

Creating a Congregational Sexual Misconduct Policy

As of the adoption of the current Book of Order, all Sessions, Presbyteries, Synods and the General Assembly need to have a Sexual Misconduct Policy. The policy belongs to the congregation/session of each church. It is not something written for the church by someone else.

Based in the policy recently adopted by the Presbytery of Ohio Valley we have attached a sort of template with which the session may think through a policy for the particular church.

First some principles behind any policy:

Do not make a policy you can't enforce. This should be self explanatory. The policy implies a kind of promise. It says not only that something is unacceptable, but also that there will be a diligent effort to make the policy effective.

Do not make a policy that will be unequally enforced.

Make policy which has consequences when violated.

Train and orient people to policies. At the very least post a policy that you have adopted.

Require acknowledgement from those covered by the policy.

Use clear language when creating a policy.

Policy on sexual misconduct does not need to include everything that is unacceptable. It needs to include issues which would be harmful to members, participants, or even to the church itself.

In the template below, a section regarding pornography is included in the **red letters of the text. As desired by your session, this may be included or omitted as desired.**

Within the template is a possible clause covering older youth in supervision of younger youth or children. This is included in **green in the text of the template.**

The Stated Clerk is available to assist any session or session committee in the development of the church policy. This availability can be accomplished through conference call, Skype conference, or other means including face to face meetings.

**Larry Jackman
866-344-7853**