

# Child & Youth Safety Policies for Churches

- Introductions:

Name

Congregation and membership size

How are children present in your church?

Do you currently have a misconduct or  
child safety policy?

One question you bring to this time  
together

Two  
mandatory  
session  
policies

# Child / Youth Safety & Sexual Misconduct

Differences, overlaps, barriers

Church Leadership Development February 11, 2017

Presbytery of Genesee Valley

Rev. James S. Evinger

# What is the catalyst?

*Book of Order (2015-2017)*

- Form of Government, G-3.0106, Administration of Mission, p. 44

“ All councils shall adopt and implement a sexual misconduct policy and a child protection policy.”

*Effective:  
July, 2015*

# Is that 1 policy or 2 policies?

From the 2014 General Assembly's rationale for the amendment

A child / youth protection policy and procedures "are completely separate from sexual misconduct policies..."

2,  
*dos, duo,*  
*two,*  
*deux,*  
*zwei,*  
*neshwa,*  
*tolu, rua,*  
*twa*

# 2 policies? Are we sure about that?

2016 General Assembly (Item 05-09)  
adopted a proposed amendment to  
edit & refine G-3.0106. Currently  
before all presbyteries.

“ All councils shall adopt a  
sexual misconduct policy  
and a child and youth  
protection policy.”

2,  
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# What is the **purpose** of this mandate?

2014 General Assembly's rationale for (Item 05-09) as an amendment to the *Book of Order*.

“The focus of child / youth protection policies is to ensure a safe, thriving, and nurturing environment for children and youth...”

# What are the desired outcomes?

- From the PGV perspective, the outcome desired is not a session's compliance with a mandatory rule.
- G-3.0106 is a means to an end. The end is the well-being of people – God's people

## Outcomes we care about

1. Vulnerable people – children & youth – are safe in the life of our faith community, our programs, & our mission / ministry.
2. The integrity of our mission / ministry is preserved.
3. We practice wise risk management, & fulfill our fiduciary responsibilities as trustees of our church as a non-profit corporation.

How are the 2 policies different?

## Sexual Misconduct Policy



Covers everything related to a sexual boundary violation, including prevention & intervention

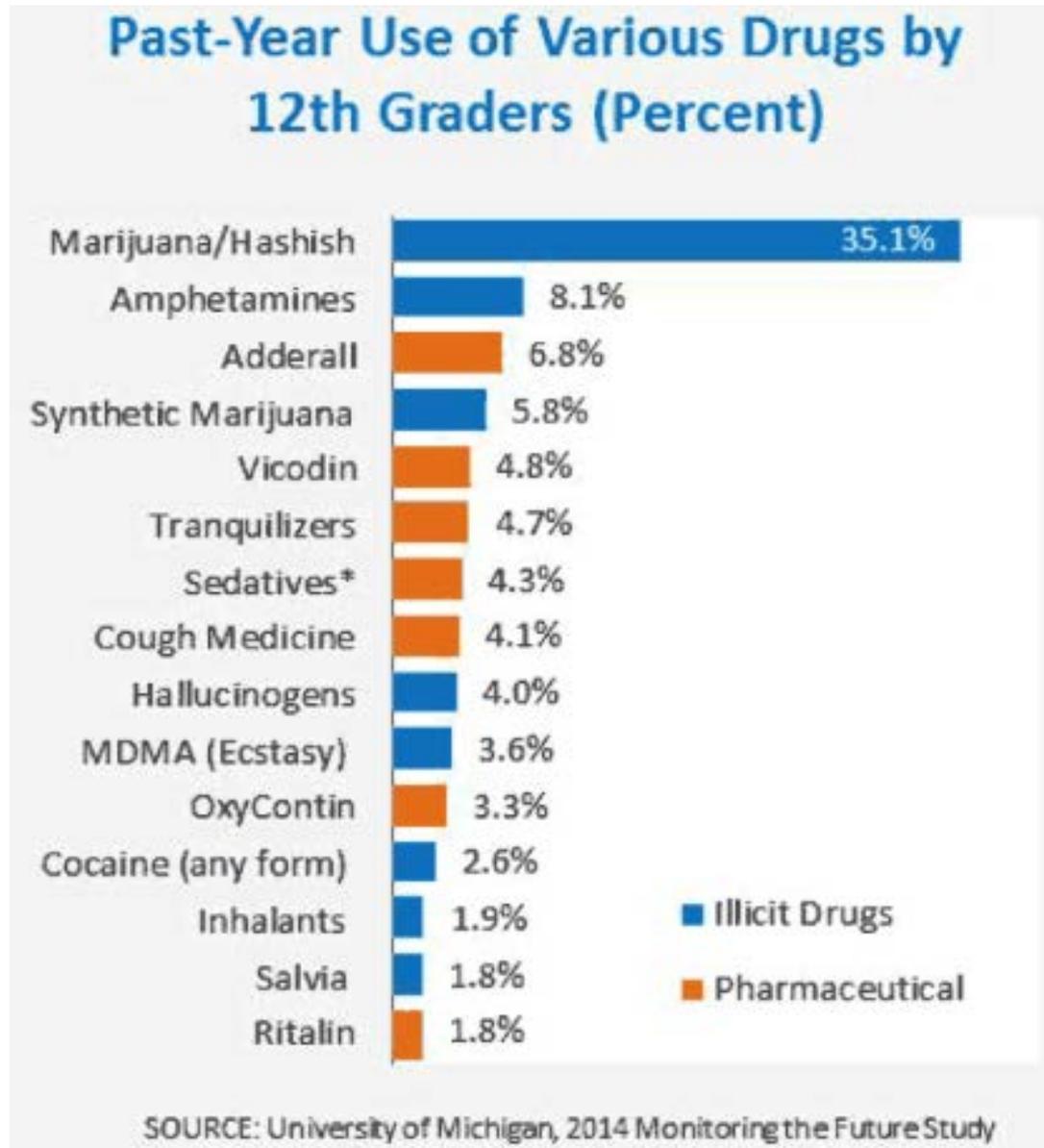
How are the 2 policies different?

## Child / Youth Safety Policy



Covers items not covered by a  
Sexual Misconduct Policy

# Some topics do not overlap



*Youth group  
covenant  
promising to not  
use illicit drugs or  
misuse  
pharmaceuticals*

# Some topics do not overlap



*Work-related safety procedures on a senior high mission trip.*



# Some topics do not overlap



*Chaperone on a youth group's retreat dispensing a minor's medication.*



*Transportation safety on an out-of-state youth group trip.*



*Parent/guardian permission forms.*



# Some topics do not overlap



*Does your church operate a pre-school or daycare program?*



*How do you deal with the presence of children who are not vaccinated?*

Runquist, Lisa A. (2015). Churches, schools, and the unvaccinated movement. *Church Law & Tax Report*, 29(5, Sept./Oct.): 1-2, 4-7.

# Some topics do not overlap

*Do you use waiver of liability forms?*



Hammar, Richard R. (2016). Assumption of risk forms: A legal blind spot for many churches. *Church Law & Tax Report*, 30(4, Jul./Aug.): 1,3-14.

# A topic may overlap, but context & behavior require differentiation



*social media*

■ sexting



■ cyber bullying



# A topic may overlap, but context & behavior require differentiation

A background check of a volunteer applicant discovers a conviction...

PGV church example:

*Endangering the welfare of a minor*

- sexual acts 
- serving ETOH to a minor 



# A topic may overlap, but context & behavior require differentiation



a PGV church  
example:

*transgender*

■ behavior

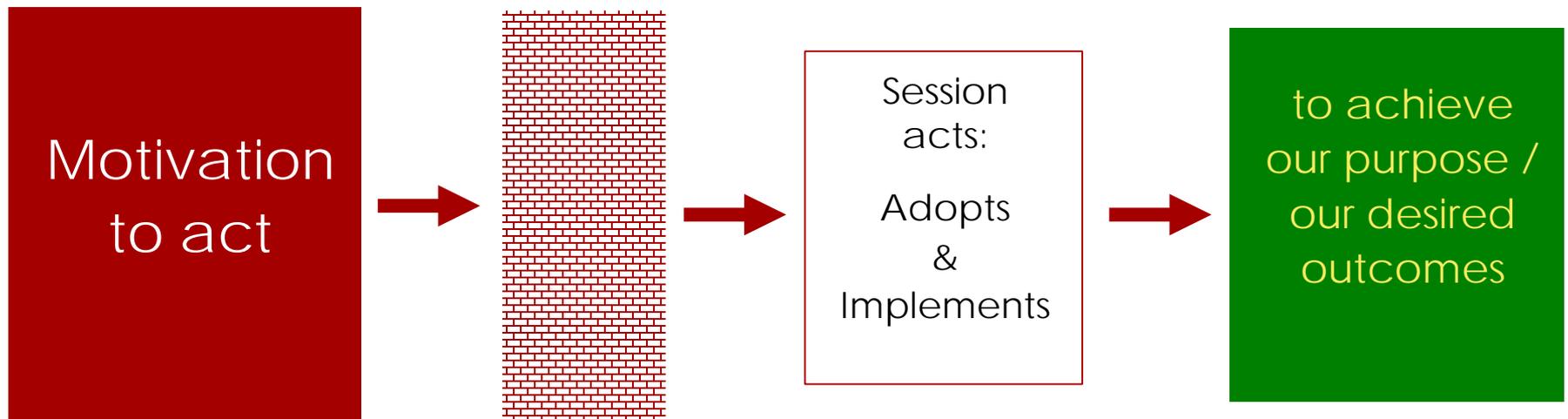


■ bullying

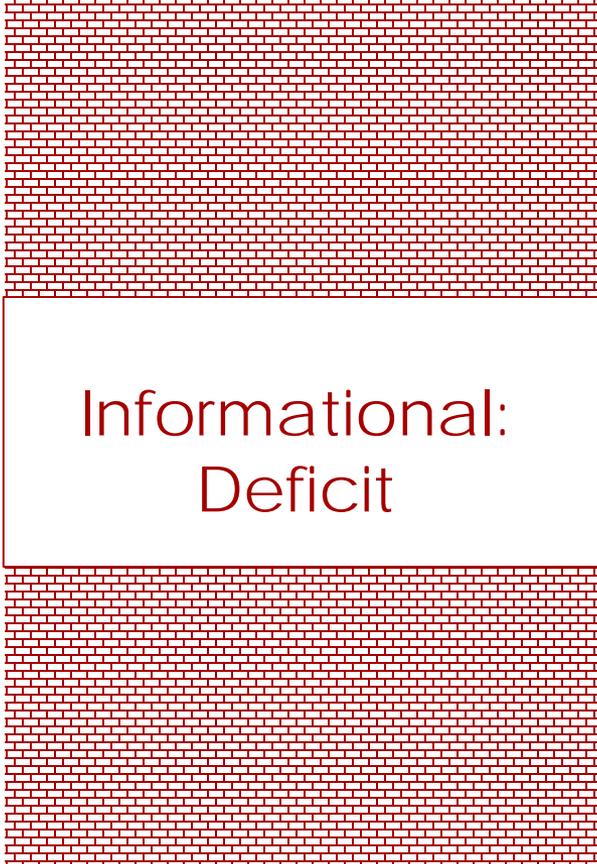


# Barriers & resistance

1. **Informational** barrier: Willing to act, but lacking resources or guidance or support...
2. **Attitudinal** barrier: Not relevant and not necessary; no urgency and not a priority. (Forms of denial & avoidance. Elevates perceived *low probability* of an incident over the reality that there is always a *possibility*.)



# Barriers? Brick walls? Let's talk!



Informational:  
Deficit



Attitudinal:  
Resistance

# Barriers? Brick walls? Let's talk!

Informational:  
Deficit

Attitudinal:  
Resistance

1. **Informational Deficit**: Easiest to overcome. Results in adoption of a policy. (fulfills **mandate to comply**)
2. **Attitudinal Resistance**: Most difficult to overcome. Is **adoption** of a policy followed by its being **implemented**? What is the result over time? Are people educated? Do behaviors change? Is the result a new **culture** committed to protecting children and youth? (achieves the **Desired Outcomes**)

# Risk: Most frequent reasons that churches went to court

Source: Richard J. Hammar, *Church Law & Tax Report*, annual report.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
<b>#1</b>	 <p>Sexual abuse of a minor</p>	 <p>Sexual abuse of a minor</p>	 <p>Sexual abuse of a minor</p>	 <p>Sexual abuse of a minor</p>	 <p>Sexual abuse of a minor</p>	 <p>Sexual abuse of a minor</p>
<b>#2</b>	 <p>Personal injury</p>	 <p>Property dispute</p>	 <p>Personal injury</p>	 <p>Insurance dispute</p>	 <p>Personal injury</p>	 <p>Property dispute</p>

Safeguarding God's children, whom we baptize and promise to nurture as disciples of Jesus Christ, is not an extra burden, an uncomfortable extra, or a hindering distraction from our real mission.

This policy initiative is a necessary and intrinsic part of our ministry. Safeguarding vulnerable people enhances, rather than diminishes, our ministry.

Welcome the requirement to adopt/implement this policy as a teachable moment, a gift from God.