

Policy for Reducing the Risk of Abuse within the Church

Community Covenant Church
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Dear Christian Friend,

Community Covenant Church insists that its volunteers be familiar with and uphold important policies and procedures to safeguard the Children in our care from abuse. It is not in the best interest of our Children and Youth to ignore the potential for abuse. Abusive situations occur not just in society at large, but within the church as well. We have a responsibility both ethically and spiritually to address these issues.

As part of fulfilling that responsibility, Community Covenant Church has adopted a "Reduce the Risk of Abuse" Policy. This brochure sets out that policy in order to help parents and ministry team members to understand what is expected in this important area of caring for our Children. Please do everything you can to help us uphold this policy.

If you ever have questions about this policy or concerns about them being upheld, please feel free to contact one of us.

Sincerely in Christ,

Pastor Johan Tredoux
Senior Pastor

Scope

This Reduce the Risk of Abuse policy is intended to provide reasonable measures to ensure the safety of Children and Youth in our care against abuse.

This Reduce the Risk of Abuse policy DOES apply to all church-sponsored activities, specifically for Children or Youth, occurring on church property or in public places, including, transportation provided during these activities. A church-sponsored activity is defined as any event or activity advertised by the church as a children's or youth activity (via website, bulletin, facebook, church calendar etc.).

This Reduce the Risk of Abuse policy does NOT apply to:

1. Adult Bible Studies or Small Groups occurring off of church property. Parents are responsible for their Children in these situations.
2. Non-church sponsored events occurring on our property that are sponsored by church families or outside organizations. Separate guidelines are available in the church office for these types of events

Definitions

Child:	a person in 5 th grade and under.
Youth:	a person in grades 6 through 12. A Youth who reaches age 18 and is still in high school is considered being under the protection of this policy.
Adult:	a person age 18 or older and not in high school.
Abuse:	emotional, physical or sexual mistreatment.

Categories of Workers

Adult Volunteer: A person who has met the screening requirements of this policy and has been approved by the applicable pastoral staff member to be a responsible worker.

Youth Volunteer: A Youth who has met the screening requirements of this policy and has been approved by the Associate Pastor for Christian Education as being a helper in Children's events.

Parent Helper: A parent of a Child or Youth participating in the applicable activity who has been approved by the applicable staff member without meeting the screening requirements of this policy to help during a time of unusually high enrollment one time in any given calendar year. Two Adult Volunteers must also be present and the Parent Helper will never be alone with the Children or Youth.

Paid Staff: An Adult who has met the screening requirements of this policy hired by the church.

General Qualifications for Working with Children and Youth

In general, a person who works with our Youth or Children should:

- Be a Christian, engaged in an active, growing, and vital relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Have, or be willing to obtain, a working knowledge of the Bible.
- Be familiar with, and sympathetic to, Covenant beliefs and the direction of Community Covenant Church.
- Have a sense of call to minister to Children or Youth.
- Have a desire and willingness to be sensitive to the spiritual, physical, social, emotional, and mental needs of Children or Youth.
- Have a rapport with Children and youth and a demonstrated ability to relate to them.
- Be able to be supervised, and be accountable to the church body and those in authority.

Precautions

These precautions are to be observed for all activities covered by this policy:

- 1) Six-month rule: Persons volunteering must have been attending Community Covenant Church for at least 6 consecutive months before beginning service in an activity covered by this policy.
- 2) Two-deep rule: Two or more Adult Volunteers and/ or Paid Staff must be present at all times during an activity covered by this policy.
- 3) Screening: Designated pastoral staff must assure that all required screening is conducted prior to the Volunteer or Paid Staff member beginning service. Designated pastoral staff shall review all screening documents and make the final decision regarding the applicant's suitability for ministry with Children or Youth.

SCREENING REQUIREMENTS

	Paid Staff	Adult Volunteer	Youth Volunteer	Parent Helper
Application	YES	YES	YES	NO
Criminal Background Check (every 3 yrs.)	YES	YES	NO	NO
Personal Reference Check	YES	YES	YES	NO
Pre-Ministry Interview	YES	YES	YES	NO

- 4) Training: Volunteers and Paid Staff are required to participate in:
 - a) Training relevant to their ministry area as determined by their ministry coordinator.
 - b) Training in this Reduce the Risk of Abuse policy provided by pastoral staff.
- 5) All Volunteers and Parent Helpers for Children's ministry (grades 6 and younger) shall wear an appropriate name/identification tag provided by the church.
- 6) Windows are required on all classroom doors.
- 7) Permission slips are required for any off-site trips. They are available from the ministry coordinators.
- 8) Accident/incident reports must be completed by ministry coordinators on appropriate forms immediately after occurrence and submitted to the Associate Pastor for Christian Education.
- 9) Under no circumstances should any Child or Youth be left alone unsupervised.

Discipline in Children's Ministry

The Associate Pastor for Christian Education shall establish appropriate classroom management guidelines and provide training to volunteers.

Volunteers, Paid Staff and Parent Helpers will not use verbal abuse, including profanity, demeaning statements, and sarcasm, or physical discipline, including spanking, pushing, and arm grabbing.

Relationships between Leaders and Children or Youth

The "Two-Deep" Rule requires that Volunteers and Paid staff must not be alone and isolated with Youth. However, this policy acknowledges that the nature of ministry requires some exceptions; they are:

a. A Volunteer or Paid Staff may have a confidential, private one on one conversation with a Middle School or High School aged student both within and off the church premises, if, they are conducted in a public place where they will be in constant sight of other people (i.e. a Starbucks, etc.), the Volunteer or Paid Staff arrive and depart in separate vehicles from the student, have permission from the parent, and a (different) Paid Staff member has been informed and agrees to provide accountability.

b. Occasional one-on-one conversations taking place in an open-door area, with the participants visible to others.

c. During certain transportation situations (see "Transportation" section)

Volunteer and Paid Staff shall exercise caution in showing affection to Children and Youth. An arm around the shoulder, squeezes of the hand, or side-to-side hugs are permissible when appropriate. However, it is wise to ask for a side hug first and allow the Child or Youth to give permission. Generally, frontal hugs are not permissible, and leaders should take great caution when a student offers a frontal hug. Workers should be especially careful that physical contact is not perceived as sexual.

Volunteers or Paid Staff should not date any Youth.

Restroom Guidelines for young children: Children shall be given privacy when using the restrooms. Volunteers must check to be sure no Adults are in the restroom and then wait outside for the child. If a very young child needs assistance with clothing, the Adult shall use their hand on top of the child's to guide zippers and buttons. This is known as the "hand over hand" method. Bathroom doors shall be propped open if an Adult enters to help a child.

Transportation

Ministry coordinators shall arrange to use church vehicles whenever possible. Drivers for Children and Youth events must be 21 years of age and must provide proof of their driver's license prior to driving for the first time. Drivers of personal vehicles must also provide proof of current insurance before each event.

Drivers must follow driving directions provided for an event, attempt to stay in caravan and will arrive on a timely basis at the destination and check in. Drivers must require seat belts be worn at all times.

An exception to the 'two-deep rule' may be made for local trips only when there are two or more Middle School or High School students riding in the car. In this case, the driver must be an Adult Volunteer or Paid Staff. A student shall never ride one on one in a car with an Adult Volunteer or Paid Staff regardless of age or gender.

Crisis Steps

If a Child or Youth confides an abusive situation or incident to you:

- Thank him/her for confiding in you.
- Tell the Child or Youth he/she did the right thing and that you will try to help him/her.
- Report the situation directly to the Associate Pastor for Christian Education, Associate Pastor for Youth Ministries, or Senior Pastor.

If you believe a crime has been committed, the applicable governmental authorities should be contacted.

Any complaint of a violation of this policy may be made to any of the following:

- the Associate Pastor for Christian Education
- the Associate Pastor for Student Ministries
- the Church Chairperson or
- the Senior Pastor

If the allegation involves conduct on the part of a pastoral staff member, the complaint may be directed to the Superintendent of the Midwest Conference of the Evangelical Covenant Church (402-334-3020).

A Crisis Response Team consisting of the Senior Pastor, Assoc. Pastor for Christian Education, Associate Pastor for Youth Ministries, a professional social worker or psychologist and the Church Chairperson shall be convened by the Senior Pastor as needed.