



Saint Paul Area Synod, ELCA

Congregation action steps for sexual misconduct prevention and response

1. **RECOGNITION.** Prayerfully acknowledge that sexual misconduct continues to be pervasive in society and can occur within faith communities, and that there are tools we can use to prevent it, and to address it if it occurs.

2. **REVIEW AVAILABLE RESOURCES.** Both the ELCA and Saint Paul Area Synod provide a variety of resources to assist congregations in preventing, and responding to sexual misconduct. These are listed on the synod's web page, Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Policy Resources at www.spas-elca.org/report-misconduct.

3. **EDUCATION.** Develop a congregational culture and understanding of appropriate boundaries, mutual respect by providing training and education opportunities for the whole congregation and specific groups, including:
 - a. Education and training are important elements of preventing and appropriately responding to sexual misconduct.
 - b. Consider using sermons, Bible studies/discussions, adult forums, men's and women's groups, small group discussions, healing communities, prayer, and other resources
 - c. Inform the congregation of the sexual misconduct policy.
 - d. Ensure that pastors and deacons are up to date in the boundaries training provided and required by the synod.
 - e. Provide boundaries training for children youth, and family staff and volunteers.
 - f. Establish ongoing expectations for future training and education.
 - g. Place posters about how to make a report of sexual misconduct in accessible places around your church facilities. See sample poster at www.spas-elca.org/report-misconduct.

4. **POLICIES.** Ensure appropriate policies are in place for your congregation. It is important to understand that although the synod has a policy on sexual misconduct for pastors and deacons, each congregation should have its own policy on dealing with sexual misconduct by others.

- a. Review current policies, including personnel policies, child protection policies, volunteer policies, facilities policies, etc., to determine whether additional policy adoption should be considered.
 - b. If no encompassing policy exists, consider adoption of a comprehensive sexual misconduct policy. See sample at www.spas-elca.org/report-misconduct.
 - i. It may be necessary to make changes to existing policies to ensure they align with each other.
 - ii. Adoption of these policies is a good opportunity to stress that your congregation is intentional about caring for each member of the community.
 - c. Post information on your website, making sure to provide easy-to-find resources. Information posted should include:
 - i. Resources on sexual misconduct prevention.
 - ii. How to report sexual misconduct
 - 1. Sexual misconduct by pastors or deacons must be reported to the bishop in the synod office
 - 2. Sexual misconduct by any other person must be reported to a designated person or other person in authority.
 - 3. It is critical to post the appropriate contact information for persons designated to receive reports of sexual misconduct, including synod contact information for claims against a pastor or deacon.
 - iii. The congregation's sexual misconduct policy
5. **CONSULTATION.** The Saint Paul Area Synod bishop and staff are available for consultation when any concern arises and will provide guidance and referrals where appropriate. Congregational leaders are encouraged to consult with the synod office in the event a congregation becomes aware of possible sexual misconduct.