

CENTRAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH POLICY STATEMENT ON CHILD PROTECTION

October 2, 1997

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PREFACE

The purpose of this policy statement is to establish a plan for the prevention of child abuse, and for the response of the church should child abuse occur or be alleged. The plan has four parts: selection and screening, supervision, reporting, and response.

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all persons who desire to serve in a ministry involving children or youth. It applies to employees, including ministers, and regular volunteers. It applies to those who desire to serve as childcare attendants, as church school teachers or aides in youth ministry, in children's and youth music programs, in summer camping programs, and in any other program of the church involving children and youth. In instances where an organization is also governed by rules of that organization, e.g. Boy Scouts of America, then the more stringent rule applicable shall be adhered to.

OVERSIGHT RESPONSIBILITY

Oversight of this policy is to be carried out by a Child Safety Committee, appointed by the chairs of the Children and Youth Ministry Teams. The Child Safety Committee shall be comprised of the Senior Minister, the Minister for Children and Youth, the Chair of the Administrative Board or the Chair of the Elders, a member attorney, and a member child advocate. The Committee shall be responsible for the review of applications for employment and volunteer service, to oversee the supervision of all persons who serve with children and youth, to report to the chair of the Administrative Board any violation of this policy, and to direct the church's response to any accusation or claim of child abuse. The Child Safety Committee shall also ensure that all volunteer workers and employees involved with children and youth are trained in the prevention, recognition, reporting and response to child abuse.

DEFINITIONS

As used in this statement, unless the context otherwise requires:

1. "Abused or neglected child" means a child whose health or welfare is harmed or threatened with harm when any person inflicts or allows to be inflicted upon a child physical or emotional injury by other than accidental means; or, commits or allows to be committed an act of sexual abuse, or sexual exploitation upon the child.
2. "Child" means any person who has not reached their eighteenth birthday.
3. "Dependent child" means any child who is under improper care not due to an intentional act of the parent or guardian.
4. "Emotional harm" means harm to the mental or psychological capacity or emotional stability of a child.
5. "Physical injury or harm" means substantial physical pain or any impairment of physical condition.

6. "Sexual abuse" includes, but is not necessarily limited to, any contacts or interactions between a child and an adult in which the adult uses or allows, permits, or encourages the use of the child for purposes of sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or another person.
7. "Regular volunteer" shall be a person who is engaged in a teacher mentor role with a child or group of children, and whose relationship brings them into contact with the child or children on more than three (3) occasions over a 180 day period. The relationship with the child or children shall be on more than a mere proximal basis. Any doubt as to whether an individual is a "regular volunteer" shall be resolved by finding the individual to be subject to the "regular volunteer" requirements.

PART 1 SELECTION AND SCREENING

The process of selection and screening applies to both employees and regular volunteers. This process involves the following steps:

1. Application
2. Interview
3. Reference checks
4. Six month rule for volunteers
5. Assessment

1. Application The application serves as both application and screening form. It is designed to provide the church with information concerning the applicant's past conduct, and also to identify any potential circumstance which would indicate a propensity to molest children. The application shall be filled out by all persons who desire to work or serve in any capacity with children from infancy through high school age. Applications are to be reviewed by the Children's Safety Committee and approved before any additional selection steps are taken. A copy of the Application is attached and labeled "Attachment A". Completed application forms are to be retained in a locked file.

2. Interview An interview is required, using the application form as a point of reference. The purposes of the interview are to tell each person who desires to work with children or youth the steps we are taking to protect our children from abuse of all types including sexual, psychological and physical. The interview will also serve to give the applicant an opportunity to discuss the matter. Applicants should be asked if there is anything they would add to what they wrote on the application form, particularly if they indicated that they had been abused as a child. The interview gives the Children's Safety Committee; an opportunity to observe the applicant as well as to hear the applicant's responses. A written record of the interview is to be retained with the application in a locked file.

3. Reference checks An attempt to contact listed references will be made in every case and a written record of the contacts kept in the locked file with the application and the record of the interview. Written references are preferable to oral references, although both are permitted. A copy of the written reference form is attached and labeled "Attachment B".

In screening minors, either as volunteers or paid child care attendants, a written parental statement is required which states that the parent knows no reason why the child should not be permitted to serve in the position. References should also be obtained from two of the

following sources:

- Other youth programs
- A school teacher
- Youth workers within Central
- Youth workers outside Central

In addition to checking references, a criminal record check is required for all applicants desiring to work in positions involving contact with children and youth. An information form for requesting a criminal records check is attached and labeled "Attachment C."

4. Six Month Rule Regular volunteers are prohibited from working with children or youth until they have been members or have been in regular attendance at the church for at least six months. The six month rule permits church members and staff to become acquainted with applicants prior to their beginning to serve with children. The period also serves to acquaint prospective volunteers with the church's policy to protect its children.

5. Assessment An assessment must be made of the application, interview, reference comments, and personal observations, and a specific determination made that the applicant has been screened and is considered suitable to serve with children and youth at Central Christian Church. The record of this assessment is to be recorded on form "Attachment D", and is to be kept with the other documents in the locked file.

PART II SUPERVISION

Supervision in the case of children or youth workers means establishing an environment and policies wherein people do not have an opportunity to abuse a child. Commensurately, the following procedures will be observed at Central Christian Church:

1. Central Christian Church recommends that at least two responsible persons are present at all times at activities involving children and youth.
2. At least two adults shall accompany minors on field trips, outings, or camping trips.
3. At least two adults shall accompany minors on any program involving an overnight stay.
4. A cleric, an employee, or a regular volunteer must obtain the consent of a child's parent or legal guardian before inviting a minor to visit in the adults home.
5. If a minor needs a ride home after a meeting, two adults should be present.
6. All classroom doors shall have windows, so that activities within can be clearly observed by persons in the corridor.
7. Parental permission is required for a child or youth to have a private meeting with an adult, including a minister. If parental permission is inappropriate in a given case, the meeting shall take place where the adult and youth can be seen, through a window, an open door, or in a room with another adult present who can see but not necessarily hear the conversation.

PART III REPORTING

Kentucky Revised Statute 620.030 requires that any person who knows or has "reasonable cause to believe" a child is "dependent, neglected or abused" report this fact to the local or state police, the county attorney, the Commonwealth Attorney, or the Cabinet for Families and Children (the "child abuse hotline" at 246-2282 or (800) 422-4453). The law also requires that any medical, school, child care or law enforcement personnel or agency which knows or has reasonable cause to believe a child is being abused or neglected report this fact to one of the authorities listed above. In the absence of a clergy-penitent privilege the individual who discovered the alleged abuse is responsible to make the required report.

Any person who is a volunteer worker or an employee at Central Christian Church who knows or has reasonable cause to believe a child is dependent, neglected or abused is required, in addition, to report it immediately to his or her supervisor. The supervisor is then required to pass the report up the supervisory chain to the Senior Minister or Administrative Board Chair. It is imperative that the Senior Minister and appropriate church official be aware of the allegation of child abuse as soon as possible. It is the responsibility of the Senior Minister or Administrative Board Chair to notify the appropriate church officials, including the chair of the Children's Safety Committee. The Senior Minister or Administrative Board Chair is also responsible for notifying the Regional Minister, the church's insurance company and the church's attorney.

It is a requirement of the church that all regular volunteers and employees who work with children be provided with training to ensure that they know the symptoms indicating the possibility of child abuse.

PART IV RESPONSE

Every report of child abuse must be taken seriously. Central Christian Church will deal responsibly with any allegation of child abuse. The Children's Safety Committee will serve as the response coordinating body within the church. All actions concerning the church's handling of the incident should be thoroughly documented. The church's response to a report of child abuse will depend upon the circumstances that exist in the case. Therefore, it is not possible to state all the specific steps that will be involved in every case. Nevertheless, certain minimum steps must be taken in every case, as follows:

1. Where the abuse or neglect creates a substantial risk of physical or emotional injury, the case will be reported to the authorities as discussed in Part III. If an employee or volunteer detects evidence of abuse he or she must report it to a minister of the church. Likewise, if a person confesses to perpetrating child abuse and such confession is not made in a situation where the clergy-penitent privilege applies, it is to be reported to state authorities.

2. Following the report to authorities, the Senior Minister or Administrative Board Chair will form an "Investigative Team" of three to five persons from an list approved by the Child Safety Committee. It is recommended that the Children and Youth Minister and a

representative of the Children's Safety Committee participate in this initial investigation together with other persons from the appropriate professional disciplines. They will exercise discretion and care in determining as soon as possible the necessary action to be taken.

From the very beginning, care shall be taken to be sensitive to the needs of all involved and to prevent the reputation of anyone from being unnecessarily endangered by this investigation. Care shall also be taken to ensure that Christian support is extended to all persons involved, including the alleged perpetrator. It is the ministry of the church to respond responsibly to the person or persons alleged to have perpetrated the abuse. Care shall also be taken to not interfere with any ongoing investigation being conducted by civil authorities.

The investigative team will organize the investigation as the particular circumstances demand and may speak directly with the parties involved. Persons other than the accuser and the accused may be consulted as advisable. The team will prepare a written record of the investigation and its findings.

If the investigative team determines that it is clear that the incident did not occur, the Senior Minister or Administrative Board Chair will be so notified and the investigative process will then be suspended. The accused and the person who brought the allegation will then be notified of the decision of the investigative team.

Should the investigative team determine that there is cause to believe that a valid claim exist, it will present a written report of the investigation to the Senior Minister or Administrative Board Chair along with a recommendation as to further action.

3. In every case of alleged child abuse, or whenever a person claims that someone has abused him or her, the allegations must be reported to the church's insurance company, the church's legal counsel, and the Regional Minister.

4. If a church employee or worker is accused of child abuse, the accused person shall be immediately informed of the nature of the complaint, and be removed from contact with children and youth pending further action.

5. If a victim of abuse has been identified, the Senior Minister or Administrative Board Chair, or in his/her absence such other person as is designated by the Senior Minister or Administrative Board Chair, shall talk to the victim's parents. The parents should be informed that they have the right to anonymity, but that if the accused perpetrator has denied the allegation, anonymity will make investigation more difficult. At all times care shall be taken to be extremely sensitive to the child, showing care and concern so as to prevent harm. The care and safety of the child is the first priority. At all times let the child and the child's parents know that the church takes the matter very seriously and that the policy of the church is to deal with the situation responsibly. In like fashion, care shall be taken to be sensitive of the accused and to treat the accused in a Christian fashion.

6. In some cases, it will be necessary to inform the church members of the occurrence of child abuse. A letter should be sent to the members so that they will hear it first from the Senior Minister or church officers, rather than the news media. The letter should go only to participating members and be marked "confidential". The letter should be brief; for example, "(name) has been accused of an incident of child molestation in our church, and the matter is

being investigated by the state Cabinet of Human Resources (or the Police, as appropriate). (name) denies any wrongdoing. We urge you not to discuss this matter with any person who is not a member of Central." The church's attorney should review the letter prior to mailing.

7. It is probable that a case of child abuse will eventually be revealed to the news media. All comments to the media should be made by the Senior Minister or Administrative Board Chair or a spokesperson designated by the Senior Minister or Administrative Board Chair. Where appropriate, allegations should be frankly admitted insofar as the investigative process will permit. The response of Central should be that we have taken every precaution to protect the children who are involved in our many church programs. The existence of this policy, "Statement on Child Protection" should be discussed to reinforce the church's intent to create an environment that is as safe as possible for children and youth. Let them know that we have acted responsibly in accordance with Kentucky laws and our policy. We should report to the media the aggressive and extensive steps we have taken to reduce the risk, and the response that the church has made to this reported child abuse.