

# CHRIST UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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## **I. C.U.C.C. GUIDELINES FOR PROTECTION OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUTH OF THE CONGREGATION**

### **CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS**

As a community of Christian faith, Christ United Church of Christ is committed to creating and maintaining programs, facilities and a community in which members, friends, staff and volunteers can worship, learn and work together in an atmosphere free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation or intimidation.

Adult leaders for youth ministry activity function as representatives of the church and as such are held to different standards than when acting as a parent or adult in their own family. The rules and guidelines of the church must be followed by all leaders at all events, thereby providing appropriate supervision for the youth.

Staff and volunteers should always be mindful that they will be providing both supervision and modeling adult Christian behavior for the youth in their care. They should endeavor to set an example that is consistent with the values and expectations of the church community.

Staff and volunteers should strive to make the church a safe haven and sanctuary where children and youth can seek advice, help and nurture. They should strive to make our church a place where children can come to learn and develop inner strength and spiritual resources they will need to feel truly connected to God.

All adults who work with minors must be screened and undergo a criminal background check prior to beginning work. Staff and volunteers may be re-screened at the discretion of the Pastor, staff, and/or Youth Council. An offer of employment by the Policy and Personnel Committee and Church Council is contingent upon the results of the criminal background check. Updated criminal background checks will be conducted on an annual basis. The background checks will be conducted by searching public online data bases for the Wayne County court system, the Ohio Attorney General Sex Offender Registry, and for any other county and city of residence the individual has listed in their employment application. The individual conducting the background check will check-off the relevant boxes on the "Staff and Volunteer Screening Checklist" form and turn the form into the Church office.

Volunteers subject to basic screening include those individuals with an ongoing commitment and participation in youth programming. Event chaperones who do not participate with the youth on an ongoing basis are not to be considered volunteers for the purposes of the screening requirements. However, chaperones will be provided with a summary of the conduct guidelines with the expectation that they will follow all church rules regarding adult-child interaction. Event chaperones will operate under the direction of church staff.

Adults who have been convicted of either sexual or physical abuse of minors, or those who have a history of inappropriate conduct with minors will not serve in any church-sponsored activity or program for minors. If the adult has any other criminal convictions that are discovered during the background check, the information will be

provided to the Church Council for their consideration and possible action.

Staff and volunteers should be given a complete copy of the church's Child Protection Policy by the church staff. The staff member distributing the CPP will date and initial the appropriate box on the "Staff and Volunteer Screening Checklist" form for the individual in question. Staff and volunteers should strive to comply at all times with the letter and intent of the policies. They should seek to participate in whatever training is offered by the church to keep volunteers informed of policies and state laws regarding child abuse.

Sexual misconduct toward children is never permissible under any circumstances. It is always the responsibility of the adult to establish safe boundaries and appropriate rules in their relationships with children.

This policy only governs Christ United Church of Christ activities and programs. Events and programs of the wider church operate under different guidelines and procedures. We encourage parents to inquire directly of the host entity regarding policies prior to enrollment or registration of their children in wider church programs.

### *Application and Screening*

#### A. THE SIX MONTH VOLUNTEER WAITING PERIOD

All volunteers involved with children and youth must have been actively participating in the congregation for at least six months, or be approved by the Youth Council, before assuming volunteer responsibilities with our children and youth.

#### B. VOLUNTEER APPLICATIONS

All volunteers who work with children and youth will be required to complete applications and releases. Volunteer background checks will be conducted as detailed in the "Conduct Expectations" portion of this policy. Reference checks and additional records searches may be conducted. Application interviews may be conducted. Volunteers must sign a covenant agreement.

#### C. STAFF APPLICATIONS

Individuals applying for a paid staff position with the church will be subject to all the requirements listed for volunteers. In addition, staff applicants will be required to submit to a fingerprint check through the State of Ohio. The church will pay for the fingerprint check. As part of the search and hiring process, the Policy and Personnel Committee will implement the provisions of this section.

### *Supervision Rules*

#### A. THE TWO ADULT RULE

When at all possible, elementary school age children and younger in all church activities shall be under the care and supervision of two adults, one of whom may be a high school

youth aide. On Sunday mornings, at least two adult teachers should be present in the second floor classroom area.

An exception would exist if classes or activities are so constructed as to allow constant visual access and opportunities for unannounced observation by the Pastor, Faith Formation Coordinator, Youth Coordinator, or their designee.

No teacher, advisor, aide, or anyone else working with our children should place themselves in a compromising situation by being alone with a child or with children out-of-sight of other adults.

If, for any reason, a teacher or volunteer is left alone in a classroom with a child, the teacher or other adult in the nearest or neighboring classroom should be so informed. The door of the room should be left open.

#### B. YOUTH VOLUNTEERS & THE FIVE YEAR SEPARATION RULE

The church encourages high school students and young adults to fully participate in the life of the church. However, precaution needs to be taken when youth are placed in positions of authority or with care responsibilities over younger children and youth.

There should be a five year separation between high school youth volunteers and those they supervise or for whom they provide care. Every attempt should be made to first use youth who have reached the age of 18 as workers with children/youth.

High school youth volunteers should be paired whenever possible with an adult when dealing with children/youth. If an adult is not available, high school youth volunteers should be paired together to avoid violation of the "Two Adult Rule."

#### C. DISCIPLINE

The purpose of discipline with children and youth is to maintain order in a manner consistent with the teaching of religious responsibility, respect and cooperation.

No child shall be disciplined by the use of spanking, hitting, slapping, or any form of physical punishment.

Verbal reprimands shall not include destructive criticism, insult, name calling or shouting.

Teachers, staff, and volunteers are encouraged to listen to the child, communicate expectations of appropriate behavior, use time-outs, or give alternative choices. If a child continues to be disruptive, a parent should be contacted and brought to the location.

Christ UCC has a zero tolerance policy of any verbal or physical abuse from any child or youth towards any of the staff or volunteers.

1. The first time any child/youth physically or verbally abuses a staff member or volunteer, they will be immediately removed from the rest of the group. Their parent will then be contacted to come pick them up. The staff member or volunteer

involved in the incident should write up an incident report documenting what happened.

2. Consequences of a second incident of any abuse will depend on the severity of the incidence and the recommendation of the Youth Council.
3. After the third offense there will be a meeting with the child/youth, their parents, the pastor, and either the Youth Coordinator or the Faith Formation Coordinator. That group will decide on what further actions need to be taken depending on the offense.

### Protection of Young Children

#### A. THE OPEN DOOR RULE

If there are no windows in the doors, classroom doors should remain open when an activity with children/youth is going on the rooms.

#### B. PARENTAL GUIDELINES

Parents are strongly encouraged that while on the premises with their children to know at all times where their children are, who they are with, and what they are doing. It is strongly encouraged that children 10 or under do not play in unsupervised areas.

At the beginning of every church year, parents will be provided with a copy of the CPP. Parents are expected to read and abide by the provisions and rules of the CPP. Parents are encouraged to ask questions, make recommendations, and discuss CPP provisions that cause them concern. Parents may waive application of the rules in this Child Protection Policy to their child(ren), but only in writing and in advance of application of the rules.

#### C. NURSERY ROOM GUIDELINES

Christ U.C.C. has adopted a policy detailing procedures for protection of the children in the nursery during the worship service. That policy is incorporated by reference into this general policy manual.

#### D. BATHROOM SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN

Normally teachers, staff or volunteers who accompany a child to the bathroom should remain outside the bathroom or stall while the child is inside. If a child needs assistance with zipping, buttoning, buckling, clean-up, wiping, etc., two adults should be present, one of whom may be a high school aide. The parent should be advised of bathroom activity at the time of pick-up.

Diapering of infants and toddlers may be done in the classroom if two people are present, one of whom is an adult. The parents will be informed at pick-up of diaper changes.

#### E. VISITORS ON SITE

The staff and volunteers serving our congregation should endeavor to be aware of who is visiting our facilities. Visitors are welcomed. Visitors to the church should be

accompanied on their visit to the areas frequented by our youth and children by a member of our staff.

#### F. NURSERY SCHOOL GUIDELINES

The C.U.C.C. Community Nursery School will have its own policy and procedures, subject to approval by Church Council.

### Protection of Youth

#### A. YOUTH GROUP ACTIVITIES INVOLVING ISOLATION OR PHYSICAL CONTACT

Physical contact during youth activities that is not directly supervised by adults is inappropriate. Church staff and program volunteers will be very mindful of the risks associated with games and activities involving isolation of youth or physical contact, and will continuously monitor the youth while these activities are taking place.

No adult should initiate or encourage physical or intimate contact with children or youth. Setting boundaries is the responsibility of the adults.

#### B. PICK-UP & DROP-OFF AT YOUTH ACTIVITIES

Parents and guardians are expected to respect opening and closing times of activities. Parents should verify the presence of a supervising adult before leaving a child at the facility. Drop-offs should not be made more than fifteen minutes in advance of the scheduled activity unless other arrangements have been made with the staff. All youth should be able to provide a telephone number where their parents can be located. Supervising adults should assume when volunteering that their responsibilities may extend a reasonable time beyond the listed end of the activity.

We avoid situations where one adult and one youth or child are left at the facility's door waiting to be picked up by parents at the end of an evening activity. Two adults should remain until all youth have been picked up.

If the parent has not arrived at the end of the activity, the supervising adults have the following options if phone contact has not been successful:

- Call an alternative number listed on the youth's registration or medical forms;
- At least two adults will agree to remain on site with the child until the parent arrives; or
- If one adult must leave, a call will be made to request the presence of a church staff person, a Church Council member, or the pastor.

The supervising adult should not transport the child home in their vehicle without either a written consent from a parent or a second person in the vehicle.

Youth will not be permitted to leave with each other in a vehicle without prior written consent from parents of both the driver and the passenger.

Youth should not be permitted to leave the premises with someone other than the youth's parent without the prior written consent of the youth's parent. If a child leaves the facility against the instruction of the supervising adult, the parent will immediately be notified.

Written consent forms should be provided in advance to all parents of youth.

#### C. OVERNIGHT ACTIVITIES

When an activity or trip involves overnights, there shall be at least one adult chaperone of the same sex in the youth sleeping quarters.

Any adult chaperone supervising church-sponsored overnight activities shall have been cleared to do so by the Faith Formation Coordinator, the Youth Director, and/or the Pastor.

A signed, written parental consent form is required at the beginning of each programming season.

#### D. TRANSPORTATION

Staff and adult volunteers cannot transport children or youth to their homes.

Transportation for field trips, to activities, or for events cannot occur without written parental consent. Any adult chaperone transporting youth to activities shall have been cleared to do so by the Faith Formation Coordinator, the Youth Coordinator, and/or the Pastor. All transporting adults must have a valid operator's license and proof of insurance.

No adult should transport one child/youth without prior written consent of the child's parent or guardian. The church should be the central pick-up and drop-off site.

#### E. DRUGS, ALCOHOL, TOBACCO

The use of any drugs, tobacco, or alcoholic products on or in congregation facilities or at congregation sponsored youth events is not permitted. Staff or volunteers who smoke should leave the premises and presence of the children/youth if they choose to smoke. Volunteers who smoke should not neglect supervision responsibilities to smoke away from the youth activity.

#### F. MENTOR GUIDELINES

The C.U.C.C. mentoring program has become an extremely positive aspect of youth programming. It is not intended that the program be crippled by the restrictions of the Child Protection Policy. Special attention to this aspect of youth programming is warranted.

The mentoring program necessarily involves youth-adult interaction that falls within the "high risk" category identified in Section I of this policy. However, several factors tend to minimize the risk of an abusive mentoring relationship. The youth and the youth's family choose the mentor - the mentor does not choose the youth. While not a

guarantee of propriety, the mentoring relationships are usually same gender. The youth are in their teenage years. They are more able and capable of reporting problems in the mentoring relationship. And mentors express a willingness to assume a higher degree of responsibility in accepting their role.

A written covenant agreed to by the mentor will reinforce the safety issues in the mentoring relationship. The general guidelines in the agreement will serve to protect both youth and mentor.

#### G. FRIENDS OF CHURCH YOUTH

Youth are encouraged to invite friends to church activities. The friends are expected to provide contact information for their parents/guardians to our staff or adult volunteers at the activities. Friends cannot be transported by staff or church volunteers without written parental permission. If a friend participates on a regular basis, her/his parents should be asked to complete and return a general activity permission form and medical/emergency contact information

#### H. INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

When school is cancelled, youth activities for that day are also cancelled. When the Sheriff declares a Level II or III road emergency, then youth activities during the emergency period are cancelled. When the Sheriff declares a Level I road emergency, or when inclement weather is forecast, the cancellation decision will be left to the Youth Coordinator in consultation with the Pastor and volunteers for the activity in question. Weather forecasts, travel distance, and driver circumstances are factors that will be considered in making the decision to cancel or postpone an activity. When in doubt, the decision will be weighted toward safety of the youth.

### II. REPORTING RESPONSIBILITIES

Any inappropriate contact or relationship between an adult and a child/youth or between children/youth shall be promptly reported to the Faith Formation Coordinator, the Youth Coordinator, and/or the Pastor.

Any inappropriate contact, either sexual or physical, between children shall be promptly reported to the Faith Formation Coordinator, the Youth Coordinator, and/or the Pastor.

If a suspected case of abuse has either been reported to a volunteer or is suspected by the volunteer to have occurred at a church-related function or program, immediately contact the Faith Formation Coordinator, the Youth Coordinator, and/or the Pastor.

In a case where the Faith Formation Coordinator, the Youth Coordinator, or the Pastor cannot be reached, the Moderator of the Church Council should be contacted.

If the alleged abuser is the Faith Formation Coordinator, the Youth Coordinator, or the Pastor, report the allegation to the Moderator of the Church Council. In addition to following the mandatory reporting requirements of the law, the church's insurance carrier and the Association Minister of the Living Water Association should be notified.



The church will follow all child abuse and neglect reporting requirements under state law. The church will follow a specific protocol in handling of all reports.

Christ United Church of Christ recognizes the need for the church to remain proactive and aware in order to protect our children. The Youth Council will solicit resources from the wider church and social service agencies. Training will be periodically offered to staff and volunteers. The Child Protection Policy will be reviewed and re-assessed on a regular basis. Compliance with the Policy will be periodically reviewed.

### **III. RECORDS POLICY**

The following records and documents will be classified as sensitive and confidential:

- all screening forms and applications;
- all documents relating to background and reference checks; and
- all files, reports, or notes generated by a report of misconduct.

Access to the records will be limited to the following individuals:

- Members of the Response Team (Pastor, Faith Formation Coordinator, Youth Coordinator, Chair of the Youth Council, and the Council Moderator);
- Social welfare and law enforcement agencies entitled to access;
- Counsel for the church; and
- The church's insurance carrier pursuant to the terms of the policy.

Access by individuals not on this list must be pre-approved by legal counsel or pursuant to a court order.

The documents must be kept in a secured, locked file. Keys for the locked file should not be available to persons not on the approved access list. If an alleged perpetrator has a key, they should be asked to turn in the key pending the investigation. It would be prudent to move the files to a separately keyed file.

#### **RETENTION OF RECORDS**

The files should be securely stored indefinitely. Files should remain securely stored even after the resignation, retirement, or death of a staff member or volunteer.

For applicants who were not hired or approved for volunteer work, the files should be securely held for a period of at least three years and then destroyed on site. Files should never be discarded into trash containers without prior shredding. A list of rejected applicants should be securely maintained indefinitely.

#### IV. SEX OFFENDERS IN THE CONGREGATION

##### GENERAL POLICY

A person with a criminal record involving sexual misconduct is welcome to worship in the sanctuary and participate in the life of the church. We recognize the worth of each and every life, welcoming sinners in the name of Jesus Christ.

However, the church has an obligation to establish restrictions and guidelines with a known sex offender for the safety of the congregation and to help the offender avoid repeating the offense. The congregation member or visitor with such a record will be asked to comply with reasonable and common sense precautions. The precautions serve two functions. First, they protect the children. Second, they protect the individual with a record from situations that might give rise to misunderstandings and false accusations. It is expected that the offender who is committed to avoiding an offense will welcome accountability and accompaniment.

It shall be the responsibility of the Church Council or Council Moderator to meet with the member/visitor and detail the precautions. The offender will be provided with a copy of the church policy. If the individual is unwilling to comply with the precautions, they will be asked not to come onto church grounds or to be present at any church-sponsored activities. They will be offered the opportunity to participate through our Live streamed worship.

##### PRECAUTIONS

No adult who has been convicted of any child abuse offense (sexual, physical, emotional) will be accepted as a volunteer to work with children and youth for any church sponsored activity.

Outside of the sanctuary, the sex offender congregation member/visitor must be accompanied by a pastor-designated person. They are not to be unaccompanied in any other area of the church building. They are not to be unaccompanied at any church function. They are not to attend youth functions or programs.

The offender will be asked to sign a covenant or limited access agreement. The covenant would involve a release giving the Pastor permission to contact parole officers, therapists, and treatment providers. The covenant will commit the individual to compliance with the supervision on grounds guidelines. The covenant will include a commitment to continue in counseling/therapy. The covenant will include a disclosure agreement allowing our church to discretely disclose his/her status if the offender moves to a different church community.

Any person who has pending charges of sexual misconduct shall not be in contact with any children/youth until the case is resolved.

## V. STATE OF OHIO REPORTING GUIDELINES FOR SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

### WHO SHOULD REPORT

Ohio law mandates that certain professionals report any child they suspect may be, or is at risk of being, abused or neglected. Those professionals required to report suspected child abuse and neglect include:

- schoolteachers
- clergy
- psychologists
- social workers
- health care professionals

The list of professionals subject to the mandatory report law would include paid church staff: the pastor, Faith Formation Coordinator, and Youth Coordinator. Unpaid volunteers may not be subject to the state's mandatory reporting law. But, as noted in the C.U.C.C. Child Protection Policy, they must report concerns to an individual in the church who is subject to the reporting law.

In addition to those subject to mandatory reporting requirements, Ohio law encourages everyone to act on behalf of children in need of protection and to report suspicions to the appropriate authorities. All of us have a responsibility to report a child we suspect may be in danger.

### HOW TO REPORT

A report can be made by telephone, in person, or in writing to Wayne County Children Services. **The 24 hour reporting number is 330-345-5340.** The agency is located at 2534 Burbank Road, Wooster, Ohio 44691.

### WHAT SHOULD YOU REPORT

You should report any child under 18 years of age, or any physically or mentally handicapped child under 21, who you have reason to believe has suffered any wound, injury, disability or condition of such a nature as to indicate abuse or neglect. It is important to note that you need only suspect - have reason to believe - that abuse or neglect is occurring. Physical proof or other forms of validation are not required. It is the responsibility of the children services agency, through its investigation, to determine if abuse or neglect is in fact occurring.

### WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD YOU GIVE

- Name and address of the child you suspect is being abused or neglected.
- Age of the child.
- Name and address of the parent or caretaker of the child.
- Name of the person you suspect is abusing or neglecting the child.
- Reason you suspect the child is being abused or neglected.

- Nature and extent of injury, abuse, or neglect
- Any other information which may be helpful to the investigation.
- Your name, if you want to give it. You may report anonymously if you choose, but you are encouraged to give your name.
- If you are a mandated reporter, you may be required to follow up your verbal report in writing.

### CONFIDENTIALITY

A report of suspected child abuse and neglect is confidential. Your identity will not be released or affirmed to anyone without your written consent, except through court process. Be aware that the reporter's identity may be guessed by the parent. A parent's suspicions, however, will never be confirmed by the agency. You are also protected from civil or criminal liability for making the report. By law, anyone participating in good faith in making a report is immune from any civil or criminal liability.

### WHAT HAPPENS TO THE REPORT

Children Services begins a child welfare investigation within 24 hours of receipt of the report. Investigations are made in cooperation with law enforcement officers. The child welfare investigation is a social service function and can result in the provision of emergency and protective services. Ohio's child abuse and neglect laws are not intended to punish but, instead, to help the family. Primary emphasis is placed upon preserving the family unit whenever possible through the provision of supportive services. Children will be removed from the home when sufficient protection cannot be provided to guarantee their continued safety within the home environment.

When deciding whether to report suspected abuse/neglect, you should consider that, regardless of the circumstances, the abuse/neglect will not stop without professional intervention. Not to report is to allow the maltreatment to continue.

## VI. C.U.C.C CHILD PROTECTION POLICY: RESPONSE PLAN

### *Procedures When Sexual Misconduct & Sexual Harassment is Reported*

#### INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The care and safety of the alleged victim(s) and their family is the first priority. The safety of other children and youth in the congregation is included in this concern.

All reports and allegations will be taken seriously. They will be handled in a responsible and prompt manner. All legal reporting requirements will be reviewed and followed whenever a report or allegation is made. An effort will be made to respect the privacy of all involved individuals. An effort will be made to maintain insofar as is possible the confidentiality the individual(s) making the report(s).

All reports and incidents will be fully documented. The person receiving the report is responsible for accurately documenting the details of the initial report. All activity involved in handling the report/incident will be documented. Documented information must include: date and time of report; persons involved in the report process; and a detailed recitation of the actual information reported. All documents relating to allegations of abuse or misconduct will be stored in a secure, locked manner.

#### INITIAL STEPS TO BE TAKEN

##### **A. Interview of the Reporter**

An immediate interview of the individual making the report is necessary. Two staff persons should be present to hear the details of the report. When a report is made to a staff person, the staff person should notify the reporting individual that a second person should be present to hear the details of the allegations. Detailed notes should be taken. A sample incident form may be used to guide questioning. It must be remembered that everyone involved in the handling of the report may at some point be required to testify under oath in a criminal or civil proceeding.

After receipt of the documented allegation, the church Response Team should be notified. The church Response Team should consist of: the Pastor, the Faith Formation Coordinator, the Youth Coordinator, the chair of the Youth Ministries Council, and the Council Moderator . The Response Team obviously should not include the alleged perpetrator. Church Council should be notified of the fact that a report has been made and that an investigation is pending. The Church Council will be notified and consulted at each stage of the process at the discretion of the Pastor and the Council Moderator.

## **B. Determination of Whether Mandatory Reporting Law Applies**

If the Response Team determines that the allegation triggers the mandatory reporting provisions of Ohio law, the mandatory report must immediately be made to Wayne County Children Services (330-345-5340). Responsibility for the investigation is then turned over to child welfare and law enforcement personnel.

If a mandatory report is being made, a Response Team representative should privately and in-person notify the parent of the report being made. The parent should be advised to contact C.S.B. for advice on how and when to discuss the allegation with the child/youth. The child and parent(s) should be advised that the alleged perpetrator has been or will be asked to avoid all contact with the child/youth pending the investigation. The parent(s) should be advised to report any further contact with the alleged perpetrator to Wayne C.S.B.

If a formal report to C.S.B. is made, the church's investigative role ends. The child should not be questioned. The alleged perpetrator should not be interviewed. However, immediate steps should be taken to ensure the minor and the accused remain isolated from each other in the church and at church activities. The burden for this isolation should reasonably fall upon the accused - the alleged victim should not be further traumatized by isolation from the larger church family. More details regarding separation of alleged victim from alleged perpetrator are outlined below.

## **C. Preliminary Investigation if Mandatory Reporting Law Does Not Apply**

### **a. Notification of Supervisory Church Personnel**

If the Response Team determines that the allegation is not sufficient to trigger the law's mandatory reporting requirements, a preliminary investigation should be commenced within the church. After an incident report is completed, the staff members taking the report should immediately notify the Pastor if he/she was not involved in taking the initial report. As soon as is possible, an internal preliminary investigation will commence.

The church insurance policy should be reviewed to determine the circumstances and time frame required for reporting allegations to the insurance carrier.

### **b. Interview of the Alleged Perpetrator**

The discrete investigation will involve speaking to both the alleged perpetrator and the alleged victim. Treat the accused with dignity and respect. The alleged perpetrator will be advised of the nature of the allegation. The alleged perpetrator will be advised of the church policy and procedures regarding handling of reports. At this point, the identity of the source will remain confidential. The alleged perpetrator will be given an opportunity to respond to the allegations. The alleged perpetrator will be given an opportunity to write out her/his perspective of the incident in question.

The alleged perpetrator will be advised not to contact the child/youth in any manner while the investigation is being conducted. The alleged perpetrator will be advised to avoid areas of the church where they might encounter the child/youth while the investigation is continuing.

If the alleged perpetrator is a staff member or congregation volunteer, he/she should be temporarily relieved of his/her duties until the investigation is completed. If the accused is a paid employee, a decision will need to be made to maintain or suspend his/her pay, as appropriate, until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.

If the alleged perpetrator is a child/youth, the parents of that individual should be contacted. No interview of the child/youth should occur without the consent of the parent. If the parent refuses consent, the parents should be advised that church policy requires staff to err on the side of caution when reports are received. Without a response to the allegation, caution would presumptively require that the alleged perpetrator have no unsupervised contact with any other child or youth in the congregation until the investigation is complete. And caution would presumptively require that the alleged juvenile perpetrator not participate in any youth programming until the investigation is complete.

All actions and communications should be documented.

### **c. Parental Notification and Interview of the Alleged Victim**

The parent(s) of the alleged victim will be notified that a report of misconduct concerning their child had been raised. While maintaining the confidentiality of the reporting individual, the details of the report will be disclosed to the parent(s). The reporter may choose to disclose their identity to the parents. The parent(s) will be asked to bring the child to the church or to make the child available for a home visit. The parent will be asked not to begin questioning of the child without the presence of trained church or professional personnel.

Extreme care must be taken in eliciting a response from an alleged child/youth victim. It is important that the child who may have been abused not be further traumatized. It is important that the child not be made to feel any guilt about the conduct of the adult, even if the child regards the conduct as "consensual." And there are strict legal requirements that govern the protocol for interviewing of child abuse victims. If the child confirms that abuse has occurred, the interview should terminate and a referral to Wayne Co. C.S.B. should be made under mandatory reporting laws. The child should be reassured that they did the right thing by reporting the abuse. The child and parents should be advised that the church is required by law to work with the Wayne Co. C.S.B. in handling the abuse incident. The parents should be advised that they also seek whatever legal recourse they believe is warranted. The child and parent(s) should be advised that the alleged perpetrator has been or will be asked to avoid all contact with the

child/youth. The parent(s) should be advised to report any further contact with the alleged perpetrator.

All actions and communications should be documented.

#### **4. Re-Determination of Whether Mandatory Reporting Law Applies**

The Response Team should review the available information and once again make a determination as to whether the situation falls under the law's mandatory reporting requirements. If it is determined that a formal report is required, all documents relating to the investigation should be compiled and copied for the Wayne Co. C.S.B.

If the situation is determined to be unsubstantiated, the alleged perpetrator, the parents of the child, and Spiritual Council should be advised of the determination.

If the situation did not rise to the level of abuse, but it was determined that conduct was inappropriate or unacceptable, the matter will be referred to the Church Council for further consideration and action pursuant to the church constitution.

#### **CHECKLIST FOR THE FIRST RESPONDENTS:**

- Document the details.
- Report the incident immediately.
- Contact the proper civil authorities.
- Notify the parents.
- Do not confront the accused until the safety of the child is secured.
- Do not prejudge the situation.
- Treat the accused with dignity and respect.

#### **CHECKLIST FOR THE RESPONSE TEAM**

- Continuously show adequate care and concern for the victim.
- The victim should not be held responsible in any way.
- Document all actions taken in response to the allegation.
- Treat all allegations seriously.
- Handle the situation with respect for everyone's privacy and confidentiality.
- Contact the church's insurance carrier.
- Give full cooperation to civil authorities with the guidance of the congregation's attorney.
- Comply with all reporting procedures of the wider denomination.
- Identify and utilize resources available through the wider congregation.

#### **D. HANDLING PUBLIC DISCLOSURE OF THE INCIDENT**

If criminal conduct has been perpetrated upon a child in the church or during a church-related activity, the church will need to be prepared to issue a public statement to inform the congregation and to respond to press inquiries. The statement should



communicate how seriously the congregation regards the allegations. The statement should explain the application of the church's child protection policy. The statement should extend the congregation's prayers and concerns for all involved. No details of the accusation will be released by the church. Do not deny that the incident occurred. Do not assign blame. Do not minimize the situation. It is anticipated that the Response Team would prepare the statement. A single spokesperson should be selected to speak with the media and the congregation.

No statement should be released until it has been approved by the congregation's attorney.