

ROBBINS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Child/Youth Care and Protection Policy

Revised February 16, 2013

The church must be a safe environment for children. This policy applies to all church-sponsored programs. This policy was developed to help:

1. Ensure the safety of our children, youth and adults with special needs.
2. To uphold the good reputation of our staff and volunteers.

I. Worker Screening and Selection

“Children/Youth Workers” are individuals who supervise or have custody of minors, whether through ministry, in the nursery, Sunday School, Children’s Worship, Vacation Bible School, Youth Group, camps, or other children/youth activities.

A. Policy Oversight Committee and responsibilities

1. A Policy Oversight Committee consisting of the Pastor, Education Chair, Youth Ministry Representative, Children’s Ministry Representative, and Nursery Coordinator, will be responsible for the CAPP training, and screening of volunteers who have contact with children/ youth and adults with special needs.
 - a. If possible, the Oversight Committee should have a member that is a mandated reporter under Michigan Law (see footnote1).
 - b. The Administrative Council may add additional members to the Committee as deemed appropriate.
2. The Policy Oversight Committee will oversee the implementation of and compliance with this policy and will report at least annually on the implementation of this policy to the Administrative Board.
3. The CAPP Administrator and Assistant Administrator will be selected by the Nominations and Leadership Development team in consultation with the Policy Oversight Committee and approved by the Administrative Council.

B. Screening

1. Records and written information will be gathered, reviewed and maintained by the Administrator and Assistant Administrator. Files will be stored in a locked cabinet in the Church Office.
2. All information acquired during the screening process will be treated as confidential and will not be disclosed except in cases deemed necessary to protect a child/youth from possible harm.
3. In cases of uncertainty of fitness for contact with children, youth and adults with special needs, the CAPP Administrator and Assistant will consult with the Oversight Committee in a manner that does not violate confidentiality.

C. Training

1. The Policy Oversight Committee will be responsible for providing periodic training appropriate for Children/Youth Workers.
2. The training will be administered by a trained Trainer, in accordance with the guidelines from Church Mutual Insurance Company.

II. Qualifications of Applicants

- A. All adult applicants for Children/Youth Workers must have been a resident of MI for five years and in regular attendance at Robbins for at least 6 months prior to application, or have been endorsed at the discretion of the Administrative Council.
- B. All adult applicants must:
 - 1. Be 18 years of age or older
 - 2. Participate in a CAPP training event.
 - 3. Complete an "Application for Children/Youth Work"
 - 4. Submit three references
 - 5. Consent to a police background check
 - 6. Sign a Request for Central Registry Clearance
- C. Applicants may be subject to additional requirements as determined by the Policy Oversight Committee.
- D. Transporters of children/youth must be at least 21 years of age, possess a valid driver's license, proof of insurance, have a good driving record and have cleared the CAPP (Child Abuse Protection) training.
- E. All steps for approval must be repeated every three (3) years.
- F. Youth Volunteers
 - 1. All youth volunteers from age 12-17 must attend youth training on the care and protection of children.
 - 2. All youth volunteers must complete a youth screening packet including, but not limited to, a youth application form, a parent consent form, and one non-family youth personal reference form.
 - 3. All youth volunteers must have been in regular attendance at Robbins for at least 6 months prior to application.
 - 4. A youth volunteer must be paired with a CAPP trained adult while working with children.
 - 5. Upon turning 18 years of age, a youth that has completed Youth Training must take the Adult Training.

III. General Safety Guidelines for Children & Youth Workers

- A. Bathroom Guidelines
 - 1. Children under two years old – Diapering will be by parents or adult care giver.
 - 2. Children two and three years old
 - a. Plan a bathroom trip at least once every hour.
 - b. Always leave the bathroom stall door open while assisting a child.
 - c. Assisting children with toileting--workers should be careful to respect children's privacy,
 - 3. Children four and five years old
 - a. Plan a bathroom trip during your session.
 - b. If an individual child needs to use the bathroom, take the child to the bathroom.
 - (1) Screen the bathroom before letting the child enter.
 - (2) Wait in the hallway--if the child seems to be taking longer than necessary, call in and see if assistance is needed.
 - 4. Children six years old through fifth grade

- a. Communicate at the outset of a new relationship with a group that the bathroom/drinking fountain are to be used before class.
 - b. Be sure to communicate this information regularly to newcomers.
 - c. Make exceptions when a child truly needs to use the bathroom.
5. Youth - Avoid being in a one-on-one situation if at all possible, especially in the bathroom.
- B. Buddy System
1. Whenever possible, children/youth will be cared for in the company of two or more approved workers at church-sponsored activities.
 - A. If possible one male and one female
 2. The buddy system should be used when
 - a. transporting children/youth to and from events
 - b. chaperoning overnight activities or field trips
 - c. meeting with children/youth in private homes unless parental approval has been specifically given.
- C. Whenever children's or youth programs are in session, the classroom door should allow for an unobstructed view of the room.
- D. Volunteers may not meet privately with children or youth in the facility or off-site.
- E. Volunteers should not arrange a private meeting in the facility without another CAPP trained individual present, the knowledge of the child's parent(s) and the knowledge of a member of the Oversight Committee.
- F. Permission Slips - Permission slips must be obtained from parent/guardian for each child/youth for each church activity that involves transportation from the church property.
- G. Seat Belt Usage - It is the drivers' responsibility to enforce the use of seat belts by all children/youth being transported for church-sponsored activities.
- H. During non church-scheduled events, if childcare is necessary, use of rooms, materials and equipment must be pre-arranged.

IV Admonishment and Responding to Allegations of Abuse

- A. Inappropriate Behavior
1. Behavior by anyone in the church, especially a Children/Youth Worker, that indicates that he or she may be inclined to abuse, molest, or otherwise harm any child/youth, especially one under the care of this church.
 2. Indications that a child/youth under the care of the church is being abused, molested, neglected, or otherwise harmed, whether by someone within the church or those outside.
 3. Inappropriate comments about sexual matters, especially about or in the presence of children/youth.
 4. Use of pornography, including inclination toward sexually explicit television shows movies, books, or magazines.
 5. Anyone paying excessive and inappropriate attention to a particular child/youth, especially if it involves an effort to be alone with the child/youth.
 6. Be aware that older children and youth sometimes abuse younger/weaker children.
- B. Admonishing and Reporting Inappropriate Behavior by a Children/youth Worker
1. If you observe anyone, especially a Children/Youth Worker, behaving in a manner that gives rise to a reasonable suspicion of improper involvement with a child/youth, or of

potential for improper involvement with a child/youth, you should promptly report your concern to the Pastor or Administrative Council Chair, who will look into the matter and take corrective measures.

2. If you observe anyone, especially a Children/Youth Worker, behaving in a manner that seems to be innocent but may appear to others to be inappropriate, you should privately admonish that person and encourage him or her to exercise greater care in words and actions (see Matthew 18:15).

C. Reporting Actual or Suspected Abuse or Neglect of a Child/youth

1. State law does not require volunteer Children/Youth Workers in a church to report actual or suspected abuse or neglect unless they are a mandated reporter (see footnote 1). Should a Children/Youth Worker voluntarily make a report to civil authorities however, the law provides that he or she will be immune to civil or criminal liability, provided the report was made in good faith and without malicious purpose.
2. No single indicator of abuse or neglect is necessarily cause for alarm, but it may be cause to observe a person or situation more closely. When multiple indicators appear however, it is appropriate to discuss the situation with the Pastor or Administrative Council Chair or, if an urgent case, to make a direct report to the authorities.
 - a. Indications of physical abuse
 - (1) Child/youth reports injury by others.
 - (2) Child/youth has unexplained bruises, welts, lacerations, burns, fractures, abdominal injuries, or human bites.
 - (3) Child/youth is unusually wary of physical contact with adults, demonstrates extremes in behavior, or seems frightened of parents or caretaker.
 - b. Indications of sexual abuse
 - (1) Child/youth reports abuse.
 - (2) Child/youth has difficulty walking or sitting.
 - (3) Child/youth has torn, stained, or bloody underclothing.
 - (4) Child/youth complains of pain or itching in genital area.
 - (5) Child/youth has bruises or bleeding in external genitalia, vaginal, anal area, or mouth.
 - (6) Child/youth has unusual interest in or knowledge of sexual matters or unusual and excessive behaviors inappropriate for a child/youth of his/her age.
3. Reporting abuse can precipitate severe consequences to a family, so it should never be done casually or thoughtlessly, and certainly not for malicious purposes. At the same time, failing to report abuse can have severe consequences to a child/youth at risk. Therefore, if reasonable cause to suspect abuse exists, the concerned person should talk with the Pastor, Administrative Council Chair or a member of the Oversight Committee who will take the appropriate steps outlined in paragraph IV.C.4.
4. Reporting Process
 - a. Contact immediately the Pastor or Administrative Council Chair.
 - b. Fill out the Robbins Incident Report Form, have the Pastor or Administrative Council Chair place it in CAPP confidential file.
 - c. A Mandated Reporter under Michigan State Law shall immediately report by telephone or otherwise, an oral report, or cause an oral report to be made, of the suspected child abuse or neglect to the Michigan Department of Human Services. (855-444-3911)

- d. The Pastor or Administrative Council Chair will inform each other as appropriate, and in consultation with the Oversight committee, will investigate allegations, seek assistance from the Lansing District or West Michigan Conference of the United Methodist Church as needed, or report the allegations or abuse to the authorities.

V. Responding to Allegations of Abuse

All allegations of abuse require a timely, appropriate response by the church. The response will depend on the seriousness of the allegation and may include immediately calling the police. When an investigation by the church appears appropriate, the following guidelines should be followed.

A. Responding to Allegations of Abuse or Misconduct

1. Initial response to an allegation
 - a. Contact the District Superintendent
 - b. Contact insurance carrier and follow their procedures for handling the allegation.
2. Establish a committee to deal with all the necessary steps and to make decisions. The committee should consist of the Chairpersons of the Staff Parish Relations Committee, the Administrative Council, the Education Committee, the Pastor, and attorney.
3. Serious prayer for the accuser, the accused, and the church is in order.
4. Investigation
 - a. Cooperate with authorities if they are involved.
 - b. Consider an independent investigation--use a private investigator if at all possible.
 - c. Do not assume anything--do not assume that either party is being truthful.

B. A "Trusted Person" will be appointed by the Nominations and Leadership Development Committee and Approved by the Ad/Council. Their responsibilities are:

1. Listen to the child but do not ask questions.
2. Leave in-depth questioning of a child/youth to an appropriately trained professional person.
3. Take the child/youth seriously.
4. Reassure the child/youth that it is safe to report and not his/her fault.
5. Do not promise to keep information a secret.
6. Let the child/youth know what action will be taken.
7. If the Pastor is not a part of the individual meeting with the child/youth, report immediately to the Pastor.
8. Keep all information strictly confidential except what must be shared with the District Superintendent, the attorney, the insurance company, and other authorities.
9. Share a concern from personal observation, with the Pastor or other member of the Oversight Committee.

C. Responding to the accused

1. The Pastor will respond to the accused if necessary.
2. All statements and findings must be documented.

Footnote 1:

Act No. 238, Public Act of 1975, as amended, State of Michigan. Individuals that are mandated to report child abuse or neglect are as follows:

- A physician
- Dentist
- physician's assistant
- registered dental hygienist
- medical examiner
- nurse
- person licensed to provide emergency medical care
- audiologist
- psychologist
- marriage and family therapist
- licensed professional counselor
- social worker
- licensed master's social worker
- licensed bachelor's social worker
- registered social service technician
- social service technician
- a person employed in a professional capacity in any office of the friend of the court
- school administrator
- school counselor or teacher
- law enforcement officer
- member of the clergy
- or regulated child care provider

who has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect shall make immediately, by telephone or otherwise, an oral report, or cause an oral report to be made, of the suspected child abuse or neglect to the department (Department of Human Services, State of Michigan).

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