



# GUIDE

## Advice from a Child Safety Committee Chair

### THE IMPORTANCE OF GENERATING COMMUNAL SUPPORT

Every member of your community is responsible for the safety of your organization's children. That responsibility does not reside in the hands of your leaders and Child Safety Committee alone; it is an essential communal value.

Conveying this message to your community requires not only thoughtful and deliberate conversations but also time.

Start by convening small focus groups of professional staff and lay leadership to provide information about child maltreatment and how you envision your community protecting its children. These discussions lay the groundwork for a cohort of strategic allies who will support the efforts of the Child Safety Committee. It's crucial that these individuals represent the wide range of your community's membership across age, gender, ethnic, religious, socioeconomic, and other demographics (e.g., recently joined members and veterans of the community; people who live in geographically disparate locations).

At first, some members of your community may be skeptical about the use of precious time and resources. If so, provide them with opportunities for conversation, questions, and answers, and you may find that their approach shifts the more they learn more about the issue and its importance. Remember that it takes time to process information about child maltreatment. If an individual appears overwhelmed or resistant, consider continuing the conversation at a later time.

Once your senior leadership is on board, widen the discussion by including other stakeholders, which may include board members, active participants, and others. (See *Best Practice 2, Goal 2* for a PowerPoint you can use in presenting to your board.) Make sure attendees at each small convening understand that

### Best Practice 2

Creating Opportunities for Community Dialogue

### Goal 3

Introduce your Community to the Initiative

#### OBJECTIVE

Read one Committee Chair's advice on generating communal support for your safeguarding efforts.

#### AUDIENCE

Child Safety Committee

#### TIME

30 minutes to review and discuss

child maltreatment is a human problem, impacting all communities, including your own. Consider having similar discussions with members of your community affiliate groups and try to designate at least one ally in each of those.

The more opportunities provided for members of your community to learn about the importance of this issue, the broader your buy-in and consensus will be. Ultimately the goal is to make child protection an integral part of the fabric of your community, with everyone acknowledging their own responsibility for keeping children safe and protected.



**Cliff Nerwen MD**, is the chair of the Sacred Spaces board of directors. An academic general pediatrician at Cohen Children's Medical Center of New York, Dr. Nerwen has been passionately concerned about the health and safety of children for more than 25 years. As the chairperson of the Child Protection Committee at his synagogue, the Conservative Synagogue Adath Israel of Riverdale, he has directed the implementation of child protection policies and helped to educate his community about this important topic.