CHECKLIST OF “VITAL MATTERS” for Sessions

LAKE ERIE PRESBYTERY, AUTUMN 2019

Town/City of Church\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Name of Congregation\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

As uncomfortable as these topics can seem, it is also vital that congregations and presbyteries recognize how important they are – to protect financial and legal liability, as well as to enact our Christ-based responsibility to past and potential victims, those who might be accused rightly or wrongly, and maintaining peace and unity and purity within the church. Emphasis is being pushed to assure that each congregation is up to date on the requirements below. If you have any questions, speak with the presbytery stated clerk, your congregation’s advocate from the Committee on Ministry, or your own local experts in safety and liability. We can talk further with questions, helpful ideas, and possible sample policies at the Session Minutes reviews in October. We can help sessions know how to meet these standards.

*G-3.0106 Administration of Mission* [as amended effective June 2017]

All [sessions and presbyteries] shall adopt and implement a **sexual misconduct policy** and

a **child and youth protection policy**.

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| 1. Sexual Misconduct Policy | **Yes:**  Date approved: | **Not Yet:** Action  still in process: |

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| 2. Child & Youth Protection Policy | **Yes:**  Date approved: | **Not Yet:** Action  still in process: |

*G-4.0302 Mandatory Reporting*

Any member of this church engaged in ordered ministry [that is, elders, deacons and pastors] and any certified Christian educator employed by this church or its congregations, shall report to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities knowledge of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity when (1) such information is gained outside of a confidential communication

as defined in G-4.0301\*\*, (2) she or he is not bound by an obligation of privileged communication under law, or (3) she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of future physical harm or abuse.

*\*\* The exception for confidentiality only applies to Ministers of Word and Sacrament, and only in the specifics of pastoral counseling. There is NO EXCEPTION for deacons, ruling elders or certified educators.*

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| 3. Ordained Leaders as Mandatory Reporters  Is this reminder made known, at least during annual reorganization, leader training, or another occasion? | **Yes:**  Date approved: | **Not Yet:** Action  still in process: |

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| ***Comments on #1 or #2 or #3:*** |

INFORMATIONAL RESOURCES: The national denomination’s documents cannot take into account all state and local laws, and were up to date on the dates indicated. Therefore, resources provided by the presbytery and the national church interpret ecclesiastic requirements, but is only basic general information regarding secular law.

* <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/legal-resources/creating-safe-ministries/>
* <http://oga.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/mid_council_ministries/legalmanual.pdf>
* Your liability insurance company is likely a good resource for understanding mandates.
* State government websites: <http://keepkidssafe.pa.gov/> <http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/cps/faqs.asp>