

ESTABLISHING A VICTIM ASSISTANCE MINISTRY



EVANGELICAL COUNCIL
FOR ABUSE PREVENTION

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Every community has victims and survivors of abuse within its membership. Due to the sensitive nature of the subject matter and the needs of the victims and survivors, it is a suggested best practice to have a trained advocate to respond appropriately to victims and survivors so as not to re-victimize victims or survivors when they reach out for assistance. In this way, the Organization may establish a victim assistance ministry through a coordinator or other provision of direct services.



There are several ways to ensure that victims receive the assistance they require. The Organization could hire or contract with a victim assistance coordinator / advocate. Secondly, the Organization could ensure that one or more volunteers or employees are specially trained to respond to victims and survivors of abuse. Thirdly, the Organization could collaborate with trusted local victim service providers that can receive referrals as needed, such as agencies that specialize in domestic violence or sexual assault. It is possible to follow more than one of these approaches.



If the Organization chooses to establish a “Care Team” to respond to victims and survivors of abuse, in other words, to establish a “Care Team,” care should be made available, in turn, to the volunteers or employees themselves. Personnel should be given the option of pastoral care, as well as spiritual and reparative resources such as counseling, mentoring, retreats, educational materials, and medical care (also see ECAP Resource “Care Suggested Best Practices”).

A “Care Team” for victims and their families has appropriate background and training. The individuals should be trained in appropriate responses to those victimized by abuse such as: active listening, appropriate and inappropriate responses, appropriate referrals in the community, and practical resources such as childcare or transportation. These responders should also be trained in how to avoid secondary victimization when responding to the abuse victim or their family.

The Organization’s “Care Team” should be familiar with what the Organization can and cannot do to assist the victim and the family, including familiarity with basic Organizational policies.

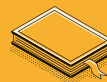
The Organization’s “Care Team” should provide or coordinate practical support to the victim and his/her family such as: rides to appointments, childcare, court accompaniment, legal assistance, meals, and any other practical need the family may have, while maintaining responsible practices. Safe and confidential housing may be available through community resources, or the Organization can establish a housing option.



Regardless of the method(s) chosen above, the Organization should establish a connection between victim service agencies in the community and members of the Organization.



Establish written policies for confidentiality for any internal victim advocate. Maintain policies and procedures that adequately address victim safety and assistance (see ECAP Resource “Care Suggested Best Practices”).



Ensure that training is available for any internal victim advocate or volunteer on issues related to victimization such as: the criminal justice system, the psychological effects of victimization, active listening, secondary victimization, spiritual issues surrounding victimization, and relevant community resources.

**For more information and resources about
creating safe environments in your ministry visit:**



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