

# PROTECTION AND ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY

Board of Christian Education & Discipleship  
Metolius Friends Community Church

## I. Background Principles

Safeguarding the physical, emotional, and spiritual well being of young people and other vulnerable individuals may be one of the most important responsibilities for ministry organizations. The disturbing and traumatic rise of physical, mental, and sexual abuse of children and disabled adults has claimed the attention of our nation and society. We, at Metolius Friends Community Church, are deeply aware of the responsibilities associated with caring for, teaching, and training children.

Abuse accusations within a ministry can demoralize everyone involved – the victim, the victim’s parents, the ministry and its leaders, the family of the abuser, and the community. The greatest impact is on the victim who has been abused. The trauma is potentially insurmountable.

As a caring church, sensitive to the needs of our families, it is of utmost importance to establish a policy for all persons, paid or volunteer, who minister to/with children, youth, or disabled adults under our care and supervision. Metolius Friends Community Church will take necessary steps, both legally and morally, to prevent and report the abuse of children with/to whom we minister.

This policy reflects Metolius Friends Community Church’s commitment to provide:

- A. Protective supervision and care for all children, youth and disabled adults.
- B. Guidance and protection for paid and volunteer workers who minister to/with children, youth, or disabled adults.
- C. Protection for the various ministries of Metolius Friends Community Church.
- D. Information and instruction regarding policies and procedures relating to the protection of children, youth and disabled adults and prevention of abuse.

## II. Definitions

The following definitions will be used for the purposes of the Abuse Prevention and Protection Policy of Metolius Friends Community Church:

A. **Abuse** – Any recent act or failure to act which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation; or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk or serious harm.

- 1. **Emotional Abuse** – threats, critical words, demeaning terms or names, or depriving a child of any sign of affection or other similar spoken or unspoken emotional cruelty. It conveys a message that the person is worthless and undeserving of love and care.

*Behavioral Indicators of Emotional Abuse:* Severe depression, withdrawal from activities, severe lack of self-esteem, threatens or attempts suicide, potential speech or eating disorders, high need for adult approval, extreme passive/aggressive behavior.

**2. Sexual Abuse** – sexual contact between a child/youth and an adult (or older, more powerful youth). A sexually abused person also may be physically and psychologically dependent upon the abuser.

*Behavioral Indicators of Sexual Abuse:* Advanced sexual knowledge or behavior, depression – often crying without reason, promiscuous behavior, withdrawal from activities, running away, walking or sitting difficulties, bruising/bleeding in the genital area, frequent headaches/stomachaches, or extreme fatigue.

**3. Physical Abuse** – intentional, deliberate behavior that causes bodily harm. It can take several forms, including assault, shaking, kicking, choking, bone fractures – non-accidental injuries, in general.

*Behavioral Indicators of Physical Abuse:* Hostile, aggressive behavior toward others, fear of parents and other adults, destructive behavior (self, others, property), unexplainable bruises or fractures, burns, facial injuries (often reoccurring), sexually transmitted diseases.

**4. Neglect** – meaning a child or disabled adult who is without proper parental care and control, or subsistence, education, medical or other care or control necessary for his well-being because of the conduct or omission of his parents, guardian or other custodian or their neglect or refusal to provide them.

*Behavioral Indicators of Neglect:* Depressed, poor impulse control, regularly displays fatigue, steals food, reports that no caregiver is at home, poor hygiene, lack of basic food and clothing, lack of education as required by law.

**B. Child/Youth:** An unmarried person under the age of eighteen (18) who is not an emancipated minor or an eighteen (18) year old youth who attends youth group activities as a participant. (Any student who wants to be in a leadership position that is eighteen (18) or older must have a background check)

**C. Disabled Adult:** A cognitive, emotional, or physical impairment for a person over the age of eighteen (18).

**D. Staff worker:** A person who is paid by the church to perform a specific function, e.g., Assistant Pastor, Youth Coordinator, Children’s Coordinator, Senior Pastor, Secretary, or Janitor.

**E. Volunteer Worker:** A person who does not receive pay and performs some sort of ministry or work, e.g. Sunday school teacher or small group leader.

**F. Occasional Worker:** A volunteer who does not have a regular assignment and serves as a substitute when needed.

G. **Church Officer:** Persons who are duly elected or appointed to fill an office in the church.

H. **Two Adult Rule:** Adults working with children should observe the "two adult rule" during all church sponsored events where feasible ("Rule of Three" if the "Two Adult Rule" is not feasible). This suggests that an adult is never with a child up to age 13 without another person being present, except in public places in view of others or with parental permission. It is recommended that the second person be of the opposite sex.

I. **Rule of Three:** At least three individuals (at least one being a previously screened adult) must be present at every function and in each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area during all activities involving children, youth or vulnerable adults, unless with written permission by a parent or guardian.

### III. Specific Policies

A. **Screening Requirements:** In order to adequately protect our children and disabled adults these are the procedures for screening paid and volunteer ministry staff.

1. All workers, paid and volunteer, who minister to/work with children or disabled adults must complete a "Screening Form for Ministry Workers" to be filed in the church office. These forms are confidential and will be kept in a locked area.
2. In addition to "A-1" above, all NEW workers who minister to/with children or disabled adults must have an "Applicant Interview" conducted by an appropriate interviewer. The results of the interview will be kept in a locked file with the person's completed Screening Form.
3. All volunteer candidates must be regularly (average 3 times/month) involved at Metolius Friends Community Church for six months or more before they will be considered for any ministry position involving contact with children, youth, or disabled adults.
4. All workers, paid and volunteer, who minister to/work with children or disabled adults must agree in writing that they have read and agree to follow Metolius Friends Community Church abuse prevention policies.

B. **Locked File:** Contents of the "locked file" should be kept CONFIDENTIAL AT ALL TIMES. Access to these records will be restricted to:

1. The Senior Pastor or appointed designee.
2. The Presiding Clerk of MFCC.
3. The Clerk of the Elders of MFCC.

### C. Restrictions:

1. Any person who may pose a threat to children, youth or vulnerable adults will be prohibited from working in any ministry involving children, youth or vulnerable adults. Persons who have a founded report of abuse against another person of any age, have a criminal record which includes any crime of violence, or are under investigation for a crime are NOT eligible for any type of volunteer or paid work with children in Metolius Friends Community Church or activities.

If there is a previous conviction of another crime not including abuse against another person or any crime of violence, there must be a lapse of one year from the time of conviction before serving with children, youth or disabled adults.

If there are multiple previous convictions not including abuse against another person or any crime of violence, applicants will need to be approved by the board of Christian Education Committee or the Elders.

2. Adults volunteering to work with children must have attended a Friends Church for at least six (6) months before they will be considered for ministry to/with children, youth or disabled adults. Exceptions could be made for people who are well-known e.g. local teachers, police, etc.

3. Current and prospective workers with children within Metolius Friends Community Church shall be screened as directed by this policy.

**D. Two Adult (Person) Rule:** Adults working with children should observe the "Two Adult Rule" (See II –H/G under Definitions).

If the Two Adult Rule is not possible the "Rule of Three" is mandatory. When exercising this discretion, consideration should be given to special circumstances, such as overnight trips. The age and capacity of ministry participants should be considered when approving the Rule of Three.

**Limited Exception:** Limited exceptions to the Two Adult Rule and/or the Rule of Three include One-on-One Spiritual Counseling and Emergency Situations (e.g., isolation of a child during illness for the safety of the child and other children and workers).

One-on-One Spiritual Counseling should only occur with prior written approval of the minor's parent or guardian and the advanced notification and consent of the worker's supervisor. Spiritual Counseling situations should be limited in duration (30 minutes) and frequency (3-4 sessions).

**E. Physical Contact:** Adults working with children, youth or disabled adults are required to use appropriate physical contact at all times, including, but not limited to, touching a child's hand, side rather than frontal hugging, no touching of private body areas. Appropriate touching takes into account the situation and location. For example, a hug may be appropriate in a public, but not in a private location in the church.

**F. Discipline:** Workers are never to spank, hit, grab, shake, or otherwise physically discipline anyone. Physical restraint should only be used in a situation where it is reasonably necessary to prevent an individual from physically harming himself or another individual. Disciplinary problems should be reported to the ministry activity coordinator and/or parent or guardian.

**G. Immediate Reporting:** Adults working with children should immediately report to the specific program supervisor, any behavior that appears to be abusive or inappropriate. Any physical or mental injury in evidence on any child in their care must be reported as required by state and local laws.

**H. Occasional Workers:** There may be situations where "occasional" volunteer workers are required to fulfill a specific ministry with children. Occasional workers may serve as a substitute worker though they may not have been through worker screening or training, but may only serve alongside a worker who has been through the screening and training. These situations are described in II-E and II-F under Definitions. Please refer to II-H for the "two adult rule."

**I. Annual Review:** All policies, procedures and guidelines with respect to Child Protection and Abuse Prevention should be reviewed each year to make certain they are up to date. It is suggested that the Christian Education Committee see that this is done.

**J. Classroom Observation:** It is strongly recommended that windows be present in all classroom doors or other areas used by children. Church leaders and/or Sunday School Superintendents are expected to regularly observe all activities and frequently visit all areas.

**K. Restroom Visits:** When taking young children to the restroom, be especially careful to give them as much privacy as possible. Only females should assist small children in the restroom or change diapers because of the statistical correlation between males and child molestation.

When using the restroom, a screened adult to and from the restroom shall accompany children, youth and vulnerable adults. Before any child, youth or vulnerable adult enters the restroom, the screened adult will enter the restroom to make sure that it is safe. If assistance is required, the screened adult will assist the individual with the door propped open so that a second screened adult can visually monitor the assisting adult. It is recommended that two screened adults be present when assistance will be required in the restroom.

When restrooms are directly accessible to children from the room where children's activities are taking place and not accessible to the general public, children can be allowed to utilize the restroom alone.

**L. Nursery Policies:** Establish and follow strictly a sign-in-sign out system for all nursery-age children. Know the adults who will be picking up the children.

## **M. Transportation:**

1. Transportation between the home and the church and return is the responsibility of the parents or guardians to arrange, which may include the parents or guardians utilizing the church provided transportation.
2. Transportation is to be provided only by drivers that are authorized by the church. Drivers will carry permission slips for each child that has been duly signed by the child's parent(s) or guardian(s). Permission slips should include liability waivers for each activity. These slips may be signed annually and kept in an appropriate file.
3. Each driver must complete a ministry screening form that will authorize a criminal background check. In addition, each driver will be responsible to have a current driver's license and proof of insurance.
4. The "two adult rule" is especially important when providing transportation when feasible. It is advisable for two or more children to be present in each vehicle. A caravan of vehicles is a unique case where multiple screened adults are rotating drivers, e.g. 3 vehicles with 5 drivers.

**N. Sexual Offender Chaperone Policy:** In the event that a registered sex offender is attending Metolius Friends Community Church, the following steps must be taken to manage risk.

1. Obtain a record of the sex offender's prior criminal convictions.
2. If the sex offender is on probation, identify his/her probation officer and assess the conditions that have been imposed. In some cases, sex offenders are not allowed to attend church. If the probation officer says the offender is free to attend church, ask the officer if he/she recommends the offender attend church, and if so, under what conditions. Obtain this information in writing, or, create a detailed written account of the officer's response.
3. Condition the sex offender's right to attend church services and activities by having him/her sign a "conditional attendance agreement" that imposes the following conditions:
  - The sex offender will always be in the presence of a designated chaperone while on church property,
  - The sex offender will not attend any youth or children's functions while on the church property, except for those involving his or her own child/children, and only if in the presence of a chaperone.
  - A single violation of these conditions will result in an immediate termination of the sex offender's privilege to attend the church.

**O. Social Networking Practices:** With the increasing number of people using new media communication over traditional forms, it is important to maintain healthy boundaries and

practices for adults communicating with children/youth. If a parent or child reports inappropriate communication from any adult a report to the education clerk or pastoral staff should be made.

#### **IV. Training and Education**

A. The Clerk of the Christian Education Committee shall be responsible to ensure adequate training and education is provided for all children's workers.

B. All staff and volunteers who work in any capacity, directly or indirectly with children, youth or disabled adults shall receive training regarding the detection of child abuse and the implementation of this policy and its procedures.

C. All staff that work in any capacity, directly or indirectly with children and families, shall receive a copy of this policy and shall sign a statement attesting to familiarity with its directives.

#### **V. Screening Requirements Review**

A. In order to adequately protect our children, the following procedures should be fulfilled for screening paid and volunteer children's workers:

1. Complete the Screening Form for Ministry Workers adopted by the church.
2. Complete an oral applicant interview with the Christian Education Clerk or designee.
3. Conduct criminal background check every two years through the state and/or local police departments and federal agency.

#### **VI. Applicant Interviews** (Regarding the Abuse Policy)

A. All worker candidates who expect to work with or minister to children, will be interviewed by an appropriate person designated by the Christian Education Committee.

B. Senior Pastor candidate interviews will be conducted by the Clerk of Elders and reviewed by the Presiding Clerk. (This is in regards to the Abuse Policy)

C. Any worker candidate may request that his/her interview be conducted by the Senior Pastor or a mutually agreed upon third party.

D. All prospective employees of Metolius Friends Community Church will be screened, regardless of the position for which they are applying.

#### **VII. Applicant Interview Forms**

Applicant Interview Forms and reference contact information will be completed by the interviewer and labeled "CONFIDENTIAL." Any and all information gathered from the interview

form shall be kept confidential except to the extent required for reporting purposes. Completed forms will be stored in a locked file in an appropriate location with limited (controlled) access.

## **VIII. Procedure for Reporting Child Abuse Suspected or Witnessed**

### **A. Guidelines for Dealing with Child Abuse**

If a child reports sexual abuse or improper touching:

1. Believe the child
2. Protect the child
3. Report the abuse (see the procedure below)

*Note:* If abuse is disclosed it is important to limit the amount of follow-up questions asked of the child, youth or disabled adult to not interfere with a further investigation by trained interviewers.

### **B. Who Should Report Abuse?**

1. When a staff member or volunteer witnesses child abuse, or is told of child abuse by a party involved, that person must promptly contact the ministry leader and make a report, or cause a report to be made to the appropriate child protection services and local police agency. This is not to be discussed with the child in question.
2. When a staff member or volunteer has cause to believe that abuse has occurred, but has not observed the abusive conduct, such as abuse by a parent, that person must report the information to the ministry leader. If the ministry leader concurs that the situation warrants, a report will be made to the local authorities. Discussion with the child should be kept to a minimum, and then only to confirm suspicions. The child's parents, or other suspected individuals, should not be contacted at this time.
3. The senior pastor must report all relevant information concerning suspected or observed abuse to the Northwest Yearly Meeting Superintendent, if deemed necessary.

### **C. How Should an Abuse Report be Made?**

1. Witnessed or suspected child abuse shall be reported on Form F4 which is included in this packet.
2. The form shall be completed as soon as possible following the verbal report, and should be in as much detail as possible. Special attention should be given to time, place, what was witnessed or suspected, person making the report, indicators of abuse, family background, visible signs of any injury on the child, remarks by the child (without interviewing the child), etc.
3. All aspects of the report, verbal and written, shall be maintained confidential except to the extent required for reporting purposes to avoid mistaken accusation.

#### **D. How Should the Written Report be Followed Up?**

The written reports shall be maintained at the church office. Only the Senior Pastor, Clerk of the Elders, and the Presiding Clerk shall have access to these reports.

#### **IX. Responding to Allegations of Abuse**

A. Proper responses to allegations of child abuse can minimize the pain and liability for all parties involved in a given situation. It is the church's goal to respond to allegations in a manner that people's rights to privacy and confidentiality be maintained at the highest possible level. Adequate care and support for both the alleged victim and the accused shall be considered mandatory at all times.

B. In the case of an allegation of abuse against a worker serving in the ministry of the church, the following steps shall be taken:

1. The person(s) in charge of the program or activity shall document all efforts used when dealing with the allegation.
2. The allegation will be reported as soon as possible to the proper church authority and to the Northwest Yearly Meeting Superintendent.
3. The incident shall be reported as soon as possible to the applicable insurance company and/or attorney.
4. The accused shall be relieved of duties until the prompt investigation of said accusation occurs.
5. Follow the counsel of an attorney and/or insurance company representative when reporting to Services for Children and Families.
6. If the victim is under the age of 18, his/her parents shall be notified as soon as possible.
7. If the accused is under the age of 18, his/her parents shall be notified as soon as possible.
8. The alleged victim must be supported by all the love and care that is reasonably possible.
9. The accused must be treated with dignity, support and Christian love.
10. All means must be taken to ensure confidentiality at all levels of this process. Disclosure of information regarding the abuse or suspected abuse is prohibited, except as required for reporting purposes.

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