

Child Protection and Abuse Response Policy

Manhattan Mennonite Fellowship

Introduction

We commit ourselves to treasuring our children as precious members of God's family. We acknowledge our responsibility to protect them, to create safe environments in church activities, and to respond if they are being hurt.

Definitions

Physical abuse: when a child has a non-accidental injury

Emotional abuse: when a parent always blames or rejects the child

Sexual abuse: when an adult uses a child as a part of any sexual act

Emotional neglect: when a child is not given the chance to feel loved, wanted, and secure

Physical neglect: when a child is not given their basic needs

Child abuse prevention within our church community:

1. Maintain a safe church facility
 - a. Sunday school classes will be held in the common room, where the doors will remain open.
 - b. Any activity for youth or children conducted outside of the church schedule will have at least two adults providing supervision. This is especially important for overnight activities.
 - c. Youth under eighteen providing childcare should have an adult available for supervision.
 - d. Parents must be notified and give consent for his or her child to be transported away from church activities.
 - e. Physical discipline will not be used. If a child misbehaves, adults will redirect or use verbal guidance. The child will be taken to his or her parent for any further action.
2. Personnel issues
 - a. Each year, teachers or leaders of children or youth will be given a copy of this child protection policy and must agree to abide by it.
 - b. A background check will be conducted on final candidates for all church employees who will have contact with children.
 - c. Teachers or leaders of children must affirm that they have no history of perpetrating child abuse.
3. Deal appropriately with allegations of abuse
 - a. If a child discloses abuse or if child abuse is suspected, Child Protective Services (311) or the police (911) will be notified.
 - b. If an individual is not sure if a situation requires reporting, they should contact the pastor or an elder immediately.
 - c. The alleged offender will be removed from all responsibilities involving children or youth while the allegations are being investigated.

- d. All parents whose children may have had contact with the alleged offender will be notified within forty-eight hours that there have been allegations and that the allegations have been reported to the proper authorities.
 - e. Pastoral care, or outside referrals, will be offered to all persons affected by allegations of abuse
4. Policy for known sexual offenders
- a. Any individual convicted of a sexual offense may not be involved in activities for children or youth, formal or informal. They will not be allowed any unsupervised contact with children.
 - b. All parents of children or youth will be notified if there is a registered sexual offender attending the church when the information becomes known. New families to the church must be notified within two months of beginning to attend the church.

This policy will be available to all church members and attendees. Church leadership, parents, and all individuals working with youth or children will be given a copy of this policy. Further information and resources are available in the church library.

This policy was adapted from a sample provided in *Let the Children Come: Preparing Faith Communities to End Child Abuse and Neglect* by Jeanette Harder, (2010).

-Michelle Kennel, 2011