

# Faith leaders can protect victims

**Creating a culture of safety and support through awareness and prevention efforts speaks volumes to victims and survivors of abuse – and warns abusers.**

## How churches can help

An important role of a pastor – a shepherd – is to protect people from the wolves prowling both within and around the flock. When speaking to church leaders in Ephesus, Paul said:

*Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. (Acts 20:27-28, NIV)*

Among other things, church leaders can:

- Address the topic in everyday conversations, meetings and sermons.
- Support all victims of all forms of abuse.
- Partner with Sheltering Wings and other local agencies for resources and help.
- Place resource cards and brochures in restrooms.
- Invite Sheltering Wings to train staff and leaders.
- Offer support groups for survivors.
- Prevent abuse by addressing healthy teen relationships, offering premarital counseling and providing marriage enrichment opportunities.
- Involve your church in community awareness and prevention initiatives at deeper levels.

## Create policies and procedures

While your church is primarily a place of worship, it is also a workplace. Consider creating a policy to protect employees from domestic violence (as well as other abuses). Creating these kinds of policies will provide support to victims and prevent others from being taken advantage of. Policies may include:

- A statement that your church will believe and support employees (and members) who disclose that they are victims
- A procedure detailing how supervisors or human resources will handle reports of violence
- A tactic for prohibiting unauthorized visitors
- A description of employee rights and protections
- A strategy for helping an employee who is a victim develop a safety plan while at work

## Honor and protect confidentiality

Church leaders have a moral and legal obligation to maintain confidentiality. This applies to domestic violence disclosures. A dilemma may arise when a victim's physical safety is in danger. Preventing further harm is the only justification for breaking confidentiality.

## Understand mandatory reporting

While there is no mandatory reporting for domestic violence in Indiana, church leaders are mandated to report child abuse and neglect to Child Protective Services and endangered-adult abuse to Adult Protective Services.





## Provide training

It is a good idea to offer mandatory training so supervisors, staff and volunteers know:

- The definition and prevalence of domestic violence
- How to spot signs that someone may be a victim
- How to assess risk and respond to help a victim

### Domestic Violence Resources

Central Indiana

 <b>Sheltering Wings</b> emergency housing and life skills training for survivors 24/7 Helpline: (317) 745-1496 Web: shelteringwings.org	 <b>Connect2Help</b> information, referral and crisis services contact center 24/7 Call Center: 211 Web: connect2help.org
 <b>State of Indiana</b> <b>Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence</b> the state coalition for domestic violence programs in Indiana Phone: (800) 332-7385 Web: icadvinc.org	 <b>United States</b> <b>National Domestic Violence Hotline</b> tools and support to empower victims and survivors Hotline: (800) 799-7233 Web: thehotline.org

## Awareness of resources

Church leaders can make their churches aware of how to access shelters and social services, contact police, obtain protective orders and safety plan with victims.

**Contact us to learn more about how we can help your church protect victims, or if someone needs assistance. Call our 24/7 helpline at (317) 745-1496.**



Healthy Me. Stronger Us.  
[shelteringwings.org](http://shelteringwings.org)