

-Second Draft -

4/15/02

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Policy and Procedures Regarding Abuse Prevention for Children and Youth

The disturbing and traumatic rise of physical and sexual abuse has claimed the attention of our nation and society. The following policies reflect our commitment to provide care to everyone who participates in church sponsored activities.

1. POLICY STATEMENT

It is the mission of the NAME Presbyterian Church to share the good news of Jesus Christ. In keeping with that purpose, this policy seeks to assure that NAME OF CHURCH is continually working towards providing an environment safe from physical, mental, sexual abuse or neglect for those participating in its ministries. An additional purpose of the NAME OF CHURCH policy is to provide appropriate care, including pastoral care and support to those affected by a situation involving child abuse or alleged child abuse.

When those who provide the ministries of the church, paid personnel or volunteers, engage in abuse they violate the terms of the employment or voluntary service.

Adults who have been convicted of either sexual or physical abuse shall not volunteer services in any church sponsored activity or program for children or youth.

Adults who were victims of abuse as a child or youth need the love and acceptance of the church. In particular, being a past victim of abuse does not specifically exclude individuals from service in children or youth ministry. It is however our hope that any previously violated adults who are considering working with children or youth have therapeutically resolved any issues in their past which might negatively impact their work as a volunteer. If these issues are resolved, we offer commendation. If they are not, we pray they will accept our willingness to help by connecting them with a pastor.

Individuals involved with children and youth ministries should observe the “two adults/open door” rule that requires an adult working with children or youth to be accompanied by an adult partner or to provide visual access to the room.

Individuals involved with children and youth ministries should immediately report suspected or inappropriate behaviors to the director of children or youth ministry.

2. PROHIBITED BEHAVIOR

The following behaviors, as defined by the Law of the State of Michigan, are prohibited for all paid employees and volunteers of NAME OF CHURCH.

2.1 Sexual Abuse (as it applies to minor or vulnerable person interaction) is the subjection of a minor or vulnerable adult, by any person responsible for their care, to any sexual act that is a violation of the Michigan Criminal Sexual Conduct.

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- 2.2 Physical Abuse—Any physical or mental injury or threatened injury inflicted by a person responsible for the care of the child or youth on that child or youth other than by accidental means. The law also defines physical abuse as being any physical or mental injury that cannot be reasonable explained by the child's history of injury.
- 2.3 Mental/Emotional Abuse—The law defines this as an injury to the psychological capacity or emotional stability of child as evidenced by an observable or substantial impairment in the child's ability to function within normal range of behavior including verbal abuse. This means repeated conduct that produces mental or emotional stress.
- 2.4 Neglect--The law defines neglect as the failure by a person responsible for the child's care to provide the necessary food, clothing or shelter when reasonably able to do so.

3. SCREENING AND REFERENCE CHECKS

- 3.1 Mandatory Screening – NAME OF CHURCH will screen all persons directly involved in personal interactions with children or youth in NAME OF CHURCH ministries, whether adult or teenagers. Screening shall be carried out the mandatory completion of the Physical/Sexual Misconduct Screening Form by all individuals directly involved in personal interactions with children or youth in NAME OF CHURCH ministries.
- 3.2 NAME OF CHURCH Obligations for Screening & Record Retention – NAME OF CHURCH will conduct or contract for the conduct of reference checks on volunteers and staff in order to complete the contacting of all references supplied in the Physical/Sexual Misconduct Screening Form. The Physical/Sexual Misconduct Screening Forms for all individuals will be retained according to the requirements of the Michigan State Law.
- 3.3 NAME OF CHURCH shall maintain confidentiality with regards to all screening and reference checks for volunteers.

4. REPORTING POLICY

- 4.1 Any NAME OF CHURCH individual involved in children and/or youth ministries who observes child and/or youth abuse is required to report the incident immediately (within 24 hours) to the Director of Children's' Ministries or the Director of Youth Ministries.
- 4.2 It shall be the responsibility of the NAME OF CHURCH staff to repond in a morally and legally responsible manner when receiving a report of child and/or youth abuse.

5. TRAINING

- 5.1 All individuals involved in children and/or youth ministries shall be required to be familiar with this policy. This shall be documented on the Physical/Sexual Misconduct Screening Form.
- 5.2 It is strongly recommended that all individuals involved in children and/or youth ministries receive training in the appropriate conduct for interaction with children and youth and in the recognition of abuse.
- 5.3 NAME OF CHURCH shall make available training in the appropriate conduct for interaction with children and youth and in the recognition of abuse on a regular basis.