



E-Quipped for Prevention

July 2014:
Building Relationships

Resources for Learning and Growth

Why Building Relationships is Important

Cherish Our Children asks congregations to consider more deeply the concerns of young people in the broader community by building relationships with other organizations, coalitions, or networks that work to prevent child sexual exploitation.

When synods and congregations build relationships with other organizations, it lets others in the community know that the church wants to be proactive in prevention. Building relationships also gets congregations in touch with the needs of the community and makes the work of the congregation relevant to the community. For those who do not trust churches because of past abuse cover-up scandals, this can help us begin to build bridges of trust within our communities and encourage individual congregations to take seriously their role as protector of children's well-being.

Building relationships can also enhance the current ministries of congregations because outside organizations may be a source of educational and service opportunities, may provide expertise needed for safe church policies and other protective measures, and may provide counselors and therapists to whom pastors may refer congregation members as needed. Ultimately, being a good neighbor in the community means taking care of your own children, and working with others on behalf of children.

Discerning Possible Relationship-Building

A congregation should reflect on the responsibility that comes with establishing and sustaining relationships with exploitation prevention and support agencies. The types and number of relationships a congregation would be able to engage should be based on the congregation's mission and values, the resources (time and gifts) of its membership, and the needs of the local community.

It is equally important for the congregation to identify the level of prevention and support that organizations offer. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recognizes that there are several ways to classify sexual violence prevention and intervention activities. The most common and useful way identifies activities according to when they

occur in relation to the violence:

- **Primary Prevention:** [Activities] that take place before sexual violence has occurred to prevent initial perpetration or victimization.
- **Secondary Prevention:** An immediate response after the sexual violence has occurred to deal with the short term consequences of violence.
- **Tertiary Prevention:** Long-term responses after sexual violence has occurred to deal with the lasting consequences of sexual violence for the victim/survivor, as well as sex offender treatment interventions.

From a MN Department of Health document (Appendix 3) found at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/injury/pub/svpplan.pdf>

Possible Organizations to Consider

The purpose of building relationships and working with other organizations is to support and enhance the work of prevention. Who is working to protect and improve the lives of children in your community? Some organizations and groups to consider include schools, after school programs, day care centers, homeless shelters, police and fire departments, hospitals, crisis centers, child advocacy centers, prison ministries, cultural centers, and community business organizations.

Each community is different, so it is important to think outside the box and consider the possibilities. What is God already up to in your midst, and how can you cooperate with God and partner with those around you to prevent the exploitation and abuse of children?

Primary Prevention Organizations

For collaboration on activities that take place before sexual violence has occurred to prevent initial perpetration or victimization:

- Organizations that provide services to victims of sexual abuse, violence, trafficking, or exploitation, which may include rape crisis centers or domestic abuse shelters. Oftentimes they provide education or primary prevention services as well.
- Law Enforcement may be helpful for reviewing your "safe church" policy and doing a child safety audit of your church facilities. Ask them how to report child sexual abuse/exploitation. Some offices have an Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force that could provide trainings to parents and others about keeping children safe on the internet.
- Other community groups that are also working on prevention or may have an interest in doing so, such as:
 - Other places of worship
 - Schools
 - Child Protection Services

- State Bureau of Corrections
- State Department of Health or Human Services
- Local judges and court officials
- Local parole/probation officers
- Local government officials (city, town, village, county, township, etc.)
- Business associations (Downtown Business Associations, Mall Management Companies, etc.)
- Hospitals and doctor/medical associations
- Community Watch Associations
- County Extension Office/4-H Clubs
- Boys and Girls Clubs
- Chamber of Commerce
- Local insurance agents or companies (particularly those that provide liability insurance to places of worship)
- Pre-med/nursing/psychology departments of colleges
- Service clubs (Lions Club, Exchange Clubs, VFW, American Legion, Elks, Moose, etc.)
- Foster home agencies
- Adoption agencies
- Civic-minded corporations
- Local newspaper reporters who have an interest in this issue and write responsible articles about it.

You could work with any of these groups to provide events open to the public and raise awareness of prevention through informative films, round-table discussions, "town-hall" style meetings with experts/presentations, etc.

A number of congregations have used "Safeguarding God's Children" materials created by the Episcopal Church. Your local Episcopal diocese may have a list of official trainers who could provide training for your congregation members. Go to this website for more information: <https://www.cpg.org/administrators/insurance/preventing-sexual-misconduct/overview/>

Darkness to Light, a national prevention organization, has online and in-person training in their "Stewards of Children" material. Check their website (www.d2l.org) for organizations in your state or region that have certified trainers in this material.

Stop It Now! is a national organization that provides resources to potential abusers so that they do not victimize another person. They have an on-line helpline where questions are answered and archived (<http://www.stopitnow.org/advice-column>). The Helpline (1-888-PREVENT) operates on limited hours and may refer you to the website.

In Minnesota, Project Pathfinder (www.projectpathfinder.org) has resources and other intervention services for potential abusers. The MN Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MNCASA) has a webpage (www.mncasa.org/concerned-about-someones-behavior)

dedicated to those who are “worried about your own or another’s behavior.” This page links to MnATSA which is a statewide resource for providers of sex offender treatment.

For national resources, the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (www.atsa.com) provides e-mail referrals for people looking for help with sexual behavior concerns (<http://www.atsa.com/request-referral>).

In some situations, your congregation may help fill a need of the organization, such as funding or a specific project related to their services or facilities.

Secondary Prevention Organizations

For collaboration on activities that provide an immediate response after the sexual violence has occurred, which can help deal with the short-term consequences, consider these organizations:

- 9-1-1, for immediate injury and safety concerns.
- Local rape crisis centers, sexual assault hotlines, or shelters.
- Child Advocacy Centers for children who have experienced abuse.
- Statewide Coalitions that address sexual violence. Go to http://www.nsvrc.org/organizations?tid=8&tid_1=All to find a coalition in your state.
- Sexual Assault Advocates, who are available during the crisis (medical exam) and can provide good support going through the court process. In Minnesota, MNCASA recently launched www.rapehelpmn.org, which can help connect someone with the closest advocacy organization.
- National hotlines:
 - National Human Trafficking Resources Center: call 1-888-373-7888 or text BeFree (233733). This resource is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and is a program of Polaris Project, a non-profit organization working exclusively on the issue of human trafficking.
 - Darkness to light National Helpline: 1-866-367-5444. This helpline is available to any individual, child or adult, who needs resources about sexual abuse.

Your relationship with these organizations may only consist of making their information available, such as posting hotlines in church restrooms so that people have easy and confidential access to this information.

Tertiary Prevention Organizations

For collaboration on long-term responses after sexual violence has occurred, in order to deal with the lasting consequences of sexual violence, consider these organizations:

- Rape crisis centers, domestic abuse shelters, or other groups that work with victims of sexual violence, as well as survivors of prostitution and sexual exploitation.

- Physicians or hospitals
- Counseling services
- Local Child Protection Services
- Local mental health board
- Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA workers)
- Legal aid attorneys.

For treatment of sex offenders:

The treatment of both victims and offenders is a highly specialized process, best carried out by trained counselors and therapists. We discourage congregations and their leaders from starting their own treatment services for these groups. Instead, we recommend working with trained professionals in the community who are already doing this work.

Also, there is controversy within the mental health field regarding the efficacy of various treatments for sex offenders.

The International Association for the Treatment of Sexual Offenders focuses on research regarding treatment rather than providing direct services to offenders.

Offender services can include assessment and treatment through the local community mental health system. They may be available during incarceration at certain facilities and after incarceration when back in the community through on-going treatment groups and support groups, such as Sexual Addiction Anonymous.

Sexual offenders who are caught typically go to prison or other sex offender treatment facilities within the correctional system, so a better option would be to partner with prison ministries. For more information about prison ministries in the ELCA, go to: http://resources.elca.org/Social_Issues-Criminal_Justice_Ministry_Handbook.html

Organizations that assist women in getting out of prostitution may have services directed at the men who solicit women in prostitution. For example, Breaking Free, an organization in St. Paul, MN, has "john school." There may be organizations in your community that provide a similar program. Contact local law enforcement or probation services for information.

Caution is required if a congregation has direct contact with sexual offenders. The safety of our children is of the utmost importance. Be sure to follow the guidelines in the Cherish All Children Safe Child Policy.

Resources for congregations in which a sex offender is a member or would like to become a member, go to http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Responding_to_Sex_Offender_in_a_congregation.pdf

Child Advocacy Centers

National Children's Alliance (NCA) is the national association and accrediting body for Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs), which are secondary prevention organizations.

Formed in 1988, NCA has been providing support, technical assistance, and quality assurance for CACs, while serving as a voice for abused children for more than 25 years. A children's advocacy center is a child-friendly facility in which law enforcement, child protection, prosecution, mental health, medical and victim advocacy professionals work together to investigate abuse, help children heal from abuse, and hold offenders accountable.

One specific group that Child Advocacy Centers are ideally suited to serve is runaway youth who have been sexually abused. *The International Journal of Child and Adolescent Resilience* recently [published an article](#) examining the abuse prevalence and characteristics, as well as risk and protective factors, among both runaway and non-runaway adolescents evaluated at a CAC in Minnesota. This CAC had implemented a referral program to assess runaways for potential sexual assault or sexual exploitation.

Runaways were significantly more likely than non-runaways to have experienced severe sexual abuse, leading to such issues as alcohol and drug use, more sexual partners, an increased likelihood of contracting a sexually transmitted infection (STI), and higher levels of distress.

The recommendation of the study is that CACs should encourage referrals of runaway adolescents for routine assessment of sexual assault and evaluation for possible sexual abuse.

To find a CAC near you check out the National Children's Alliance website:
<http://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org>

For Minneapolis Area Synod congregations...

God's Work, Our Hands Sunday

Has your congregation chosen a project for God's Work, Our Hands Sunday (September 7, 2014)? Cherish All Children would like to suggest an option.

Breaking Free is a nonprofit agency in St. Paul which works to provide services to women and girls who have been victims of sexual exploitation and trafficking. Every year, Breaking Free helps an average of 400-500 women and girls escape systems of sexual exploitation through advocacy, direct services, housing, and education.

While Breaking Free would welcome any items you can gather, at this time the transitional and permanent housing units are in need of the following gently used or new items:

- Towels (wash cloths, hand towels, bath towels)

- Pots and Pans
- Silverware
- Can openers

At various times throughout the year, they also have a need for mattresses and box springs.

If your congregation would like to gather these items for trafficking victims, please contact Robin Escobar (612-501-8296) at Breaking Free to make arrangements for delivery.

For more information about Breaking Free see their website www.breakingfree.net

How are you taking action to prevent exploitation?

Send your ideas to Erica Larson, E-Quipped Coordinator (elarson@lakenokomis.org), by August 31 for the September 2014 issue of *E-quipped for Prevention*. The topic for September is "Action" - God's people in action to prevent exploitation.

Please send stories of what you or others have done to make changes and take action in the community in order to prevent the sexual exploitation of children. Thank you!

Encouragement Circles – Just for you!

Getting your congregation involved in preventing child sexual exploitation can be challenging. One way to help yourself stay focused and energized and healthy is to be in an "Encouragement Circle."

An Encouragement Circle is 4-5 people who get-together by phone once a month. Each participant has an opportunity to share a joy, frustration, challenge, or idea and then ask the group for whatever help is needed. "Help" may be a listening ear, prayer, ideas, strategies, encouragement - the participant decides what he/she needs from the others in the group.

Interested? Contact ahartman@cherishchildren.org for more information.

Cherish All Children

Cherish All Children is a national Lutheran ministry of prayer, education, relationship-building, and action to prevent child sexual exploitation.

[Follow us on Facebook.](#)

"Like" Cherish All Children, keep up-to-date on the latest news, and lots more!

We believe that "Love born of faith in Jesus Christ calls us all to attend to, discuss, resist, and reject the system of sexual exploitation"

([ELCA Message on Commercial Sexual Exploitation](#), pg. 1.)

You are invited to [give financially](#) to support this ministry. Donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Are you a member of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans? You may be able to designate Cherish All Children to receive your Choice Dollars.

[Follow this link to learn how!](#)

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