

**Rainbow Mennonite Church  
Abuse Prevention Policy**

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Abuse Prevention Policy**

**Updated: November 29, 2012**

**Introduction**

We realize that despite our strong desire to provide all who Worship, Learn, and Serve at Rainbow Mennonite Church a safe and nurturing environment, churches are places where abuse may occur. Therefore, the Rainbow Mennonite Church establishes this Abuse Prevention Policy and accompanying guidelines to demonstrate our commitment to creating and maintaining a church environment that is safe from abuse, protective of church volunteers and staff, and nurturing for children, youth, and adults.

The following policy and guidelines have been developed in order to reduce the risk of incidents of abuse, to educate ourselves regarding abuse and to develop clear direction for dealing with allegations of abuse. In order to accomplish this, we will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of staff and volunteers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will educate our staff and volunteers regarding the use of all appropriate policies and procedures; we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law; and we will be prepared to respond to all involved, including the media, if an incident occurs.

Misuse of positions of power by any staff or volunteer representing Rainbow Mennonite Church will not be tolerated. As a congregation, we commit to not being party to secrets regarding abuse. In all of our ministries, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each person is treated with respect and equality. The administration of this policy and guidelines is the responsibility of the Past Moderator and Church Council or its designees.

These guidelines for activities and programs sponsored by Rainbow Mennonite Church were developed in accordance with recommendations from Mennonite Church USA via the Western District Conference. Materials from Mennonite Central Committee, *Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church*, and information from Church Mutual Insurance Company were utilized.

## **Abuse Prevention Guidelines**

### **Definitions:**

Abuse: physical, mental, or emotional harm or neglect; or sexual abuse.

Adult: a person who is 18 years of age or older.

Child: a person under the age of 16 unless indicated otherwise

Youth: a person between the ages of 16 and 18 unless indicated otherwise

Emotional Abuse: attempting to control a person through the use of derogatory language, threats, or intimidation. This may be spoken and/or unspoken cruelty. For the purposes of this policy, examples are: being shamed or told he/she is bad; ignoring or not including someone on purpose in a specific situation; threatening to do such things in order to control someone's behavior.

Neglect: endangering a person's health, welfare, or safety through negligence -- failure or threatened failure to meet their needs. Examples are: inadequate food, shelter, clothing, medical care, affection, and even education.

Physical Abuse: deliberately or intentionally causing bodily harm to another person. Examples are: violent battery with or without a weapon, burning, choking, fracturing bones, and other non-accidental injuries. For the purposes of this policy, any corporal punishment such as hitting, kicking, pushing, etc. is included.

Sexual Abuse: When any person who has less maturity or power is tricked, persuaded, enticed, or coerced into any sexual contact or interaction for the sexual stimulation of the abuser, or another person. Examples are: any sexual contact with a child, fondling, intercourse, exposure to pornography, sodomy, exhibition of any sexually explicit conduct, inappropriate language. The power imbalance may result from the abuser's greater age, size, position, experience or authority.

Sexual harassment: Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or verbal or physical conduct or written communication of an intimidating, hostile, or offensive nature.

### **Guidelines for Working with Children and Youth**

1. There will be a window in the door of all offices and classrooms for children and youth. If this is not the case, the door will be left open while the office is in use for counseling or the classroom is in use for children and youth.
2. Two approved adult volunteers should be present during any church activity involving children and youth. An exception would be on Sunday morning in an individual classroom or the nursery in the education wing of the church, if an adult member of the Youth Education Committee is making rounds and able to visualize participants in the classroom.
3. Children and youth may volunteer to help with children's programs, provided at least one adult is present. A child or youth may not care for other children without adult supervision.
4. A First Aid kit will be kept in the education wing of the church. A list of church members who are medical personnel or have CPR and/or First Aid training will be kept with the First Aid kit.

5. All displays of verbal and physical affection shall be non-sexual in nature and intent and have the prior consent of the recipient. Examples of appropriate displays of affection include a side-to-side hug, handshake, or pat on the back or forearm. Any refusal of such a display of affection will be respected. A refusal to participate in holding hands for any activity except for safety in crossing the street will also be respected.
6. Discipline shall consist of verbally requesting the child to stop disruptive or inappropriate behavior. If this does not resolve the situation, use of time out in a designated spot in the classroom may be utilized. If this does not resolve the situation, the child/youth's parent will be contacted to be with them. Physically or emotionally abusive discipline is prohibited.
7. Children will be encouraged to use bathroom facilities before and after classes or other programs. Any adult other than the child's parent assisting a child in the bathroom will stand outside the door or if the child needs assistance will have a second adult present during the process. Two adults (if child's parent not present) will be present when changing diapers or checking for injuries under children's clothing or diapers. In the unlikely event that two adults are not present for a needed diaper change or assistance in the bathroom, the adult present will notify the parent that the contact occurred.
8. An adult member of the Youth Education Committee will make periodic tours of the facility wherever Sunday School classes meet during regular worship hours.
9. Off-property activities or overnight functions involving children or youth will be scheduled with knowledge of the Youth support board or other leadership persons. At least two approved adults will be present at all times.
10. Before any private one-to-one contact (for example, transportation or mentoring) with a child or youth occurs, a parent/legal guardian is to be informed and permission obtained. If this cannot occur, circumstances of the situation will be explained to a parent/legal guardian as soon as possible.

## **Education**

1. All volunteers and staff will be given a copy of the Abuse Prevention Policy and guidelines. A copy will also be provided to any interested individuals and families in the congregation. Other resource material will be available in the church library.
2. All volunteers and staff working with children and youth will be provided education regarding abuse on a regular basis. These individuals will complete a participation covenant form at that time.
3. Education will also be provided to persons of all ages in an appropriate format during Sunday School or other organized program.

## **Selection and Supervision of Volunteers Working with Children and Youth**

1. An applicant must have attended Rainbow Mennonite Church on a regular basis for at least six months prior to applying.
2. Persons working with the Children/Youth must complete a Volunteer Application form.

3. All volunteers shall be made aware of this policy and guidelines prior to beginning their duties. There shall be written acknowledgement that this information has been read, understood, and will be followed.
4. Information on forms will be reviewed by the person(s) supervising that position only and be kept confidential. They will be stored in a secured location in the church offices.
5. Representatives from the Deacon committee will initiate individual or group meetings to address program concerns or individual needs as they arise.

### **Selection and Supervision of Staff**

1. Employees must meet the qualifications for the position as described in the position description.
2. They must complete an application which includes references.
3. Reference check forms will be completed for each reference or documentation provided as to why that was not possible.
4. An authorization and request for Criminal Records Check form will be completed by each applicant.
5. Candidates for paid positions must undergo a personal interview. The interview shall include, but not be limited to, the person's motivation for providing the service; their awareness of boundary issues such as: dress code, use of appropriate language, and demonstrations of affection or encouragement; their willingness to be supervised; their awareness of the limits of their training and expertise; and their willingness to work within such limits.
6. All information will be kept confidential and reviewed by the Personnel committee in conjunction with the person(s) supervising the position. Forms will be stored in a secure location in the church offices.
7. All staff shall be made aware of this policy and guidelines prior to beginning their duties. There shall be written acknowledgement that this information has been read, understood, and will be followed (Participation Covenant Statement form).
8. Ongoing monitoring for paid employees will involve a formal performance review at minimum every three years, at which time a renewal of commitment to follow this policy and guidelines will occur in writing.

### **Pastoral Care Guidelines**

1. Usual settings for one-on-one pastoral care visits are: a public place, a church office with a window for observation, or a person's home under certain circumstances agreed upon by the deacons and pastoral team (such as illness). If an unusual setting is called for, the pastoral caregiver shall discuss this with a supervisor or deacon in advance (if feasible), or as soon as possible afterwards (as in the case of an emergency).
2. A log shall be kept including time, place, and circumstances of all pastoral contacts. These logs shall be reviewed by the deacons on a regular basis and be kept in a confidential locked file at the church.

3. The type and scope of activities shall reflect the limits of pastoral expertise and training. Church personnel shall not engage in long-term formal psychological counseling, but rather refer persons to a counseling agency. Church personnel may remain in supportive contact with persons requiring specialized psychological, medical, or legal counsel, but shall not attempt to provide such counsel themselves unless their training very specifically equips them to do so.
4. All displays of verbal and physical affection shall be non-sexual in nature and intent and have the prior consent of the recipient. Examples of appropriate displays of affection include a brief hug or pat on the back or forearm or the like. Any refusal of such a display of affection will be respected.
5. Pastoral caregivers are required to give adequate attention to their own spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being to maintain a healthy attitude towards ministry.

## **Processing a Report of Suspected Abuse**

1. Any incident shall be reported to a member of the Deacons or the pastor.
2. A written incident report will be completed by the person receiving the report. This report shall be completed based on statements and facts, but is not to be considered “investigatory.” The report shall be kept confidential, with knowledge only being given to those directly involved (including the victim’s family), the pastor, and deacons. If one of these parties is an accused person, he or she shall remove themselves from the proceedings of the incident.
3. The Deacon Committee will notify the accused party of the report. The person / family reporting the abuse will also be kept informed of this process.
4. The accused party will be removed from his or her assignment pending the outcome of the investigation.
5. The incident shall be reported to local child abuse authorities or law enforcement in a timely manner. The written report will be filed in a secure location in the church offices.
6. Members of the Deacon Committee shall be available to minister to the needs of both the accuser and the accused, with different Deacons responding to each person.
7. A church representative will be assigned as a spokesperson to the media. Only this person will be authorized to speak on behalf of the congregation.

## **Keeping of the Records**

Records required for this policy include Volunteer forms (application and participation covenant) and Employee forms (applications, references and participation covenants.) These records shall be organized by last name and kept in manila file folders in a file cabinet in the pastor’s office. Any records related to reports of incidents or complaints will be kept in a separate file folder at the back of the file cabinet. The file cabinet will be locked at all times except during the access times for filing or retrieving records. In addition, the pastor’s office is locked at those times when the pastor is not in. Individuals with access to the key for the records may include the pastor; ~~Church School Superintendent~~ and a member of the Deacons. When materials are accessed, the record of entry should be noted on the manila file folder with the date of access.

Records will be kept as long as the volunteer or employee is participating in the life of the church. Any record of incident or complaint will be kept as long as the person making the complaint is participating in the life of the church and/or as long as the accused party is either a part of the life of the church or living in the metropolitan area.

When material is destroyed it should be shredded.

## Volunteer Application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Evening phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

Current job responsibilities and schedule: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Previous work experience: \_\_\_\_\_

Previous volunteer experience: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Special interests, hobbies, and skills: \_\_\_\_\_

How many hours per week are you available to volunteer? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Days \_\_\_\_\_ Evenings \_\_\_\_\_ Weekends

Can you make a one-year commitment to this volunteer role? \_\_\_\_\_

Why would you like to volunteer as a worker with children and/or youth?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What qualities do you have that would help you work with children and/or youth?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Will you be able to comply with the disciplinary techniques stated in the guidelines?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No If not, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been charged, convicted of, or pled guilty to a crime, either a misdemeanor or a felony (including but not limited to drug related charges, child abuse, other crimes of violence, theft, or motor vehicle violations)? \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Yes

If yes, please explain fully:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been exposed to an incident of child abuse or neglect that would impact your ability to follow these guidelines? \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Yes

If yes, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Would you be available for periodic volunteer training sessions? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Applicant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Participation Covenant Statement  
for Volunteers and Employees  
Working with Children / Youth**

Rainbow Mennonite Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy statements reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who would enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through healthy relationships with others.

1. No adult who has been convicted of child abuse (either sexual abuse, physical abuse or emotional abuse) should work with children or youth in any church-sponsored activity.
2. All adults involved with children or youth of our church must be regular in attendance in the congregation for at least six months before beginning the assignment. Persons employed as church staff are exempted from this expectation.
3. All adult volunteers with youth shall follow the two-adult policy unless an exception is outlined in the guidelines.
4. Adults working with children and youth shall attend regular training and education events provided by the church to keep informed of church policies and state laws regarding child abuse.
5. Adult persons shall immediately report to their supervisor any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.

**Please answer each of the following questions:**

1. As a volunteer / employee in this congregation, do you agree to observe and abide by all church policies regarding working in ministries with children and youth?  yes  no
2. As a volunteer / employee in this congregation, do you agree to observe the Two Adult Policy at all times?  yes  no
3. As a volunteer / employee in this congregation, do you agree to participate in training and education events provided by the church related to your assignment?  yes  no
4. As a volunteer / employee in this congregation, do you agree to promptly report abusive or inappropriate behavior to your supervisor?  yes  no
5. As a volunteer / employee of this congregation, do you agree to inform the pastor (before beginning your assignment) if you have ever been convicted of child abuse?  yes  no

I have read this **Participation Covenant**, and I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above.

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Signature of Applicant

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Date

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Print full name



Previous Work Experience: Please list your previous employers from the past five years. Include the job title, a description of position duties and responsibilities, the name of the company/employer, the address of company/employer, the name of your immediate supervisor, and the dates you were employed in each position.

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Previous Volunteer Experience: Please list any relevant volunteer positions you have held and list the duties you performed in each position, the name of your supervisor, the address and phone number of the volunteer organization, and the dates of your volunteer service.

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Have you ever been convicted of or pled guilty to a crime, either a misdemeanor or a felony (including but not limited to drug-related charges, child abuse, other crimes of violence, theft, or motor vehicle violations)? \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Yes

If yes, please explain:

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**References:** Please list three individuals, who are not related to you by blood or marriage ,who have known you for at least three years, as references.

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Daytime phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Evening phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Length of time you have known reference: \_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship to reference: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Daytime phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Evening phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Length of time you have known reference: \_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship to reference: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Daytime phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Evening phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Length of time you have known reference: \_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship to reference: \_\_\_\_\_

**Waiver and Consent:**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby certify that the information I have provided on this application for employment is true and correct. I authorize this church to verify the information I have provided on this application by contacting the references and employers I have listed, or by other means, including contacting others whom I have not listed. I authorize the references and employers listed in this application to give you whatever information they may have regarding my character and fitness for the job for which I have applied. Furthermore, I waive any rights I may have to confidentiality.

In the event that my application is accepted and I become employed by Rainbow Mennonite Church, I agree to abide by and be bound by the policies of Rainbow Mennonite Church and to refrain from inappropriate conduct in the performance of my duties on behalf of Rainbow Mennonite Church.

I have read this waiver and the entire application, and I am fully aware of its contents. I sign this consent freely and under no duress or coercion.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Applicant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Form for Reference Check**

Applicant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Reference Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Reference Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Reference Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your relationship to the applicant?
  
2. How long have you known the applicant?
  
3. How would you describe the applicant's ability to relate to children / youth?
  
4. How would you describe the applicant's ability to relate to adults?
  
5. What are your thoughts about this applicant working with children and youth in a church setting?
  
6. Do you know of any characteristics that would negatively affect the applicant's ability to work with youth? If so, please describe them.
  
7. Do you have any knowledge that the applicant has ever been convicted of a crime? If so, please describe.
  
8. Please list any other comments you would like to make:

Reference inquiry completed by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

**Authorization and Request for Criminal Records Check**

Print Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Print all other names used by applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Race: \_\_\_\_\_

Height: \_\_\_\_\_ Weight: \_\_\_\_\_

Driver's License Number: \_\_\_\_\_ State Issuing License: \_\_\_\_\_

Driver's License expiration date: \_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby authorize Rainbow Mennonite Church to request the KBI, Missouri Highway Patrol, or \_\_\_\_\_ to release information regarding any record or charges or convictions contained in its files, or in any criminal file maintained on me, whether said file is a local, state or national file, and including but not limited to accusations and conviction for crimes committed against minors, to the fullest extent permitted by state and federal law. I do release the KBI, Missouri Highway Patrol, or \_\_\_\_\_ from all liability that may result from any such disclosure made in response to this request. The information recorded here is current and factual.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Applicant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse**

1. Name and position (if applicable) of person making report: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Alleged victim's name: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Alleged victim's age / date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Information regarding first report (include date / place / time / who was told)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Call to alleged victim's parents / family (include date / time/ person contacted / summary)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Contact with accused (include date / time / person contacted / relationship with alleged victim / summary) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Call to local authorities (include date / time / person contacted / summary)

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Other contacts: \_\_\_\_\_

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