



SHEPERD

MANDATED REPORTER TRAINING COMPANION

NATIONAL FACILITATOR GUIDE + STATE LAW INSERT

A pastor-led training system for recognizing concerns, responding to disclosures, reporting according to state law, and caring for young people with truth and compassion.

S	SEE
H	HEAR
E	EXAMINE
P	PROVIDE
E	EXPRESS UNDERSTANDING
R	REVEAL TRUTH
D	DISCUSS THE NEXT STEP

**NO SURPRISES. CLEAR EXPECTATIONS. CONSISTENT BOUNDARIES.
COMPASSIONATE ACCOUNTABILITY.**

Editable nationwide training template
Complete the State Law Insert before every training.

GENERATION REGENERATION MINISTRIES | TRAINING + TOOLS

Purpose and required use

This companion equips pastors and ministry leaders to train staff and volunteers in a trauma-informed response to suspected child abuse or neglect. It is designed to be used alongside the SHEPERD Trauma-Informed Youth Ministry field guide. The universal core teaches both the student-facing SHEPERD response and the adult-facing SHEPERD Safety and Reporting Protocol. The State Law Insert must be completed with current official information for the state where the ministry operates.

This is a training and ministry-practice resource, not legal advice. State law controls who must report, what triggers a report, how quickly a report must be made, where it must be made, whether an internal report is sufficient, whether a written follow-up is required, how clergy privilege applies, and what protections or penalties exist. A church should obtain qualified legal or safeguarding advice when its obligations are unclear.

Nonnegotiable training rule

Do not present this program as complete mandated-reporter training until the State Law Insert has been completed, dated, and verified against current official state sources. Do not describe the training as state-approved, certified, accredited, or legally sufficient unless the relevant state authority has expressly confirmed that status in writing.

What this package includes

- A 90 to 95 minute facilitator plan for pastors and ministry leaders.
- Universal teaching on warning signs, disclosures, immediate safety, reporting, documentation, and ongoing care.
- The SHEPERD Safety and Reporting Protocol, built from the Shepherd's Circle, with clear ministry roles and handoffs.
- A State Law Insert that can be adapted to any state or territory.
- Church policy fields that clarify roles without replacing an individual legal duty.
- Multisensory role-play labs, visual cue cards, observer checklists, a knowledge check, answer guidance, attendance record, and certificate of participation.
- A one-page response card leaders can keep with ministry materials.

Source framework

SHEPERD and FACTS were developed for Generation Regeneration Ministries. They incorporate generally accepted trauma-informed ministry, safeguarding, and factual-documentation principles. The legal portions of each state-specific training must be based on current official state sources.

Facilitator readiness checklist

The facilitator should complete every item before scheduling or presenting the training.

Done	Readiness requirement
☐	Complete every field in the State Law Insert.
☐	Verify the state statute and reporting instructions on official government websites.
☐	Confirm the current reporting phone number, online portal, and emergency procedure.
☐	Confirm whether clergy are mandated reporters and how clergy-penitent privilege is treated.
☐	Confirm whether each individual must report directly or whether another procedure is permitted.
☐	Confirm whether oral and written reports are required and the applicable deadlines.
☐	Insert the church safeguarding lead and internal notification procedure.
☐	Review the church child-safety policy and resolve conflicts before training.
☐	Prepare the scenario handouts and knowledge check.
☐	Schedule an annual legal and policy review date.

Verification standard

Use at least one current state statute or official legislative source and one current state child-welfare or law-enforcement reporting source. A national directory may help locate the correct agency, but it should not replace review of the state's own instructions. Record the URL and review date in the State Law Insert.

When to pause the training

- The state reporting threshold or reporting destination is uncertain.
- The church policy tells a volunteer to report only to a pastor when state law appears to require an individual report.
- The ministry serves children in more than one state and jurisdiction has not been clarified.
- Questions about confession, pastoral counseling, privilege, or institutional reporting remain unresolved.
- The facilitator cannot verify that the reporting information is current.

Training plan

Time	Section	Purpose
0–5 min	Opening and scope	Explain the purpose, state-specific insert, and limits of the training.
5–15 min	Recognizing concerns	Review types, warning signs, patterns, and the difference between a sign and proof.
15–32 min	The SHEPERD Framework	Teach and rehearse See, Hear, Examine, Provide, Express Understanding, Reveal Truth, and Discuss the Next Step.
32–49 min	Reporting protocol	Practice Protect, Report, Notify, Preserve, Communicate, and Continue Care using the completed State Law Insert.
49–59 min	Documenting with FACTS	Separate firsthand observations from allegations and preserve information.
59–84 min	Multisensory role-play lab	See, hear, say, and physically sequence the SHEPERD response and reporting protocol in realistic ministry situations.
84–95 min	Knowledge check and commitment	Confirm understanding, correct errors, and record participation.

Learning objectives

By the end of the training, participants should be able to:

- Recognize common indicators that may warrant concern without treating an indicator as proof.
- Respond to a child or teenager without shock, blame, interrogation, spiritual bypassing, or promises of secrecy.
- Explain the reporting threshold, deadline, reporting agency, and individual responsibility in the applicable state.
- Distinguish an official report from an internal church notification.
- Carry out the six actions in the SHEPERD Safety and Reporting Protocol without unlawful delay or unsafe communication.
- Document what was observed, reported, and done using neutral factual language.
- Take immediate action when a child or another person is in imminent danger.
- Support a student after a report without conducting an investigation or interfering with authorities.
- Demonstrate all seven SHEPERD steps by name and place the six reporting-protocol actions in a safe, lawful sequence.

Suggested opening script

“Today we are learning how to recognize concerns, respond when a young person tells us something serious, and follow the law and our safety policy. Our job is not to prove abuse, conduct an investigation, or decide whether a child is telling the truth. Our job is to respond calmly, protect immediate safety, preserve the facts, and make the reports required in this state. Internal church communication never replaces an individual legal duty unless the law expressly says it does.”

Universal core Recognizing concerns

Child maltreatment may include physical abuse, sexual abuse or exploitation, emotional maltreatment, and neglect. State definitions differ, so the completed State Law Insert supplies the controlling legal definitions. Warning signs should be considered in context. One sign may have many explanations; a pattern, disclosure, injury, behavior change, or unsafe circumstance may require action.

Area	Possible indicators to notice
Physical harm	Unexplained or patterned injuries; injuries inconsistent with the explanation or developmental ability; repeated injuries; fear of going home; flinching; unusual clothing intended to cover injuries.
Sexual abuse or exploitation	Age-incongruent sexual knowledge or behavior; pain or injury; pregnancy or sexually transmitted infection; fear of a particular person; coercion, grooming, image-sharing, trafficking, or exchanging sex for needs or valuables.
Emotional maltreatment	Extreme withdrawal, fear, anxiety, aggression, self-devaluation, developmental regression, persistent humiliation, threats, rejection, isolation, or exposure to severe domestic conflict.
Neglect	Persistent hunger, poor hygiene, untreated medical needs, unsafe supervision, unsuitable clothing, dangerous living conditions, abandonment, or repeated unmet basic needs.
Behavior and functioning	Sudden changes in attendance, school performance, mood, sleep, relationships, substance use, self-harm, running away, or reluctance to be alone with a particular person.
Digital and relational safety	Secret accounts, pressure to send images, controlling communication, gifts from unknown adults, unwanted monitoring, stalking, threats, or isolation from trusted relationships.

Teach this distinction

A warning sign is not a diagnosis, and ministry leaders do not need proof before contacting the proper reporting agency when the state’s reporting threshold is met. Reporting a concern asks the authorized agency to assess the situation; it is not a declaration that a person is guilty.

Bias and consistency

Apply the same safety standard regardless of a family’s status, church role, reputation, disability, race, income, immigration status, or relationship to leadership. Trauma and disability may affect communication and support needs, but they do not erase another person’s right to safety.

The SHEPERD Framework

SHEPERD is the ministry's seven-step, student-facing response when a young person shares a serious concern or a leader notices a possible safety issue. Move through See, Hear, Examine, Provide, Express Understanding, Reveal Truth, and Discuss the Next Step without interrogating, promising secrecy, or delaying a required report. SHEPERD guides the conversation with the student; the SHEPERD Safety and Reporting Protocol governs the adult actions that follow.

Step	Leader action	Useful language
S See	Notice the student and the immediate environment. Attend to safety, injury, fear, body language, and who may be nearby.	"I can see this is hard to talk about."
H Hear	Listen without interrogating, correcting, minimizing, or preaching over the disclosure.	"I'm listening. Take your time."
E Examine	Assess immediate danger, medical needs, who may be at risk, and what reporting or supervision is required.	"Are you or anyone else in danger right now?"
P Provide	Provide calm presence, physical safety, appropriate supervision, medical or emergency help, and connection to authorized adults.	"I'm going to help you take the next safe step."
E Express understanding	Thank the student and acknowledge the weight of what was shared without claiming to know exactly how they feel.	"Thank you for telling me. I'm glad you came to me."
R Reveal truth	Offer brief truth that does not silence pain, assign blame, or substitute spirituality for action.	"This is not your fault. You deserve to be safe."
D Discuss	Explain the next step honestly. Do not promise secrecy or an outcome you cannot control.	"I need to share this with people whose job is to help keep you safe. I will tell you what I can about what happens next."

Teach both pathways

First use the SHEPERD Framework to respond to the young person with calm, safety, truth, and an honest next step. Then carry out Protect, Report, Notify, Preserve, Communicate, and Continue Care. The first pathway protects the student-facing response; the second protects the legal and ministry response.

Do not ask investigative questions

Ask only what is necessary to understand immediate safety and make the report. Open prompts such as “Tell me what happened” are safer than leading questions. Do not repeatedly question the child, ask the child to demonstrate, confront the alleged person, search devices without authority, or attempt to reconcile accounts. Preserve the child’s words as accurately as possible and allow trained authorities to investigate.

Disclosure response practice

Say

- “Thank you for telling me.”
- “I believe you are telling me something important.”
- “You did the right thing by telling a safe adult.”
- “This is not your fault.”
- “I cannot promise to keep this secret. I need to involve people who can help keep you safe.”
- “Are you in danger right now?”
- “I may not know every next step yet, but I will not ignore what you told me.”

Avoid

- “Why didn’t you tell sooner?”
- “Are you sure?” or “That does not sound like him.”
- “I promise I won’t tell anyone.”
- “Everything will be fine.”
- Detailed or repeated questions intended to prove what happened.
- Confronting the alleged person in front of the child.
- Pressuring the child to forgive, pray with, hug, meet with, or reconcile with anyone.
- Using Scripture, prayer, or spiritual language as a substitute for reporting and concrete safety action.

If danger is immediate

Call 911 or the appropriate emergency service. Separate people when it is safe to do so, maintain appropriate supervision, address urgent medical needs, and follow the state reporting process. Do not transport, restrain, search, or confront unless authorized by policy, training, and law and necessary to prevent immediate harm.

Parent or guardian communication

Do not assume the parent or guardian should always be contacted before the report. Parent notification may increase danger, alert an alleged offender, or interfere with an official response. Follow state law, the reporting agency’s direction, and the church safeguarding plan. When contact is appropriate, communicate facts, immediate actions, and next steps without sharing confidential information about another child.

Universal core Reporting and internal response

Report rather than investigate

A mandated reporter's role is to report when the applicable legal threshold is met. The reporter generally does not need to prove abuse or neglect. The receiving agency decides whether the information meets its screening criteria and what assessment or investigation follows.

Internal notice is not automatically an official report

Telling a pastor, supervisor, safeguarding lead, or parent may be required by church policy, but it may not satisfy state law. Teach the exact state rule from the completed insert. No internal process may be used to block or unlawfully delay a required report.

The church safeguarding lead

The safeguarding lead helps with immediate protection, records, policy, insurance notice, pastoral care, and coordination. The role should support reporters rather than taking control of facts, discouraging a call, filtering concerns, or requiring proof. If state law places an individual duty on the person who received the information, the church should not promise that leadership will "handle it" in place of that person.

What to have available when reporting

- The child's name, age, address, and current location, if known.
- The parent or guardian's name and contact information, if known.
- What was observed or disclosed, using the child's words when possible.
- When and where the concern occurred and whether it may be ongoing.
- The nature and extent of any injury or immediate danger.
- The alleged person's identity and access to the child, if known.
- Other children or vulnerable people who may be at risk.
- Immediate actions already taken.
- Your contact information if required or if you choose to provide it.

Do not delay a report because some information is missing. Call the authorized agency and provide what you know.

SHEPERD Safety and Reporting Protocol

This is the ministry's adult-facing protocol after a serious concern, suspected abuse or neglect, or a disclosure. It applies the Shepherd's Circle from the SHEPERD field guide to mandated reporting. The actions are shown in a teachable sequence, but they are not a permission chain. Immediate safety and the legally required report take priority. No pastor, supervisor, parent, committee, insurer, or internal review may be used as a gatekeeper when the law requires the person who received the information to report.

Action	Required ministry response
1 PROTECT	Address immediate danger, urgent medical needs, safe supervision, and separation. Call emergency services when needed. Do not confront the alleged person.
2 REPORT	Apply the verified State Law Insert. The legally responsible person makes the official report to the designated agency within the required time. Report what is known; do not wait for proof or a complete account.
3 NOTIFY	Notify the designated safeguarding lead according to written church policy when safe and lawful. Internal notice supports the response but never replaces or unlawfully delays the official report.
4 PRESERVE	Write the factual record using FACTS. Preserve messages, attendance records, video, incident forms, and report details without searching, altering, forwarding, or broadly sharing them.
5 COMMUNICATE	Coordinate parent, guardian, victim-family, staff, insurer, and legal communication under state law and official direction. Do not automatically contact a parent first when doing so could increase danger or interfere with the response.
6 CONTINUE CARE	Provide appropriate pastoral care, practical support, referrals, access restrictions, and follow-up without investigating, pressuring forgiveness, promising outcomes, or interfering with authorities.

How the Shepherd's Circle fits the protocol

The Shepherd's Circle identifies who may need to be brought into the response. The protocol identifies what must happen and prevents a communication circle from becoming a delay. Ask, "Who needs to know this so that the next right action can happen?" Then use the completed State Law Insert to determine whether the authorized reporting agency or emergency services must be contacted before other members of the circle.

Shepherd's Circle contact	Purpose and boundary
Immediate safety	Protect life, health, supervision, and physical separation first.
Police or child protection	Receive the official report or emergency call required by law. The ministry supplies facts and does not investigate.
Ministry safeguarding leadership	Coordinate internal safety, records, policy, insurance, legal guidance, and care without controlling whether a legally required report is made.
Parent or guardian	Receive prompt, factual communication when lawful and safe, unless official direction or risk requires a different sequence.
Victim or victim's family	Receive safety information, support, boundaries, and a clear contact for additional concerns without confidential details about another person.
Qualified professionals	Provide medical, mental-health, behavioral, disability-informed, legal, or other support beyond ministry competence.

Say the protocol aloud

"I will protect immediate safety, make the required official report, notify our safeguarding lead without delaying the report, preserve the facts and records, communicate only as law and official direction allow, and continue appropriate care."

Protocol stop points

- STOP if someone asks you to wait for a meeting, permission, proof, prayer, or a family conversation before making a legally required report.
- STOP if someone proposes confronting the alleged person, interviewing witnesses, searching a device, or repeatedly questioning the child.
- STOP before contacting a parent or guardian when that person may be involved, may increase danger, or when the reporting agency has not yet directed communication.
- STOP broad sharing. Use only the people needed for lawful reporting, safety, records, care, and administration.

Reporting protocol roles

Complete this page before training. One person may hold more than one ministry role, but no assignment may remove or narrow an individual legal duty identified in the State Law Insert.

Role	Name and contact	Protocol responsibility
Person receiving the disclosure or concern		Remain calm, protect immediate safety, follow the verified individual reporting duty, and document the original information.
Second screened adult		Maintain observable supervision, protect the child's privacy, and support immediate safety without questioning the child.
Safeguarding lead		Coordinate internal protection, records, access restrictions, care, and external guidance; never gatekeep a required report.
Backup safeguarding lead		Act when the primary lead is unavailable, implicated, or has a conflict of interest.
Senior policy leader		Oversee policy compliance, corrective action, insurer or counsel contact, and organizational response.
Records custodian		Secure incident records, evidence, access logs, and retention without altering the original record.
Family or victim-care contact		Provide approved factual updates and care while protecting confidentiality and following official direction.

Conflict and bypass rule

If the safeguarding lead, senior pastor, staff member, volunteer, board member, parent, or another person in the normal pathway is accused, implicated, unavailable, or attempting to obstruct the response, bypass that person. Protect immediate safety, make the legally required report, contact the backup or next non-implicated authority, and document the attempted obstruction or conflict factually.

Protocol confirmation before ministry begins

Confirm	Local answer
Who calls emergency services?	
Who makes the official child-protection or law-enforcement report under this state's law?	
Who receives internal notice, and what is the backup route?	
Who decides parent or guardian communication after official guidance?	
Where are factual records and preserved information secured?	
Who coordinates care for the child, family, witnesses, and ministry team?	

Universal core Documenting with FACTS

FACTS helps leaders communicate accurately without turning observations into conclusions.

Letter	Record
F Firsthand	What did you personally see, hear, receive, or observe?
A Allegation or report	What did the child, parent, volunteer, or witness report? Preserve their wording as accurately as possible.
C Context	Where and when did it occur? Who was present? What immediate risk exists?
T Taken action	What did the ministry do for safety, supervision, medical care, emergency response, reporting, or notification?
S Stored information	What incident reports, messages, videos, attendance records, or other records exist, and where are they securely preserved?

Documentation rules

- Write promptly, date and time the record, and identify the writer.
- Separate personal observations from information reported by someone else.
- Use quotation marks only for words remembered accurately.
- Avoid labels such as liar, predator, crazy, manipulative, bad parent, or attention-seeking.
- Do not rewrite records to make the event look better or worse.
- Record the reporting agency, date, time, method, and reference number if provided.
- Limit access to people who need the information for a lawful safety, reporting, pastoral, or administrative purpose.
- Preserve relevant information according to law, church policy, insurer guidance, and any direction from authorities.

Sample factual record

“At approximately 7:20 p.m. in the small-group room, Jordan said, ‘I do not want to go home because he hit me again.’ Jordan pointed to a bruise on the upper left arm. I did not ask Jordan to remove clothing or explain further. I asked whether Jordan felt in danger tonight. Jordan said yes. I remained with Jordan in view of another screened leader, notified the safeguarding lead, and made the required report at 7:34 p.m. The agency reference number was recorded in the restricted incident file.”

State Law Insert

COMPLETE BEFORE TRAINING

This section converts the universal training into a state-specific program. Use current official sources and do not guess. If the church regularly serves children from more than one state, complete a separate insert for each state and obtain advice about which law applies to cross-state situations.

State or territory _____

Prepared by _____

Date prepared _____

Required review date _____

Reviewed by church leadership or safeguarding professional _____

Official sources

Source	Current official URL	Date checked
State statute or legislature		
State child-welfare agency		
State reporting instructions		
State training resource		
Additional counsel or insurer guidance		

Trainer verification

☐ I reviewed the current statute and the current reporting agency instructions. ☐ I confirmed the information below is current. ☐ I will not describe this training as state-approved unless written approval exists.

State reporting requirements

Question	Verified state-specific answer
Who is legally required to report?	
Does the law require all persons, certain professionals, clergy, staff of institutions, or another category?	
What legal threshold triggers a report?	
How does the state define child, abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, exploitation, and trafficking?	
How quickly must a report be made?	
Which agency or agencies receive the report?	
What is the reporting phone number?	
Is online reporting permitted, and for which situations?	
Is a written follow-up required after an oral report?	
Must the reporter provide a name or contact information?	
May reports be anonymous?	
What information should the reporter provide?	
May or must a report also be made to law enforcement?	
What does the state require when danger is imminent?	
What immunity or protection applies to a good-faith reporter?	
What penalties may apply for knowingly failing to report?	
What confidentiality rules apply to the reporter and report?	

Clergy and institutional questions

Question	Verified state-specific answer
Are clergy included among mandated reporters?	
Does clergy-penitent or confessional privilege apply? If so, to which communications and under what conditions?	
Does pastoral counseling outside formal confession receive different treatment?	
Must a staff member notify the person in charge of an institution or organization?	
Does notifying leadership replace, supplement, or not affect the individual duty to report?	
May an organization designate one reporter? If yes, what individual obligations remain?	
Are volunteers treated differently from employees?	
Are there special requirements for churches, camps, schools, child care, or overnight programs?	
Are adults with disabilities or other vulnerable adults covered by a separate reporting law?	

State-specific teaching script

"In _____, the people legally required to report are _____. A report is required when _____. The report must be made within _____ to _____ by _____. Our church also requires internal notice to _____, but that internal step _____ the legal reporting duty. In immediate danger, call _____. The current official instructions were verified on _____."

Church reporting plan

Use this page to adapt the SHEPERD Safety and Reporting Protocol to the church's actual team, written policy, and verified state law. It coordinates safety and ministry response. It does not narrow, replace, or delay any duty imposed by law.

Church or ministry name

Safeguarding lead

Backup safeguarding lead

Senior leader responsible for policy oversight

Emergency contact procedure

Where incident records are securely stored

Who has authorized access to incident records

Insurance notification procedure

Legal or safeguarding adviser

SHEPERD protocol in this church

1. PROTECT: Address immediate danger, urgent medical needs, supervision, and separation.
2. REPORT: Make the report required by state law without waiting for an internal meeting or permission.
3. NOTIFY: Notify the church safeguarding lead according to policy when doing so is safe and lawful.
4. PRESERVE: Document with FACTS and secure relevant records, messages, video, and report details.
5. COMMUNICATE: Follow official direction concerning parent contact, victim-family communication, evidence, and additional interviews.
6. CONTINUE CARE: Create separate care and access plans without interfering with the investigation; review supervision, suspension, insurer, counsel, and follow-up needs.

Multisensory role-play lab

This lab is designed so participants see the response, hear safe language, say it aloud, and physically practice the sequence. Role-play the leader's response and reporting decision only. Never act out abuse, ask a participant to portray an offender, or use identifiable details from a real case.

Trauma-safe participation

- Tell participants before the activity that they may observe, pause, or step out without explaining why.
- Use the printed words on each Student Card. Do not improvise graphic details or surprise another participant.
- Use fictional names and do not invite public disclosure of personal experiences.
- If a current safety concern is disclosed, stop the exercise and follow the verified reporting and emergency procedures.
- End every round by returning to the present: take one breath, name one thing visible in the room, and remind participants that the scenario was fictional.

Three-person practice method

Role	What to do
Student	Read the Student Card exactly as written. Answer only the immediate-safety question printed on the card. Do not add details.
Leader	Respond aloud using all seven SHEPERD steps. Stay calm, do not promise secrecy, ask only what is necessary for immediate safety, explain the next safe step, and state the reporting action.
Observer / coach	Use the visual checklist. Raise a STOP card for an unsafe phrase, a SAFE card for a strong response, and give one specific coaching note.

1. The facilitator models one 60-second response while everyone watches and listens.
2. Groups of three choose a scenario and assign Student, Leader, and Observer roles.
3. The Student reads the card. The Leader responds for no more than two minutes, moving through all seven SHEPERD steps.
4. The Observer gives feedback using "I saw...", "I heard...", and "Next time, do..."
5. The Leader repeats the response immediately with the coaching applied.
6. Rotate roles or move to another station. No participant is required to play the Student role.

Visual response path

1 PROTECT	2 REPORT	3 NOTIFY	4 PRESERVE	5 COMMUNICATE	6 CONTINUE CARE
Safety and emergency action.	Official report under state law.	Internal safeguarding notice.	FACTS and secure records.	Directed, factual contact.	Support without interference.

KINESTHETIC OPTION: Print or copy the six headings above onto separate sheets and place them across the room. After each scenario, participants physically stand beside the step that must happen next, then walk the complete protocol while saying the action aloud. If danger is imminent, move PROTECT to the front. If a report is legally required, REPORT cannot be placed behind permission, a meeting, parent contact, prayer, or an internal investigation.

Observer coaching checklist

Seen / heard	Skill marker
☐	SEE: Noticed the student, immediate environment, body language, injury, fear, and nearby risks.
☐	HEAR: Listened with calm posture and a steady voice without correcting, minimizing, or preaching over the disclosure.
☐	EXAMINE: Asked only what was necessary to identify immediate danger, urgent medical needs, and who else may be at risk.
☐	PROVIDE: Offered safe supervision, practical protection, emergency help when needed, and connection to authorized adults.
☐	EXPRESS UNDERSTANDING: Thanked the young person and affirmed that telling a safe adult was right.
☐	REVEAL TRUTH: Used brief truthful language such as “This is not your fault” and “You deserve to be safe.”
☐	DISCUSS THE NEXT STEP: Did not promise secrecy or a specific outcome and explained what would happen next.
☐	REPORTING PROTOCOL: Correctly carried out Protect, Report, Notify, Preserve, Communicate, and Continue Care.
☐	FACTS: Named what must be documented and preserved using neutral, factual language.

Role-play cards Round one

CUT APART OR ASSIGN ONE CARD TO EACH GROUP

Scenario one The quiet disclosure

STUDENT CARD: You are thirteen. Read: "My mom's boyfriend comes into my room at night. Please do not tell anyone. She will choose him." If asked whether you are in danger now or expected to return to danger, answer: "I have to go home tonight."

LEADER TASK: Give a complete first response, ask one immediate-safety question, and explain what you must do next. Do not ask what happens in the room.

OBSERVER FOCUS: Listen for gratitude, no secrecy promise, no investigative questions, immediate safety, and a truthful next-step explanation.

Scenario two The respected volunteer

STUDENT CARD: You are fifteen. Read: "A leader keeps messaging me late at night. He tells me to delete the messages and says he can drive me home alone. I have not answered the last few messages." If asked whether you are in immediate danger, answer: "He is supposed to lead my group tonight."

LEADER TASK: Respond to the student, protect immediate access, preserve the messages, and state what must be checked in law and policy. Do not confront the volunteer during the role-play.

OBSERVER FOCUS: Watch for calm belief, preservation of information, separation from the leader, and no amateur investigation.

Scenario three The internal handoff

VOLUNTEER CARD: Tell the youth pastor: "I saw bruises on Eli's upper arm. Eli said, 'My caregiver grabbed me and would not let go.' I believe I need to report this."

PASTOR CARD: Read: "I'll take care of it tomorrow. Do not call anyone until I speak to the family."

REPORTER TASK: Respectfully but clearly state the individual reporting responsibility shown in the completed State Law Insert, refuse an unlawful delay, and name what you will document.

OBSERVER FOCUS: Listen for respectful courage, accurate state-law language, prompt action, and separation of internal notice from the official report.

Role-play cards Round two

Scenario four The uncertain sign

CHILD CARD: You are ten. Read: "I'm hungry. There usually isn't a grown-up home when I wake up at night." If asked whether you are alone tonight, answer: "I think so."

LEADER TASK: Separate what you personally observed from what the child reported. Ask only about immediate safety, state the reporting decision using the verified state threshold, and name one practical support that does not replace a report.

OBSERVER FOCUS: Listen for FACTS language, no assumptions about poverty, no home investigation, and both safety action and compassionate support.

Scenario five The parent at the door

SETUP CARD: Immediately after a student discloses harm by a caregiver, another adult says, "Their parent is here. Let's bring the parent in and clear this up." The student becomes visibly afraid.

LEADER TASK: Protect the student, decline the confrontation, follow official direction about parent contact, and communicate with the waiting adult without revealing confidential details.

OBSERVER FOCUS: Watch for privacy, no forced reconciliation, no automatic parent notification, safe supervision, and prompt reporting.

Scenario six The incomplete information

STUDENT CARD: You are fourteen. Read: "Something happened at my cousin's house. I don't want to talk about it, but I don't feel safe going back." If asked whether you are expected to go there today, answer: "Yes, after youth group."

LEADER TASK: Respond without pressing for details, assess immediate danger, explain the need to involve safe helpers, and make the report with the information available.

OBSERVER FOCUS: Listen for patience, no repeated questioning, no delay because details are incomplete, and a clear next safe step.

Auditory drill Hear the difference

The facilitator reads each pair aloud without showing the text first. Participants call out SAFE or STOP, then explain what they heard. Read the safer sentence again together so participants practice its sound and rhythm.

STOP language	SAFE replacement
"Why didn't you tell me sooner?"	"Thank you for telling me now."
"Are you sure that is what happened?"	"I believe you are telling me something important."
"I promise I will not tell anyone."	"I cannot keep this secret, but I will involve only the people needed to help keep you safe."
"Tell me every detail from the beginning."	"Are you or anyone else in danger right now?"
"Let's call your parent and confront this together."	"I am going to follow the safety and reporting steps. I will tell you what I can about what happens next."
"Let me pray and see what God says first."	"We can pray, and I will also take the safety and reporting steps required now."

Kinesthetic sequence challenge

Give each group the action strips below in a mixed order. Participants arrange them on a table or stand in a line holding them. They must remove the unsafe strips, place the safe actions in order, and explain each choice using the State Law Insert and church reporting plan.

Action strip	Use?
Stay calm and listen.	SAFE
Promise secrecy so the child keeps talking.	REMOVE
Ask whether anyone is in immediate danger.	SAFE
Question the child until the whole story is clear.	REMOVE
Provide safe supervision and emergency help when needed.	SAFE
Wait for a staff meeting before deciding whether to report.	REMOVE
Make the official report required by the verified state rule.	SAFE
Notify the safeguarding lead as policy requires without replacing or delaying the report.	SAFE
Confront the alleged person to hear both sides.	REMOVE
Document firsthand observations, reported words, context, actions, and stored information.	SAFE
Continue appropriate pastoral care without interfering with authorities.	SAFE

Debrief that reaches every learner

Prompt	Learning channel
What did you SEE the leader do that increased or reduced safety?	Visual
What exact words did you HEAR that helped or harmed?	Auditory
What did you DO first, and where did the sequence become unclear?	Kinesthetic
Which SHEPERD step, protocol action, and FACTS category did you use?	Framework recall
What will you say or do differently in real ministry?	Transfer to practice

Facilitator mastery check

A participant demonstrates the skill when they can complete the response without a secrecy promise, investigative questioning, confrontation, unlawful delay, or spiritual bypassing. If a critical error occurs, coach one correction and have the participant repeat the response. Practice continues until the safe wording and sequence can be demonstrated, not merely recognized on paper.

Facilitator answer guidance

Scenario	Essential response
1 Quiet disclosure	Thank the student; do not promise secrecy; ask only about danger now or expected danger; preserve the student's words; report under the verified state rule; do not automatically contact a parent first when that could increase danger.
2 Respected volunteer	Treat secret contact, deletion requests, and isolated access as serious safeguarding concerns. Preserve messages, restrict access under policy, obtain official guidance, and do not confront or conduct an amateur investigation.
3 Internal handoff	Church hierarchy does not override state law. Refuse an unlawful delay, make the required report, and document the disclosure, the instruction received, and the action taken.
4 Uncertain sign	Separate observed hunger and hygiene from the child's statement about being left alone. Apply the state threshold, report when required, and offer practical support without investigating the home.
5 Parent at the door	Protect privacy and supervision; do not create a confrontation or automatically notify a parent when that may increase danger; report and follow agency direction about family contact.
6 Incomplete information	Do not press for details or delay because the account is incomplete. Ask about immediate or expected danger, explain the need for safe helpers, and report what is known when the state threshold is met.

Discussion boundary

Scenarios are for practicing response and reporting decisions. Do not invite participants to disclose identifiable real cases in a group setting. Provide a private route for urgent concerns and respond immediately if a current child-safety issue is raised during training.

Participant knowledge check

Circle the best answer. The facilitator should review every response before issuing a certificate of participation.

1. A child asks you to keep suspected abuse secret. You should:

A. Promise secrecy B. Explain that you must involve safe helpers C. Call the alleged person D. Wait for proof

2. Your role after a disclosure is to:

A. Investigate B. Determine guilt C. Protect immediate safety and follow reporting law D. Arrange reconciliation

3. An internal report to a pastor:

A. Always satisfies the law B. Never matters C. May be required by policy but does not automatically replace the legal report D. Should happen only after contacting parents

4. A warning sign:

A. Is proof of abuse B. Should always be ignored without a disclosure C. May warrant concern and action under the state threshold D. Authorizes confrontation

5. FACTS documentation separates:

A. Prayer from policy B. Firsthand observations from allegations or reports C. Parents from leaders D. Volunteers from staff

6. When danger is imminent:

A. Wait for the next business day B. Call the senior pastor only C. Use emergency services and follow the state reporting process D. Conduct a full interview

7. Parent contact before a report:

A. Is always required B. May be unsafe or interfere with the response C. Is never permitted D. Replaces the report

8. A pastor using this training in a new state must:

A. Change only the hotline number B. Use the national core without review C. Complete and verify the State Law Insert D. Call the training state-certified

9. In the SHEPERD Safety and Reporting Protocol, internal notice:

A. Must happen before every official report B. Supports the response but cannot replace or unlawfully delay a required report C. Gives a pastor authority to decide whether the reporter may call D. Is optional in every church

10. The SHEPERD Framework primarily guides:

A. The church's insurance claim B. The leader's student-facing response C. The agency investigation D. The board's disciplinary vote

Participant commitment

I understand that I must follow the reporting law that applies where I serve and that church policy cannot be used to obstruct or unlawfully delay a required report. I will respond calmly, protect immediate safety, preserve facts, avoid investigating, and seek qualified guidance when the law or policy is unclear.

Participant signature

Date _____

Knowledge check answer key

Question	Answer	Teaching point
1	B	Never promise secrecy. Explain the need to involve safe helpers.
2	C	The leader protects, reports, and supports; authorized agencies investigate.
3	C	Internal and legal duties must be distinguished using the state insert.
4	C	Indicators are not proof, but the legal threshold may require action.
5	B	Neutral records distinguish observations from reported information.
6	C	Emergency action and reporting are not delayed by internal procedure.
7	B	Follow law and official direction when parent contact could increase danger.
8	C	Every state version requires current official verification.
9	B	The protocol uses internal leadership for coordination, never as a gatekeeper for a required report.
10	B	SHEPERD guides the student-facing response; the six-action protocol guides reporting and ministry follow-through.

Completion standard

Recommended completion requires attendance for the full training, review of the completed State Law Insert, active participation as Leader in at least one role-play, completion of an Observer checklist, successful correction and repetition of any critical role-play error, and a score of at least 9 out of 10 on the knowledge check. A missed answer should be corrected and discussed. A certificate documents participation only; it does not certify legal competence, confer professional licensure, or establish state approval.

Training record

Training detail	Record
Date / location or platform	
State-specific version / insert review date	
Facilitator / next annual review date	

Attendance record

Participant name	Role	Church or ministry	Signature	Score

Training title: SHEPERD Mandated Reporter Training Companion

Applicable state _____

Training date and time

Facilitator name and contact

Retention note: Store attendance and training-version records according to church policy, insurer guidance, and applicable law. Do not place confidential case details in the attendance record.

Certificate of participation

This certifies that

_____ completed

SHEPERD Mandated Reporter Training Companion
Trauma-informed ministry response and state-specific reporting instruction

Applicable state _____

Training date _____

Training length _____

Facilitator signature _____

Church or ministry _____

This certificate documents participation only. It does not represent state approval, professional licensure, legal certification, or a guarantee that a particular employer, denomination, licensing body, insurer, school, or government agency will accept the training.

Leader response card

KEEP ACCESSIBLE DURING MINISTRY ACTIVITIES

If a child tells you something serious

1. Stay calm and listen.
2. Thank the child for telling you.
3. Do not promise secrecy.
4. Ask only what is necessary for immediate safety and the report.
5. Do not investigate or confront.
6. Address imminent danger and urgent medical needs.
7. Follow the verified state reporting procedure without unlawful delay.
8. Notify the church safeguarding lead as policy requires, without substituting internal notice for the legal report.
9. Document with FACTS.
10. Explain the next safe step to the child when appropriate.

SHEPERD Safety and Reporting Protocol

PROTECT • REPORT • NOTIFY • PRESERVE • COMMUNICATE • CONTINUE CARE

Immediate safety and the legally required official report take priority. Internal notice supports the response; it never replaces or unlawfully delays the report.

SHEPERD

SEE • HEAR • EXAMINE • PROVIDE • EXPRESS UNDERSTANDING • REVEAL TRUTH • DISCUSS

FACTS

FIRSTHAND • ALLEGATION OR REPORT • CONTEXT • TAKEN ACTION • STORED INFORMATION

Local reporting information

State reporting hotline or portal

Emergency procedure

Safeguarding lead

Backup lead

Annual review and version control

Reporting laws, agency instructions, online portals, training requirements, and church contacts change. Review this training at least annually and before use in a new state.

Version	State	Reviewed on	Reviewed by	Changes made	Next review

National reference points

- Child Welfare Information Gateway Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect <https://www.childwelfare.gov/resources/mandatory-reporting-child-abuse-and-neglect/>
- Child Welfare Information Gateway What Is Child Abuse and Neglect Recognizing the Signs and Symptoms <https://www.childwelfare.gov/resources/what-child-abuse-and-neglect-recognizing-signs-and-symptoms/>
- ChildCare.gov State and Territory Reporting Contacts <https://www.childcare.gov/report-child-abuse-neglect>
- Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline Call or text 800-422-4453 for information and referrals. This service is not a substitute for a report to the legally designated state agency or for 911 when danger is imminent.

Final charge

Pastors should not improvise child-safety decisions while adrenaline is high. Prepare the policy. Verify the law. Train the team. Listen carefully. Report faithfully. Protect courageously. Continue pastoral care without obstructing the official response.