



Children's and Youth Ministries Policy

1. Purpose

- a. In order to provide a wholesome, highly reputable, and spirit-filled learning environment at _____, the Board of Administration has adopted the following policy for working with minors.
- b. Children for the purposes of this policy are defined as all persons aged 17 or younger AND all 18 year olds who remain wards of the state through systems such as foster care.
- c. As a church we recognize that all children are important to God; fearfully and wonderfully made by him (Psalm 139:14), and welcomed by Jesus (Mark 10:13-16). Our children thus deserve a safe and protective learning environment, and _____ will take every opportunity and measure to insure the safety of our children. _____ leadership is committed to rigorous oversight of this policy and encourages all leaders and workers who serve and teach our children to follow the Bible's admonition to "always conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel." (Phil. 1:27)

2. Key Policies

Central to this policy are the following non-negotiables:

- a. All children's and youth workers will be screened and approved by the Children's / Youth Director before beginning any work or ministry with children and youth.
- b. Adult workers will observe the "rule of three." This requires that an adult is never alone with children or youth without a second adult being present. Exceptions to this rule must be approved in advance by the Children's / Youth Ministry Leader or Lead Pastor in accordance with Paragraph 8 or conform to paragraph 4d.
- c. The church will host an annual child protection training, at which all children's and youth workers are expected to attend.
- d. Random, unannounced checks will be conducted by church and ministry leaders of all activities, especially during activities at remote locations.
- e. All adult workers shall immediately report any behavior they observe that is considered, in their judgment, to be abusive or inappropriate to the Children's / Youth Director and the Lead Pastor.

The respective worker should prepare a written report of his or her observation within 24 hours of the alleged incident and provide it to the Executive Pastor.

- f. Adults who have been convicted of either sexual and/or physical abuse related crimes will not work with or participate in any church-sponsored activity or program especially designed for children / youth.
- g. All workers will conduct themselves in a manner in conformity with chapter 3 of the Book of Discipline of the FMC-USA.

3. Worker Selection and Screening

- a. Primary screening is required for all employees of _____, and all volunteers who work in ministries that focus on children and youth. This means that the "Application and Screening Form" found in Appendix B of this policy, which includes consent to a background check, and details for 3 references, must be completed in full, signed, verified, and submitted and before beginning work.
- b. Background checks will be conducted on all workers at the time of their screening, and once every two years thereafter. In addition, if the church knows or has reason to believe that an employee or volunteer has a criminal conviction that was not previously disclosed to us, that individual will also be requested to consent to a background check(s) as described above, or the church may terminate the employee or volunteer. _____ specifically reserves any and all rights to conduct criminal background checks regarding applicants, employees, or volunteers without the consent of such individuals, as permitted by law.
- c. All reference interviews will be recorded using the "Reference Check Form for Work with Minors" form found in Appendix C of this policy.
- d. Completed screening and reference forms will be stored securely (i.e. in a locked cabinet) in the church office to protect the sensitive information contained within.
- e. Whenever possible six months minimum involvement with _____ is preferred before an applicant will be considered for work with the children or youth.
- f. All employees of _____, and all children's or youth volunteers will receive a copy of this policy and agree to adhere to it. (Appendix A)
- g. All children's workers must have finished the screening procedure and be approved by the Children's or Youth Ministry Leaders prior to being asked to work.
- h. The Children's or Youth Ministry Leaders will be the final approval authority for all children and youth workers in their respective ministries.

4. Worker Supervision

- a. Routine children's activities will be conducted in assigned locations with normal leadership in attendance. Random, unannounced visits to classrooms and/or remote areas should be performed by activity leadership during the activity.
- b. Changes in meeting place must be arranged with the respective ministry coordinator or other person responsible for the activity, prior to relocating.
- c. All children and youth ministry activities shall use a team approach where there are always two adults working together. One adult must be at least 21 years old.
- d. Exceptions to the team approach may be allowed in low risk situations but additional supervisory care must be taken. When class size requires one teacher or leader to work with children in a room with no visual access (window in interior door or wall), the door to the classroom should be left fully open.
- e. When a small child needs a diaper changed or help going to the bathroom, this should be done by an approved nursery worker or the child's parent.
- f. Non-nursery age children needing special assistance with clothing adjustments or help in the bathroom should ideally be assisted by two adults, of the same sex whenever possible. If only one adult is available to provide assistance, and if the same child needs assistance from time to time, a different adult should provide the assistance next time.
- g. Parents should be informed where their children and youth are, and in whose care they will be. There must not be last minute changes in plans that would cause the children to be someplace or do something that their parents do not expect.

5. Emergency Scenario Safety

- a. Regular and routine children's and youth ministries (i.e. those that meet every week) will maintain a record of who is present. Infrequent/one-off events held for children and teens specifically will record the names of those in attendance at the start of the event by some means, either informally, or through more formal procedures such as event permission slips.
- b. The church will ensure that evacuation drills are done at least once per year to ensure leaders and children know what to do in the event of an emergency, and are familiar with safety equipment (such as evacuation ladders).
- c. Children's and youth leaders are not to provide any emergency care for which they are not suitably qualified.

6. Special Situations

- a. Children without accompanying parents or guardians
 - i. We acknowledge that due to the context of _____, we have a number of children taking part in our regular ministries who walk to and from the church by themselves, and whose parents have little association with _____.
 - ii. In these situations, even for regular weekly ministry, _____ will attempt, as far as it is able, to obtain written permission from the parents or guardians of the children regarding:
 - 1. Permission for children to leave _____ activities without an approved adult collecting them (Appendix D)
 - 2. A Liability Waiver and Consent for Emergency Medical Care (Appendix E)
- b. Overnight Lock-ins
 - i. Lock-ins will, as a goal, maintain a ratio of at least 1 adult leader for every 8 children present.
 - ii. Sleeping children will always be supervised by at least 2 (awake) adults, regardless of how many are asleep.
 - iii. All lock-in participants are required to have a signed Liability Waiver and Consent for Emergency Medical Care (Appendix E) on file with the church.
- c. Off-site events and trips
 - i. Official off-site trips require permission from the Lead Pastor.
 - ii. Off-site trips will, as a goal, maintain a ratio of at least 1 adult to every 6 children.
 - iii. All participants in an off-site trip are required to have a signed Liability Waiver and Consent for Emergency Medical Care (Appendix E) on file with the church.
 - iv. All off-site trips should, as a goal, have at least 1 CPR/AED trained leader.

7. Reporting Obligations

- a. Anyone who observes inappropriate behavior of children's or youth workers must immediately inform the Children's or Youth Ministry Leader and the Lead Pastor of their observation. A written report must be prepared and submitted to the Children's or Youth Ministry Leader within 24 hours of the alleged incident.
- b. The Children's or Youth Ministry Leader will document the alleged incident in a confidential file and consult with the Lead Pastor as soon as possible to determine a course of action.

8. Response to Allegations

- a. When an allegation is made it is important to gather facts and be non-judgmental. Collect as much information as possible about who, when, where, how, etc.
- b. The Board of Administration and Lead Pastor must be notified immediately and a special Board meeting called for the purpose of determining how best to respond, with highest priority given to protecting anyone allegedly abused while also accurately uncovering facts. . When the alleged incident report is deemed to be credible, the church's legal counsel must be contacted within 48 hours.
- c. The person accused of inappropriate behavior shall be immediately removed from all children and youth interaction or responsibilities until the facts of the situation are uncovered and appropriate responses made.
- d. The Lead Pastor will meet with the worker who was accused of inappropriate behavior to determine the facts of the matter.
- e. Resolution will follow in accordance with the extent of the offense. Documentation of all actions and discussions will be required, and will be kept confidential among the fewest people necessary to resolve the matter. In cases where the law requires reporting to legal authorities, a report will be filed. At that juncture, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.



_____ | Pastor

Children's and Youth Ministries Policy – Appendix A

Acknowledgement of Receipt and Adherence

I have received a copy of the _____ Children's and Youth Ministries Policy, and have read the attached policy and agree to observe the safeguards listed.

This is a legally binding agreement which I have read and understand.

Please print name

Date

Signature

Administrative Acknowledgement for File

Date



_____ | Pastor

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Appendix B: Application and Screening Form for Work with Minors

Welcome! Thank you for considering serving with our ministry. Child safety is one of our top priorities, and in order to help us with this we require that this application is completed by all applicants for any position (volunteer or compensated) involving the supervision or custody of minors. **This is not an employment application form.** Please let us know if you have any questions about this screening process, and thank you for partnering with us in growing the Kingdom of God!

Please note: We appreciate the sensitivity of some of the following questions, and your answers to them **will be held in strict confidence**. You may discuss any of these questions **in confidence** with our pastor. Affirmative answers to any questions on this form will not, in themselves, disqualify you from ministering to our children and youth.

Personal Details

Today's Date: _____ Date of Birth _____ Social Security # _____

Name: _____
Last First Middle

Present Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Do you have a current driver's license? _____ Yes _____ No

If yes, please list your license number and state: _____

Personal History

If you have lived at your current address for less than 7 years, provide information on all addresses during that period.

Address _____ City _____ State ____ Zip _____

Address _____ City _____ State ____ Zip _____

Address _____ City _____ State ____ Zip _____

(Please attach a separate sheet for any additional addresses)

How long have you been attending _____? ____ Years ____ Months

Are you a member of _____? ____ Yes ____ No

Have you ever been convicted of, pled guilty to, or pled no contest to a crime other than a minor traffic violation? ____ Yes ____ No

If yes, please explain _____

Are you now under charges for any criminal offense? ____ Yes ____ No

If yes, please explain _____

To your knowledge, have you ever had a positive test for HIV, AIDS, or Hepatitis B? ____ Yes ____ No

References

Please list 3 references. References must be over the age of 18; cannot be a relative; must have seen you work with minors and be able to speak to your ability to serve young people; and have known you for at least 1 year. At least one reference should be from a prior place of employment or volunteer service.

Reference #1

Name: _____ How do you know this person? _____

Length of time you have known this person _____ Phone Number _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email address _____

Reference #2

Name: _____ How do you know this person? _____

Length of time you have known this person _____ Phone Number _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email address _____

Reference #3

Name: _____ How do you know this person? _____

Length of time you have known this person _____ Phone Number _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email address _____

Please identify all the faith communities you have attended or in which you have been involved in the last 5 years.

Name _____ City _____ State _____

Attended from (dates) _____

Name _____ City _____ State _____

Attended from (dates) _____

Name _____ City _____ State _____

Attended from (dates) _____

Criminal History Background Check Consent

I consent to undergoing a criminal history background check.

Signed _____ Date _____

Authorization and Release of Liability

I affirm that the information contained in this application is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references or churches listed in this application to give any information that they may have regarding my character and fitness to work with children or youth. I will hold harmless anyone who in good faith provides you with information about me. I understand that the decision whether or not to allow me to serve in the capacity that I have applied for is completely within the discretion of _____ pastoral staff and designated ministry leaders.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the policies of _____, and conduct myself in a manner consistent with the Bible and chapter 3 of the Free Methodist Book of Discipline.

Signed _____ Date _____



_____ | Pastor

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Appendix C: Reference Check form for Work with Minors

Name of Applicant _____

Reference: _____

Date of Reference Check: _____

This reference check was done: By Phone In Person

Name of person doing reference check: _____

Questions:

1. How long have you known this individual? In what capacity?

2. How would you describe the applicant's ability to work with adults?

3. How would you describe the applicant's ability to work with and relate to children and youth?

4. To the extent you know, please tell me about the applicant's roles with youth; for example, school volunteer, youth coach, day care volunteer, youth group leader, etc

5. Do you think this person is well suited to work with youth and children?

6. Have you observed the applicant working with youth, and if so, can you give me an example of how the applicant relates to young people?

7. If you have seen the applicant discipline a child, please describe what you saw.

8. Would you have any reservations about recommending this person to serve as a Youth program volunteer?

Signature of Person Performing Reference Check _____

Date _____

Please place completed reference check form with the applicant's application in the church office.



_____ | Pastor

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Appendix D: Permission for a Minor to Leave Unaccompanied

I, _____ am the parent/legal guardian of
(Name of Parent/Guardian)

_____, and I give permission for _____
(Name of Child)

_____ to allow him/her to leave for home unaccompanied after

participating in _____ facilitated ministries and activities.

Signed _____

Date _____



_____ | Pastor

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Appendix E: Liability and Medical Releases

Liability Waiver and Release

I, the undersigned, am a person at least 18 years of age. I am the parent or guardian of the minor child named below, and that child desires to voluntarily participate in the programs for children and/or youth at _____.

I acknowledge that such Program may be hazardous and I hereby assume all responsibility and risk for any accidents, sickness, or other mishaps, including, but not limited to, serious bodily injury, permanent disability, and/or death, that may result to me on the Program. In connection with my participation in the Program, I hereby waive all rights to any claim, cause of action, and/or the right to file a law suit against The Church, or against any of its affiliates, parent organizations, directors, officers, sponsors, employees, agents, volunteers, successors and assigns. I further release all such organizations and/or persons from any and all responsibility or liability of any nature whatsoever for any loss or damage to my person or property, including, but not limited to, personal injury and/or death sustained on or through the Program.

This Waiver and Release of Liability is binding upon my and my child's personal representatives, trustees, heirs, successors, beneficiaries, relatives, next of kin or assigns and shall inure to the benefit of all organizations named herein as well as to their directors, officers, sponsors, employees, agents, volunteers, successors and assigns.

If any provision of this document is held to be invalid or unenforceable, this form shall be construed as if the invalid or unenforceable provision was not contained in the document.

Name of Minor Child: _____

By signing below I represent that I am the parent or guardian – and if divorced that I have custody – of the above named Minor Child. I have carefully read this Waiver and Release of Liability. By my signature, I am stating that I understand, agree to, and accept all of its provisions, and understand that I am giving away substantial legal rights for both myself and for my child.

Signature _____

Date _____

Printed Name _____

Medical Release

In the event I/we cannot be reached during an Emergency, I the undersigned give permission for my/our child to be treated by a licensed physician, and for said physician to administer whatever care is necessary, including anesthesia, for their safety and care.

Name of Child _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____

Date _____

Please note below any medical allergies, problems, medications being taken or other information that is pertinent.

Are there any concerns or special circumstances of which we should be aware in order to best meet the needs of your child?