



Be a blue ribbon faith community

Faith-based and religious communities can support strong, healthy families and prevent child abuse and neglect in many ways. Below are some ideas for becoming a blue ribbon faith community:

Create a safe environment for children

- Keep your building free from dangerous equipment and substances.
- Ensure security measures are in place for children's areas.
- Provide age-appropriate equipment, materials and activities for children.

Be sure your staff and volunteers are ready to respond to the needs of children and families

- Screen all those who work with children. Run formal background checks and contact references.
- Train staff to recognize the signs of abuse (including child sexual abuse) and to report.
- Make sure all staff and volunteers understand their responsibility to report suspected child abuse and neglect.
- Treat children with respect. Learn their names, make eye contact and listen to what they have to say.

Support children and families in the community

- Organize a blue ribbon event during Child Abuse Prevention Month.
- Create a pool of volunteers to provide support to new or at-risk parents.
- Partner with local child-centered organizations to provide information to your church members and guests.
- Organize a fundraiser to support a local organization that works with families.
- Organize a Celebrate Children's Day each year on April 30.

Be supportive of parents

- Recognize when families appear overwhelmed and offer assistance.
- Start a Circle of Parents® group.
- Sponsor a group for fathers.
- Invite a speaker to address the issue of child sexual abuse and how to protect our children.
- Provide new parents with quality parenting information.
- Host a parenting fair to educate parents about services in the community.
- Promote the important role parents play in the community.
- Promote understanding of children and their developmental stages.
- Provide a quiet space for parents to take children to settle down during services.

Resources

- "Balancing Acts" - A set of guidelines to keep a congregation safe from child sexual abuse.
 - <http://archive.uua.org/cde/ethics/balancing/index.html>
- Darkness to Light
 - <http://www.darkness2light.org/>
- Stop It Now! Wisconsin
 - www.stopitnow.wi.gov
- Stop It Now!
 - www.stopitnow.org