

# Child Protection and Abuse Response Policy

## CHRIST COMMUNITY CHURCH

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 and youth. 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. No faith community is immune.

- [Definitions](#) according to Iowa Code section 232.68
- [What is child abuse and neglect?](#) according to childwelfare.gov.

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 nursery, children formation classes, youth activities and mentors. We commit to:

### **1. Offer trainings.**

- a. Training and materials on abuse prevention will be offered annually to all new teachers and leaders of children. Training will be offered every three years for veteran teachers.
- b. The Pastoral Staff and Christian Formation team will discern a training curriculum that will be provided at least every three years for all children, covering topics such as safety, empowerment, bodies and boundaries. This training will be appropriate to the child's age group. We will use curriculum from [Circle of Grace, a Christian safe environment curriculum](#).

### **2. Make our church facility safe for children.**

- a. Windows will be present in all doors/or doors will be left open where children or youth ministry is conducted (nursery, Children Formation classrooms).
- b. A fully stocked first-aid kit will be available in the church building.
- c. Areas where children or adults and children could easily be alone together unsupervised will be locked or restricted.

### **3. Provide safe and adequate supervision to children.**

a. We will follow a *two-person rule*: one adult should never be alone with one child. It's also best to avoid one adult with multiple children.

Possible exceptions:

- When the adult/child are related
- When prior consent is obtained from parent or guardian for mentor/mentee activities, transportation

b. A youth/minor will never teach/care for children alone without supervising adults available.

c. Prior consent will be obtained from a parent or guardian if a child is to be transported away from church facilities.

d. We will practice and model appropriate touch and healthy boundaries as clarified in teacher training and student curriculum.

e. Guidelines will be implemented for child-to-child and youth-to-youth contact.

- We will expect respectful behavior at all times.
- Teasing, verbal abuse, and any form of bullying will not be tolerated.
- There will be no inappropriate wrestling or roughhousing.

f. No physical discipline (e.g., hitting, slapping) will be used. When a child misbehaves, we will use redirection and/or verbal means to guide the child's behavior. If this does not work, the child will be taken to their parent. If a parent is not available, we will speak with them as soon as possible. In the meantime, we will ensure the child's safety but remove him or her from the activities to minimize disruption.

### **4. Attend to related personnel issues.**

a. **Annually, each teacher and leader of children will be presented with a copy of the congregation's child protection and abuse response policy and be 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—before hiring. A background check will also be conducted on all new adult volunteers working with children/youth.

c. Individuals must have regular involvement in the church for at least six months before they are permitted to become a teacher or leader of children or youth.

## **5. Deal appropriately with allegations of abuse.**

a. If a child discloses abuse or child abuse is suspected, the person who the child disclosed to or who has the suspicions will immediately make a report to **Child Protective Services 1-800-362-2178 or the police.**

b. When the victim and alleged offender are both in the church community, we will follow these additional steps:

- Immediately attend to the victim and his or her family's safety and needs through church leadership *and* an outside agency (like a child advocacy center), *keeping the victim's needs at the center of any process.*
- Immediately relieve the alleged offender from all responsibilities involving contact with children until the conclusion of the investigation.
- Within 48 hours, notify all parents whose children may have encountered the alleged offender. Let them know that allegations have been made and reported. [Leadership needs to consider the likelihood that more than one individual has been harmed.]
- Keep victims and alleged offenders separated during the investigation. [Support child victims in engaging in age-appropriate activities. If the alleged offender is an adolescent, find alternate activities for him or her.]
- Inform area conference leadership [or the equivalent].
- After the investigation, follow all legal implications for the offender. Inform the entire church, as secrecy not only makes children unsafe, it also does not help offenders.
- Even if the abuse is not confirmed, attend to the dynamics that prompted the

allegations and carefully consider the degree to which individuals involved need to remain separated.

- Make pastoral care available to all involved, prioritizing the needs of the victim.

c. Any known or credibly accused child abuse offender will not be allowed to be around children or youth unsupervised and will not be involved in children's or youth ministry (formal or informal). [Work with an external organization or resource, such as Dove's Nest, when considering including an individual with an offending history.]

d. The church community will be notified if there is a registered sex offender attending the church at the time this information becomes known. New families to the church will be notified of this information within two months of beginning to attend church.

## **6. Consider technology and social media concerns.**

a. Adults will limit one-on-one electronic communications with children.

b. Parents or other adults will be copied on emails and kept apprised of ongoing texting or phone conversations.

c. Communication will be traceable.

d. Photos of children or youth will not be shared on personal social media platforms without permission from a parent/guardian.

This policy will be implemented and facilitated by the Pastoral staff along with the Christian Formation team. **It will be posted on the church website and provided to the congregation each time it is updated. It will be reviewed and updated every 3 years.**

Updated: Childrens Formation team (09/15/20) Reviewed 9/2/21