

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY AND YOUTH PROTECTION GUIDELINES

United Church of God, *an International Association*

We believe that children should be safe from all forms of abuse and neglect. The United Church of God, *an International Association* (hereinafter the “Church”) staff and volunteers, will be advocates for children’s safety and establish clearly defined safeguards, policies and procedures for their protection.

The Church will not tolerate and will seek to eradicate any behavior by its ordained ministry or members, volunteers, adherents or employees that constitutes adult sexual abuse (sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, sexual misconduct, sexual assault, sexual battery) or child abuse. The Church is committed to providing a safe environment in its offices, congregations, camps and at any activity that operates under its name. Complaints related to adult sexual abuse or child abuse will be taken very seriously and will be dealt with internally in accordance with biblical and spiritual criteria and externally as required by applicable law.

Allegations of adult abuse or harassment should be reported internally to the person’s pastor or, if the pastor is the alleged abuser or the complaining person is uncomfortable in doing so, the person can contact the regional pastor or Ministerial Services. Church employees who have allegedly been harassed or abused by other employees or agents of the Church should follow guidelines for addressing such abuse in the Church’s HR Policy Manual. If such adult abuse is criminal, the abused person must not be discouraged from reporting the matter to law enforcement authorities. Child abuse is to be reported in accordance with local law as well as internally in the manner provided above for adult abuse.

Further information regarding the investigation of reports of abuse, bringing forward accusations and the administration of discipline against perpetrators is to be more fully developed and made available by Ministerial Services.

GUIDELINES FOR PROTECTING CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CHURCH ACTIVITIES¹

Introduction:

On May 6, 2004, the Council of Elders of the Church adopted the following guidelines and procedures for keeping the Church safe for our children and youth. In effect, these guidelines and procedures only reduce to a formal policy what the Church has generally practiced for some time. These formal guidelines were not initiated in response to problems within the Church, but are prompted by awareness of problems in other churches that have resulted in the abuse of

¹ **Note:** The language for these guidelines was to a large degree adapted from Pacific Southwest District Church of the Brethren *Child Abuse Prevention Policy Statement, Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church*, published by Church Law and Tax Report; from *Youth Protection Guidelines: Training for Volunteer Leaders and Parents of the Boy Scouts of America*; and from the *Policy and Procedure Manual of Youth and Young Adult Ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee & Bethany Church Policy for the Protection of Children*.

children by paid and unpaid child and youth workers in their churches, as well as by other minors. What helps protect the children and youth also helps protect the Church from unfounded charges and legal liability. When properly administered, these guidelines and procedures will in no way interfere with the fulfillment of the Church's mission and, in fact, should enhance it.

Other organizations in our society have taken similar steps with good results. Among them are scouting organizations, YMCA and YWCA. Many of today's parents are accustomed to these considerations in their volunteer activities with children and youth outside the Church. The experience of other churches that have adopted similar policies is positive. Therefore, we are adopting these policies to the extent we are entrusted with the spiritual, educational and moral development of our youth and wish to do so in as protected an environment as possible.

The following guidelines and procedures shall be followed by all professional and lay people in their work or service for the Church.

A. Screening of Lay and Professional Workers ("Leaders")

Lay and professional child and youth activity leaders should go through a screening procedure using forms developed by the Church. This process will be overseen by individuals designated by the Church, which reserves the right to verify information regarding a prospective leader's background and history of activities with minors. Likewise, the Church reserves the right to run background checks on prospective leaders, which could include accessing and reviewing a prospective leader's criminal history. This includes people working in youth activities and music and educational activities such as Sabbath school. No one should be accepted who has had a known criminal sexual or physical abuse violation or who has admitted to having done so in the past. Leaders should be informed of the rules they are required to follow in their activities with minors and should be required to agree in writing that they will faithfully follow these requirements. Unless otherwise directed by Ministerial Services, local pastors shall oversee screening for all lay volunteers in their respective congregations in accordance with these guidelines and such other standards as may be given to them by Ministerial Services. United Youth Camp screening will be overseen by the overall camp director in accordance with the United Youth Camp Manual and these guidelines. Ministerial Services shall oversee the screening of all elders and all employees of the Church.

B. Treatment of Perpetrators With a History of Sexual Misconduct

Any person who has been convicted of (whether by a finding or admission of guilt, no contest or nolo contendere) sexual misconduct or abuse; or who has pled no contest or nolo contendere to a sex crime or a crime that involves child abuse or similar behavior; or who has admitted to Church personnel to having committed any acts that constitute sexual misconduct or child abuse under applicable law and/or under the doctrines of the Church; or who has otherwise been proved to have committed acts that constitute sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, child abuse or the like may not participate in any capacity in any Church program for children or youth.

C. Dating

Adult leaders (i.e., leaders 18 years of age or older) shall not date, be romantically involved with or otherwise exhibit sexual behavior towards a Church youth within the program in which they are leaders. A possible exception might be a young adult dating an older teen with the minor's parental or guardian consent.

D. Two-Deep Leadership

There should always be two (2) adult supervisors/leaders present when caring for minor children under the auspices of the Church. Two adult supervisors/leaders must be present at each activity with minors. Exceptions are Sabbath school classes held in rooms with a window in the door and where there are also several children present, emergency situations and such other common sense or practical variations to this rule as may be required in order to carry out these activities in conformance with the spirit and intent of these guidelines. The two-deep rule should never be relaxed where a man is the teacher. In local congregations such activities are to be overseen by the pastor. Details for the two-deep principle at United Youth Camps are more fully set forth in the United Youth Camp Manual.

E. Individual Consultation

Individual consultation between adults and minors must be done within the two-deep framework. In situations that require personal conferences, mentoring or counseling, this should be conducted in the Church offices within view of at least one other approved leader who is present in the area (though not necessarily in the office).

As a rule, the counseling should be as public as possible, without sacrificing necessary confidentiality. If conducted in an office, it shall only be in an office with an unobstructed window in the door or wall, or with the door open if confidentiality can be maintained. Unplanned individual contact on outings (such as for counseling purposes) must be done in view of another adult or minor. Planned individual contact outside the Church building must occur only in public places and with the prior consent of the minor and his or her parent(s) or guardian(s) or in their presence (the only exception being a minor's reporting of child abuse by a parent or guardian to the counselor).

F. Respect of Physical Privacy

Adult leaders need to respect the privacy of minors in situations such as use of restrooms, changing into swimming suits or taking showers/bathing on overnight outings, and intrude only insofar as health and safety require. They also need to protect their own privacy in similar situations.

G. Separate Accommodations

A minimum of two adults should be present at an overnight activity. If an activity has coed participants, there should be both male and female adult leaders present. If these conditions cannot be met, the event should be canceled. When camping, no minor is permitted to sleep alone in the tent of an adult other than his or her own parent or guardian or a sibling of the same sex. On other outings that require that an adult share the same room as a minor, the minors and parents or guardians shall give prior consent, preferably in writing. The adult should not occupy the same bed as a minor, again with the exception of a parent or guardian. Males and females

should sleep in separate rooms at events and have separate access to bathroom facilities. Minors are to be supervised at all times. Adult chaperones are never to be excluded or “locked out” of any activity. When separate shower/bathing facilities are not available, times for male and female use should be scheduled and posted.

H. Appropriate Attire

The Church requires modest clothing in all Church activities as defined by Church teaching and policy.

I. Housing

Whenever private homes are used for overnight events, the program staff member will make final approval of all adults involved as hosts, hostesses and chaperones.

J. No Secret Activities; Child’s Expectation of Privacy of Communications

No “secret” activities or organizations are recognized by the Church. All aspects of the Church program are open to observation by parents and congregational leaders. Confidentiality or secrecy is not a privilege of adult leaders while involved in Church activities with youth. Minors also have no expectation that Church leaders will keep confessions of improper behavior, etc. (by themselves or others) private. Parents or guardians of the minors who make such confessions (or others, as applicable) may be alerted to a child’s improper behavior, threats against others or dangerous or suicidal thinking. Child abuse that a minor reveals may be (and must be, if required by law) reported.

K. Transportation

Transportation to and from local Church events is generally the responsibility of the families. During events, drivers should avoid dropping off or picking up minors without being accompanied by another adult. In local congregations the pastor shall set standards as to who is permitted to drive during events using general guidelines for United Youth Camps. Any deviations should have the prior consent of the parent and be reported to the next person in the line of responsibility.

L. Constructive Discipline

Discipline used in Church activities should be constructive and reflect Christian values. Corporal punishment may never be administered by anyone other than the child’s own parent or guardian.

M. Hazing Prohibited

Physical hazing and initiations are prohibited. For example, at United Youth Camps, practical jokes and any attempt to belittle or pick on other campers is forbidden.

N. No Behavior of Sexual Nature

No lewd touching or other improper contact of a sexual nature is permitted with minors. Other behaviors, which are abusive but do not involve physical contact, are also prohibited. Examples include, but are not limited to, verbal abuse of a sexual nature, sexual advances or propositions, requests for sexual favors, the exposure of sexual parts of the minor’s body and/or the adult’s body and showing minors pornography (including pornography delivered by e-mail or other electronic means).

O. Gifts

Child and youth leaders shall not give personal gifts or money to individual children or youth without first notifying the parents and the leader's direct supervisor. An exception is Sabbath school programs where gift giving or awards are encouraged or are a part of the program. Gifts to entire classes are acceptable.

P. Nursery

Any nursery should have an identification system that links the child with the parent in a way that prevents the possibility of someone else taking the child. The nursery should have two adult leaders at all times of operation.

Q. Reporting of Violations of These Rules

Persons covered by these rules are required to notify the individual(s) in the Church with oversight responsibilities of any violations of these rules. Suspicions of child abuse occurring during an event shall be reported to the event coordinator and as required by law reported to the local authorities. The alleged perpetrator should be removed and precluded from contact with Church youth at Church events until an investigation has taken place and the proper course of action determined.

R. Reporting of Abuse

All elders, members and volunteers are expected to comply with all mandatory reporting requirements under any local, state or federal law. Legal Services at United Church of God can supply current law regarding such reporting requirements for an area on request.

If local law does not require the reporting of such abuse by Church personnel who become aware of the same (such as the discovery of the abuse as a result of a confidential penitential communication or confession to a minister by an adult perpetrator against a minor), but the abuse consists of child sexual abuse or it is felt that for the child's protection the matter still needs to be reported to civil authorities, then the Church should encourage adults with knowledge of the abuse to report the matter and, if they fail or refuse to do so, then the Church representative may report the same. If practical, the Church's legal counsel should be consulted in advance in cases that might entail a breach of confidentiality in order to report a case of child abuse.

Adult leaders are liable for disciplinary action for not following these guidelines, even if no abuse can be established.

After this written policy has been adopted by the Council of Elders, all new adult participants in Church activities involving minors should go through the application and screening process being required. All adults who were participants before this policy was implemented shall be expected to sign a statement confirming their receipt of, and their agreement to comply with, this policy for reducing the risk as well as submitting supplemental information to their pastor on forms to be supplied by Ministerial Services confirming that they have no past history of committing child abuse.

S. Church Attendance by Offenders

Before an individual who has been found guilty of adult or child sexual abuse is allowed to attend Church services again, he or she must meet requirements established by Ministerial Services. These requirements are to include instructions regarding registered sex offenders.

T. False Accusations

Any person making a false accusation against anyone regarding matters forbidden by this policy is subject to disciplinary action up to and including removal from the Church fellowship.

U. Exceptions and Interpretations of This Policy and Its Guidelines

In emergency situations youth leaders and others subject to this policy are allowed to take the most prudent or commonsense course of action necessary to supervise and protect Church youth during that emergency. Other exceptions to the policy, as well as clarifications or interpretations of the same, which are in conformance with the policy's spirit and intent, but which are not already provided for or addressed therein, may be set forth in Ministerial Services' directives, standards or other requirements it is to distribute pursuant to the policy, or granted on a case-by-case basis by the manager of Ministerial Services, or such other individual(s) as that manager or the Council of Elders may designate for that purpose. Such interpretations, clarifications or exceptions are to be made or granted in writing.

Implementation of This Policy and Guidelines

In order to give Ministerial Services sufficient time to develop the information, directives, standards, requirements and forms (collectively "duties") required, full implementation of this policy and guidelines by Ministerial Services of said duties may be delayed until August 31, 2004. In the meantime, all pastors should announce the adoption of this policy and guidelines to their congregations, and make a copy of it available to them, so that the same can be followed in their areas to the extent possible pending full implementation.