

IMMANUEL CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

SAFE CHURCH AND CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY

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SAFE CHURCH POLICY

PURPOSE:

The Immanuel Christian Reformed Church seeks to ensure the safety and welfare of all children who connect with Immanuel and its members and protect all juveniles' rights. Immanuel is committed to developing high quality ministries for children and youth that seek to follow Christ. In order to succeed in bringing children and youth to Christ, it is important for adult leaders and teachers to form a Christ like relationship with youth and children.

Physical, sexual, and emotional abuse most frequently occurs in the context of relationships between children and youths and the adults who hold positions of responsibility in their lives. Immanuel seeks to protect against the potential risk of abuse and to minimize the potential risk of abuse. It is also important to protect against false allegations of abuse against ministry leaders and to provide a safe experience for all those who are participating in bringing Christ to the children and youths.

The guidelines and procedures contained within this policy represent “best practices” for keeping ministries safe and should give ministry leaders, children, and their parents or guardians and the congregation as a whole a sense of what to expect when ministries are in practice.

POLICY:

Defining Abuse:

The State of Illinois Definitions for Child abuse is the mistreatment of a child under the age of 18 by a parent, caretaker, someone living in their home or someone who works with or around children. The mistreatment must cause injury or put the child at risk of physical injury. Child abuse can be physical (such as burns or broken bones), sexual (such as fondling or incest), or emotional. Neglect happens when a parent or responsible caretaker fails to provide adequate supervision, food, clothing, shelter or other basics for a child.

Applicable Personnel:

1. This policy is in effect for the following categories of personnel:
 - a. The paid staff of Immanuel Christian Reformed Church whose duties include supervision of children and youth ministries and or direct care to or minister with children and youth.
 - b. The unpaid Immanuel Christian Reformed Church ministry leaders, teachers, and helpers who provide direct care to or minister with children and youth. (Ministry leaders, teachers and helpers refer to those volunteers who are adults aged 18 or older)

SAFE CHURCH POLICY

2. This policy will be reviewed with all Immanuel Christian Reformed Church personnel whether paid or unpaid at the time they begin serving with a ministry and yearly thereafter. Receipt of this policy and acknowledgement of the guidelines must be signed by all those paid and unpaid staff. (See attachment)
3. This policy is posted to the Immanuel Christian Reformed Church website and is accessible for anyone to view.
4. All changes to this policy are subject to approval by the Immanuel Christian Reformed Church Council.
5. Ministry leaders are responsible for reviewing all applicable policies and procedures with ministry helpers.
6. Ministry leaders are encouraged to consult with the Council of Immanuel Christian Reformed Church or its designee if there are any questions about the implementation of this policy.

PROCEDURES:

CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRIES:

1. The Council along with the Ministry leaders are responsible for ensuring that there are enough ministry leaders, teachers, or helpers to meet the needs of the children and youth. (If offsite or overnight outings are conducted the ratio of adults to children should be greater than normal)
2. At least two adult leaders should be present in close proximity of any location in which a children's or youth ministry program meeting/activity is held. (if two adult leaders cannot be present for children/youth program meetings/activities', then the meeting will be canceled)
3. All Ministry leaders, Helpers, and Volunteers must have been involved with the Immanuel Christian Reformed Church for at least 6 months prior to being allowed in a position where they have contact with minors.

SAFE CHURCH POLICY

4. For all children and youth programs, the head ministry leader is responsible for visually monitoring classrooms and meeting locations when the program is in session.
5. All leaders will meet with at least two or more children at one time. (If classes or groups only have one or two participants, it is advisable to combine two or more groups)
6. If it is necessary to meet with a child one-on-one during a regular ministry meeting, do so in a well-lighted room with an open door or in the corner of a large room where interactions can be observed by other leaders.
 - a. Ministry leaders or teachers should inform their supervisor before meeting one-on-one with a child, if possible.
 - b. One-on-one meeting should only occur when no other option is available, to address misbehavior in the classroom or an immediate emotional/personal crisis.
 - c. One-on-one meetings should be of a very short duration and should have a clear purpose for returning the child to healthy participation in the larger group.
 - d. Leaders will inform the child's parent(s)/guardian(s) of the reason for and nature of the discussion after a one-on-one meeting has taken place.
7. Ministry leaders, teachers, and helpers should not meet one-on-one with children outside of normal ministry hours while involved in a church ministry.
8. Immanuel Christian Reformed Church staff that provides pastoral care to children and youth should inform the Church Council President of the time and location of any pastoral care meetings and should obtain permission from the applicable parent(s)/guardian(s) before meeting.
 - a. Pastoral care meetings should generally take place during the stated office hours. Pastoral care meetings should only take place outside of stated office hours during Wednesday night children's program meetings.
 - b. Pastoral care meetings should only be scheduled when two or more staff are scheduled to work in the office at the same time.

SAFE CHURCH POLICY

- c. Pastoral care meetings should only take place in the offices located by the Southwest offices after entering into the building at the parking lot.
9. Ministry leaders are responsible for supervising all activities of the children while participating in ministry activities. This includes:
 - a. Supervising children when they arrive and before the actual ministry activities begin.
 - b. Supervising children when they depart and after the ministry activities end.
 - c. Ensuring that children leave the church only with their parent(s)/guardian(s), the parent(s)/guardian(s) designated representative or their siblings.
10. Ministry leaders are responsible for ensuring that meeting locations are safe and appropriate for ministry use. This includes:
 - a. Ensuring that potentially hazardous materials, objects, chemicals, tools and supplies are inaccessible to children and youth when not being used.
 - b. Supervising the use of potentially hazardous materials, objects, chemicals, tools and supplies.
11. For all ministry meetings that take place during the week (Monday through Saturday), only the primary entrance at the parking lot may be used and unlocked during ministry hours. (Other doors may be used if needed and at the discretion of the head ministry leader)
12. When a ministry leader becomes aware of an incident involving some type of abuse, that ministry leader must file an incident report indicating the following:
 - The type of incident.
 - Date of the incident.
 - Names and ages of the Minor or Minor's involved.
 - Names of the Adult involved in the incident.
 - Witnesses names.

SAFE CHURCH POLICY

- Ministry involved in the incident.
- Full written report indicating what occurred, what actions were taken, whether or not it was resolved, the child's first words in quote form, and finally the report must be signed.

NURSERY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD MINISTRIES:

1. At least two nursery attendants must work in the nursery whenever childcare is provided for a church service or function, with the following conditions:
 - a. Each occupied nursery room (infant, or toddler) should have at least two attendants present.
2. All nursery substitutes must be individuals who are approved to work in the nursery.
3. Only nursery attendants will be allowed in the nursery area. Parent(s)/guardian(s) are allowed in the nursery area at the discretion of the attendants. All parents or guardians must check-in their children at the nursery. Children will only be released to those individuals who dropped them off prior to the service or those otherwise designated by the parents or guardians who dropped the children off.
4. After children are dropped off in the nursery, they must remain in the nursery rooms until they are picked up by the individuals who dropped them off or those otherwise designated by the parents. Nursery attendants may walk with a child in the hallways outside of the nursery if needed to soothe the child.
5. Only adults (with parental or a caregivers permission) can change (diapers and clothing) children in the nursery. Diaper changes should take place using the provided changing tables in open areas. Clothing changes, if necessary, should take place to ensure the privacy of the child as much as possible.
6. An adult female (with observance of another) should help children in the bathroom with toileting tasks. An adult male can help his own child in the bathroom.

SAFE CHURCH POLICY

PROVIDING DISCIPLINE:

The church acknowledges that at any time children and youth ministries may require discipline (in some form) that may become necessary. Discipline should be given with the following procedure in mind:

1. Discipline should be appropriate to the incident and given in the least-restrictive manner.
2. Discipline should begin with positive verbal redirection. This includes:
 - a. Asking a child to stop his/her actions.
 - b. Giving warnings to a child about what may happen if he/she does not stop.
 - c. Informing a child of a loss in privileges (e.g. cannot play games, must sit out, etc) because of his/her actions.
 - d. Calling or speaking with parent(s)/guardian(s) about a child's actions.
3. If necessary, discipline can proceed to positive physical redirection if verbal redirection is not effective. This may include:
 - a. Holding a child's hand or arm to escort them from the environment or remove them from an unsafe situation.
 - b. Physically intervening in an argument to prevent children from fighting or hurting each other.
4. Discipline should not include physical restraint. If physical restraint is necessary, the only people that should be involved in physically restraining children are parent(s)/guardian(s) or other family members. Restraint should only be utilized to prevent immediate bodily harm to the individual or others.
5. Discipline should never be physically or verbally abusive.
 - a. Examples of abusive physical discipline include:
 - i. Hitting, punching, slapping or kicking.
 - ii. Holding a child in such a way to cause bruising.
 - iii. Restraining a child in a manner that compresses the head, lungs, or abdominal region.
 - b. Examples of abusive verbal discipline include:
 - i. Shouting, yelling, insulting, and cursing at children.
 - ii. Attempting to humiliate or embarrass a child.
 - iii. Bribery, coercion or threats: and
 - iv. Discipline that is followed by a request or threat to not report it.

SAFE CHURCH POLICY

6. Child-peer interactions should be safe and appropriate to the church environment. This includes:
 - a. Ensuring that children treat each other respectfully and politely.
 - b. Ensuring that children do not bully each other physically, verbally, or emotionally.
 - c. Working to create an atmosphere in which individuals are comfortable reporting bullying or other unhealthy peer interactions.
 - d. Ministry leaders, teachers and helpers should understand that any physical contact with a child or youth that is not consensual may be considered a “Battery” against the child or youth and may result in legal action.

TRANSPORTATION PROCEDURE:

Immanuel Christian Reformed Church recognizes that when Immanuel Christian Reformed Church ministries participate in or attend various off-site outings and activities, transportation will be necessary. Ministries will provide transportation to children with the following guidelines:

1. Parent(s)/guardian(s) or their designated representatives are responsible for transporting their children to and from Immanuel Christian Reformed Church or sponsored events.
2. Ministry leaders must notify parent(s)/guardian(s) in writing of scheduled off-site activities at least one week prior to the outing.
3. Ministry leaders and the church should ensure that all drives are over the age of 21, are responsible and mature, are licensed, and have vehicle insurance.
4. All vehicle occupants on ministry outings and trips must wear a seatbelt at all times.
5. If driving the church bus, two adult leaders should ordinarily be on the bus—one to drive and one to supervise.

SAFE CHURCH POLICY

6. Personal vehicles can be driven for outings with the following provisions:
 - a. If possible, two ministry leaders should be in each vehicle.
 - b. if it is necessary to have one child in a vehicle with one leader (same gender only), the child should sit in the back seat.
 - c. These constraints do not apply if the child is an immediate relative of the ministry leader.

SCREENING POLICY:

Immanuel Christian Reformed Church will conduct a national criminal record background checks on all employees, adults' leaders, teachers, helpers, whether or not they have contact with children. The background check will be completed when you first begin working with a ministry and ordinarily every three years thereafter. Legal minors or exempt from criminal record background checks:

All employees, ministry leaders, teachers and helpers will be screened for service and questioned in the interview as to if they have ever been accused of, participated in or convicted of Criminal Sexual Abuse. The following procedures will be completed:

1. Completing an application
2. Completing an interview
3. Verifying references

You will need to sign the Consent for background Investigation form in order for the church to complete the background check. The background checks are administered by the church council and completed by the background company. The church council are the only people who have access to signed consent forms and to the results of the background checks: both the consent forms and the background check results are stored in a locked filing cabinet in the church secretaries office.

Immanuel Christian Reformed Church reserves the right to reject any potential ministry leader, teacher or helper for any reason, including but not limited to, failure to consent to a background check or prior criminal activity. An applicant has the right to withdraw an application to be a ministry leader, teacher, or helper at any time without being penalized in the future should they decide to reapply. Anyone who has been convicted of any felony offense or any felony or misdemeanor sexual offense is ineligible to serve as a ministry leader or teacher.

In the application to be an employee, ministry leader, teacher or helper, the individual will be asked to complete an interview in order to be considered for a position. These steps are completed at the discretion of the council who is in charge of developing leaders, teachers and helpers for his/her respective ministry.

SAFE CHURCH POLICY

REPORTING ABUSE:

Immanuel Christian Reformed Church ministry leaders, teachers, and helpers are responsible only for reporting allegations of abuse that occurred during the course of a ministry's scheduled programs and activities. Under Illinois law, ministry leader's teachers and helpers are not required to report allegation of abuse that occurred in a location outside of the church and occurred outside of a ministries scheduled programs and activities. These individuals are known as permissive reporters.

Certain individuals are "mandated reporters" by the State of Illinois and must report all allegations of abuse, whether they took place during a church program and activity or not. These include, but are not limited to:

- a. Medical personnel
- b. Law Enforcement personnel
- c. School teachers and other education personnel
- d. Social workers
- e. Day care and nursery school director and staff

If a child reports an incident of possible abuse involving a church program or program leader, teacher, or helper, please report it as soon as possible to one of the following people (unless they are the alleged abuser) Together they will report the allegation of abuse to the Illinois Child Abuse Hotline **1-800-25-ABUSE** or **1-217-524-2606**. Mandated reporters, however, do not have to report any alleged abuse to a church administrator prior to calling the Child Abuse Hotline.

- a. Head Ministry Leader
- b. Senior or Associate Pastor
- c. Elder

If a child reports an incident of possible abuse that occurred outside of a church program, activity or leadership, permissive reporters, should consult with a member of the church council regarding how to report the allegation to the parent(s)/guardian(s) and/or the Illinois Child Abuse Hotline.

If an allegation of abuse is reported to the Child Abuse Hotline, the reporter or Head Ministry Leader should notify the Senior Pastor or the President of Council as soon as possible that an allegation of abuse was reported to the Hotline.

SAFE CHURCH POLICY

RESPONSE TO ABUSE:

If an allegation of abuse is made against a ministry leader, teacher, or helper, the following steps are to be followed:

1. The alleged abuser will be suspended from his role as a leader, teacher, or helper until an investigation of the alleged incident is completed.
2. If the abuse hotline was called and the allegation is being investigated by DCFS, the Immanuel Church Council will usually begin their own investigation. (See attached Christian Reformed Church Guidelines)
3. If the allegation was not reported to the abuse hotline or the allegation is not being investigated by DCFS, the church council will perform an internal investigation of the allegation and make a report to the council on their findings.
4. The Church Council is responsible for determining the course of action to be taken in response to an allegation of abuse. The church council should contact the civil authorities immediately if the results of an internal investigation reveal evidence of abuse or harm or if the ministry leader admits to abusive behavior.
5. If a Church Council Member is implicated as the abuser, the Church Council Members not implicated will be responsible to conduct the interview and should notify the Classical Abuse Response Team of the allegations.
6. If there is no merit to the allegation of abuse, the alleged offender may be allowed to return to his/her role as a ministry leader, teacher, or helper.
7. Attached are the guidelines by the Christian Reformed Church for the church handling abuse allegations against a Church Leader. (See Attached)

IMMANUEL CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH CONSENT AGREEMENT:

Information form for volunteers:

This form is to be completed and signed by each employee, ministry leader and volunteer. All forms will be kept in the main church office. All question asked and all information provided is for the sake those children and adults who would be affected.

A. Personal Data (Please Print)

Name_____

Address_____

Telephone_____

This document and this form is being used to help the church provide a safe and secure environment for those adults, children and youth who participate in our programs and use of our facilities.

B. Receipt of Sexual Abuse Prevention Information

I have received and understand the information provided concerning the prevention of abuse by Immanuel Christian Reformed Church. In signing this document I attest that I have never participated in, nor been convicted of Sexual Abuse. Should I be involved in any ministry of the church, I agree to be bound by the policies of Immanuel Christian Reformed Church and to allow a national background check and to refrain from any inappropriate conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of the church.

If I have questions concerning this policy and my possible involvement in ministries with adults and children, I understand that I may talk with the pastor about such concerns.

Signature_____

Date_____

Parent or Guardian Signature if 16 years of age or under:

Signature_____

Date_____

We at Immanuel Christian Reformed Church are aware that abuse occurs. If you are a victim of any form of abuse and would like to seek some form of counseling, the pastor at Immanuel Christian Reformed Church is willing and available to talk confidentially with you or to help you find appropriate counselors.

ABUSE INCIDENT FORM

IMMANUEL CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

Date: _____ Time: _____ Name: _____
(Print)

Type of incident: _____

Date of Incident: _____

Names and Ages of the Minor or Minor's involved: _____

Names of the Adult involved in the incident: _____

Witnesses names and phone number: _____

Ministry involved in Incident: _____

Written report of incident: (please write a full report containing all details)
