

YOUTH SAFETY AND WELFARE POLICY

INTRODUCTION

As a church we believe that the spiritual, emotional and physical well-being of our children is vital. Therefore, it is our intent to ensure that all church activities involving children are consistent with the teachings and example of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the Christian tradition of nurturing all children involved in our ministries.

The following policy is designed to make certain that we as a church have wise and carefully thought out policies in place to guide all those in children's ministries.

The leaders of First Christian Reformed Church request the cooperation of the volunteers of our church who must abide by the rules of this policy.

MINISTRIES COVERED IN THIS POLICY

Nursery

Children's Ministry

Cadets / GEMS

DEFINITION OF IMPORTANT TERMS

Adult:

A person at least 18 years of age.

Appropriate Conduct:

Conduct that one could reasonably assume would be acceptable and permissible by the child's parents and the Council of this congregation.

Child:

A person under 18 years of age, or over age 18, but participating as a student.

Child Abuse:

Harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare which occurs through non-accidental physical, sexual or mental injury.

Sexual Abuse:

Engaging in any sexual contact or non-contact with a child which may be violent or non-violent.

Adult Program Leader:

A volunteer person giving leadership in any of First CRC's ministries.

Youth Volunteer:

A volunteer under the age of 18 giving leadership in any of First CRC's ministries.

RULES OF CONDUCT FOR ALL WORKERS

All program leaders should pray regularly for the children in our church, thanking God for the privilege of ministering to them and asking Him to protect them from any kind of harm, workers should also pray that God would give them wisdom and discernment so that they will be sensitive to ways to help and protect the children.

Appearance:

Workers must avoid even the appearance of misconduct. This is needed in order to maintain parental confidence and to avoid mistaken allegations.

Discipline:

No form of physical punishment is ever appropriate by a program leader. If misbehavior is happening in the classroom, a parent should become involved.

Counseling:

Counseling should be done in a public place where private conversation is possible but occurs in full view of others. Otherwise, notify another adult of the location and whom you are meeting.

One-on-One:

At no time should a youth worker take a child to another part of the church alone. If the need arises to talk with a child one-on-one, it should be done in an environment in which others are in the area.

Open Door Rule:

All youth events will be open door. All workers, parents and church members have a right to observe any youth activity.

Touching:

1. Hugging and other forms of appropriate physical affection are important to a child's development and are generally suitable in our church setting.
2. Physical affection must be appropriate to the age of the child.
3. Touching must be a response to the child's need for comfort, encouragement or affection. Not the adult's emotional need.
4. A child's preference not to be touched should be respected.
5. Church workers are responsible to protect children under their supervision from inappropriate touching by others; this includes touch by other leaders or other children.

Transportation:

Parents are responsible for providing or arranging this transportation. It would be appropriate, if riding together, to have two adults with one child or one adult with two children.

This policy is to be reviewed with the volunteers of each ministry covered in the policy on a yearly basis.

NURSERY

All persons desiring to serve in the nursery need to meet the rules of conduct for all workers.

Two adults need to be in attendance for each service. One must be a female. Members of the same family should not be scheduled together.

Helpers must be in the 6th grade or above. They may be either girls or boys.

If there are only a limited number of children in the nursery, then only one adult and helper must be present.

A “sign-in” sheet must be completed for each child in nursery. Children are to be released only to those indicated by the parents.

The following logs must be completed:

- Diaper Changing Log – This includes date, name of child and changer.
- Nursery Bathroom Log – This includes date, name of child assisted or monitored, and name of the attendant.

A record of those who serve in the nursery and above logs must be kept for one year.

Anyone not following these rules must be reported to the First CRC Church Council.

Children’s Ministry

All persons desiring to serve in children’s ministry need to meet the rules of conduct for all workers.

Two adult volunteers need to be in attendance for the service if only one room is being used. Three adults must be in attendance if both rooms are being used with the third adult serving as a “float”

between the two rooms to monitor bathroom use and provide assistance as needed, leaving one adult in each room at all times.

Designated “float” adult volunteer must do a walk around to check each classroom as well as the restrooms.

Bathroom Policy:

- The bathroom use will be monitored by a Children’s ministry volunteer.
- While the child uses the bathroom, the volunteer should remain outside the bathrooms with the main bathroom door propped open.
- If a 3-year-old or preschooler needs assistance, the volunteer should enter the bathroom to assist the child and leave the door open until both the child and volunteer exit.

Children should not leave class except for illness or to use the restroom.

Any student/volunteer one-on-one outings require the approval of the parents.

An adult will remain until the last student has left programming.

Anyone not following these rules must be reported to the First CRC Church Council.

CADETS AND GEMS

All persons desiring to serve in the Cadets or GEMS need to meet the rules of conduct for all workers.

A minimum of two counselors must be present at all activities.

If a child needs significant medical attention, the parent(s) should be notified immediately.

Anyone not following these rules must be reported to the First CRC Church Council.

ACTIONS THAT MAY BE REQUIRED OF COUNCIL

Summary of Reporting Obligations

Council should take care in appointing adults as leaders for the Youth Programs of our church. This is the first line in our attempt to protect our children and lessen the opportunity for abuse to take place.

The youth and parents will be informed of the Abuse Policy. They will also be informed on how to protect themselves and who they can consult for help. It is NOT the responsibility of the reporting person to substantiate the alleged abuse, but only to report it to the Church Council or Child Protective Services and Law Enforcement Agencies.

If the "Incident Documentation Form" is presented to the Church Council

1. The Church Council will engage in an initial fact-finding investigation within 24-48 hours of the allegation being made. Interviews will be conducted with:

- a) the person making the allegation
- b) the alleged victim and, if possible, their parents
- c) the alleged offender
- d) potential witnesses

Documentation of the above should be made. The accused will be allowed to continue in ministry with restrictions.

2. If reasonable cause is judged NOT to exist, the Church Council will notify all parties.

3. If reasonable cause is judged to exist, an attorney and the law enforcement agencies will be contacted and the offender will be temporarily suspended from ministry.

4. If the offender is a pastor or staff person:

- a) the church visitors will be notified immediately.
- b) the person should be placed on suspension while salary continues.
- c) the church visitors will work as mediators with the Council and the parties in order to facilitate open communication and cooperation in the investigation of the incident.
- d) if allegations are true, the offender will be placed under the supervision of the Council and the law enforcement agencies will be contacted.
- e) if allegations prove to be false, the accused will be allowed to resume their ministry.

5. Reinstatement of an offender:

- a) an offender will NOT be placed in a volunteer position which might provide further opportunity for such abuse to again occur.
- b) the person must submit to Church Order Articles 81 through 84.