

## Guidelines for offenders at church

This is a list of suggested guidelines only and should be approved by your support team (Counselor, Clergy, Probation/Parole Officer, other significant persons). If any in your support team disagrees with any of these rules, then of course you should go by the guidelines they give you. They may want to add guidelines at the end of this document.

1) The main obvious issue is that you should never be alone with a child (anyone under 18). You are the adult. You do what it takes to make this happen. You do what it takes to avoid being alone with a child, at all costs.

2) Someone at your church should know about your offense history. Depending upon your risk level, it may be that the professional staff of the church and people who hold paid or volunteer positions of authority and trust such as Ministers, Youth/Children's Minister, Elders, Deacons, should know. It will be tempting to start fresh at a new church where no one knows you, or your history. This is very dangerous. Consult your counselor on this one.

3) Never initiate physical touch with anyone under 18 years old. This includes hugs and handshakes. You should never discuss the physical appearance of anyone under 18 years old. Hugs are common in church settings. If someone under 18 years of age attempts to hug you – you make it a handshake. It is a good idea for you to also refrain from initiating physical contact, other than handshakes with adults.

4) How you deal with the issue of the restroom at church should be discussed with your counselor and Clergy. For some of you this is not an issue. This depends on your risk level. Some of you should not go into the restroom at all unless you have an adult escort. Some of you however, can use the same relapse prevention strategies that you use in the community to avoid being alone in the bathroom with a child. Plan ahead; be vigilant. Use the restroom before you attend the church. You should not leave the sanctuary during the church service to go to the restroom.

5) You should not be wandering the hallway and in the area of the church building where the Sunday school classes are taught alone, especially during the church service, Remember your argument is that the church service and the worship experience are very important to you. If it is, then why would you be leaving it to go on hall patrol?

6) You will not be in a position of authority and trust over any person under 18 years old. This includes Sunday school, helping with the nursery, or even leading songs for a teenage or children's class. Let me be very clear here: You cannot be even a 'helper' in these activities. These activities put you in a 'zone' or a way of thinking of relating to kids on their level – a place where you do not need to be.

7) Remember the word boundaries. You are the one that needs to exercise them.

8) If you come to church with your family, you should stay with your family during the entire church experience. If you attend church alone, do not sit next to children or teenagers. Only you know your mind and how it works. Many times groups of teenagers sit together at the front of the church. If sitting directly behind this group triggers your fantasies and distracts your mind from the sermon, then you should not be sitting behind the teenagers.

9) Be very careful and vigilant at church parties, potlucks, or other functions whether they are at someone's house or in the church building. During these types of functions children are often running around unsupervised. Remember this basic rule: **stay with the crowd**. You have no business wandering around sparsely populated areas of the church, where you increase the chance you may end up alone with a child or group of children. Again remember the word boundaries. If a child initiates physical contact with you, shake their hand- only, or start a “high five.”

10) Some of you will have a rule of absolutely NO physical contact with a child; even if initiated by the child. If this is the case, you and your support team will need to decide what church activities you can attend and still comply with this rule.

11) You should not go to a church function that is at someone's house where there are children present, unless someone in that house is aware of your offense history.

12) Ask your clergy to be on your support team.

The following are some extra guidelines that your support team may wish to add.

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I have read the above rules and guidelines with my Clergy/minister, counselor, parole or probation officer, and I agree to follow them.

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Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I have read these rules and agree to support \_\_\_\_\_  
In following them.

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