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1. Form a Child Safety Committee

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Best Practice 1: *Form a Child Safety Committee* is the starting point for this campaign because, simply put, the success of child safety is dependent upon people who prioritize and engage in this work. Forming a Child Safety Committee is part of Aleinu's theory of change to build capacity from within organizations. The book of Proverbs shares that multiple advisors help plans succeed, and this Committee is a central group that coordinates communication with multiple stakeholders. In addition to inviting communal

participation, the Committee enacts checks and balances to avoid overly centralizing decision-making power around this sensitive topic. Completing this Best Practice requires achieving three goals: recruiting a Committee, onboarding them to their work, and setting up Committee procedures. This Best Practice includes practical resources, such as a Committee training video and sample policy language on role composition and proceedings of the Committee.



2. Create
Opportunities for
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Creating a community where all members are thoughtfully engaged in safeguarding our youth is a long-term, multi-layered process. The work of creating healthy, vibrant communities in which children are protected and nurtured is far more impactful when shared by a broad range of community members. The famous Talmudic maxim “All Jews are responsible for one another” lays the foundation upon which this communal work is built.

Best Practice 2: Creating Opportunities for Community Dialogue is achieved by engaging the entire community in the child safeguarding initiative. While the Child Safety Committee is designed to build a small group that prioritizes and champions this issue, longer-term culture change depends upon shifting policies and behaviors throughout the community. Ongoing dialogue at every level of the community raises awareness of child maltreatment and signals communal responsibility for safeguarding our children. Completing this Best Practice requires engaging your boards and organizational leadership as well as introducing your broader community to your safeguarding children initiative, so that all stakeholders are informed and invited to participate. Resources are provided to assist you in grounding this dialogue in Jewish tradition and sensitive language while navigating any resistance you may encounter.



3. Screen Employees
and Volunteers

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Best Practice 3: *Screen Employees and Volunteers* focuses on screening practices recommended for youth-serving organizations. This Best Practice is rooted in the Talmudic maxim describing a wise person as one who foresees the future consequences of their actions; the work is designed to help you develop a level of proactive vision as a central component to welcoming new adults into your organization’s team. Although your organization may already have a screening process, this step will help you incorporate questions about child safety into the written materials, interview, reference checks, and background checks. Through video simulations, worksheets, guides, and more, you will be introduced to these steps of the hiring and screening process as a way to assess candidates and identify red flags. You’ll learn helpful follow-up questions and next steps.



4. Assess your
Physical Space

4. Assess your Space

Best Practice 4: *Assess your Space* is about evaluating the safety of your physical site's design and access to each space in your facility. There are two basic ways that your institution can decrease risk in vulnerable areas of your building: by careful design of the physical space and by utilizing supervision. Your organization should aim for all activities on its premises to be conducted in a space that is visible and interruptible. This Best Practice will describe how to run a physical site assessment and provide you with suggestions for improving the safety of each space in your facility so that our organizations will be partners in Isaiah's promise of a Jewish people abiding "in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."



5. Implement
Guidelines for
Interacting with Youth

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Best Practice 5: *Implement Guidelines for Interacting with Youth* is designed to create clear organizational boundaries for all those who interact with children and teens. Just as the Jewish people demarcated the sacred space around Mount Sinai before receiving the Ten Commandments, so too, we invite your organization to establish intentional boundaries in adult-youth interactions to delineate the behaviors that are most appropriate within your sacred spaces. By completing this Best Practice, you will clarify which adult-youth interactions are acceptable and which are unacceptable within

your organizational culture. You will gain an understanding of the risks introduced by a variety of interactions, decide where to draw the lines for your own community, and learn effective language for enforcing these protocols. This Best Practice will help you to differentiate between higher- and lower-risk interactions and identify the safeguards your community can enact in each situation.



6. Train Adults

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Best Practice 6: *Train Adults* is based on a simple premise: education enables safeguarding. It is an adult's responsibility to safeguard children; it is never children's responsibility to protect themselves from maltreatment. Given that reality, this Best Practice will help you to expand your circle of



community members who are educated about child maltreatment and proper intervention protocols. Those who seek to harm children may look like ordinary community members, but certain behaviors are “red flags” indicating the need for immediate intervention.

Proper training empowers community members to identify these behaviors and intervene immediately, quickly de-escalating a situation and following up with appropriate protocols. When every person in a community clearly understands child protection policies, all members of that community are able to uphold agreed-upon norms and model safe behavior as a united front. While each educated individual is one critical thread in achieving this goal, it is the ripple effect of intentional community-wide adult education regarding child maltreatment that creates a tightly knit cord. As we learn from Ecclesiastes, “the threefold cord will not quickly be broken.” As educated individuals, we are strong. As an educated community, we give strength to others.

7. Support Victim-Survivors



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Supporting victim-survivors is one of the most sacred steps in the work of safeguarding our children. **Best Practice 7: Support Victim-Survivors** fosters the intentional design of welcoming and supportive spaces for our entire community, including those who have experienced child maltreatment or other forms of abuse. Whether they are public about their personal histories or not, more than a quarter of the participants and leaders in our communities have experienced some form of child maltreatment. When we support and stand with victim-survivors, we send a clear message to everyone in the community. We are here for you. We will work together to

create a safer community for our children. Children will learn that if they come forward with disclosures of maltreatment, they will be protected and our organizations will take action.

All too often, victim-survivors are doubted or left without the necessary Jewish communal support, leading to significant secondary trauma. In contrast, when victim-survivors experience an organization as welcoming and trauma-informed, they are more likely to attend, share, heal together, and feel empowered to discuss their experiences. Through this process, communities gain valuable insights, which regularly lead to the increased safety of children. Jews are reminded in the Book of Isaiah that we are responsible for supporting victim-survivors and strengthening them throughout all journeys towards healing.

8. Develop Protocols for Responding



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The Book of Leviticus teaches the critical notion of being an Upstander rather than standing by while harm befalls another. No matter how committed a youth-serving organization is to safeguarding its children, when faced with an instance of ongoing or historic maltreatment by an individual who is trusted, loved, or simply known, leaders may freeze, enter a state of disbelief, and, even with the best of intentions, respond poorly. This is when response protocols become absolutely critical: they offer leaders a roadmap of actions that was carefully determined through communal introspection and research. Response protocols are also

necessary for instances of behavior that do not qualify as “maltreatment” but do violate child protection policies or are otherwise concerning. Because one rarely catches an individual abusing a child, and children often do not disclose their abuse, these behaviors might be the only indicators of wrongdoing.

Best Practice 8: *Develop Protocols for Responding* includes videos, worksheets, a sample incident reporting form, sample policy language, a facilitator’s guide, and a handout on the following topics: process for filing an incident report; non-retaliation policy; documentation of incident reports; information for reporting and cooperating with relevant governmental agencies; communications; and investigation, disciplinary action, and safe-engagement plans.

9. Empower Youth



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Safeguarding youth is at the center of our work together, and there is no better way to empower children and teens than through education. At the heart of **Best Practice 9: Empower Youth** is research revealing that well-informed youth are more likely to know when something is wrong, more likely to disclose should something happen, and more likely to get help when needed. While youth are not responsible for protecting themselves, offenders report specifically seeking out children and teens who are uneducated about personal safety or otherwise naive because they are less likely to recognize abuse when it occurs; teaching our

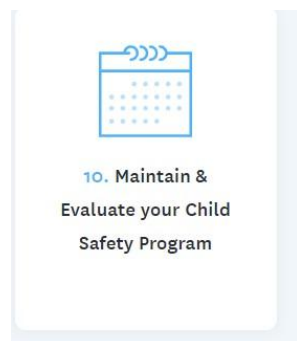
community’s youth about bodily autonomy and personal safety is paramount to breaking this cycle. Educating children about personal safety has been shown to lead to early disclosure of child maltreatment, and early disclosure is linked to greater long-term resilience. Therefore



education, designed in partnership with organizations and parents, is a key to raising informed, empowered youth.

With this mandate front and center, teaching youth our communal interpersonal rights and obligations -- helping them understand body boundaries, how to respect another's agency and autonomy, and how to stand up for others -- is foundational to building a safer, healthier society. When youth are raised with education and a space to discuss this topic, they learn what they can expect of a community and its organizations. Furthermore, they will know how to model safe behavior for their peers for generations to come.

10. Maintain & Evaluate your Child Safety Program



Now that your child safety program, including Aleinu's ten Best Practices, is developed and implemented, we look towards the future. To remain vigilant, your organization will need to review it annually to remain current with best practice standards in child protection, evaluate your organization's compliance, and ensure that your program reflects the reality on the ground. Programs that seemed crystal clear during the development stage may actually be ambiguous in practice,

well-intentioned new guidelines may introduce their own unanticipated risks, and certain gold standards may simply be too onerous to observe. Remember that no child safety program is perfect. In fact, regularly reviewing your program, listening to feedback, and revising makes it stronger. Having a child protection program that is tailored to your organization's context and embraced by the community creates a culture of protection that is far stronger than any one protocol or plan.

Best Practice 10: *Maintain and Evaluate Your Child Safety Program* outlines the steps for an annual review of your child safety program, including an annual Committee review, solicitation of child and parent feedback, external review of your organization's policies and procedures by a child protection professional, and a report summarizing these evaluations and any recommended revisions for presentation to your organization's stakeholders. This report helps gauge the level of child safety in your organization so that the Committee and community as a whole can track the organization's progress from year to year. Sharing this information with the community helps to build a culture of transparency and accountability, and generates support for the Committee's efforts towards continuous improvement.



This Best Practice includes the following resources: a worksheet for structuring the annual review and report; checklists for the Committee’s annual review; questionnaires soliciting feedback from parents and children on the state of child safety in your organization; sample evaluation forms; policy language; and email templates for soliciting participation in the review.

We know that it is “Aleinu” -- our duty -- to carry on the work of previous generations and pave the pathways for those to come. By regularly reviewing what we’ve done and maintaining a level of vigilance around safeguarding our children, we work to ensure that what we’ve planted, they will see to fruition.