

Elements of a policy

Writing policies can be difficult and challenging in that there are many things to consider. Here are some basic elements of a policy.:

1. Prologue (this answers the why question)
 - a. A Scriptural foundation
 - b. Purpose
2. Prohibited behavior
 - a. Definitions of prohibited behavior
 - b. Standards of conduct
3. Prevention
 - a. Leadership screening and training to prevent prohibited behavior
 - b. Actions needed to minimizing the risk of the prohibited behavior.
4. Reporting
 - a. Who, what, when and where
5. Response to allegations
 - a. Actions taken when the prohibited behavior happens.
6. General items
 - a. Date when the policy is approved
 - b. How the policy is communicated with the congregation
 - c. Where the policy will be stored
 - d. When the policy will be reviewed

What makes an effective policy?

1. The audience can clearly understand why it exists and who it will affect.
2. Both major conditions and restrictions are spelled out.
3. The circumstances for which it applies are relevant.
4. It clearly states how the policy will be implemented.
5. The actions within it are sustainable, consistent, and flexible.
6. It is concise as well as easy to read and understand.
7. It is easily accessible, and everyone knows where to find it.
8. The policy has words which are selected carefully. Look at the words in the front of the Book of Order. Words like may, ordinarily and should imply a choice rather than shall or will which don't.

On the pcusa.org website are some more ideas about policy writing:

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/legal-resources/creating-safe-ministries/create-policies/>