

SAFE SANTUARY POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL

FIRST MENNONITE CHURCH OF HUTCHINSON, KS

Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse

The First Mennonite Church of Hutchinson, Kansas recognizes that abuse is a serious problem in today's world. First Mennonite Church will not tolerate abuse of children or youth in the Church or during Church-sponsored activities. We recognize that the abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child. For the safeguarding of our children and our volunteers, we will work at preventing child abuse through the procedures contained in this document.

Definition of Abuse

Physical Abuse: Any non-accidental physical injury causing substantial risk or impairment of physical well-being, inflicted or allowed to be inflicted upon another person.

Sexual Abuse: Any sexual harassment or sexual behavior that occurs when one party does not give, or is incapable of giving, informed consent. All ages are incapable of giving informed consent when the other party is in a position of power/authority/leadership over them. Examples of sexual abuse include, but are not limited to, fondling, intercourse, incest, and sexual exploitation.

Emotional Abuse: A pattern of excessive, aggressive, or unreasonable demands that place expectations on a person beyond that person's capacity, which limits that person's development and sense of self-worth.

Emotional Neglect: When the child suffers from an adult failing to give chances for feeling loved, wanted, secure, and worthy.

Physical Neglect: When an adult does not provide basic needs or supervision.

1. SCREENING PROCESS

Screening is to be used with all applicants, compensated or volunteer, including clergy, according to the guidelines set forth below prior to working with children or youth under 18 years of age.

A. Screening

All pastors, youth sponsors and mentors will be required to complete an authorization and release form authorizing the release of criminal history information. A written record of the contact will be kept on file in the church office.

No person who has been convicted of any criminal offense involving physical or sexual abuse, or who is required to register under the Kansas Offender Registration Act, will be allowed to work with children or youth. Those with a history of alleged abuse will need to get permission from the Congregational Ministry Team in order to work with children or youth.

B. Training

All pastors, Sunday School teachers, youth sponsors and mentors will attend an annual training session organized by the Safe Sanctuaries Coordinator that includes teaching the Church's policies and procedures to reduce the risk of abuse as outlined in this document.

Annually, each teacher or leader of children will be presented with a copy of the Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedure Manual and asked to read it and abide by the policy.

Additionally, the congregation is committed to implementing yearly the Circle of Grace Curriculum in all of our children and youth Sunday School classes. Circle of Grace is a Christian safe environment curriculum that helps to form and educate children and youth about the value of positive relationships with God and others. The Circle of Grace curriculum teaches children and youth how to identify and maintain appropriate physical, emotional, spiritual, and sexual boundaries; recognize when boundary violations are about to occur; and demonstrate how to take action when boundaries are threatened or violated. (copied from VI Care of Survivors of Abuse)

C. The “Six Month” Rule

Volunteers will be permitted to work with youth or children only after they have been regular attenders of the Church for 6 months.

II GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYEES OR VOLUNTEERS AND FACILITIES

A. Use a Team Approach – The Two Person Rule

Two approved church employees or volunteers should be present during any church activity involving minors. One of these adults must be a minimum of 18 years of age. All workers must be a minimum of five years older than the minors with whom they are directly supervising.

B. Restroom Policy

Sunday School teachers, nursery volunteers and others working with young children that might need assistance with toileting will observe the following practices:

- Talk to parents about how they want trips to the bathroom or diaper changes to be handled.
- Allow children to handle as much of a bathroom visit as possible by themselves.
- When taking a child to the toilet the door to the bathroom will be propped open.
- This Bathroom Policy will be posted in the bathrooms.

C. Obtain Parental Permission

Church employees or volunteers should obtain the consent of the child’s parent or guardian before going out alone with that child, or spending time with the child in an unsupervised one-on-one situation. Children and youth should also have parental permission for involvement in church sponsored programs or activities.

D. No Physical Discipline (e.g. hitting, slapping) will be used. When a child misbehaves, employees or volunteers will use redirection and/or verbal means to guide the child’s behavior. If this does not work, the child will be taken to their parent or guardian. If a parent/guardian is not available, they will be reached as soon as possible. In the meantime to ensure child safety, the individual will be removed from activities to minimize disruption.

E. Provide Adequate Personnel

Programs that involve children and youth should always include adequate supervisory personnel. Supervision should be maintained before and after the event until all children are in the custody of their parents or legal guardians.

F. Observe an Overnight Rule

On all overnight occasions a minimum of two screened church employees or volunteers will be in attendance.

G. Technology and Social Media Concerns

- Adults will limit one-on-one electronic communications with children.
- Parents and other adults will be copied and/or kept apprised on email, texts, or other electronic communication and phone conversations between children and church employees and volunteers.
- Communication will be traceable.
- Photos of children will not be shared on personal social media platforms without the permission from a parent/guardian.

H. Sharing Safety Expectations with Outside Groups

This document will be shared with all groups using our facilities for children and youth programming in order to encourage them to follow this policy and procedure manual.

III. REPORTING PROCEDURES FOR SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR, ABUSE, OR NEGLECT

A. Reporting Obligations

1. If a child 18 years old or younger discloses abuse or child abuse is suspected, the person who the child disclosed to or who has the suspicions will first and immediately, within 24 hours, make a report to the Child Protective Services (800-922-5330) or the police (911). The individual reporting the abuse or suspicion of abuse is protected from legal and civil liability if the report is made in good faith.
2. If the complainant is an adult, use as a guide the MC USA Prevention and Response Policy: Sexual Abuse Non-Credentialed Individuals: <http://mennoniteusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Spanish-SAP-Booklet-digital-5.5-x-8.5-FINAL.pdf> and available in the church office.

B. Line of Reporting for Allegations of Abuse or Neglect

1. After the report to CPS or Police is made, this same person will within 24 hours also:
 - a. contact the chair of the Congregational Ministry Team (CMT) and the Pastors,
 - b. fill out a “Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse” form included in the Appendix of this policy, and file it in the locked filing cabinet in the church office. This report shall be completed based on statements and facts, but is not to be considered “investigatory.”
2. The CMT Chair will, within 24 hours:
 - a. Notify the other CMT members to alert them of the alleged abuse
 - b. Notify the Western District Conference (WDC) Minister to alert them of the allegation of abuse. If the accused person has ministerial credentials, Mennonite Church USA guidelines in consultation with WDC will be followed. (See Ministerial Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedure, <http://mennoniteusa.org/resource/sexual-misconduct/>)
 - c. Contact the church’s insurance company.
3. Within 24 hours, CMT chair or Pastors will inform the complainant’s parents or guardians of the alleged abuse and will make sure to attend to the victim and his or her family’s safety and needs through the church and also through the help of outside agencies. Any process will keep the victim’s needs at the center.

4. The accused and those in the alleged abuser’s family will be suspended from all church responsibilities during the investigation of alleged abuse. The proper process for when and how to communicate this suspension to the alleged abuser and his/her family will be determined in consultation with CMT, pastors, and CPS and/or Law Enforcement when a report has been made. During but not limited to the time of investigation, the alleged abuser will not be allowed to participate in congregational activities or be on the church property.
5. Within 48 hours, CMT chair or pastors will notify all parents whose children may have encountered the alleged offender. Let them know that allegations have been made and reported.
6. A team of no less than 3 people (may include one of the pastors) will be appointed by the CMT to be responsible for consulting with WDC on the following, including developing an action plan for each step that is also shared with the CMT:
 - a. The need to secure legal counsel.
 - b. Caring for the complainant and his/her family.
 - c. Communication with the congregation, including timing and content.
 - d. Caring for survivors of abuse in the congregation who may be re-traumatized by this incident.
 - e. Any communication with the alleged abuser. Questions of seeking spiritual care and support for the alleged abuser somewhere other than of First Mennonite Church.
 - f. Decision making about spiritual care for and the level of involvement of the alleged abuser’s family in church activities.
 - g. Even if the abuse is not confirmed, leadership will attend to the dynamics that prompted the allegations and carefully consider the degree to which individuals involved need to remain separated.
7. A “Follow Up to Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse” Form included in the Appendix to this policy will be filled out by the CMT Chair or one of the Pastors and filed in the locked filing cabinet in the church office.

IV. RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

A. Maintain Adequate Records

Up-to-date employee and volunteer (applications, references, and screening forms) will be on record in a confidential locked file in the church office and will be kept up to date. All employees and volunteers who work with children or youth will be rescreened every 5 years. The Congregational Ministry Team will appoint a congregation member, on an annual basis, to perform screenings and maintain records in accordance with this policy.

B. Spokesperson

The lead pastor will be designated as the church spokesperson that will have the responsibility to respond to inquiries from law enforcement, social services, the media, and the congregation. In the event that the lead pastor is the accused, a spokesperson will be designated by the Congregational Ministry Team. The spokesperson will consult with the WDC regarding best practices for communication and information sharing with the congregation and beyond.

C. Emotional Response

The church will avoid inappropriate response to allegations including denial, accusations, and minimizing the events.

D. Use An Attorney

The church's legal counsel will be present when the spokesperson is answering any investigational questions from the police or social service agencies.

V. CARE OF SURVIVORS OF ABUSE

The congregation and pastors will seek to offer emotional and spiritual support and care for survivors of abuse. This support and care may be provided both from within our congregation, as we are able, and through referrals to appropriate resources in the wider community. We will seek to be intentional about consulting with experts in survivor care as we strive to support survivors of sexual abuse. In the event of a current situation, steps will be taken to help support those who may be re-traumatized. Pastors will be responsible to ensure that such steps are taken.

VI. RELATIONSHIP OF OFFENDERS WITH THE CONGREGATION

A. Time of Separation

If abuse occurs by an offender within the congregation, it is expected that a protection plan would involve a time of separation of the abuser from congregational activities. Once the investigation, trial and sentencing (as applicable) are completed, an accountability group will be appointed by CMT to discern if and how re-integration with the congregation is possible.

B. Known Offenders

Known offenders will be accountable to a group of at least three persons appointed by CMT who will support the offender and develop and manage a plan for his or her participation in the life of the congregation. The plan will be shared with the congregation. The accountability group will consult with experts or other resources to further guide the process of integration.

The church community will be notified if there is a registered sex offender attending the church community at the time this information becomes known. New families to the church will be notified of this information within two months of beginning to attend church.

C. Alleged Offenders

In the case of persons who have been accused but not convicted of abuse, an accountability group of at least three persons will be appointed by the CMT to discern their level of participation and leadership within the congregation. This group will also discern the appropriate level of confidentiality and transparency.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

The Congregational Ministry Team (CMT) has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and its procedures.

Faith Formation CT is responsible for appointing persons to coordinate Safe Sanctuaries training (including making people aware of this policy and procedure manual), background checks, and ensuring that there is a coordinator for the yearly Circle of Grace Curriculum.

Revised by: Tonya Ramer Wenger, Nathan Koontz, Jonathan Wenger, Tanya Martin Nisly – August 23, 2018

Revised by: Tonya Ramer Wenger, Nathan Koontz – October 2018

Approved by: Congregational Ministry Team- October 25, 2018

Appendix includes the following forms:

- 1. Voluntary Disclosure & Authorization for Criminal Records Check**
- 2. Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse**
- 3. Follow Up to Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse**

**First Mennonite Church
52 Rambler Rd. Hutchinson KS 67502**

**VOLUNTARY DISCLOSURE &
AUTHORIZATION FOR CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECK**

CONFIDENTIAL

*This form is used to help the church provide a safe and secure environment for those children and youth who participate in our programs and use our facilities. This form is to be completed by all people in positions (volunteer and compensated) that involve the supervision or custody of minors.
This is not an employment application form.*

1. Personal Information

Name: _____ Date: _____
 Last First Middle (Maiden)

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Driver's License Number: _____ State Issuing License: _____

Driver's License expiration date: _____

I have been a regular attendee at First Mennonite Church since: _____

Have you ever been investigated, accused or convicted of sexual or physical abuse, or any crime?
____ No ____ Yes

If yes, please explain (attach a separate page, if necessary): _____

2. Church History and Prior Work with Minors

Name of church of which you are a member: _____

List names and addresses of other churches you have attended regularly during the past 5 years:

List all previous work involving minors (organization name, address, type of work performed, dates):

3. Personal References (not former employers or relatives):

Name: _____	Name: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____
Email address: _____	Email address: _____
Phone #: _____	Phone #: _____

4. List all places of employment for the last 5 years:

Name	Address	Supervisor	Phone/Email

5. List all educational institutions attended in the last 5 years:

6. Authorization

I affirm to the best of my knowledge that the information on this form is correct. I authorize First Mennonite Church (Hutchinson KS) to contact any individuals or organizations to provide the confidential information requested. I further authorize First Mennonite Church to conduct a child abuse and/or criminal background check.

I have read the "First Mennonite Church of Hutchinson KS Child Protection and Abuse Response Policy" and agree to observe and participate in the guidelines as outlined.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse

To be filled out by the person who received the initial disclosure of suspected abuse.

1. Name and position (if applicable) of person who received the initial disclosure of suspected abuse, and filling out this form:

2. Date, time, and location that the suspected incident was first disclosed:

If there was anyone else present to hear the initial disclosure, please list their name(s) here:

3. Date/Time CPS or the Police were called to report the suspected abuse (*within 24 hours of initial disclosure*): _____

Summary of the conversation with CPS or the Police: _____

4. Alleged victim's name and age/date of birth: _____

5. Alleged victim's statement (give a detailed summary): _____

6. Date and time the Congregational Ministry Team (CMT) Chair and Pastors were notified:

This report is to be filed in the locked filing cabinet in the church office.

Follow Up to Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse

(See procedures outlined in FMC's Safe Sanctuaries Policy and Procedure Manual – these actions are to be taken and reported upon by CMT Chair and/or Pastors.)

Name and position of person filling out this form: _____

Date: _____

Date information was first received about the alleged abuse: _____

1. Report here details regarding the call to alleged victim's parents/family (*including date/time/person contacted/summary of conversation*). This call is to be made **within 24 hours** of receiving information of the alleged abuse.

2. Report here details about the additional **contacts to be made within 24 hours** of receiving information about the alleged abuse:

- a. Date/time additional CMT members were called (*include names of who was notified*).

- b. Date/time WDC Conference Minister was called & summary of conversation. If the accused is a credentialed leader, refer to MC USA's Ministerial Misconduct Policy, and note what steps will be taken.

- c. Date/time the church's insurance company was called: _____

3. Report here details about calls made **within 48 hours** to all parents/grandparents/guardians whose children may have encountered the alleged offender (*including date/time/persons contacted/summary of conversation*). Let them know that allegations have been made and reported.

4. Report here on calls made to the accused and those in the alleged abuser's family to communicate their immediate suspension from all church responsibilities during the investigation (*include date/time/persons contacted/summary of conversations*).

5. As outlined by the Safe Sanctuaries Policy and Procedure Manual, a team of the following 3 people has been appointed by the CMT:

They will begin their work on (date): _____.

This report is to be filed in the locked filing cabinet in the church office.