

Safe Sanctuary Policy

Adopted March 18, 2014

Revised June 15, 2021

Jesus plainly taught that children were to be included and provided for within the community of faith. (See Luke 18:15-17 and Matthew 18:5-6). Today, the church may be the only place where some children find the unconditional love and care they so desperately need to grow, to thrive, and to become faithful people.

As Christians, we must take our responsibilities to our children (very seriously, always attending to their spiritual growth and nurturing. We fail in our responsibilities if we neglect to take adequate precautions against physical abuse in our churches. We must remember that our church is a holy place of sanctuary where children may come to know God and experience the love of Jesus Christ.

South Elkhorn Christian Church will be a place where people of all ages can come together for worship, study, and service, with the assurance that they are safe and secure in the community of faith. Child abuse prevention and risk reduction policies and procedures are essential, not only for the protection and safety of our children but also for our volunteer and employed workers with children.

In response to this church-wide challenge, we will work to assure that our ministries are carried out in responsibly safe circumstances and that adequate supervision assures that ministry is being accomplished safely.

Therefore, we will initiate a comprehensive child abuse prevention strategy that applies not only to the paid professional staff members but also to volunteers who work with children and youth.

BASIC PROCEDURES

The Screening of all Workers with children and youth

We will screen, check references, do criminal records checks and make it a requirement for all paid workers and volunteers to submit all the necessary information, including clergy, who have contact with children or youth.

There is a mandatory 6-month waiting period before a volunteer may work directly with children and youth. The six months begins from an individual's initial "commitment" into the life of the church. The waiting period does not apply to employees.

The "Two-Adult Rule"

No fewer than two adults will be in the presence of the children at all times during any church-sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children and youth. Vigilant adherence to this rule provides important protection to the

church's workers with children and youth and drastically reduces the possibility of an incident of child abuse. Generally, the adults should not be related.

If two adults are not present, we will utilize assigned or paid adult "roamers" who move in and out of rooms, and the door of the room must remain open.

Parental Authorization

It is a requirement that parents use sign-in and sign-out in the nursery. Parents must return the pager or provide a written permission for someone other than a custodial parent to pick up the child.

Permission slips will be obtained before allowing caregivers with children to administer any medication or over-the-counter topical creams such as sunscreen, lotions, lip balm, etc.

Written permission will be required from parents if their infants are to be placed on their stomachs to sleep.

Accident Report Form

If any child or youth sustains an injury of any kind, it is required of the assigned volunteers or paid workers to fill out an accident report form and to follow procedures for first aid.

Annual Training for Volunteers and Paid Staff

Paid staff, clergy, and volunteers who regularly work with the children will be required to attend an orientation session in which they are informed of the church's policies for the prevention of child abuse. Such training will review the following items:

1. Procedures to be used in all ministries with children and youth
2. Appropriate steps to report an incident of child abuse
3. Details of the state laws regarding child abuse

First aid and CPR training will also be provided on an annual basis for all church workers with children and youth.

Age Restrictions

Workers must be five years older than the oldest child in the group they are working with.

Youth under the age of eighteen may only assist other adults.

The minimum age for volunteering in the nursery will be sixteen.

Windows in All Classrooms/Doors

Rooms set aside for children and youth should have a door with a window in it or a half door.

Open-Door Counseling

At any counseling sessions with children or youth, the door of the room used should remain open for the entire session.

Advance Notice to Parents for Off-Site Activities

For off-site activities, parents are to be given advance notice and full information regarding the event(s) in which their children will be participating. Before the event, parents must give written permission for their child's participation.

Participation Covenant for All Participants and Leaders

A written covenant of participation should be developed and provided to all leaders and participants in children's and youth ministries. The covenant is a statement in which the participants and leaders agree to:

- a) Take part in the ministry
- b) Give their best efforts to the ministry
- c) Respect the other participants
- d) Treat the others as well as they would wish to be treated.

Such covenants are useful (especially for retreats or trips) for establishing from the outset the behavior standards expected of everyone. The covenants are also important reminders for leaders that abusive behavior toward the children and/or youth will not be tolerated.

Annual Parent and Family Education

Information will be provided about this plan to the congregation and parents. An annual family education event will be provided in which families are invited to learn the facts about child sexual abuse and about the components of the church's plan.

An event of this type may include any of the following:

- a. A speaker from a local law enforcement agency.
- b. A speaker from a local child protective services agency.
- c. A doctor or counselor who is experienced in treating abused children
- d. An attorney experienced in advising churches about risk management or loss prevention
- e. A DVD about the incidence of child sexual abuse within churches
- f. Printed information about your state's abuse statutes and abuse reporting requirements.
- g. Printed copies of the church's abuse prevention policies and procedures (Allow time for discussion).
- h. A time for worship and prayer

An event can also include sessions for children so they are informed about the behavior that is to be expected from church leaders, how to recognize and report possible abuse, and how they can help prevent harm being done to anyone at the church.

Reporting Requirements

To report suspected child abuse, neglect or dependency call the 24-hour hotline at 1-877-597-2331.

All workers with children and youth must be fully aware of their responsibilities under state law and under the church's prevention policies if they become aware of or suspect abuse. When you have reason to believe a child is being abused, neglected, or is dependent, call the child protection hotline at 1-877-597-2331 or your county Department for Community-Based Services (CBS). If in doubt, it is preferred that you call and talk over what has come to your attention. CBS will help you sort things out, such as whether a specific incident must be reported and to whom. If you feel the child is in imminent danger or is in need of immediate protection, call 911 or your local police department. The safety of the victim is the church's primary concern.

Both civil and criminal immunity from prosecution is given to any person making a report or assisting legal authorities or the child protection program in making an assessment, as long as that person is acting in good faith.

This is the essential information required for a report:

1. The child's identity;
2. Any person believed to be responsible for the abuse or neglect to the child if the person is known;
3. The nature and extent of the abuse or neglect;
4. The name and address of the reporter, if he or she so chooses; and
5. Where the child can be found.

More information about Child Abuse and Neglect can be found at <http://chfs.ky.gov>
A handbook published by the Cabinet for Health and Family Services on these issues is available online at:

http://cfc.ky.gov/dcbs_manuals/DPP/index_dpp.asp

Policy Regarding Registered Sex Offenders

In order to enhance the safety of the children, youth and adults in our church, our ministry to registered sex offenders will take place off campus.

Lockdown Procedures

- Fire and tornado drills will be practiced several times a year to develop preparedness.
- All entrances will be secured to prevent trespassing when children and/or youth are in the building.
- Every effort will be made to lead kids who are outside the facility away from the building to a safe location. Leaders will lead kids inside classrooms, offices, or other sites that can be locked, remaining until an all-clear is given.

All forms mentioned above are located in the church offices. The First Aid Kits are located in the kitchen, the nursery, Little Elks office, and in the Children Worship and Wonder room.