

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Revised & Approved, August 2007

Management Team Approved, Spring 2002



crossroads
evangelical church

Crossroads Evangelical Church
Wauseon, Ohio

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Introduction—Why a Child Protection Policy?

Crossroads Evangelical church is a community of believers committed to the safety and protection of the children and youth within our care. This policy is in place to protect our children and volunteers. As the people of Crossroads continue to increase in number, we recognize the importance of having a common standard of service for those who serve in our children and youth ministries. Carefully following this policy allows the church to be above reproach in providing a safe atmosphere for all children and youth.

Crossroads' Use of Terms

Adult: a person 18 years of age or older.

Child or Youth: a person 17 years of age or younger

Child Safety Team: volunteers (identified by bright yellow shirts) who circulate Crossroads' facility & grounds ensuring children/youth are in the appropriate places and handling any situations that hinder safety or require discipline.

Child abuse: any non-accidental injury to a child whether physical assault or chronic patterns of behaviors such as belittling, humiliating, or ridiculing a child.

Contraband: Anything prohibited by law from children and youth (Ex: cigarettes, drugs, alcohol, any form of weapon)

Neglect: failure of a guardian or caretaker to provide a child with basic needs such as appropriate support and affection, food, shelter, medical care, protection and supervision. This includes the failure to exercise due diligence in preventing the physical or emotional harm of a child.

Private meeting: any one-on-one meeting occurring in a setting where it would be very unlikely or improbable to be viewed by someone else, such as an enclosed room with no windows. Private meetings between an adult and child are to be prevented at Crossroads. (Please see pg 5 on having private conversations.)

Sexual abuse: an exploitation of a child or adolescent for the sexual gratification of another person.

Staff & Leadership Teams: a staff member is any person serving Crossroads in an official paid capacity; Crossroads' two other leadership teams include the Elders and Management Team

Volunteer: any person providing teaching, leadership, supervision or service in any of Crossroads' ministries without receiving pay for such services.

Application Procedures for Serving in Children or Youth Ministries

Anyone seeking to volunteer in any children or youth ministry at Crossroads, must take the following steps.

1. After contacting a staff person, he/she will receive a copy of the Child Protection Policy and will be asked to read it.
2. The applicant must watch the training video produced by the Church Staff. This video will explain the reasoning, purposes and procedures of the Child Protection Policy.
3. During the training, the applicant will receive a Volunteer Application for Children/Youth Workers. This application must be completed and returned to the appropriate staff member. It is asked that the application is returned no later than the Sunday following the training.*
4. Upon review the staff may choose to ask an applicant for an interview, and/or conduct a background check.**
5. All approved applicants will be noted in Crossroads' database and may begin serving within any children or youth ministry. All unapproved applicants will be confidentially notified by a staff member and redirected to more suitable area of service.

*All information on this application is kept confidential within the staff and leadership teams and maintained in a secure area.

**Random background checks are conducted on applicants.

Standards of Conduct

Prohibited Conduct

To prevent any forms of abuse and to reduce the risk of false allegations, staff and volunteers must not engage in any of the following conduct with children and youth, whether consensual or non-consensual.

1. Abuse of any kind, including emotional, physical and sexual abuse, exploitation or molestation.
2. Distributing, exhibiting, or displaying pornographic material.
3. Abusive hitting, kicking, slapping or shoving
4. Selling, giving, or furnishing any child with a contraband
5. Use of obscene, foul, or sexually explicit language
6. Demonstrate any romantic or sexual interest in a child or youth
7. Remove any clothing from another person, except when appropriately required (ex: when serving in the nursery) and only in the presence of another adult
8. Kiss any child or youth or non-family member on the lips or in an intimate manner
9. Sleep in the same bed or bedding with any child or youth
10. Remain alone in any private place with a child or youth
11. Assist any child in the restroom except as permitted in this policy
12. Denying anyone, who is not a threat to a child or a hindrance to ministry, access into a room, vehicle, or other place in which you are present with a child.

Permitted conduct

We must remember we are a church, and it is important for Christians to express and share their love and affection for each other in appropriate ways. Volunteers are encouraged to appropriately express and share Christian love to a child, youth or another adult. These expressions are not considered abuse or in any way prohibited, restricted or limited by this policy.

Private Conversations and/or Counseling children or youth

Private conversations are an integral part of a caring and loving Christian community. The opportunity to share one's private and personal concerns with someone in confidence is important. However, such conversations *in a private place* create a high risk environment for potential abuse and alleged abuse. Therefore, volunteers conduct private conversations within the following environments: either in a public place, or within the presence of other adults, or behind closed doors which have windows (in which case another volunteer or staff member needs to be aware that the conversation is taking place).

General Supervision of Youth and Children

All children and youth ministry volunteers and staff are expected to provide adequate care and comprehensive supervision of all children and youth during any ministry meeting and activity. It is important that the adults are aware of the whereabouts of any child/youth at all times.

It is important that two adults be present with children and youth at all times.

- When staff/volunteer numbers are insufficient to allow for two adults in each room volunteers should call upon a Child Safety Team Member to help fulfill that role.
- Restroom Procedures — Only approved volunteers may assist a child in the restroom. If no restroom assistance is needed, children through grade 5 must be accompanied to restrooms. A volunteer/staff member must remain outside the restroom until the child can be accompanied back to the class. If a child needs assistance, or is not coming out of the restroom, the staff/volunteer must notify a second adult for assistance.

Volunteers are asked to arrive at least 15 minutes before a scheduled class or activity begins. Children will not be left unattended until the scheduled supervisor/teacher arrives. Children nursery through grade 5 will not be accepted into care nor released from care until a parent or guardian goes through the proper check-in and pick-up procedures. At least one approved female volunteer must be in the nursery at all times.

Off Campus and Other Special Activities

Prior to any overnight or off campus event sponsored by Crossroads, a parent or guardian must sign a permission form granting overnight privileges for their youth or child.

Injuries and Illness

Anyone who is ill (i.e. one, who has a fever, is vomiting or has a communicable disease) will not be permitted to participate in a program or activity. Children should be taken to their parent or guardian as soon as illness is discovered. If this is not possible, the child who is ill should be kept from the other children in a manner that will allow supervision to continue until the child can be returned to his/her parent or guardian.

In the Event of an Emergency

Fire Evacuation — In the event of any building evacuation, the staff/volunteers should prepare their children/youth to exit the building as quickly and orderly as possible. One adult should be leading the group out of the building, while another adult follows the entire group ensuring no one is left behind or gets off course. The volunteer/staff leading group should follow the fire emergency exit plan posted in each room. Once outside building, the group should be led to the front (south) lawn and kept together until further instructions are given by a staff member.

Tornado — In the event of a tornado the staff/volunteer members should lead children into the auditorium. Instructions will then be given in the auditorium.

In the case of any emergency all volunteers should look to the Child Safety Team (indicated by the bright yellow shirts) who will be coordinating efforts with staff members.

Discipline Procedures

At all grade levels, the expectations placed on all children and youth are: Be a good listener. Be respectful. Be a participant. Be self-controlled. When a child/youth demonstrates disrespect volunteers/staff will utilize the following discipline procedure.

The volunteer should identify the inappropriate behavior and explain that to the child/youth. All children will begin in the "Green" color; "Go with a good attitude and manners". If a child is disruptive by talking, running, etc. during worship/lesson time, the child will be moved to the "Yellow" color; "Caution – someone is not listening or singing", which will be a time-out/respect area for several minutes. After the time-out, the child will be returned to large group to participate. If a child is reprimanded a third time, the child will be moved to the "Red" color; "Stop talking, running, etc." and remain in the Red color. If a child reaches the Red color, parents will be contacted. Anytime a volunteer is uncomfortable with executing the proper discipline a Safety Team member or Staff member may be called upon to help.

*Sensory Room volunteers will receive more in depth training to handle situations with our Sensory Room children.

Responding to "Tough" Situations

Initial Response to Suspected Inappropriate Behavior or Abuse by Staff and/or Volunteers

When you first notice or suspect child abuse and/or when the child first comes to you reporting child abuse, be sure to take the child seriously. (Please see Appendix A for a list of possible indicators of Child Abuse and Neglect). Do not deny the problem, stay calm, and carefully listen to the child. It is appropriate to ask the child how the sign or symptom appeared. Never suggest to the child that he or she has been abused. Remind the child that the victim is not at fault and that the child was right in telling you about the problem. Do not promise the child that you "will not tell anyone." It is good to record the substance of such a conversation as soon after the conversation as possible. Report such a case to a staff member within 24 hours of observing signs or symptoms or receiving a report of child abuse. You may be asked to submit a short written report, which will be filed in a secure location. The staff member will determine whether further investigating will be necessary and/or whether the elder board will be notified for an internal investigation or for referral to the proper authorities. After reporting an incident, respect the child's privacy and preserve the child's trust by keeping the information completely confidential.

Initial Response to Alleged Abuse

In the case of alleged abuse volunteers must report the allegation to a staff member within 24 hours. The staff will then follow the Allegation of Abuse Response Policy (Appendix B). If the alleged abuser is among the staff members, the alleged victim or representative should contact one of the other staff members in confidence.

Initial Response to the Discovery of a Contraband

If a child is suspected of possessing a contraband a volunteer may further inquire or involve a staff member or Safety Team member immediately. If a contraband is discovered, the volunteer is to take the child/youth to a Safety Team or Staff member immediately. The Safety Team will work with the staff and the authorities to handle the situation properly. Once the authorities are notified the staff will contact and explain the situation to a parent/guardian of all the children/youth involved before releasing the children/youth home.

Appendix A

Possible Indicators of Child Abuse and Neglect

Tragically some within our church family have experienced the pain of abuse. These persons often have been abused by persons in their lives whom they have known and trusted. The majority of these abuse situations have been perpetrated by family and/or extended family members. Regrettably a common theme throughout these situations has been the absence of the large church in a supporting role for the victim and unfortunately, sometimes in a role of silently ignoring the abusive act. Our intent is to be aware of these types of situations and be positioned to help the victims.

The following lists include general characteristics of abused children. **Any one indicator does not necessarily mean that abuse has occurred.** They may also indicate stress or anxiety in a child or youth. However, if a number of indicators are present, it is wise to consider the possibility of abuse and consult with a staff member.

1. Possible Indicators of Physical Abuse:

- Unexplained bruises, burns welts, human bite marks, or scars
- Bald spots and scalp bruises (caused by hair pulling)
- Unexplained broken bones, cuts or scrapes, or stomach injuries
- Unbelievable explanation of injuries or claims no knowledge of the source of injury
- Seems overly aggressive or withdrawn
- Lags in emotional and intellectual development.
- Exhibits habit disorders (sucking, biting, eating disorders)
- Seeks more than average amounts of affection from other adults.
- Fears adults, shrinks away from touch
- Fears parent (guardians) & going home

2. Possible Indicators of Physical Neglect

- Under-fed or constantly hungry
- Constantly unclean/poor hygiene
- Unattended medical needs
- Growth rate below normal
- Begging or stealing food
- Lack of supervision
- Constantly fatigued or listless

3. Possible Indicators of Emotional Abuse/Neglect

- Speech problems
- Slow mental or emotional growth
- Anti-social or destructive behavior
- Dramatic emotional swings
- Low self-esteem
- Slow physical growth
- Habit of sucking, biting, or rocking
- Long-term depression
- Loss of appetite

4. Possible Indicators of Sexual Abuse

- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Unusual knowledge of or interest in private parts
- Bed-wetting
- Depression or withdrawn behavior
- Poor relationships with other children
- Acting out adult sexual behaviors
- Indirect hints that allude to problems
- Pain or itching around private parts
- Stomach-aches
- Sleep problems
- Sudden behavior changes
- Reluctance to go to the bathroom
- Anxiety, irritability, constant inattentiveness

Appendix B

Allegation of Abuse Response Policy and Procedures

An allegation of abuse must be taken seriously. If an initial assessment by the staff members gives reasonable cause to believe that abuse may have occurred, the following people will be notified:

1. Senior Pastor or Associate Pastor
2. Parents or guardians of the offended person (if a minor) if parents or guardians are not the accused
3. The church's attorney (if applicable)
4. Local Police and/or Child Protective Services (if a minor) within 24 hours of receiving the report
5. The church's insurance carrier

If the initial assessment gives reasonable cause to believe that abuse may have occurred, then the alleged abuser will be suspended from serving in the congregation for the protection of all parties. If the alleged abuser is a Pastor, staff member or volunteer program leader, he/she will be suspended with full pay and without prejudice pending the results of further investigations. When an allegation of abuse becomes public knowledge outside of the church, an official spokesperson will be designated by the Elder Board to interact with the media.

The church will cooperate fully with any investigation done by Child Protective Services or local police. Attempts will be made to provide all persons involved in a particular case, including their families, with support through pastoral and professional counseling/care throughout the hearing, investigation and/or legal processes.

In the event that criminal charges are dropped or prosecution does not result in conviction, the Elder Board decides whether or not the volunteer or staff member is restored to his/her previous position or duty.

Conviction or lack of it is not the only criterion the church uses to discern ungodly conduct. An alleged abuser is not reinstated to a previous position of leadership until the Elder Board, in consultation with the police/child-protection authorities, legal counsel, and child-abuse experts deems it safe and proper to do so.

When appropriate, those who made false allegations will be held responsible for their actions both legally and within the church body.

If abuse is judged to have occurred, the congregation will cooperate with the legal and/or therapeutic process. The abuser will be removed from office or placed under continued suspension. If the abuser is a member of the pastoral staff, the provisions of church order and, if necessary, the judicial code will be followed. On no account will the leader simply move to another charge without long-term intensive treatment and appropriate accountability.

In the event of a suspension, the guardians of those associated with the program will be notified of the suspensions due to non-adherence to the Child Protection Policy. It will be made clear that some violation has been alleged and that an investigation is being made.