

UNDERSTANDING ADULT VULNERABILITY

SNAP Annual Conference | Leaders' Meeting | August 1, 2014

WHAT MAKES ADULTS VULNERABLE

- Desire for community, connection, belonging
- Belief that church is a safe place
- Culture of submission, especially for women
- Life circumstances (season of transition, loss, isolation, etc)
- Desire for a spiritual mentor
- Victim's belief that he/she is bad or more sinful than other

5 WAYS RELIGIOUS LEADERS CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT TO ABUSE ADULTS

ISOLATE | CREATE DOUBT | PRAISE SUBMISSION | FOSTER FEAR | SECURE SILENCE

ISOLATE

- Create opportunities to be with the victim one-on-one (phone calls at work or after hours, working together on a project, counsel/support the victim through an issue)
- Share 'privileged' information with the victim
- Make the victim feel special through praise and recognition
- Pull the victim away for group events or other priorities because there is a greater need (work, emotional support, prayer, etc.)
- Discuss marital issues
- Criticize friendships and family

CREATE DOUBT

- Compliment the victim in ways that seem flirtatious
- Touch the victim in ways that seems sexual
- Ask the victim to share his/her interests; discuss their dating relationships/marriage, sexual history

PRAISE SUBMISSION

- Teach the victim the virtue and necessity of submission. This may include:
 - A spiritual authority or covering is biblical – it is helpful for spiritual growth; it is a form of protection
 - Submission to a religious leader honors God
 - Submission maintains unity within the church
 - Women are called to be submissive; it shows they trust God
 - Failure or refusal to submit to authority is failure considered rebellious and sinful

FOSTER FEAR

- Remind the victim of consequences and punishment that could come by refusing to submit to the abuse, trying to end the abuse or telling anyone about the abuse. This may include:
 - You will be punished by God
 - You will be held responsible
 - You will be excommunicated from the church
 - You will be labeled a whore; held responsible for seducing/tempting a religious leader
 - You were the sinful one (victim believes their behavior was sinful)
 - You will be ostracized by friends and family
 - You will be responsible for the religious leader losing his job/livelihood

SECURE SILENCE

- Shame the victim (this is your fault, this is what you wanted, etc.)
- Equate silence to trust
- Express sorrow/regret, which the victim should forgive
- Tell the victim that he/she will not be believed
- Tell the victim that he/she participated and enjoyed it
- Lead the victim to believe it was consensual or in response to the victim's need