

KEEPING CMC SAFE FROM ABUSE

Policy for Protecting Children and Youth

Columbus Mennonite Church

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Purpose and Scope

Across society, the physical, emotional, and sexual abuse of minors is becoming a tragic occurrence. Abuse of a child or teen brings suffering, erodes self-esteem, destroys relationships, splits families, and violates human decency and integrity. Abuse is not only an abuse of power, but also a betrayal of trust and can be extremely devastating and long lasting in effect. CMC believes that God is a God of love and that any such abuse is against the wishes of God and that God is highly interested in the protection of children and youth. Columbus Mennonite Church is committed to providing a safe, secure, and healthy environment for all minors who enter its doors.

To this end, Columbus Mennonite has adopted the following policies. CMC will not allow, condone, or tolerate the abuse of any child or youth at our church building or at any church-sponsored activity. Recognizing that there is potential for abuse to occur, CMC is taking preventive steps in developing this abuse prevention policy and will follow all laws with respect to child abuse/neglect reporting procedures.

This policy is not intended to create alarm or suspicion among people, but rather to ensure the safety of children and youth and to protect workers from possible false accusations. This policy contains four components: Guidelines for Screening of Employees and Volunteers, General Guidelines, Identification and Reporting Procedures, and Guidelines for Reporting and Response Plan.

These guidelines shall apply to all congregational or CMC program participants and to current and future workers (compensated and volunteer). This abuse prevention policy will also govern children-to-children relationships, youth-to-children relationships, and youth-to-youth relationships. The administration of this policy is the responsibility of the Leadership Team. Individuals will be invited and ad hoc committees will be created as necessary to ensure the adequate resources to initiate and maintain this policy. Changes to this policy must be approved by church council.

Definitions

General Definitions

Administrative Team	A team of three people which has primary responsibility for overseeing the administrative tasks of the congregation.
Adult	A person eighteen years of age or older.
Child	A minor under the age of twelve years.
CMC	Columbus Mennonite Church.
Employee	Any person who works for CMC in a paid position.
FCCS	Franklin County Children's Services.
Program Coordinator	Person selected by the Leadership Team to supervise the implementation of the policy which includes screening, training, and record keeping.
Leadership Team	The Administrative and Shepherding teams including the pastor(s). Together they coordinate the programs of the church.
Minor	A person under the age of eighteen years.
Nursery Children	Minors from birth through three years.
Official Spokesperson	Response Team member responsible for speaking for the group in the event of investigation. The Response Team will appoint a spokesperson from its group at the beginning of each fiscal year.
Pastoral Team	The pastors at CMC. In the event that there is no pastor serving at CMC, the chair of the Shepherding Team or the Administrative Team will serve on the Response Team.
Preschoolers	Minors from age three to five years.
Regular Attendee	A person who has attended CMC twice per month, over a six month period during the past year.

Response Team	A team that will be created and maintained to lead the processing of any reports of abuse or neglect, lending guidance and support to the reporter, the alleged victim, the alleged perpetrator, and their families. The Response Team will be chosen by the Leadership Team and will consist of four members: one from the Pastoral Team, one from Shepherding Team, and two members of the congregation. Response Team members will serve a two-year term. Response Team members will be listed on the Leadership Roster in the church directory. If an investigation is being conducted at the end of the two year term, Response Team members will be expected to remain on the Team until the case is resolved. If a member of the Response Team (or a relative of the Team member) becomes the focus of an investigation, that member's position on the Response Team will be filled by an alternate member appointed by Leadership Team.
Shepherding Team	A team of three people whose responsibility is to envision, nurture, and give guidance to the spiritual, emotional, and physical health of the congregation
Volunteer	A person providing services at CMC, on behalf of CMC, but who is not employed by CMC for those services.
Worker	Any employee or volunteer assigned regular ongoing work or tasks related to children and youth of all ages at CMC.
Youth	A minor from the twelfth birthday to the eighteenth birthday.

Definitions of Abuse

Abuse	Any willful behavior that endangers one's development, security, or health. Abuse may be perpetrated on a child or youth by an adult or another child or another youth.
Bullying/Intimidation	Behavior, often between children and/or youth, that result in a person feeling threatened, fearful, or coerced.
Emotional Abuse	Verbal or unspoken messages (such as gestures) or written language insinuating another person is worthless, bad, unloved, or undeserving of love or care. This may include disparaging and derogatory terms.
Neglect	Abuse in which a person endangers a person's health, safety or welfare through negligence. Neglect may include withholding food, clothing, medical care, education, and even affection and affirmation of the person's self-worth.
Physical Abuse	Any non-accidental physical injury causing substantial risk or impairment of physical well being inflicted or allowed to be inflicted upon a person by another person.
Sexual Abuse	A specific abuse in which a person is tricked, coerced, bribed, or in any way involved in non-consensual sexual contact. Whenever power imbalance exists between the perpetrator and victim due to age, role, experience, or authority, any sexual abuse or sexual contact is non-consensual. Examples of sexual abuse may include groping, fondling, intercourse, and the exploitation of and exposure to pornography or prostitution.

Guidelines for Screening Employees and Volunteers

To provide a safe and nurturing environment for the children and youth who participate in our programs, the following guidelines have been established for those who desire a position involving the supervision or custody of minors. The Leadership Team and/or Program Coordinator will be responsible for implementing and monitoring the Policy for Protecting Our Children and Youth with all church employees and volunteers.

1. All individuals who seek to volunteer with children and/or youth will submit an application and sign a Memorandum of Agreement. An application and Memorandum of Agreement will be submitted every two years. Completed forms will be kept in a locked file.
2. Any volunteer who has access to a minor may be asked to submit to a criminal records check at any time.
3. Volunteers under the age of 18 will work under adult supervision.

4. Volunteers will have attended CMC regularly for at least six months prior to volunteering for activities involving the supervision of groups of children (i.e. Sunday school teachers, nursery workers, VBS teacher, adjunct teachers).
5. Volunteers will have attended CMC regularly for at least two years prior to volunteering for activities involving regular off grounds supervision of groups of youth (youth sponsors) or individuals (youth mentors). In addition to completing the application, Memorandum of Agreement, and Keeping CMC Safe training, an Ohio Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation (BCI&I) criminal records check (by fingerprinting) will be required of anyone serving in these positions. Anyone who has lived outside the state of Ohio in the past five years will also be required to have an FBI criminal records check (by fingerprinting). Criminal records check results will be reviewed by a pastor or the Keeping CMC Safe Program Coordinator. All results will be kept in a locked file. Volunteers in these positions must have a background check at least once every five years.
6. All potential employees will submit an application, sign a Memorandum of Agreement, complete Keeping CMC Safe training, and submit to an Ohio Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation (BCI&I) criminal records check (by fingerprinting). Anyone who has lived outside the state of Ohio in the past five years will also be required to have an FBI criminal records check (by fingerprinting). Review of the criminal records check will be completed by a pastor or the Program Coordinator. Criminal records check results will be kept in a locked file. A criminal records check will be required of all employees at least once every five years.
7. If contract child care providers are utilized they will also be subject to a criminal records check.
8. Any person who may pose a threat to minors, based on information gathered from the criminal records check or from other sources such as references, will be prohibited from working with any minors.

General Guidelines

Activities and Programs involving children and youth including Christian Education, MYF (Mennonite Youth Fellowship), VBS (Vacation Bible School), nursery, preschooler's time, mentoring program, and/or general activities.

1. Two adults should be present whenever possible during church activities involving children or youth. Activities shall occur in rooms which have windows for monitoring; in the event that this is not possible (e.g. a young child needs help in the bathroom), the door to the room shall remain open at all times. For activities involving children in the nursery or preschoolers' areas, the bottom half of the split doors shall remain closed for security purposes while the top half shall remain open for observation.
2. Persons supervising the activities of minors should be at least five years older than the oldest minor participating in the activity.
3. At the conclusion of an activity (e.g., Sunday School hour, end of VBS, etc.), children under the age of six should be released only to their parent or guardian, to an adult designated by the parent or guardian, or to an older sibling designated by the parent or guardian.
4. Supervision during unstructured events (e.g., potlucks) and during transition times (e.g., before and after Sunday school) is the responsibility of the individual child's parents or guardians, with the understanding that at CMC we function as a community to ensure the safety of our children and youth.
5. Pastor(s) will counsel minors with the doors open and with another adult present in the church office. Pastor(s) will conduct offsite meetings with minors in a public setting, such as a restaurant, and will obtain parental consent before the meeting.
6. In regard to discipline and expressions of affection, volunteers and employees are expected to treat all minors in an appropriate fashion, including:
 - a. Respect for physical boundaries. When physical affection is offered, it should be appropriate to the age of the minor with complete sensitivity of the personal boundaries of the minor. If changing a diaper or helping a child in the bathroom who requires assistance, another adult should be present in the room.

- b. Nurturing discipline. Physical discipline is not permitted under any circumstances. Verbal discipline may be administered respectfully and compassionately. The child's parent or guardian should be involved if additional intervention is needed.

7. Training

- a. Pastor(s), employees, and anyone applying to volunteer will be required to participate in an annual training program in which they are educated regarding the:
 - i. dynamics of abuse,
 - ii. church's policies for the prevention of child abuse,
 - iii. procedures to be used in all ministries with minors, and
 - iv. appropriate steps to report suspected child abuse.
- b. Congregation, Parent or Guardian, and Family Education

Family educational opportunities shall be provided regularly in order to learn about the facts of abuse and abuse prevention. A main goal for this training will be to assist parents or guardians, and children in the discussion of abuse, and ways of increasing children's safety. Separate educational opportunities will be provided for the junior and senior youth. Educational events shall be held for the congregation as a whole in order to share information regarding abuse and this Policy for the prevention of abuse.

8. Outside Programs

CMC will require all outside programs that use the church facility to agree to take responsibility for the care and welfare of their minors as well as sign the "Agreement for the use of Building" which includes release of liability.

Identifying and Reporting Abuse

The church's responsibility is to be aware and to report suspected abuse and/or neglect. The State of Ohio mandates reporting of abuse or possible risk of abuse (Ohio Revised Code 2151.42.1). Along with other professions such as health care providers and school workers, a "person rendering spiritual treatment through prayer in accordance with the tenets of a well-recognized religion" must immediately report the knowledge or suspicion of abuse to the appropriate authorities.

Although a volunteer or employee may not be a mandated reporter, CMC believes that anyone involved with minors who suspects abuse has a moral obligation to report. Church volunteers or employees who fail to report abuse which they witness or suspect will be removed from their position. When signs or symptoms of abuse arise, or a volunteer or employee witnesses abuse or a child or youth makes a disclosure, the volunteer or employee should immediately notify a member of the Response Team. Understandably, church volunteers or employees may be hesitant to report a suspected incident of abuse or neglect for many reasons such as embarrassment or fear of personal and legal recrimination. It is important to remember that reporting suspected abuse reflects caring and is not an act of disloyalty.

A sound reporting procedure promotes safety among our children and youth and accountability among church workers. Church workers will be trained in identifying inappropriate behavior with children, and to identify the symptoms of abuse or neglect. Reporting guidelines have been created to guide the reporter through this difficult process and ensure the safety and confidentiality of all involved parties.

We recognize that there may be occasions where incidents occur that include bullying or intimidation but do not mandate reporting. Such bullying and intimidation does represent a form of violence towards others, and Columbus Mennonite does not condone such behaviors in its congregational life. If those behaviors are reported, the Response Team will gather information and devise a response plan such that youth and children remain safe within our community.

Guidelines for Reporting Abuse and Response Plan for Allegations

1. Any incident or reasonable suspicion of abuse shall be reported, to a member of the Response Team. All incidents or suspicious activity will be documented by the Response Team using the "Abuse Incident Report Form."
2. The Response Team shall notify the parent or guardians of the victim and help insure the immediate safety of the victim.
3. The accused abuser will be treated with dignity, but will be immediately removed from further CMC involvement with children or youth.
4. The reporter, in cooperation with a Response Team member, will notify the proper law enforcement and/or Franklin County Children Services as stated in Ohio laws.
5. A written record shall be kept of the steps taken in response to the allegations. The Response Team will confidentially maintain all information.
6. CMC will seek guidance from the Central District Conference staff and will obtain legal counsel.
7. Regardless of the action taken by FCCS, the Response Team may work with the alleged victim, the accused, and their families in order to seek resolution and healing. All parties involved will be treated with dignity, compassion, and respect.
8. A brief and accurate statement will be prepared at the discretion of the Response Team that can be made to the congregation without giving unnecessary details, placing blame, interfering with the victim's privacy, or violating any confidentiality concerns.
9. Requests from the media and communication with employees and the congregation will be referred to the official spokesperson. Only the official spokesperson is to speak with the public about the case.

NOTE: This report is to be filled out by a member of the Response Team. It is imperative that the person filling out this report be familiar with the Ohio Revised Code/reporting requirement before taking action or completing this report.

ABUSE INCIDENT REPORT

Date of this Report and Time: _____/_____/_____ :_____

Date Incident Occurred: _____/_____/_____ :_____

Location of Incident: _____

Incident Reported by: _____

Incident Reported to: _____ Response Team _____ Pastor _____ Other (specify)

Alleged Type of Abuse/Neglect:

_____ Verbal _____ Physical _____ Sexual _____ Neglect _____ Other (specify)

Injuries Noted: _____ Yes _____ No

If Yes, Describe: _____

Medical Attention: _____ Yes _____ No

If Yes, Action Taken: _____

Name of Victim: _____

Name of Person(s) Accused: _____

Name of witness (es) to the incident: _____

Accused Person(s) is: _____ Church Employee _____ Teacher _____ Nursery or Preschooler Worker

_____ Jr. Youth Sponsor _____ MYF sponsor _____ Mentor _____ Church Member

_____ Other (specify)

Victim Report: (If able and willing--do not pressure) _____

Witness report: _____

Report to Victim's Family: Date ___/___/___ Time ___:___ spoke to: _____

Summary/Response: _____

Report Made To: _____ FCCS (614-229-7000) _____ Police

Date/Time: _____/_____/_____ :_____ a.m. or p.m.

Spoke With: _____

Not Applicable (Reason) _____

Corrective Action/Safety Plan: (include both victim and accused)

Victim: _____

Accused: _____

Signature of Reporter _____ Date _____

Prepared by: _____ Date _____

(Member of Response Team)

7/4/07mkhSafeCMCCommittee

06/11/10revised

Keeping CMC Safe from Abuse Application for Volunteers and Employees

Please Print

Application Date _____

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____ E-mail _____

Occupation: _____ Work Phone: _____

Business Address _____

How long have you been a resident of Ohio? _____

If less than 5 years, please include your previous address: _____

If working with a child(ren) or youth in an unsupervised setting or as a paid employee of Columbus Mennonite Church, are you willing to submit to a background/fingerprint check at any time? ___ Yes ___ No

If you are submitting an application for the first time and are 18 years old or older, please list three references. Please do not use relatives as references and include at least one reference from outside Columbus Mennonite Church.

Name	Address	Phone	email	Relationship

For what position(s) are you applying? (Be specific, i.e. mentor, nursery worker, etc.) _____

If volunteering, when did you begin attending Columbus Mennonite Church regularly? _____

Have you ever participated in, or been accused, convicted or pleaded guilty or no contest to abuse or any sexual misconduct? ___ Yes ___ No

Have you ever been convicted of or pleaded guilty or no contest to any criminal offense of any kind? ___ Yes ___ No

If you answered yes to either criminal background question, someone will be contacting you for further information.

Answer the following two questions if applying for a position requiring driving:

Do you have a valid driver's license? _____ State _____ Exp. Date _____

Do you have car insurance? _____ Company and policy number _____

I affirm that all answers that I have given are true and complete and I understand that misrepresentation and/or withholding information will result in the rejection of this application or discharge after my term begins.

Applicant Signature _____ Date _____

Keeping CMC Safe from Abuse Memorandum of Agreement

Columbus Mennonite Church is committed to providing a safe, secure, and healthy environment for all children and youth who participate in its ministries and activities.

The Keeping CMC Safe policy reflects 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 God's love, healing, and hope through relationships with others.

This agreement is to be signed by all Columbus Mennonite Church volunteers who work with children and youth and all Columbus Mennonite Church employees.

As a volunteer and/or employee in this congregation:

I agree to promptly report to the Response Team any incident of abuse, including bullying/intimidation, emotional abuse, neglect, physical abuse, or sexual abuse.

I agree to complete an annual Keeping CMC Safe training provided by the church.

If under the age of 18, I agree to work under adult supervision at all times.

I agree to observe and abide by the Keeping CMC Safe from Abuse Policy and guidelines regarding working with children and youth.

Signature _____ Date _____

Participation in Annual Training

Year 1: I have participated in the Keeping CMC Safe from Abuse annual training for the year _____.

I completed the training on _____ (date).

Signature _____ Date _____

Year 2: I have participated in the Keeping CMC Safe from Abuse annual training for the year _____.

I completed the training on _____ (date).

Signature _____ Date _____