

The Olentangy Christian Reformed Church
Safe Church Policy

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy and its related procedures is to provide a safe church environment by establishing safeguards and reducing the risk of physical, emotional and sexual abuse of all congregants and especially children. This policy focuses on selection of workers/volunteers in child related programs of the Church, the supervision of those activities, reporting requirements, and the response to allegations of abuse.

- A.** This policy is applicable to, except as provided below, all Church sponsored activities involving children, including but not limited to Church School, Children's Church/Worship, Nursery and Youth Group.
- B.** The Child Care Center is a separate legal entity from the Church and as such has a separate policy of its own as required to comply with Ohio laws, rules and regulations that address the prevention and reporting of child physical and sexual abuse.
- C.** This policy provides for a safe church environment that guards against inappropriate behavior that results in Physical, Emotional or Sexual Abuse. Abuse is defined as the physical or mental injury, sexual exploitation or abuse, negligent treatment, or maltreatment of an individual (child or adult) by a person who is responsible for the individual's welfare under circumstances that the person's health or welfare is thereby threatened or harmed.

II. Implementation

- A.** The Council shall designate two of its adult (21 years old or older) office bearers as a Policy Implementation Team to oversee the implementation of this policy in applicable Church activities involving children. Whenever possible this team should include at least one female member.
- B.** The designated members of the Policy Implementation Team described herein shall be identified in the Church's weekly bulletin.
- C.** The Policy Implementation Team shall annually review and update this Safe Church Policy with all worker/volunteers involved with Church activities involving children. The Policy Implementation Team shall also strive to make the whole congregation aware of the current Safe Church Policy.
- D.** All workers and volunteers working and/or assisting in child related programs shall read the church's Safe Church Policy and annually sign a document indicating that they agree with the policy and will abide by it. This document shall be retained in the church's files. (See page 5 of this document)

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III. Selection and Supervision of Worker/Volunteer in Church Activities

- A.** No person shall be permitted to work in Church activities involving children until they have been an active attendee of the Church for six (6) months or until other outside character assurances and appropriate documentation as determined by the church Council on a case by case basis have been received and retained in church records.
- B.** No person under a pending allegation or a conviction record of abuse shall be permitted to work in Church activities involving children.
- C.** Persons selected for positions in Church activities involving children shall be trained in this Safe Church Policy.
- D.** There shall be two (2) worker/volunteers, at least one being an adult of at least 21 years of age, present at all times in the following Church activities involving children: Children's Church/Worship and Nursery.
 - 1.** One member of the Policy Implementation Team is to be designated as a primary and the other as an alternate stand-in to cover situations where staffing cannot be accomplished with two qualified worker/volunteers.
 - 2.** It shall be the responsibility of the worker/volunteer in charge of the activity to notify the Policy Implementation Team of this need.
- E.** If two worker/volunteers cannot be present during Children's Church/Worship or Nursery, the activity shall be cancelled.
- F.** The Policy Implementation Team and/or the Church School Superintendent shall make routine checks of the Church School classes when classes are in session.
- G.** Toileting Assistance for Church School, Children's Church/Worship and Nursery:
 - 1.** Only adults (21 years old or older) may assist children with toileting needs.
 - a.** For children who do not require toileting assistance, the adult (21 years old or older) worker/volunteer shall remain outside the restroom.
 - b.** For children who require toileting assistance, the restroom door shall remain ajar while the adult (21 years old or older) worker/volunteer assists the child.
 - c.** Diapering of an infant or toddler shall take place in the nursery area within the presence of another worker/volunteer.

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2. During scheduled times, children shall not be released from Church School, Children's Church/Worship or the Nursery except to a parent or appropriate custodial person.

H. For Youth Group Activities, there shall be two adult (21 years old or older) sponsors to provide leadership and supervision of youth in their activities both on and off church premises.

iv. Reporting Obligations

A. In matters involving suspected abuse of a child:

1. Teachers, daycare staff, social workers, school personnel, physicians, dentists, nurses, psychologists, speech pathologists, children services staff, coroners, attorneys and persons rendering spiritual guidance in accordance with tenets of an organized religion acting in official or professional capacity are required by law to report suspected child abuse to Franklin County Children's Services immediately.
2. An adult (21 years old or older) church member and volunteer serving in unofficial or non-professional capacities shall report an allegation of child abuse immediately upon becoming aware of an incident or allegation of abuse to the Policy Implementation Team unless the allegation involves a team member. In such cases the allegation shall be reported to any Council member who is not related to the victim, the alleged offender or a member of the Policy Implementation Team.
 - a. When an allegation of child abuse is reported, the adult (21 years old or older) person making the initial report and a member of the Policy Implementation Team shall investigate the allegation.
 - i. Were the abused and accused in proximity to one another at the time and location that the alleged abuse occurred?
 - ii. Was there an opportunity for the alleged abuse to occur?
 - iii. Do physical and/or emotional signs of abuse exist?
 - iv. Is the child exposed to further imminent danger?
 - b. The alleged allegation of abuse shall be documented via written report that is to be retained in the church's confidential files. (See pages 6&7 of this policy)
 - c. The matter shall be reported to Franklin County Children's Services immediately if the child is suspected to be in further imminent danger. The report shall be made either jointly or individually by at least one of: the first adult (21 years old or older) to become aware of the alleged incident, a member of the Policy Implementation Team, or a member of the church Council.

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3. All allegations of abuse that have been brought forward shall be dealt with in strict confidence.

B. In matters involving an adult (21 years old or older) bringing an allegation of abuse forward:

1. The adult (21 years old or older) person bringing an allegation of abuse forward and/or her/his representative shall contact a member of the church Council of the church of which the alleged abuser is currently a member via letter identifying the alleged abuse and the alleged abuser and the specific details [date(s), time(s), location(s), nature and extent of harm done, etc.] of the allegation.

- a. The church Council members shall consult with one another regarding the allegation. If the alleged abuser is a member of the church council, he/she shall not be included in the consultation.
- b. At the conclusion of the church Council's consultation, the Council may choose to handle the allegation without outside assistance or may request that an Advisory Panel Process be initiated by the Classis Safe Church Team.
- c. If the Council chooses to utilize the Advisory Panel Process, when the Process is completed and the Advisory Panel's report is submitted to the church Council, the church Council shall then take appropriate action based on the findings of the Advisory Panel.

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