

The following information was received from Pr. Lowell Almen, Secretary of the ELCA, and is distributed to all the leaders in the NT-NL Synod for your information. The information comes from Barbara Keller, consultant for the prevention of misconduct, who works with General Counsel Phillip Harris and Associate General Counsel David Ullrich of the ELCA.

What is Cybersex?

A variety of sex related behaviors when using a computer. The behaviors fall into three general categories:

1. Accessing online pornography, such as audio, video, and text stories.
2. Real time or email with a partner or chat room.
3. Multimedia software.

Why Cybersex?

Five factors play a part in making the internet enormously appealing for someone seeking sexual arousal and fulfillment. These are accessibility, isolation, anonymity, affordability, and fantasy.

Reason for e-mail bulletin:

Several bishops at the October 2006 Conference of Bishops asked about the problem of pornography on the church computers. Here are some "fast facts" to begin to deal with this problem:

1. If a rostered leader is using the church computer to download porn, that individual is already hooked and probably spending considerable time looking at porn both at home and the church.
2. Porn use and addiction are abuses. Porn interferes with other intimate, significant relationships, exploits the porn participants, wastes time needed for ministry, and offers access to congregates, especially minors.
3. The church council can monitor the use of the church computer to determine accessing of pornographic sites.
4. The church council can put a screen or blocks of pornography in the computer.
5. The church council can adopt a policy for the congregation and staff which deals with use of computers.

Do you need to know more?

1. Need resources?
2. Need a synod or region workshop.
3. Need to know more about the problem? How it is related to addiction?
4. Need ideas or recommendations for treatment?

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What about Registered Sex Offenders?

What could we do when registered sex offenders want to worship with us? What do you think we are called to do, as Christians? Several bishops at the October 2006 Conference of Bishops asked this question.

Some suggestions to help the process:

1. Information about registered sex offenders is available to public from the courthouse in which they were sentenced.
2. Many states and/or counties have online web sites regarding some registered sex offenders.
3. Registered sex offenders are accountable to state and/or county probation offices.
4. Probation officers can help local churches make a plan of accessibility and accountability for sex offenders in the church. Some considerations for the church:
 - Does the congregation have a safe church policy?
 - Is the offender in sex offender specific therapy?
 - Does the offender really want to worship and improve spirituality or does this person just want to access to victim types?
 - Does this person have a support group in the church who knows about his/her history?
 - Are there any reasons why this person cannot be in the church community, i.e. judicial no contact order?
 - Has the offender agreed to participate only in approved congregation activities?
 - Has the congregation received some training about safe church issues?
 - Does the congregation have a policy for sexual misconduct/protection of youth?

- How do we protect the congregation when we know a member has been charged with a sex crime?

Do you want more help?

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