

**FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH
(Disciples of Christ)
PUYALLUP, WA**

Child Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedures

MISSION STATEMENT -- PURPOSE

Believing that children placed in our care are to be nurtured with the love of Jesus Christ, we endeavor to do our best to keep them safe from all forms of abuse and neglect. Our employees and volunteers will be advocates for the children, and First Christian Church of Puyallup has aspired to develop safeguards, policies and procedures for their protection. In order to create a safe environment for the children, our policies and procedures are directed toward that end.

All persons associated with the First Christian Church of Puyallup should be aware that the Church is strongly opposed to abuse of children, and that such behavior is prohibited by church policy. It is the goal of the First Christian Church of Puyallup to take whatever action may be necessary to prevent and correct behavior which is contrary to this policy and, if determined to be necessary, to discipline those persons who violate this policy.

**AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH BOARD
AND THE AUTHORITY OF THE COMMITTEE OF FOUR**

The Church Board of the First Christian Church of Puyallup shall have the authority to make any changes whatsoever, (whether to make additions, deletions, or new provisions), at any time it deems necessary to any or all portions of this policy and procedures.

The Committee of Four will be formed to conduct and oversee the application, screening and hiring process for the Church. The Committee of Four will also advise the Church Board on a regular basis as to any issues that merit the attention of the Church Board. The Committee of Four is comprised of one member of the Personnel Committee, the Christian Education Chair, and two of the Trustees. The Pastor of the Church will also be considered a member of this Committee. The Committee of Four will be responsible for the conducting of the screening and hiring process for the Church. The Committee of Four will also have access and be responsible for the retention and the confidentiality of all files for applications for employment or volunteer positions. The Committee of Four shall meet at any time and place as it determines necessary in order to affect its responsibilities as outlined within this Policies and Procedures.

SCOPE

Our policy and procedures shall apply to all current and future workers, whether they are compensated or volunteer, who will have the responsibility of supervising the activities of youth and mentally challenged persons.

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of our policies and procedures, the following definitions shall apply:

1. "Child Abuse:" is defined as a non-accidental physical or mental injury or mistreatment caused by the acts or omissions of the workers (compensated or volunteer);
2. "Neglect:" is defined as failure to provide adequate supervision which leads to the harm of a child;
3. "Sexual Abuse:" is defined as sexual exploitation of a child done for the sexual gratification of the offender or another person;
4. "Youth:" is defined as a "child," "children," "preschooler," "infant," "minor," "any individual under the age of eighteen (18) or whose mental capacity is that of a minor."
5. "Adult:" is defined as any individual at least eighteen (18), enlisted (whether a compensated worker or volunteer worker);
6. "Teenage Worker:" is defined as any worker at least fourteen (14) years of age or older, but under the age of eighteen (18);

HIRING/SCREENING PROCESS AND GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

1. All employees and any volunteer who will be in contact with minors at the First Christian Church of Puyallup will be required to complete a Background Information Form and a Criminal Records Check and Background Information Authorization. Should the employee or volunteer be a minor, they shall be required to fill out the appropriate form.
2. After a Background Information Form and a Criminal Records Check and Background Information Authorization is received, prior employment, volunteer service and personal references will be checked. The Committee of Four will be responsible for conducting the investigation into the applications, for the interviews of the prospective employees and/or volunteers, and for the determination as to the accepting or denying of any Application submitted. Should the Committee of Four deem it appropriate or necessary, the Committee of Four can also request assistance from other Trustees or from the Personnel Committee with the screening process, and said individual(s) will be held to the same confidentiality requirements discussed herein.
3. Criminal Background Checks will be performed on each applicant. The Committee of Four shall have the authority to conduct any subsequent Criminal Background Checks on any employee or volunteer as the Committee deems appropriate. Subsequent Criminal Background Checks and/or Reviews of all volunteers or employees will be routinely done every other year, or as the Committee of Four deems appropriate.
 - a. Should a situation be brought to the attention of the Committee of Four, the Pastor, and the Board Chair, and then determined by the Committee of Four that further investigation may be warranted, then the Committee of Four shall have the authority to conduct said investigation.

- b. All files created as a result of the submission of an Application shall become the property of the First Christian Church of Puyallup and shall be retained by the Church at all times. No copies of the information contained in any file created as a result of the Application process shall be provided to the Applicant or any other individual without Court order.
4. A file will be opened for each application received, whether for an employment or a volunteer position, and will be kept permanently in accordance with the procedures and safeguards as outlined by the Committee of Four. All documentation dealing with any one particular application will be retained in the permanent file. A separate file will be maintained permanently on each worker, whether paid or a volunteer. Only the Committee of Four will have access to any file concerning an Application for an employment or volunteer position, as well as any file concerning a continuing employee or volunteer.
5. Confidentiality will be the utmost priority at all times concerning each and every employment/volunteer application submitted. The Committee of Four shall have the discretion to address any and all issues concerning the maintenance of these confidential files.
6. Before any volunteer can be considered for a position which may entail dealing with minors, the volunteer must have, at the minimum, six (6) months past active participation in Church activities.
7. When an employee or volunteer is engaged by the First Christian Church of Puyallup to work with minors, they will be photographed and the picture will become a permanent part of their file. Photographs of the person will be updated every two (2) years, or as deemed necessary by the Committee of Four. All paid employees will be photographed, regardless of whether or not they work with minors.
8. The Committee of Four shall have the authority to decide whether or not an individual is accepted for each paid position and each volunteer position.
9. Upon being accepted for the volunteer or paid position, the individual shall be provided with a copy of the Policies and Procedures, which shall be reviewed at the time of hiring. The individual shall also sign an Acknowledgment of said Review which shall be kept in the person's file.

EMPLOYEE AND VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Each new employee and volunteer shall be provided with a copy of the First Christian Church of Puyallup's Policies and Procedures manual upon their hiring. Each new employee and volunteer shall be required to repeat the formal training concerning child abuse. The training program shall be developed by the Christian Education Chair, the Committee of Four, the Church Board and the Pastor. The Christian Education Chair shall be responsible for the implementation of the formal training and shall have the authority to revise and amend the training program as the Chair deems appropriate. The Christian Education Chair may use appropriate training materials, including but not limited to the *Reducing the Risk II Training Manual*, as well as any other materials that the Christian Education Chair deems appropriate.

The formal training program for Child Abuse Prevention is comprised of the following and shall include at a minimum:

- a. Provide a basic orientation to the facts about child sexual abuse and the church;
- b. Present a rationale for the emphasis upon protecting young people from abuse in the Church;
- c. Describe Church policies governing ministry to children and youth; and
- d. Require worker/volunteer commitment to follow the Church policies and procedures.

Each employee and volunteer shall be required to complete the formal training at the minimum every year, or as deemed necessary by the Christian Education Chair, the Church Board, the Committee of Four, or the Pastor. Proof of completion of the re-training shall be kept in the employee/volunteers permanent file.

ALLEGED MISCONDUCT AND VIOLATIONS OF THE POLICY

Any violations of this Policy will not be tolerated or accepted. Any alleged misconduct during any activity or program of the Church shall be immediately reported to the designated program staff. Alleged misconduct shall include, but is not limited to the following:

- Any direct observation of sexual activity in the presence of or in association with a minor;
- Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, or insinuation of abuse towards a minor;
- Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any person and a minor;
- Infliction or physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to a minor;
- The presence or possession of obscene or pornographic materials at any function of the First Christian Church of Puyallup;

The aforementioned examples are not in any way to be construed as the only types of alleged misconduct prohibited by this Policy. It is the purpose of this Policy for any believed alleged misconduct to be reported so that it may be investigated, and the involved minor(s) protected.

Worker Supervision:

1. The First Christian Church of Puyallup will adopt the "two adult" rule, which means that no adult shall be left alone with a minor at any activity or program of the Church. Further, a reasonable ratio of adult workers (whether paid or volunteer) shall be maintained in each situation involving the supervision of minors at any activity or program of the Church.

2. The Christian Education Chair shall also develop and implement an identification system to be adopted concerning the "drop off" and "pick up" procedures for the children at any Church program or activity. When appropriate, Permission Slips will be required for adults to sign, authorizing the release of the children to participate in any given activity or program.
3. A list of the employees and volunteers who have met the requirements of this Policy to work with minors shall be kept by the Christian Education Chair.

Supervision of Volunteers and Employees

1. A door without windows shall remain open at all times.
2. A list of the proper reporting procedures will be posted in each room where activities or programs for minors are conducted.

REPORTING PROCEDURE FOR ANY ALLEGED MISCONDUCT

Any person having cause to believe that an incident of alleged misconduct has occurred shall report the person's belief in accordance with this Procedure. Should the incident occur during a Church program or activity, the person shall report his/her belief to the Supervisor(s) of said Program or Activity immediately.

1. Should a Supervisor be told of an allegation of misconduct, said allegation of misconduct shall be immediately reported to either the Christian Education Chair or the Pastor.
2. The Pastor and/or the Christian Education Chair shall fully comply with the child abuse reporting statute. The Pastor and/or the Christian Education Chair shall be responsible for reporting the allegation to the proper authorities (i.e., the police, child protective services), in accordance with the statutory requirements.
3. The Pastor and/or the Christian Education Chair shall immediately contact the insurance company for the First Christian Church of Puyallup, to report the occurrence. This notice to the insurance company of the alleged occurrence shall also be provided in writing. The Pastor and/or the Christian Education Chair shall have the authority to delegate this imperative contact to the insurance company to any of the Trustees.
4. In instances where the alleged misconduct involves the Pastor of the Church, the Northwest Regional Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall be immediately contacted to assist and direct any further investigation.
5. Upon the advisement of any alleged misconduct, the following steps should be immediately taken:
 - a. The proper authorities shall be contacted and consulted with before any further action is taken on the part of the Pastor and/or the Christian Education Chair.

- b. The Pastor and/or the Christian Education Chair should commence a limited investigation in order to ascertain the specifics, facts and circumstances surrounding the alleged misconduct. All pertinent information obtained shall then be provided to the proper authorities and shall be secured by the Pastor (or the Northwest Regional Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) office should the incident involve the Pastor).
- c. The Pastor and/or the Christian Education Chair shall be responsible for completing the checklist form concerning the alleged incident.
- d. The Supervisor and/or the person making the report of the alleged misconduct shall be responsible for the completion of the Incident Report Form. Once this Form is completed, it shall be secured and maintained by the Pastor (or the Northwest Regional Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) office should the incident involve the Pastor).
- e. The person whom is accused of the alleged misconduct shall be removed from any contact with minors during any church program or activity by the Pastor and/or the Christian Education Chair. If the person accused is in a paid position with the Church, the person shall immediately be suspended with pay, pending a determination of the investigation by the proper authorities.
- f. The Pastor and the Christian Education Chair shall be responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of the investigation and allegation of alleged misconduct as much as possible.
- g. The Pastor, the Christian Education Chair, the Supervisor of the activity or program, and any other individuals involved with this incident should cooperate fully with any law enforcement officials and/or any investigation of the situation by any agency.
- h. In instances where the child abuse is confirmed either by the law enforcement agency or by the child protective services, the Church should immediately dismiss the worker or the volunteer from that position.
- i. The Pastor and/or the Christian Education Chair shall be responsible for keeping the congregation of the First Christian Church of Puyallup informed of the non-confidential aspects of the incident, in an effort to advise the congregation of the situation from within the Church.
- j. The Pastor and one of the Church Trustees shall be the designated spokespersons on behalf of the Church for any media involvement concerning any incident. The Pastor and the appointed Church Trustee spokesperson shall work in conjunction and cooperate fully with the Insurance Company and the retained attorneys representing the Church and shall have all communication, whether written or to be presented orally approved by the counsel.
- k. The Pastor, the Christian Education Chair and all other individuals involved with the alleged incident shall cooperate fully with the Church's insurance company and any counsel retained by the insurance company on behalf of the Church.

INTENT

It is the intent of this Child Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedures to create a safe and secure environment for the children, the employees and the volunteers of this Church. This Child Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedure is meant to provide, to the best of the First Christian Church's ability, a more safe and secure environment for each individual of the Church's family and its guests.

Allegation of Alleged Misconduct outside of the Church:

When an allegation is made of an alleged misconduct occurring **outside** of any Church function, program or activity, concerning a person in the congregation, or an employee or volunteer, it is the policy of the First Christian Church of Puyallup to remove that person from participation in any way with a minor during any Church function, program or activity.

These allegations of alleged misconduct occurring **outside** of any Church function, program, or activity, shall be reported to the Pastor and/or the Christian Education Chair. The individual making the report of such conduct must be willing to complete an Incident Report Form and to participate fully in the procedures herein. The Pastor and/or the Christian Education Chair shall act in compliance with the child abuse reporting statutes as required by law and with the policies and procedures outlined herein, as concerns all allegations of alleged misconduct occurring **outside** of a Church function, program or activity.