

Six Case Studies

Case Study A

You receive a report from a congregant that he saw the mother of a young child in your pre-school room handle her child roughly and with what seemed to be extreme frustration and anger. The congregant, who was shocked at the intensity of behavior and fearful for the child's well-being, informs you that he has reported the incident to the county Department of Social Services.

Case Study B

One of the children attending your religious education program is being stalked by a sexual predator at her bus stop after school. The girl observes the man pulling up in his car at the intersection by her home over the course of several days, just as she walks up from the bus stop. One day, he pulls up to the sidewalk where the girl is walking, calls to her out of his car window, and exposes himself to her as he masturbates. A police report is made and the perpetrator is later caught during an undercover investigation that found him to be following bus routes in at least two neighborhoods, where he was stalking young women and girls. The girl and her family are very distressed about the situation and face a possible court hearing.

Case Study C

A couple—both members of your congregation—has come to you to announce that they are considering adopting an infant with AIDS. You realize that appropriate policy, training, and procedures must be put in place to ensure and maintain healthy and safe conditions in the church nursery.

Case Study D

A male member of the congregation discloses to the minister that he is attracted to young adolescent boys. He has no known record, is an active member of the congregation, and has not disclosed any predatory impulse. As the new religious educator, you are informed of the disclosure and monitor the man's behavior and interactions in the congregational setting. One Sunday morning you observe the man pacing back and forth on the church playground. Curious about this uncharacteristic behavior, you stop to ask him how he is doing, why he is in the playground, and how you can help him. While engaged in this exchange, you look across the playground and see a young teenage boy sitting alone on a nearby bench apparently waiting for a parent to come out of Sunday service. The boy is known to you but is not registered in the religious education program or youth group.

Case Study E

After returning from a religious education program field trip, you are informed that the parent volunteer who rented and drove the van for the field trip does not have a driver's license issued by the state where she resides and does not carry her own motorist insurance. The volunteer claims to have lost her driver's license, which was issued by another state, but assures you the lost license is still valid. The children's parents and Religious Education Committee members discovered the nature of the driver's situation after the fact and are extremely upset.

Case Study F

A community group arranges with your church office to rent your religious education program space for an evening program. A member of the group contacts you as the religious education director to inform you that her child fell from one of the pieces of playground equipment. The child was not seriously injured, but in researching the new recommended standards for public playgrounds, the caller wants to inform you that the church playground does not meet those standards.

Questions

- How would you handle these situations in your leadership role?
- What additional information, resources, or support might you need to respond most effectively to these situations?
- Are there any other circumstances present in your congregation or wider community that could create similar incidents?
- What measures would you like to see in place in your congregation that would address these circumstances or prevent similar situations from arising in the future?