

Appendix F: KEEPING CMC SAFE FROM ABUSE

Policy for Protecting Children and Youth

Columbus Mennonite Church

Revised and approved on April 15, 2026¹

Contents

Purpose and Scope.....	2
Definitions	3
General Definitions	3
Definition of Abuse.....	4
Guidelines for Screening Employees and Volunteers.....	5
Guidelines for CMC Activities and Education	6
Identifying and Reporting Abuse	8
Ohio law	8
CMC reporting.....	9
Guidelines for Reporting Abuse and Response Plan for Allegations	9
Keeping CMC Safe from Abuse: Application for Volunteers and Employees.....	16
Keeping CMC Safe from Abuse: Memorandum of Agreement	17
Participation in Annual Training	18
KCMCS Transportation Agreement.....	19

¹ The Policy was originally approved on July 23, 2006. It was updated and approved on October 7, 2010, and it was revised and approved on April 12, 2019, on April 16, 2021, on March 10, 2022 and on March 25, 2025.

Purpose and Scope

The physical, emotional, and sexual abuse of children and youth is a tragic occurrence which 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 will 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 children and youth who enter its doors.

To this end, Columbus Mennonite Church has adopted this Policy for Protecting Children and Youth (“Policy”). CMC will not allow, condone, or tolerate the abuse of any child or youth in our church building or at any church activity. Recognizing that there is potential for abuse to occur, CMC is taking preventive steps in the Policy and will follow all laws with respect to reporting abuse of children and youth.

The 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. The Policy contains four components: Guidelines for the Screening of Employees and Volunteers; Guidelines for CMC Activities and Education; Identifying and Reporting Abuse; and Guidelines for Reporting Abuse and Response Plan for Allegations.

These guidelines shall apply to all congregational or CMC program participants, to all workers (compensated and volunteer), and to all residents of the building. The Policy will also govern minor-to-minor relationships (that is, children-to-children, youth-to-children, and youth-to-youth relationships).

The administration of the Policy shall be the responsibility of the Leadership Team. Individuals will be invited and ad hoc committees will be created as necessary to ensure adequate resources to maintain the Policy. Changes to the Policy must be approved by Leadership Team. Under Leadership Team’s direction, the Policy shall be reviewed every five years.

Definitions

General Definitions

CMC	Columbus Mennonite Church.
Child (Children)	A person (persons) under the age of 12.
Youth	A person from age 12 until their 18 th birthday or 21 st birthday for a person with a disability.
Minor	A person under the age of 18 or 21 for a person with a physical or mental disability.
Adult	A person 18 years of age or older.
Employee	A person who works for CMC in a paid position.
Volunteer	A person providing services at CMC, on behalf of CMC, but who is not employed by CMC for those services.
Worker	A CMC employee or volunteer, and also any independent contractor who regularly works in the CMC building.
Leadership Team	Leadership Team provides vision, creates policy, reviews finances, approves personnel, and oversees Keeping CMC Safe (KCMCS).
Program Coordinator	Employee selected by Leadership Team to supervise the Policy's maintenance, which includes screening, training, record keeping, collaboration with professionals in the field, and grant applications.
Response Team	A committee that leads the process of any reports of abuse or neglect of children or youth.
Official Spokesperson	Response Team member responsible for speaking for the group in the event of investigation.
Shepherding Team	The commission whose responsibility is to envision, nurture, and give guidance to the spiritual, emotional, and physical health of the congregation.

Definition of Abuse

Abuse Willful behavior that endangers a person's development, security, or health. Abuse may be perpetrated on a child or youth by an adult or by another child or another youth.

Abuse includes, for example:

Bullying/Intimidation Behavior, often between minors, that results 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 underserving 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, affection, or 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 child or youth.

Sexual Abuse An abuse in which a person is tricked, coerced, bribed, or in any way subjected to nonconsensual sexual contact. Whenever a power imbalance exists between the perpetrator and victim due to age, role, experience, or authority, any sexual contact is non-consensual. Examples of sexual abuse may include groping, fondling, intercourse, and the exploitation of or 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 CMC's programs, the following guidelines have been established for those who desire a position involving the supervision or care of children and youth. The Program Coordinator shall be responsible for implementing and monitoring the Policy with all church employees and volunteers.

1. A person who seeks to volunteer with children and youth shall submit the Application for Volunteers and Employees and sign a Memorandum of Agreement. (The forms for the Application for Volunteers and Employees and the Memorandum of Agreement are found later in this Policy.) The Application for Volunteers and Employees and Memorandum of Agreement shall be submitted every two years. Completed forms shall be kept in a locked file.
2. A volunteer who can be with one or more children or youth may be asked by the Program Coordinator to submit to a criminal records check at any time.
3. All first-time volunteers shall submit three references consisting of one outside of CMC and no relatives.
4. A volunteer under the age of 18 shall work under adult supervision.
5. Before serving as a volunteer for an activity involving the supervision of a group of children or youth (e.g., a Sunday school teacher, nursery worker, VBS teacher, or adjunct teacher), a volunteer must be a regular attender at CMC (a person who has attended CMC twice per month, over a six-month period during the past year).
6. Before volunteering for activities involving regular off-grounds supervision of a group of youth as a youth sponsor, a person must have attended CMC regularly for at least **ONE year prior to volunteering**, while a **TWO-year regular attendance requirement shall apply** for youth mentors. In addition to completing the Application for Volunteers and Employees, Memorandum of Agreement, and Keeping CMC Safe training, a criminal records check for county, national and federal shall be required of anyone serving in these positions. For a person who has lived outside the state of Ohio in the previous five years, a criminal records check in their previous county shall be required. A pastor or the Program Coordinator shall review the criminal records check, which shall be kept in a locked file. A volunteer in either of these positions shall have a criminal records check at least once every five years.
7. All youth sponsors or adults transporting children or youth to activities shall complete all steps listed in guideline 6 and shall complete the KCMCS Transportation Agreement and provide the documentation requested by the Agreement. A driver must be at least 5 years older than the oldest child or youth in the vehicle.

8. A potential employee shall submit an application, sign a Memorandum of Agreement, complete Keeping CMC Safe training, and submit to a criminal records check as stated above. For a person who has lived outside the state of Ohio in the previous five years, a criminal records check shall be completed in their previous county of residence. A pastor or the Program Coordinator shall review the criminal records check, which shall be kept in a locked file. A criminal records check shall be required of an employee at least once every five years.
9. Independent contractors serving the church are exempt from the employee requirements of KCMCS unless they are working in the church building (e.g., accountant or building manager).
10. Contract child care providers shall be subject to a criminal records check.
11. A person who poses or may pose a threat to children or youth, based on information gathered from the criminal records check or from other sources such as references, shall be prohibited by the Program Coordinator from working with children and youth, if the prohibition is confirmed by the Response Team.
12. The Program Coordinator will use the Response Team as a resource for other questions or concerns that may arise while administrating the KCMCS Policy.

Guidelines for CMC Activities and Education

These guidelines apply to CMC activities involving children or youth, including Christian education, MYF (Mennonite Youth Fellowship), VBS (Vacation Bible School), nursery, preschoolers' time, mentoring program, and general activities, as well as to education on the topic of abuse and its prevention.

1. Two adults shall be present whenever possible during church activities involving children or youth. For activities which occur in rooms, there shall be 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.
2. A person supervising the activities of children or youth shall be at least five years older than the oldest child or youth participating in the activity.
3. At the conclusion of an activity (e.g., a Sunday school hour, a VBS session, etc.), children under the age of six shall 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 a 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. When a pastor is counseling one or more children or youth in a room, the doors shall remain open and another adult shall be present in the church office. Before a pastor conducts an offsite meeting with one or more children or youth in a public setting, such as a restaurant, the pastor shall obtain parental consent.
6. In regard to discipline and expressions of affection, volunteers and employees are expected to treat all children and youth in an appropriate fashion, including:
 - a. Nurturing discipline. Physical discipline is not permitted under any circumstances. If used, verbal discipline shall be administered respectfully and compassionately. The child's parent or guardian shall be involved if additional intervention is needed.
 - b. Respect for physical boundaries. If physical affection is offered, it shall be appropriate to the minor's age and with complete sensitivity to the minor's personal boundaries. If changing a diaper or helping a child in the bathroom who requires assistance, there shall be two adults present in the room, if possible.
7. Congregational Training, communication and record keeping by KCMCS Program Coordinator
 - a. Annual training will be organized by the Program Coordinator for a Sunday morning worship service in the spring (April is National Abuse Awareness month) because we are a community looking out for one another's safety. This training will provide general information about why the KCMCS program was implemented and needs to be maintained, the protection it provides for children and youth, the benefits it has for ministry workers and the function of the Response Team. The annual training will be posted on the CMC website.
 - b. Pastors, employees, Response Team members, volunteers and volunteer applicants shall participate in an annual congregational training program along with reading:
 - i. The Keeping CMC Safe from Abuse Policy.
 - ii. The pamphlet "When a child discloses, how to respond".
 - c. Training Forms. All completed KCMCS training forms, volunteer applications, references, and memorandums of agreement will be stored in a locked file for 5 years. Annual spreadsheets of the training will be stored on the computer.
 - d. Communication Methods. The KCMCS Program Coordinator will present information throughout the year to promote and keep the KCMCS Policy in

the forefront of the congregation. Such formats include the Lamplighter newsletter, emails to nursery/preschoolers' time volunteers along with the parents using those services, the church website, bulletin announcements etc. Working in conjunction with the pastoral team and Leadership Team is essential.

8. Outside Programs. CMC shall require all outside programs that use the church facility to agree to take responsibility for the care and welfare of their children and youth as well as sign the "Agreement for the Use of Building" which includes release of liability.

Identifying and Reporting Abuse

Ohio law

Section 2151.421 of the Ohio Revised Code² sets forth the scope of Ohio's mandatory reporting of abuse, which is defined as "any physical or mental wound, injury, disability, or condition of a nature that reasonably indicates abuse or neglect" The law requires certain persons (so-called mandatory reporters) who know or have reasonable cause to suspect that a person younger than 18 (or a person younger than 21 "with a developmental disability or physical impairment") has suffered abuse or faces the threat of abuse to immediately report the situation to "the public children services agency [for example, Franklin County Children's Services] or a peace officer in the county"³

The persons who are mandatory reporters include (among others) attorneys, health care professionals, licensed school psychologists, marriage and family therapists, administrators and employees of a child care center or camp, teachers and other school employees, police officers, professional employees of a county department of children and youth who work with children and families, employees and board members of a county board of developmental disabilities, and foster caregivers.⁴

Is a member of the clergy a mandatory reporter? The answer is different under Ohio law versus MC USA policy.

Under Ohio law, a member of the clergy ("cleric" is the term used) is a mandatory reporter only if both (1) they know or have reasonable cause to believe that abuse has occurred or

² Section 2151.421 | Reporting child abuse or neglect.

³ Section 2151.421(A)(1)(a).

⁴ Section 2151.421(A)(1)(b).

is threatened to occur and (2) they know or have reasonable cause to believe that another clergy member or another faith leader (who is not a volunteer) is the cause of the abuse or the threat of it.⁵ In contrast to Ohio law and essentially overriding it, MC USA has stated this policy: “In areas where clergy are not mandated reporters, explicitly or by role, MC USA consider[s] credentialed leaders moral reporters, meaning they have an obligation, morally, to function as mandated reporters.”⁶

A mandatory reporter is required to file a report only if they learn of the allegations while “acting in an official or professional capacity.”⁷

Under Ohio law, anyone who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that abuse has occurred or is threatened to occur may report the situation.⁸

CMC reporting

CMC’s responsibility is to be alert to the possibility of abuse in its church building or its activities, and, generally speaking, to report to the authorities according to Ohio law if CMC has knowledge of abuse or a reasonable suspicion of it. A CMC worker (that is, an employee, a volunteer, or an independent contractor who regularly works in the CMC building) who has knowledge or reasonable suspicion of abuse shall report this to the Response Team as soon as reasonably possible. Failure to do so may result in the worker’s being removed from their position.

Understandably, a worker may be hesitant to report abuse for various reasons, such as embarrassment, risk of retaliation, or fear of personal or legal recrimination. It is important to remember that reporting abuse normally 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 youth, and to identify the symptoms of abuse or neglect. The Response Team has been created to guide the reporter through this difficult process and ensure the safety and confidentiality of all involved parties.

There may be incidents, including bullying or intimidation, that do not mandate reporting under Ohio law. Bullying and intimidation represent a form of violence towards others, and Columbus Mennonite does not condone such behaviors in its congregational life. If those behaviors are reported to the Response Team, the Team will gather information and devise a plan so that children and youth remain safe within our community.

⁵ Section 2151.421(A)(4)(a).

⁶ Prevention and Accountability Resource, Mennonite Church USA, May 2, 2025, page 16, fn 4.

⁷ Section 2151.421(A)(1)(a) and (4)(a).

⁸ Section 2151.421(B).

Guidelines for Reporting Abuse and Response Plan for Allegations

The Response Team shall lead the processing of any reports of abuse of children or youth. It shall be the responsibility of Leadership Team to appoint the members of the Response Team. This shall be done before the spring congregational meeting so that the appointments are on the leadership slate that is voted on by the congregation at the meeting. Each year the Response team shall hold an annual reorganizational meeting and may review instructional materials provided by the Program Coordinator. The Response Team members shall be listed on the Leadership Roster in the church directory.

The Response Team shall have five members. Past experience on the Response Team and professional training are important factors in the appointment of Response Team members. The following shall be the source of members for the Response Team:

- The lead pastor at CMC. If there is no lead pastor serving CMC, another pastoral member or member of Leadership Team, but not the chair of Leadership Team, shall fill the role of lead pastor on the Response Team.
- One member of Shepherding Commission.
- Three at-large members.

Members of the Response Team shall normally serve for at least two years, and may be asked to serve consecutive terms for as long as Leadership Team desires to appoint them. If an investigation is being conducted, the Response Team members are expected to remain on the team until the case is resolved.

If a member of the Response Team (or a relative of a Team member) becomes the focus of an investigation, that person shall no longer be a member of the Response Team, and their position on the Response Team shall be filled by an alternate member appointed by Leadership Team.

When Response Team members are communicating among themselves about a confidential matter before them, they shall each use a confidential means of communication, including a single-user email account.

In processing an allegation of abuse, the Response Team shall follow these steps:

1. Any incident or reasonable suspicion of abuse shall be reported to a member of the Response Team, who shall begin to document the matter by using the "Abuse Incident Report" form.

2. As soon as possible after receiving an allegation, the Response Team shall notify the parents or guardians of the allegations involving their child and shall take reasonable steps to ensure the immediate safety of any children or youth involved.
3. A member of the Response Team shall notify the alleged perpetrator of the allegations unless doing so is deemed to jeopardize the safety of one or more persons. The alleged perpetrator shall be treated with dignity, compassion, and respect. The Response Team member shall convey that the Team is not serving as a judge in the matter and shall discuss what steps must be taken to follow church policy. If possible, this discussion should be handled in such a manner that the alleged perpetrator can understand and agree with the steps that need to be taken. The alleged perpetrator shall be told to refrain from any contact with children and youth at CMC until such time as the Response Team can meet and make further decisions about the matter.
4. The Response Team shall meet as soon as possible after the initial report of an allegation in order to discern whether the allegation provides the Response Team with reasonable cause to believe that abuse has occurred or is threatened to occur. If the Response Team discerns in the affirmative, then the incident shall be reported to the authorities.
5. If the incident is reported to the authorities, the following steps shall be taken:
 - a. The alleged perpetrator shall be informed of that decision and shall be removed from any official CMC roles involving interaction with minors or CMC leadership
 - b. The Response Team shall designate one member to work in conjunction with the person making the allegation to notify the proper authorities in accordance with Ohio law.
 - c. The Response Team shall continue to document the steps taken in response to the allegations on the Abuse Incident Report. Other documents and records of communications regarding this matter shall be attached to the Abuse Incident Report. Response Team members shall take all steps possible to maintain confidentiality of all involved. At the conclusion of the proceedings in regards to an allegation, the documents shall be kept in a sealed envelope in a locked file in the church office.
 - d. The Response Team shall plan for subsequent actions that may be taken such as:
 - i. Seeking guidance from Central District Conference staff.
 - ii. Obtaining legal counsel.

- iii. Preparing a brief and accurate statement to be made to the congregation (without giving unnecessary details, placing blame, or violating the privacy of either the victim or the accused).
 - iv. Designating a member of the Response Team as its Official Spokesperson, who will be the only person to speak with church employees, the congregation, or the public about the incident, and who will handle all requests from the media.
 - v. If deemed warranted by the Response Team, taking further action, such as that mentioned in the following paragraph 6.
6. If the Response Team discerns that the matter is not required to be reported, then the Response Team may consider how it may be of assistance in working towards resolution and healing as much as possible. The Response Team may work with the alleged perpetrator and victim and their families to this end. All parties involved shall be treated with dignity, compassion, and respect.
7. If the allegation involves events that did not occur at CMC or as part of a CMC activity, the Response Team shall strive to discuss concerns fully with all parties and encourage them to seek professional assistance and to take actions to ensure the ongoing safety of children and youth in all places.

Abuse Incident Report

Section 2151.421(C) of the Ohio Revised Code says that a mandatory reporting of abuse “shall be made forthwith either by telephone, in person, or electronically and shall be followed by a written report, if requested by the receiving agency [the county Children Services office] or officer.” In the form below, an item marked with an asterisk (*) is one that Section 2151.421(C) requires to be in a written report submitted to Children Services or the police.

The contents of this Report shall be kept confidential to the fullest extent allowed by law. Once completed, the Report shall be stored in a sealed envelope in a locked file in the church office. Also stored shall be any other documents and information the Response Team deems necessary to maintain the Response Team’s record of its proceedings related to an alleged abuse.

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

Date and time incident occurred: _____/_____/_____ :_____

Location of incident:

Incident reported by: _____

Incident reported to: ___ Response Team ___ Pastor ___ Other (specify: _____)

*Name, address, and age of child/minor involved:

*Name, address, of child/minor’s parent(s)/guardian(s):

*Type of alleged abuse or threatened abuse:

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

*Description of the nature and extent of the alleged abuse or threatened abuse:

Injuries noted? ___ Yes ___ No

*If Yes, describe: _____

*Medical attention: ___ Yes ___ No

*If Yes, action taken: _____

*Any other information that might be helpful in establishing the cause of the alleged abuse or threatened abuse:

Name of person accused:

Name(s) of witness(es) to the incident:

Accused person is: ___ CMC employee ___ Teacher ___ Nursery or preschool worker ___ Jr. /Youth Sponsor ___ MYF sponsor ___ Mentor ___ CMC member/attender ___ Other (specify: _____)

Victim report (if able and willing – do not pressure):

Witness report:

Accused person's report:

Report to victim's family: Date ___/___/___ Time: ___:___ M.

Spoke with: _____

Summary/Response: _____

Report made to: ___ Franklin County Children's Services (614-229-7000) ___ Police

___ Other (specify: _____)

Date/Time: ___/___/_____ :___ M.

Spoke with: _____

Report not applicable because: _____

Corrective action/Safety plan (as appropriate, include both victim and accused):

Victim: _____

Accused: _____

X _____ Date: _____

Signature of person reporting abuse

Prepared by: _____ Date: _____

(Member of Response Team)

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 been accused of or convicted or pleaded guilty or no contest to any kind of abusive or sexual misconduct? ____ Yes ____ No

Have you ever been convicted of or pleaded guilty or no contest to any criminal offense other than traffic violations? ____ Yes ____ No

If you answered yes to either of the last two questions, someone will contact you for further information.

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 by 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

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

I completed the training on _____ (date).

In the coming year,

_____ I intend to work with children/youth.

_____ I do not intend to work with children/youth.

Signature _____ Date _____

KCMCS Transportation Agreement

Driver must be 5 years older than the oldest youth in the car.

DRIVER:

1. I agree to transport CMC children or youth Yes_____ No_____
2. My vehicle is in safe operating conditions. Yes_____ No_____
3. My vehicle is covered by liability insurance. Yes_____ No_____
4. My driver's license is current and valid. Yes_____ No_____
5. My driving record – accidents, fines or warnings in the last 5 years:

6. My Keeping CMC Safe training and Volunteer Application to be with children is current.

Yes_____ No_____ Background check completed.

7. Included are copies of my Driver's License and Insurance Card.

Signature of Driver: _____ Date: _____

(Printed name of Driver) _____

This agreement is good for ONE year. Please update the office if there are any insurance or driving changes during this time period. *This information will be locked in a secure file.*

Reviewed by KCMCS Coordinator: _____ Date: _____