

Addendum to Safe Sanctuary Policies

Maryland, the District of Columbia and West Virginia all maintain registries of sex offenders, which attempt to list all persons residing anywhere in those jurisdictions who have been convicted by a court of law of any of a very wide variety of sexual offenses. The registry in all three jurisdictions is available for public review and may be searched online at (1) <http://www.dpscs.state.md.us/sorSearch>, for Maryland; (2) <http://sexoffender.dc.gov>, for the District of Columbia; and (3) <https://apps.wv.gov/StatePolice/SexOffender/Forms>, for West Virginia. Contrary to popular belief, these Sex Offender Registries are not limited to listing convicted “pedophiles,” which, strictly speaking, describes persons with a primary sexual interest in prepubescent children aged 13 or younger. Rather, the Registries include sex offenders whose victims, depending on the crime, may include minors as old as 17 years of age or even adults.

From time to time, a local church pastor or church leader learns that a member, or any person who regularly frequents church premises for worship or other reasons, is a registered sex offender. When that happens, and even while resolutely affirming every person’s need to be part of a faith community and receive redemption, we hold in balance the imperative to do all we can to keep all our parishioners safe, especially (but not only) our children and youth. To that end, in striving to maintain an environment of love and safety for all, we believe the congregation’s process for responding to such information should include the following components:

1. Maintenance of List: The Staff Parish Relations Committee should establish and maintain a list of registered sex offenders who are members of the church, attend worship or are otherwise known to visit the church premises (buildings or grounds) on one or more occasions. The pastor and the chair of the SPRC will ensure that this list is updated in the following manner:
 - a. at least twice a year, by making a reasonably delineated geographical and name searches of the online version of the registry maintained for the jurisdiction in which the church is located, and
 - b. whenever it is brought to the attention of the pastor or the SPRC that another church member or visitor has become a registered sex offender.

A current copy of the list will be delivered to the District Superintendent as soon as it is first prepared and whenever the list is updated.

2. Meeting and Covenant with the Registrant: Upon learning that a member or visitor is a registered sex offender, the pastor and the Chair of the SPRC chair, or another member of the SPRC designated by the Chair, will have an in-person meeting with the registered

person (Registrant) and another adult of the Registrant's choosing to discuss the procedures the congregation will follow in order to allow the Registrant to continue to participate in the life of the congregation or visit the church premises for any purpose.

During that meeting, the pastor and SPRC representative will:

- a. indicate that they have been made aware of the person's name on the registry;
 - b. summarize the congregation's principles and guidelines in such situations, as outlined here and in the attached "Covenant Letter";
 - c. explain and emphasize the importance of the "Designated Attendant" policy (as described below), both for the safety and well-being of the church community, and the well-being of the Registrant as well;
 - d. provide the Registrant with a Covenant Letter, signed by the pastor and the SPRC Chair, substantially in the form attached hereto; and
 - e. explain that the Covenant Letter must be counter-signed (in front of a witness), dated and returned to the pastor before the Registrant can be allowed to return to the church premises.
3. "Designated Attendants": Registrants should not be allowed in any church building or anywhere on church grounds, unless they are accompanied by an adult member of the congregation that has been approved by the SPRC to serve as a Designated Attendant for registered sex offenders.
- a. A list of Designated Attendants for registered sex offenders shall be maintained by the Chair of the SPRC.
 - b. Each Registrant shall be given the names and telephone numbers of two or more Designated Attendants they can contact to accompany them when they visit the church.
 - c. A Designated Attendant must be present to meet the Registrant in the church parking lot, or at another safe and well-lighted outdoor location, when the Registrant arrives at the church's property. The Designated Attendant must physically accompany the Registrant at all times while the is within any church buildings or anywhere on church grounds.
 - d. It is the Registrant's responsibility to arrange to have a Designated Attendant present when they arrive at the church property. If a Designated Attendant does not appear for any reason, the Registrant may not enter any church building and may not stay on the church grounds.
 - e. No person that is related to the Registrant by birth, adoption or marriage may serve as their Designated Attendant.
 - f. The SPRC will have the responsibility of securing designated attendants for others. In the event that a time arises and no buddy is available, the person may not stay on the grounds of the church buildings.

- g. The Designated Attendant requirement must remain in place for as long as the Registrant remains on the Sex Offenders Registry.
4. Exceptions: There should be no exceptions to these policies and procedures except on a case-by-case basis, and then only if (a) written approval is obtained from both the pastor and the SPRC, and (b) advance written notice of the exception, and an explanation of the reasons therefor, is provided to the District Superintendent fourteen (14) days before the proposed exception is to go into effect and the District Superintendent thereafter indicates in writing that there is no objection to allowing the exception.

District Superintendents must:

1. Maintain copies of each congregation's list of registered sex offenders.
2. Provide all congregations with clear instructions and guidance on preparing their lists of registered sex offenders, updating them bi-annually, and providing a current list to the District Superintendent every January.
3. Provide regional training for clergy and Staff Parish Relations Committees in 2012 and ask congregations to review the DVD every year.
4. In 2012, review the safe sanctuary policies of the congregation and introduce this practice as an addendum that congregations can add to their policies.