

Pastoral Counseling Guidelines

Pastoral counseling is an important part of ministry. Churches are in the business of reaching out to people who need advice and assistance, whether it's financial, relational, or spiritual. However, in today's litigious society, ministries need to be very familiar with the legal risks associated with pastoral counseling. There are ways to protect your organization and staff against allegations of misconduct.

| | Yes | Needs Attention |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Does your ministry offer pastoral (spiritual) counseling? If so, do you put your counseling procedures in writing? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Do you have counseling procedures developed by an attorney that include guidelines relating to child or elder abuse reporting and confidentiality of information and that assure compliance with state mental health licensing laws or exemption from such laws? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Do you have an attorney prepare "informed consent" forms or counseling agreements that describe important guidelines for pastoral counseling, such as confidentiality of counselee information and exemptions to confidentiality? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Does your ministry have a referral network of other professionals who provide counseling that falls outside the scope of spiritual counseling? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Do you discourage sessions in which opposite-sex counseling is permitted? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Do you have a second adult present when counseling members of the opposite sex or minors to protect your organization from allegations of sexual misconduct? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Do you screen everyone who will provide any type of counseling within your ministry? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Do you offer counseling sessions only on church premises when someone else is present in the building? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

(Continued on back)

| | Yes | Needs Attention |
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| 9. Do counselors refrain from using any speech or mannerisms that could be misinterpreted as sexual or romantic? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. Do counselors either have a window that looks into their office or leave the door open during counseling sessions? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Notes:

Completed by:

Date: