

***SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY of
Christ Church United, Dracut, MA***

Purpose

The purpose of these Policies and Procedures is to create a safe and secure environment for all family members and church workers, paid and volunteer, and an environment where people can explore their relationship with God and with each other as they seek to grow in faith and faithfulness. These Policies and Procedures reflect our understanding of our profound legal and moral obligation to minimize the possibility of child abuse and sexual misconduct from occurring at Christ Church United, Dracut. These Policies and Procedures are written at a time when churches are being held increasingly accountable in the courts for what is perceived to be negligent behavior, and when churches are being required by insurance companies to have such Policies and Procedures in order to secure insurance.

Section A. Application Process

- 1) All paid staff and volunteers currently involved in any form of activities with children and youth in the church must have on file a CORI (Criminal Offender Record Check) form. This form is confidential and is to be reviewed by the CORI Coordinator and kept in a locked file. Any questions are brought to the Christian Education Commission for decision on appropriateness of a person. Christ Church United, Dracut Bylaws state that teachers must be members of Christ Church United, Dracut, and can be assisted by non-members.
- 2) All persons will have read and agreed to abide by all Policies and Procedures here in after. Signature upon the appropriate screening form denotes a willingness to remain in compliance with these policies or their successors.
- 3) Any person known to have committed previous acts of sexual misconduct with children or youth shall be strictly prohibited from serving our children or youth.

Section B. Policies and Procedures Regarding Programs and Activities

1) **The Two-Adult Rule: ALL CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CHRIST CHURCH UNITED, DRACUT PROGRAMS SHALL BE UNDER THE CARE AND SUPERVISION OF TWO ADULTS, ONE OF WHO MAY BE A HIGH SCHOOL AIDE.**

Further, no teacher, advisor, aide, or anyone else working with our children or youth should place him/herself in a compromising situation by being alone with a child or with children out of sight of other teachers, advisors, aides, or parents. If for any reason, a teacher or aide is left alone in a classroom, the teacher in the nearest or neighboring classroom should be so informed.

No teacher, advisor or aide shall be alone with a child in the bathroom for the purposes of toileting, clean-up from craft or art projects, or care of illness or injury.

Bathroom Supervision of Church School Children

- Normally, teachers, advisors or aides who accompany a child to the bathroom should remain outside the bathroom while the child is inside
- If a child needs assistance with undressing, clean up or dressing, two (2) adults will be present, one (1) of whom may be a high school aide
- If anything unusual occurred during this assistance, a note describing the help given and persons present will be written and handed to a member of the staff at the close of church school that day
- If a teacher or aide is left alone in a classroom due to bathroom necessities, the teacher in the nearest or neighboring classroom should be so informed
- Diapering of infants and toddlers may be done in the nursery if two (2) people are present, one (1) of whom is an adult. As an alternative, a parent should be called to the nursery to do the diapering.
- Children may use the bathroom unescorted, provided they return within a reasonable time frame. This privilege can be granted or rescinded at the teacher's discretion.

2) Parental Consent

A signed written consent form by parent or guardian shall be on file for special activities and programs away from the church. These activities should have the Children's or Youth Ministry Coordinator's or the Pastor's prior approval.

3) Overnight Rule

Any and all adult chaperones supervising overnight stays of church children or youth must be cleared by the Pastor or other designated official. The Two-Adult Rule shall be followed for overnight events. Further, a signed written consent form is required, which lists the names of the advisors that will be present.

Section B. Policies and Procedures Regarding Programs and Activities ~ continued

4) Discipline

- The purpose of discipline with children and youth is to maintain order in a manner consistent with teaching of Christian responsibility, respect and cooperation
- No child shall be disciplined by the use of spanking, hitting, slapping, or any form of physical punishment
- Verbal reprimands shall not include destructive criticism, insult or shouting
- Teachers and advisors are encouraged to listen to the child, communicate expectations of appropriate behavior, use time-outs, or give alternative choices
- Physical contact such as wrestling, horse play or other high contact games are not appropriate recreational activity
- All youth must remain with their group and under the direction of the adult leaders

5) Leaving and Locking

The last three (3) people, including the staff person locking the door, will leave the church together. They will avoid situations where one (1) adult and one (1) child or youth are left at the church door waiting to be picked up by parents at the end of an activity. Parents are encouraged to respect concluding times.

6) Drugs, Tobacco, Alcohol

The use of any drugs, tobacco or alcoholic products on or in church facilities or at church-sponsored youth events is not permitted.

7) Transportation

With parental consent, adults may bring children home. Adults over 25 years of age may provide transportation for church-related activities, and written parental permission is required.

Section C. Policies and Procedures Regarding Abuse Allegations

- 1) A Child Safety Response Committee to screen any allegations will be established. It will consist of three (3) members, including at least one (1) female and one (1) male. The Christian Education Commission will appoint them for a one (1) year term. An alternate will be available in case a report involves a committee member.
- 2) Statements made by children about possible abuse, whether or not it occurred on church property or during a church-sponsored event, shall be promptly reported to the Child Safety Response Committee. Allegations will be taken seriously.
- 3) All responses must be handled with due respect for everyone's privacy and confidentiality.

Section C. Policies and Procedures Regarding Abuse Allegations ~ continued

- 4) Any person involved in any form of activity with children in the church who is accused of any misconduct with children shall be temporarily relieved immediately from his/her involvement with our children. While this action implies no official determination of the accuser's innocence or guilt, this "leave of absence" will stand until such time as the allegation is removed or disapproved by the Child Safety Response Committee's action.
- 5) Parent or guardians of the alleged victim shall be notified, if appropriate.
- 6) The Child Safety Response Committee is authorized to report to civil authorities. Persons working with children have a responsibility to help the authorities become aware of children who may be abused or neglected. Any reports (51A) should be made within 48 hours after the suspected abuse has come to their attention.
- 7) A brief dated and timed written confidential record of incidents will be maintained in a locked area by the Child Safety Response Committee.
- 8) Legal counsel and the insurance company will be notified, as needed.
- 9) If the accused is on the paid staff, the United Church of Christ will be notified and their legal services secured. The Elders Commission will also be notified.

Section D. Training

All paid staff and volunteers will participate in regular training events in child safety. This should be done yearly.

Approved by the Christian Education Commission ~ 12/16/97