



Faith Communities Keeping Children & Youth Safe

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Sample Child Protection and Abuse Response Policy

[*name of church*]

Introduction

Each child is a special gift from God. We acknowledge the high value that Jesus placed on children during his earthly ministry. We seek to make all our church activities and facilities safe, especially for children. It is our responsibility as adults to do all we can to protect children.

Sadly, child abuse is prevalent. It is hurting children, families, and societies everywhere. According to Nebraska Health and Human Services [*replace with your state's or province's laws*]:

There are three definitions used to describe abuse:

1. *Physical abuse* exists when a child has a non-accidental injury.
2. *Emotional abuse* exists when parents always put blame on a child or always reject the child.
3. *Sexual abuse* exists when an adult uses a child as a part of any type of sexual act.

Neglect is defined in two ways. *Emotional neglect* is when the child suffers from a parent not giving chances for feeling loved, wanted, secure, and worthy. *Physical neglect* is when a parent does not provide basic needs or a safe place to live. Examples are: not having enough food or clothing; not following doctor's orders; not providing the supervision needed to keep the child safe; or not having heat in the winter.

Child abuse prevention within our church community

We must be prepared in both knowledge and practice to prevent all types of child abuse and neglect and to strengthen families. This policy applies to all church ministries, including but not limited to Sunday school, youth activities, vacation Bible school, mentoring, and nursery. We commit to:

1. Offer trainings.
 - a. Annually, training and materials will be offered to all adults in the congregation and especially to teachers and leaders of children. Training may be specific to child abuse or may be on a related topic such as child safety, child development, healthy family relationships, or any protective or risk factor for abuse.
 - b. Every two years for all children (ages six to eighteen) related to child abuse and/or child safety (such as safe touch for elementary-aged children or dating violence for adolescence). This training should be appropriate to the child's age group. Parents

must be included in the selection of material and involved in the screening of any books, movies, or other materials. Parents will be invited to participate in training with their child(ren).

2. Make our church facility safe for children.
 - a. Place windows in all doors where children or youth ministry is conducted (Sunday school rooms, pastor's office).
 - b. A fully stocked first-aid kit will be available in the church building.
3. Provide safe and adequate supervision to children.
 - a. Follow a *two-adult rule*, especially at overnight activities involving children and when activities are being conducted in homes or other private locations.
 - b. A youth (eighteen years or younger) should never teach/care for children alone without a supervising adult available.
 - c. A parent must always be notified ahead of time and give consent for his or her child to be transported away from church facilities.
 - d. No physical discipline (hitting, slapping) may be used. When a child misbehaves, an adult may use redirection and/or verbal means to guide the child's behavior. If this does not work, the child shall be taken to his or her parent for further action.
4. Attend to related personnel issues.
 - a. Annually each teacher and leader of children will be presented a copy of the congregation's child protection and abuse response policy and asked to acknowledge that he or she has read and will abide by the policy.
 - b. A background check, including child abuse and sex offender registries and criminal history, will be conducted on final candidates for all church staff positions, including the pastor and custodians, before hiring. A background check will also be run on all Sunday school teachers, youth leaders, and nursery workers. These background checks must be conducted in all the states the individual has lived in the previous twenty years.
 - c. Individuals must have regular involvement in the church for at least six months before being allowed to be a teacher or leader of children or youth.
5. Deal appropriately with offenders and allegations of abuse.
 - a. When a child discloses abuse or child abuse is suspected, Child Protective Services (United States: 1-800-4ACHILD or _____ [*the phone number for your state or province*]) or the police (911) will be notified at once. If there is uncertainty as to whether a situation requires reporting, it will be referred to the pastor, a church child protection team member, or other church leader knowledgeable in the area of child abuse. When notification of abuse is made, the pastor and/or a member of the child protection team will be informed at once. The alleged offender will be removed immediately from all responsibilities involving contact with children until the conclusion of the investigation. All parents whose children may have come into contact with the alleged offender will be notified within forty-eight hours that allegations have been made and reported to the authorities.
 - b. When child abuse allegations have been made, pastoral care will be offered to all involved, by the pastor and/or appropriate referrals will be made by a child protection team member.

- c. Any individual who is known to have been convicted of a child sexual offense must not be allowed any unsupervised contact with children and may not be involved in children's or youth ministry (formal or informal).
- d. All parents of children and youth must be notified if there is a registered sex offender attending church at the time this information becomes known. New families to the church must be notified of this information within two months of beginning to attend church.

Child abuse prevention within our other communities

1. As a church, we will participate in at least one outreach project each year that provides concrete goods to families in _____ [*name of city*].
2. As a church, we will participate in at least one outreach project each year that provides concrete goods to families outside the _____ [*name of city*] area.

This policy will be implemented and facilitated by a child protection team of at least two individuals, appointed by the congregation.

updated [date]