

Protection of Children and Youth Policy

First Christian Church

Manhattan, KS

Introduction

It is the desire and goal of First Christian Church to provide a safe and secure environment for those children and youth who participate in our programs. To facilitate this goal, we believe it is important to provide for the screening, training, and ongoing supervision of volunteers and staff who work in the children and youth ministries. Throughout this policy, the definition of Children and Youth Ministry is any leadership role involving the direct supervision of our children and youth. Those involved in Children and Youth Ministry at First Christian Church would include: all paid staff persons, children and youth music leaders, special event leaders, transportation volunteers and other positions with children and youth as deemed necessary.

I. Definitions:

- A. Physical Abuse. 1) intentional physical contact which causes injury; 2) intentional touching done in a rude, insolent or angry manner.
- B. Sexual Abuse. 1) any lewd fondling or touching of a person of either the child or the accused, done or submitted to with the intent to arouse or satisfy the sexual desires of either the child or the accused or both; 2) soliciting the child to engage in any lewd fondling or touching of the person of another with the intent to arouse the sexual desires of the child, the offender, or both; 3) inviting, persuading or attempting to persuade the child to enter any vehicle, building, room or secluded place with the intent to commit an unlawful sexual act; 4) intentional touching a child with the intent to arouse or satisfy the sexual desires of the offender or another; 5) any act of sexual intercourse or sodomy, regardless of consent by the minor; 6) the “attempt” to commit any of the acts constituting sexual abuse.
- C. Corporal Punishment or any physical punishment which includes but is not limited to spanking, is expressly contrary to the philosophy and practice of First Christian Church and will in no instance be administered or tolerated.

II. Recruiting & Selecting of Persons in Leadership Positions with children and youth

A. Paid Positions

- 1. All individuals applying for paid positions will provide verification of identification and photo, i.e. driver’s license.
- 2. All individuals applying for paid positions within the Children and Youth Ministries must complete a confidential Primary Screening Form. This form and three references will be used to screen applicants for their suitability for working with children and youth. The Personnel and/or Pulpit Committee will review the form and automatically disqualify any individual who has a criminal conviction for incest, molesting a child, rape, sodomy, pornography, murder, kidnapping, physical abuse of a minor, or battery. Other criminal convictions shall be considered in determining an applicant’s qualifications but do not automatically disqualify a person from further consideration.
- 3. All individuals applying for a paid position will agree to a criminal background check and a Child Abuse Registry search for crimes involving children. The Personnel Committee is responsible for being sure these background checks take place.

4. In order to actively participate in a paid leadership position at First Christian Church, each individual must have completed a child protection training event offered by the Discipleship Ministry, prior to the beginning of their ministry service for which that person is scheduled.

B. Volunteer Positions

1. Volunteers called to serve in the youth ministries of First Christian Church must be participating members or have active participation in any Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation for six months before assuming leadership roles or he or she must have a reference from a professional clergy member.
2. Volunteers must complete a confidential Primary Screening Form for Volunteer Workers. This Form and three references will be used to screen applicants for their suitability for working with children and youth. References for volunteers will be kept on file for three years.
3. Any person found to have been convicted of a sex crime or a crime against person as defined in the Kansas Criminal Code or in any criminal code from any sister state or Federal Government will be denied the opportunity to serve in our Children and Youth Ministries program. Persons charged but not convicted of such offenses will be investigated in greater detail and evaluated.
4. In order to actively participate in a leadership position at First Christian Church, each individual must have completed a child protection training event offered by the Discipleship Ministry, prior to the beginning of their ministry service for which that person is scheduled.

C. Paid and Volunteer Positions Responsible for Transporting Youth

1. To provide for the optimal safety of our children, youth workers who will be transporting youth will submit a copy of a valid driver's license.
2. A history of untreated alcohol or substance abuse-related traffic convictions disqualifies individuals from transporting youth.
3. Only those persons covered by the congregation's insurance and approved by the Director of Christian Education/Youth Minister will be permitted to transport youth.
4. The minimum age stated by our insurance for private or church owned vehicles and approved by the Director of Christian Education or Youth Minister will be preferred when transporting youth.

D. Smoking

1. The church has a no smoking policy in all church buildings. All smoking should take place outside the building, out of the view or presence of the children or parents. Employees or volunteers who smoke shall be responsible for properly disposing of all smoking materials.
2. Smoking is not allowed in the vehicles of which children and youth are being transported.

III. Supervision of Persons in Youth Leadership Positions

- A. All persons in leadership positions will observe a “two on one” rule, i.e. two persons in leadership positions are required for private interaction with a single youth, or two or more youth are required to be in any situation of private interaction between children and a single person in a leadership position. There will be no private instances of one-on-one contact between children and persons in leadership positions. One on one counseling of a confidential nature will be conducted in plain view of another person.
- B. All persons in leadership positions will exercise deliberate supervision of each other and will report observations of suspected physical or sexual abuse to the Director of Christian Education Director/Youth Minister immediately. The Director of Christian Education Director/Youth Minister will have the option of dismissing any youth worker immediately for an offense of sufficient gravity. Law enforcement officials will be contacted in any instance of conduct which could be criminally sanctioned.
- C. Training of all persons in leadership positions will include a discussion of potential criminal sanctions related to sexual and physical abuse of minors.
- D. Training of all persons in leadership positions will include discussion of the legal reporting obligations of observed criminal conduct.

IV. Reporting Procedures

- A. All persons in leadership positions, whether paid or voluntary, are responsible for reporting possible physical or sexual abuse. Reports of possible child physical or sexual abuse shall be communicated to the Director of Christian Education Director/Youth Minister immediately.
- B. If there is reason to believe that physical or sexual abuse has occurred, the Director of Christian Education Director/Youth Minister shall report the incident to SRS and law enforcement authorities as soon as possible. The Director of Christian Education Director/Youth Minister will remove the youth and the alleged accused from unsupervised contact pending an investigation.
- C. The Ministerial Staff will report possible incidents to the congregation’s Discipleship Ministry Team. The Discipleship Ministry Team will help initiate and proceed with the church’s plan of response to allegations of sexual abuse or incidents of liability concern.
- D. Upon investigation of a reported incident, a plan of response will be developed within 24 hours, to include a report to SRS or local law enforcement as appropriate. SRS shall be notified at any time there is a reason to believe (probable cause) that physical or sexual abuse of a child has occurred.
- E. The Discipleship Ministry Team will be responsible for preparing a detailed written record of each reported incident, including the reporting procedures used.

V. Plan of Response to Allegations.

- A. All allegations will be taken seriously, with regard for the privacy and confidentiality of all involved. The Director of Christian Education Director/Youth Minister will keep a detailed record of allegations and of actions taken to segregate the parties in the case of sexual abuse allegations, the reporting of the matter to the appropriate authorities if applicable, and to investigate the matter.
- B. The Director of Christian Education Director/Youth Minister will notify the Ministerial Staff of any allegation within 8 hours of its report.
- C. The Ministerial Staff so notified will notify the Sexual Abuse and Liability Response Team. A spokesperson will be chosen to speak for the Church. The Church's insurance carrier will be notified.
- D. The Director of Christian Education Director/Youth Minister, with consultation from the Response Team, will notify the parents of any minors involved in an alleged incident within 8 hours of the alleged incident.
- E. The Director of Christian Education Director/Youth Minister with consultation from the Discipleship Team will contact SRS or local law enforcement officials. However, if there is reason to believe that an incident of physical or sexual abuse has occurred, the Director of Christian Education Director/Youth Minister shall notify SRS as soon as possible.
- F. The Director of Christian Education Director/Youth Minister shall require that an attorney be consulted before any person other than the accused is questioned by an investigative agency.
- G. The Ministerial Staff, the Sexual Abuse and Liability Response Team, and all other individuals involved on behalf of the Church, including, but not limited to, those in leadership positions, whether paid or voluntary, shall provide detailed explanations of events and identification of the parties involved only to the proper authorities and the Sexual Abuse and Liability Response Team and Ministerial Staff. The church's spokesperson should avoid denial, minimization, or placing blame on victims or their families. Any public discussion should center upon the policies and precautions taken by the Church in its youth ministry program to insure a safe environment for all participants.

VI. Role of Church in Education of Children and Youth

- A. Offer at least a biennially program in Sunday School for prevention of abuse and neglect to help educate our children. (e.g. "no touch" and "say no" programs.) The key to these programs is that they have a right to protect themselves—to distinguish between "good touching" and "bad touching"—to say "no" to adults in certain situations—to remove themselves from uncomfortable predicaments—and to report incidents they encounter.

VII. A Word About Appropriate Affectionate Behavior in The Christian Community

It is widely know that “good touching” is important to life. Numerous studies have shown the importance of holding and touching for infants to survive. Likewise children do not grow and thrive without the good touches of others. We have many examples in scripture where Jesus touched people to heal and to comfort them. The Christian community has a rich heritage of sharing a loving hug, an arm around the shoulder or a squeeze of the hand to say, “you are loved....I care about you.”

With good touching, the child feels as if someone has given to them or has shared with them rather than taken from them. It is important in our concern about child sexual abuse that the importance of good touching is not lost. We need to continue to express Christian love in appropriate ways with children. The healing, comforting, and affirming aspects of good touch should be emphasized.

VIII. Procedures for Parents and Adults Leaving and Picking Up Children from Church Activities

- A. Regarding the arrival and departure of youth to church programs. Children will be picked up by a parent/guardian from within the building where the scheduled activity is taking place. Youth, ages 12 and above, will be allowed to walk and meet their parent/guardian for departure from the scheduled activity. Youth who drive to the church may not use their vehicle for transportation during scheduled church activities. Youth may not transport other youth during a youth activity.

The Procedure to Create this Policy:

Upon realization that we did not have a current or satisfactory Child Protection Policy, the Discipleship Ministry Team decided to create one. We used the Child Protection Policy of First Christian Church, Topeka, Kansas as a guide and template.

After decided upon changes and additions, we approved to pass the policy onto our insurance company through our Trustees. The insurance company now has a copy on file and with the approval from the Coordinating Council at their meeting in October, 2006, it is now the responsibility of First Christian Church, Manhattan to keep this document current and follow through on the policies listed.