violence  
P.O. Box 1157  
Amherst, VA 245211157  
Hotline: 8008388238  
Email: nancy\_frmr@yahoo.com

Bedford Domestic Violence Services  
580 Grove Street  
P.O. Box 783  
Bedford, VA 24523  
24Hour Hotline: (540) 5870970  
Toll Free 18776561984  
Email: BDVS@co.bedford.va.us  
Web site: www.co.bedford.va.us

Domestic Violence Emergency Services (DOVES)  
P.O. Box 2381  
Danville, VA 24541  
Hotline: 8884036837  
TTY: 4347911400  
Email: doves@dancom.com

Family Crisis Services  
P.O. Box 188  
North Tazewell, VA 24630  
Hotline: 8003909484

TTY: 2769885583  
Email: jennifer@netscope.net

Family Crisis Support Services  
701 Kentucky Avenue, SE  
Norton, VA 24273  
Hotline: 8005722278  
TTY: 8005722278  
Email: fcssh@yahoo.com

Family Resource Center, Inc.  
P.O. Box 612  
Wytheville, VA 24382  
Hotline: 8006136145  
TTY: 8006136145  
Email: family@frcinc.org  
Web: <http://www.frcinc.org>

Franklin County Family Resource Center  
P.O. Box 188  
Rocky Mount, VA 24151  
Hotline: 5404831234  
TTY: 5404831234  
Email: frcct@cablenetva.com  
<http://www.franklincountyva.org/shelter>

Hope House of Scott County  
P.O. Box 1992  
Gate City, VA 24251  
Hotline: 8882504325  
TTY: 2763861373  
Email: dvhope@earthlink.net  
Web: <http://www.hopehousescottcounty.org>

People, Inc.'s Domestic Violence Program

Route 4  
Post Office Box 220  
Lebanon, Virginia 24266  
Hotline: 8776979444  
TTY: 2766979444

Women's Resource Center of the New River

Valley  
P.O. Box 477  
Radford, VA 24143  
Hotline: 5406391123  
TTY: 5406392197  
Email: [director@wrcnrv.org](mailto:director@wrcnrv.org)  
Web: <http://www.wrcnrv.org>

### **East Tennessee Domestic Violence Help Services**

Abuse Alternatives (423) 652-9093  
(423) 764-2287 or  
(800) 987-6499 Bristol (TN)  
Bristol (VA), Sullivan, Washington (VA)

Avalon Center on Domestic & Sexual Violence  
(931) 456-0747 (800) 641-3434

Bledsoe, Cumberland, Fentress, Morgan, Rhea,  
Roane, Van Buren

East Branch House (423) 574-7233

East Bristol Crisis Center (276) 466-2218 (800)  
273-8255 Bristol, Sullivan, Washington

Change is Possible (CHIPS)

Family Violence Shelter (423) 743-0022 (423) 388-8281

Carter, Greene, Unicoi

ChildHelp Children's Center of East TN  
(865) 637-1753 (800) 422-4453

Knox

Community Health of East  
Tennessee (423) 562-8325 (423) 562-8325  
Campbell

Crisis Center for Women -

IVAS (865) 258-9041 (866) 239-0871

Anderson, Knox, Loudon, Moore, Monroe, Roane

Family Justice Center

Johnson City (423) 722-3720

Washington

East Family Resource Agency (423) 479-9339  
(423) 476-3886

Bradley, Polk, Rhea

Frontier Health SAFE

House (844) 578-7233 (844) 578-7233

Carter, Greene, Hancock, Hawkins, Johnson,  
Sullivan, Unicoi, Washington VA-Lee, Scott, Wise,  
and the City of Norton

East Haven House (865) 983-6818 (865) 982-1087  
Blount, Knox, Monroe

Helen Ross McNabb

Family Crisis Center (865) 363-2035 (865) 637-8000 Knox

East The H.O.P.E Center (423) 744-0599 (423)  
745-5289

Bradley, Meigs, McMinn, Monore

Johnson County Safe

Haven (423) 727-1925 (423) 727-1914

Johnson

Knoxville YWCA Victim Advocacy Program

(865) 523-6126 (865) 523-6126

Anderson, Knox

Knoxville Area Rescue Ministries Serenity Shelter Partnership for Families, Children, & Adults

(865) 673-6540

Knox

(423) 755-2822 (423) 755-2700

Hamilton, Marion

East Safe Passage

Knoxville Family Justice Center (865) 521-6336

(865) 521-6336

Knox

(423) 232-8920 (423) 926-7233

Carter, Greene, Washington

Knoxville Salvation Army Women's Shelter

(865) 525-9401 x106

Knox

Safe Space of East Tennessee (865) 453-9254 (800) 244-5968

Cocke, Grainger, Hamblin, Jefferson, Sevier

Scott County Shelter Society

(423) 569-3355 (423) 569-3333

Campbell, Fentress, Morgan, McCreary (KY),  
Scott

The Power and Control Wheels are an important way sociologists understand abuse. This is also known as the Duluth Model. Abusers often think love is control. When they listen to sermons they do not understand love to be sacrificial. All abuse from school bullying to domestic violence is about the abuser trying to gain power and control over the victim.



This is a Wheel that is the opposite of the Power and Control Wheel for use in churches. It is the property of the Duluth Model.

