



Criminal
Sexual
History and
Involvement
in Church

Criminal Sexual History and Involvement in Church

Maintaining a safe environment in our churches is a priority. But we are also commanded to love and care for each member of the body of Christ, regardless of past sins. Caring for someone with a criminal sexual history must be balanced with our efforts to be safe churches.

The presence in the church community of someone with a background of criminal sexual activity is challenging. It may cause uncomfortable feelings, and potential risks must be taken seriously. For example, parents may fear for the safety of their children. It can also trigger intense emotions for anyone with a past history of sexual abuse.

The answers are not always clear. While there is no such thing as risk-free ministry; there are precautions that churches can take. Churches must maintain an extra layer of protection to avoid any potential opportunity for re-offense. As with any protection policy, these precautions must be carefully adhered to, especially for the sake of children and those most vulnerable among us.

Below are three ideas that might be useful for your church:

- 1. A COSA – Community of Support and Accountability.** This is a small group of people who genuinely care for the one who has offended and are committed to “walk alongside” in discipleship, prayer, and maintaining accountability to agreed-upon rules of conduct. A key to avoiding the risk of re-offense is the combination of genuine caring relationships and strict accountability.
- 2. A Covenant of Conduct** – A written agreement, signed by the one who has offended as well as by a church representative, which provides clearly defined limitations regarding the involvement of the one who has offended.
- 3. An Accountability Partner** – One person agrees to accompany the one who has offended while at church.

Safe Church Ministry equips congregations in abuse awareness, prevention, and response. For more information, contact:

