



DOMESTIC ABUSE CHURCH POLICY

Review this policy locally for current law, reporting contacts, and church governance procedures.

1. Purpose and conviction

Our church has created this domestic abuse policy to protect intimate partners, children, and others residing in the homes of our church members and attendees when domestic abuse occurs within those homes.

Our church recognizes domestic abuse as a grave sin and an assault on the image of God in another person. Abuse is never justified and is never the victim's fault. We will respond with compassion, wisdom, confidentiality within its lawful limits, and a commitment to safety.

Domestic abuse, which can be used interchangeably with the term “domestic violence,” is pervasive in our culture. 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men have experienced domestic abuse in their lifetime. Domestic abuse is just as likely to exist in our church as it is in the culture outside the church, so we must be on alert.

Domestic abuse is a pattern of intentionally misusing power - openly or covertly, through words or actions - to control, manipulate, intimidate, or gratify oneself at another's expense. It may be physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, economic, psychological, or spiritual. It is not merely an anger issue, a relationship problem, or a private matter.

2. Church commitments

- We will prioritize the immediate safety of adults, children, and other vulnerable persons over reconciliation or confrontation.
- We will offer practical support as desired, including help connecting with trained advocates, professional trauma-informed counseling, and legal or community resources.
- We will honor privacy, while explaining that confidentiality has limits when safety concerns or reporting obligations apply.
- We will train pastors, staff, deacons, and lay leaders to recognize and respond appropriately to domestic abuse.
- We will consult qualified professionals and cooperate with law enforcement when appropriate or required by law.
- We will address abusive conduct through church discipline, up to and including removal from membership when there is no genuine repentance.

3. Initial response to a disclosure

- Listen without demanding proof, minimize neither the harm nor the risk, and avoid blaming, pressuring, or promising outcomes you cannot guarantee.
- Ask whether the person or anyone else is in immediate danger. If so, call 911 or seek emergency assistance.
- Ask before taking non-emergency steps. Do not contact or confront an alleged abuser until the survivor's safety has been established and any law-enforcement considerations have been addressed.

- Document the disclosure, actions taken, and safety concerns factually; keep records secure and share them only with those who need to know.
- Promptly involve the designated church care leader or other appropriate personnel, with the survivor's knowledge whenever possible.

4. Safety, reporting, and outside support

The church does not have the authority or capacity to investigate allegations of abuse. It will consult competent professionals and support survivors in seeking legal remedies if they choose. Any person who believes a child, disabled adult, or elder adult is being abused, neglected, or exploited must follow applicable reporting law and the church's Vulnerable Persons Policy. When in doubt, report and seek professional guidance. A church supervisor may make a tandem report where permitted, but this support does not prevent any person from reporting directly.

5. Care for survivors

- Safety planning, housing, transportation, advocacy, and other practical help should be offered according to the survivor's wishes and circumstances. (A Domestic Kindness Resource Team or representative at your church can help with this.)
- Counseling for a survivor should be individual and trauma-informed. Marriage or relationship counseling is not an appropriate first response to ongoing abuse.
- The church will make referrals to domestic-violence advocates, licensed counseling, legal resources, and emergency services as needed.
- No one will be pressured to remain in danger, reconcile, forgive, or meet with an alleged abuser.

6. Accountability and reconciliation

The church will confront abusive behavior only after safety is established, at the survivor's request, and in coordination with law enforcement when involved. An alleged abuser may be offered individual, professional counseling and accountability focused on power, control, entitlement, and genuine repentance. Apparent remorse is not proof of change; repentance must be assessed over time through sustained, observable conduct.

Reconciliation with God is necessary. Reconciliation with a spouse is not required and will not be considered unless the survivor's safety circumstances support it. We will not require that a victim choose to either leave an abuser or remain with an abuser.

7. Key resources

- Emergency: 911
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-7233
- Domestic Kindness: 909-335-0339
- Church Cares Ministry: 919-233-9100