Church Attendance Request by Sex Offenders on Parole or Probation

Recommendations by 70 x 7 Life Recovery

The issue of a registered sex offender attending church can be both difficult and challenging. Anxiety around this subject and the associated Sex Offender label is common and there are many real safety issues that must be taken into account. In general, there are several misconceptions about what the label of a sexual offender means and what offenses it includes.

The purpose of this outline is to develop guidelines for churches that are approached by an offender on parole or probation in our community who would like to attend their church services. In an effort to protect church communities as well as the offender, there has been a area wide sex offender committee formed, that includes parole agents and treatment providers. This committee’s purpose is twofold. It addresses accountability for the offender and includes an approval process for church function attendance. It is the responsibility of the offender to approach church leadership requesting permission to attend functions. This involves completion of the “Church Attendance Request” form. This form includes a leadership signature and names of and signatures of who will accompany them to church (accountability partner). **A key piece of the request will include having accountability partners involved and provided by or approved by the church leadership.**

**Before traveling down this ministry path each church needs to wrestle with some foundational elements regarding this subject matter:**

1. Are we as a church willing to allow individuals with these associated issues into our church?
2. Who and how will this information be communicated to in a manner that will:
   1. Promote assurance and confidence in the decision that was made
   2. Respect the privacy of the requesting individual to the best of your ability
3. What is the official position of the church on this matter when any point of contention is raised by any part of the church body?

This Church Attendance Request form only applies to those offenders that are under supervision of a parole or probation agent and does not apply to those who are no longer on supervision. Each church community will need to address handling of those individuals not under supervision at their discretion as these instances are made known to you. The following guidelines may be helpful in this area as well.

* Interview the person about specifics related to his crime including the thinking that led up to it, what was done to address this and what is different now. Most offenders should have a good understanding of this as they have been and/or are in group therapy
* Contact the parole or probation agent and have a discussion with them regarding specifics about the offender including your conversation you have had. Things to look out for are taking ownership of the offense and if there is minimizing of their crime. We are fortunate in our area that the agents are open and willing to be involved. The offender should have the name and phone number of their agent
* Carefully weigh who needs to know specifics about the offender history
* The offender will not work with minors in any church capacity
* The offender will not transport minors to or from church or any church capacity
* The church and sex offender committee will approve attendance.
* The sex offender will not attend any youth or children’s functions on church property, except those involving their own children and only if the designated accountability partner present
* The sex offender will always be in the presence of a designated accountability partner while on church property. This includes restroom breaks
* If the request to attend church is denied, out of respect, the sex offender should be told specifically why

The goal is for the offender to find community in the church body while providing a safe environment for all who are involved. Attending church should come with the goal of the offender getting involved at a deeper level through appropriate volunteering that develops a deeper sense of belonging.

If there are any concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to ask for assistance.

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