

Faith's Safety Policy for Children and Youth Ministries

Introduction:

Relationships are at the foundation of what we do here at Faith, and as such are central to the life of the church. Defining healthy and safe relationships through policies and codes of conduct is not meant, in any way, to undermine the strength and importance of personal interaction in our ministries. Rather, it is to assist in more clearly defining behaviors and practices that allow the church to more fully demonstrate its love and compassion for children and youth in sincere and genuine relationships.

Relationships in ministry should, ideally, always be experienced as caring and without intention to do harm or allow harm to occur. This Code of Conduct has been adopted by Faith Church to help the church create safe environments for children and youth and for those who minister to them. All Church Personnel (those who serve on behalf of Faith church) are asked to carefully consider each statement in the Code of Conduct and within the Safety Policy for Children and Youth Ministries before agreeing to adhere to the statements and continue in service to the church. Future revisions to this policy may be made with the input of the Elder Ministry Team and approval of the Governing Board.

Volunteer Screening Process

1. Any and all Church Personnel who regularly work with or around Children or Youth shall be screened and selected utilizing the following:

a. At least six months of active participation in the church community.

Exceptions must be approved by the Elder Ministry Team or Governing Board..

b. A standard application completed by the applicant to be reviewed by the Children's Pastor or Student Pastor that includes an authorization for the release of information to conduct background checks. If an applicant needs additional confidentiality they may choose to submit their application directly to the Senior Pastor.

c. Criminal records and sexual offender check in any state where the applicant has resided and other states, if any, as determined by the church. No one who has been convicted of a crime involving misconduct with children will be allowed to work with children. Background checks will be kept confidential in a locked file with access afforded only to appropriate church staff on a need-to-know basis. It will be updated every three years.

e. Individual interview with the applicant.

f. Reference checks of persons outside the congregation who know the applicant, preferably who know how the applicant works with children.

g. Driving or Motor Vehicle records check if the person may be transporting children or youth.

2. Any and all church personnel who work with or around children or youth less than 4 times a year shall be screened and selected utilizing the following:

- a. A standard application completed by the applicant that includes an acknowledgment for the release of information to conduct background checks. If an applicant needs additional confidentiality they may choose to submit their application directly to the Senior Pastor.
- b. Individual interview with the applicant.
- c. At least one Reference Check of a person or persons outside the congregation who know the applicant, preferably who know how the applicant interacts with children.
- d. Driving or Motor Vehicle records check if the person will be transporting children or youth.

Note: The desire of the church is to assist and care for survivors of abuse as well as fulfill our obligation to protect the children left in our care. Survivors of childhood sexual or physical abuse need the love and acceptance of the church family. Their experience with abuse and their recovery process may be pertinent to their work with children. Survivors of abuse may, if they choose, request confidential counseling either from a pastor or from a professional counselor. It will not disqualify them from service.

Education and Training Requirements

1. Before they are allowed to serve, all staff and all those who work with children and youth will be required to walk through the policy and procedures with the Children's Pastor or Student Ministries Pastor. All applicants must then acknowledge in writing that they understand the church's policies pertaining to the protection of children and that they agree to abide by them.
2. Church Personnel who are responsible for screening, selection and supervision of others in programs for children and youth are required to complete additional training in screening, selection and monitoring.
3. Faith Church encourages all volunteers to get First Aid, CPR, and AED Training as it is provided.
4. Review training will be provided on a yearly basis, where participants will be updated on all new policies and procedures.

Procedures

It is the responsibility of all persons having contact with children participating in church programs to promote the emotional and physical safety of the participants giving regard to all factors and circumstances known to them. If in their opinion, an unsafe condition exists; such persons shall immediately take appropriate precautions under the circumstances to protect all children. Nothing contained in any other church policy, procedure or instruction shall be construed to relieve persons having contact with children from this responsibility.

Adult to Children Ratio

1. The minimum requirement is two unrelated adults in the building at all times when children are being supervised during a church activity regardless of the number of participants, location, or activity.

2. In the classroom, the goal of Faith Church is to have at least two adults for every classroom. Those two adults need not be unrelated, as long as, at least one other unrelated adult is in the building, and as long as visibility and ratio rules are followed.
3. Every program for children and youth must have established ratios for adults (18 and older) and children in the classroom. Compliance with the established ratio is required at all times, including activities that occur off church premises.
 - a. 0-2 years require a minimum of 1 adult to 3 children ratio
 - b. 3-10 years require a minimum 1 adult to 10 children ratio
 - c. 11-18 years require a minimum 1 adult to 15 children ratio
4. Church personnel over the age of 21 must directly supervise church personnel under the age of 18 and be physically present during all activities.

Visibility

1. Church activities for children should be scheduled in areas visible from adjoining areas. Such visibility will be maintained by leaving curtains and blinds open and, wherever possible, by leaving the door to the room open. Reasonable exceptions to this rule may be made by the adult in charge of the ministry event where seclusion is necessary for health reasons provided two unrelated workers are present in the room at all times.
2. At no time will an adult meet alone with a child in any room where the door is closed or in an area where they cannot be seen. A clear glass window will be installed in the door of all rooms typically occupied by children and into the door of all offices in the church.
3. One on one counseling with children or youth must be done in either an open area, or in a room with an open door or with a door with a window whereby both the child and the counselor are visible.

Accidents

Serious injuries

1. Call 911 on a cell phone.
2. Send someone to notify the parents or legal guardians.
3. Do not move a child if there is any possible injury to the back or head.
4. Remain calm and continually reassure the child.
5. Clear bystanders and refocus the other children's attention elsewhere.
6. Fill out a First Report of Injury Form

Minor injuries

1. Send someone to notify a staff member.
2. Listen to and reassure the child.
3. Determine what the injury needs-bandaid or ice.
4. First aid kits will be available in every classroom.
5. Inform the Parent when the Child is picked up.

Health Concerns

1. Be aware that some of our children may have very serious or even life-threatening food allergies or other food related health issues.
2. Be aware of any allergy alert on the child's nametag.
3. Do not give out treats without prior approval. You may under no circumstances ever give any treat with peanuts or made on machines that produced peanut products –check labels!
4. Be familiar with the posted sickness policy. If children are displaying these symptoms, please see Staff.
 1. Fever, vomiting and/or diarrhea within previous 24 hours.
 2. Runny nose with any colored discharge
 3. Unexplained rash or skin infection
 4. Sore throat
 5. Pink eye and/or other eye infections
 6. Head lice

Bathroom Procedures

Pre-3 and Early Childhood: Ask parents at the beginning of the event, if they would prefer to be called to help their child use the restroom. Stand outside the stall door while child is using the bathroom. If child asks for help, leave the bathroom door open while assisting him/her. With the door open, wash your hands and the child's hands with soap and water after the child has used the toilet.

Grade School: Grade school children must be escorted to the bathroom. If no one else is in the bathroom, wait in the hallway. If someone else is also in the bathroom, you must go in and wait by the sink. Men supervise boys and women supervise girls.

Hostile Person Guidelines

When a hostile person(s) is actively causing deadly harm or the imminent threat of deadly harm or is barricaded within a building, the following procedures should be followed for those in classrooms:

1. Stay calm, assess the situation, count the children, secure your area, and pray.
2. Lock yourself in the room you are in at the time of the threatening activity.
3. If communication is available, call 911 or other appropriate emergency numbers.
4. Do not stay in open areas.
5. Do not sound the fire alarm. A fire alarm would signal the occupants in the rooms to evacuate the building and thus place them in potential harm as they attempted to exit.
6. Lock the window and close blinds or curtains. Stay away from windows.
7. Turn all lights and audio equipment off, and silence your cell phone.
8. Wait for emergency personnel to release you.

Discipline

Discipline in the classroom environment is the provision of loving boundaries so that the child can know where his circle of safety is, and the environment remains a positive learning environment for other kids.

Physical Punishment or Abusive or Demeaning Language is never a proper discipline method.

Up to age 1 ½ , discipline is just a small redirection of behavior, usually moving them to a new activity.

1. 1 ½ to 3 years old
 - a. Discipline begins with a clear description of expectations,
 - b. If the expectations are broken, use light touch on shoulders and a calm and cheerful voice to state what behavior we want to see.
 - c. If that does not work, use light touch on shoulder and a calm and forceful voice to tell them to stop their current behavior.
 - d. If that does not work, pick up the child and move them to a new location.
2. Age 3 through Early Elementary-
 - a. Discipline begins with a clear description of expectations.
 - b. If expectations are broken, use light touch on shoulders and a calm and cheerful voice to state what behavior we want to see.
 - c. If that does not work, use light touch on shoulder and a calm and forceful voice to tell them to stop their current behavior.
 - d. If that does not work use a calm but forceful voice to warn them to stop their current behavior or a small punishment will be given. Appropriate punishments are:
 1. Removal from Activity
 2. Taking the Object Away from them.
 3. A one-minute time out.
 - e. If that does not work, execute the threatened punishment immediately and fully. (A 1-minute time out that you follow through on is better than a 10-minute timeout that you stop at 5 minutes).
 - f. If that does not work, increase the length, but not the severity of the punishment.
 - g. If that does not work, speak to the Children's Pastor.
3. Late Elementary age and beyond- The same discipline policies should be in place with the addition of, in certain scenarios, having a discussion between you and the child to choose an appropriate punishment.

Proper and Improper Affection

When creating safe boundaries for children and youth, it is important to establish appropriate and inappropriate types of affection, otherwise that decision is left to each individual. Knowing which behaviors are appropriate and inappropriate allows Church

Personnel to comfortably show positive affection in ministry, and yet identify individuals who are not maintaining safe boundaries with children or youth. These Guidelines are based, in large part, on avoiding behaviors known to be used by child molesters to groom children or youth and their parents for future abuse. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by all Church Personnel working around or with children or youth. **If you see someone engaging in improper forms of affection, report to a pastoral staff member immediately.**

Positive and Appropriate Forms of Affection

- Brief hugs
- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Handshakes
- “High-fives” and hand slapping
- Verbal praise
- Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms of children or youth
- Arms around shoulders□
- Holding hands while walking with small children
- Sitting beside small children
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children□
- Holding hands during prayer
- Pats on the head when culturally appropriate. (For example, this gesture should typically be avoided in some Asian communities)
- Placing hands on top of head or shoulder during prayer.

Negative and Improper forms of Affection

The following forms of affection are considered inappropriate with children and youth in ministry setting because many of them are the behaviors that child molesters use to groom children or youth and their parents for later molestation or can be, in and of themselves, sexual abuse. **If you see someone engaging in Grooming Behaviors, report it to your supervisor immediately.**

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
- □Kisses on the mouth
- □Holding children over five years old on the lap
- □Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers
- □Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff only areas or other private rooms
- □Occupying a bed with a child or youth
- Touching knees or legs of children or youth
- Wrestling with children or youth
- Tickling children or youth
- Piggyback rides
- Any type of massage given by a child or youth to an adult
- Any type of massage given by an adult to a child or youth

- Any form of unwanted affection
- Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development. Examples would be, “You sure are □developing,” or “You look really hot in those jeans.”
- Snapping bras or giving wedgies or similar touch of underwear whether or not other clothing covers it.
- Giving gifts or money to individual children or youth.

Preventing and Handling Bullying

- Work to foster in children self-esteem, self-respect and respect for others
- Demonstrate by example the high standards of personal and social behavior we expect from them.
- Discuss bullying with all classes, so that every pupil learns about the damage caused to both the child who is bullied and to the bully.
- Report suspected cases of bullying to your ministry leader.
- Follow up any complaint by a parent about bullying, and report back promptly and fully on the action, which has been taken.
- Deal with observed instances of bullying promptly and effectively.

Examples of Bullying

- Physical violence such as hitting, pushing or spitting at another pupil.
- Interfering with another child’s property, by stealing, hiding or damaging it.
- Using offensive names when addressing another child.
- Teasing or spreading rumors about another child or his/her family.
- Belittling another child’s abilities and achievements.
- Writing offensive notes or graffiti about another child.
- Excluding another child from a group activity.
- Ridiculing another child’s appearance, way of speaking or personal mannerisms.
- Misusing technology (internet or mobiles) to hurt or humiliate another person.

Further Policies

1. Church Personnel are prohibited from the use, possession, distribution, or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or the misuse of legal drugs while participating in or assisting with programs or activities specifically for children or youth
2. Church Personnel will respond to children and youth with respect, consideration and equal treatment, regardless of sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, culture or socio-economic status. Church Personnel will portray a positive role model for children and youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, patience, and maturity. They will avoid even the appearance of favoritism.
3. Church Personnel are prohibited from dating or becoming romantically involved with a child or youth under their care.
4. Church Personnel are prohibited from having sexual contact with a child or youth.

5. Church Personnel are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing etc.) on church property or in the presence of children or youth except as expressly permitted as part of a pre-authorized educational program.
6. Church Personnel are prohibited from using the Internet to view or download any sexually oriented materials on church property or in the presence of children or youth.
7. Church Personnel are prohibited from discussing their own sexual activities, including dreams and fantasies, or discussing their use of sexually oriented or explicit materials such as pornography, videos or materials on or from the Internet, with children or youth.
8. Church Personnel are prohibited from sleeping in the same beds or sleeping bag with children or youth unless the adult is an immediate family member of all children or youth in the bed or sleeping bag.
9. Church Personnel are prohibited from dressing, undressing, bathing, or showering in the presence of children or youth.
10. Church Personnel are prohibited from using physical punishment in any way for behavior management of children and youth. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force. Physical force may only be used to stop a behavior that may cause immediate harm to the individual or to a child, youth or others.
11. Church Personnel are prohibited from using harsh language, degrading punishment, or mechanical restraint such as rope or tape for behavior management.
12. Church Personnel are prohibited from participating in or allowing others to conduct any hazing activities relating to children's or youth ministry or camp activities.
13. Prior to any activity away from the church, a Release of Claims will be necessary to be signed by the child's parent or legal guardian. Without the form signed and in the possession of the church, the child will not be allowed to participate in the away activity.

Reporting:

It is the policy of Faith Church to report any incident of child abuse or neglect toward any child in the church. By taking on the responsibility of serving in our Children and Youth Ministry you agree to take on the responsibilities of a Mandated Reporter according to Minnesota State Law. Faith Church will provide every Church Personnel with a copy of the most recent Manual for Mandated Reporters for their own review. Familiarize yourself with types of abuse, indicators of child abuse, and our reporting procedure.

Indicators of Possible Child Abuse

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

- Severe depression- often crying without reason
- Withdrawal from activities
- Lack of self-esteem
- Threatened or attempted suicide

- Speech or eating disorders
- High need for adult approval
- Extreme passive/aggressive behavior

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

- Advanced sexual knowledge or behavior
- Depression-often crying without reason
- Promiscuous behaviors
- Withdrawal from activities, running away
- Walking or sitting difficulties
- Bruising, bleeding in the genital area
- Frequent headaches, stomachaches
- Extreme fatigue
- Sexually transmitted diseases

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

- Hostile, aggressive behavior toward others
- Fear of parents and other adults
- Destructive behavior (self, others, property)
- Unexplainable bruises, fractures
- Burns, facial injuries (often reoccurring)

Reporting Policy

1. Do not treat any suspicion as frivolous.
2. Notify the Children’s Ministry Pastor, the Student Ministry Pastor, or another pastoral staff member immediately.
3. The pastor or staff member will immediately call the proper authorities as indicated.

Immediate danger – If you know or suspect that a child is in immediate danger (such as a recent sexual assault or a serious physical assault) or a child is abandoned, contact your local law enforcement agency right away. Law enforcement officers can remove a child from a threatening environment to protect them.

No immediate danger – If a child is not in immediate danger, as soon as you have reason to believe a child has been maltreated you should contact:

- The local child welfare agencychildprotection@co.mower.mn.us

507-437-9715 if an alleged perpetrator is a parent, guardian, family child care provider, family foster care provider, an unlicensed personal care provider organization, or juvenile correctional facility staff person.

- The Minnesota Department of Human Services, Division of Licensing, 651-431-6600, if the alleged maltreatment was committed by a staff person at a child care center, residential treatment center (children’s mental health), group home for children, minor parent program, shelter for children, chemical dependency treatment program for adolescents, waived services program for children, crisis respite service program for children, or residential service program for children with developmental

disabilities. There are specific state and federal laws that govern child protection involvement with an Indian child.

■ The Minnesota Department of Health, Office of Health Facility Complaints, 651-201-4201 or 800-369-7994, if the alleged maltreatment occurred in a home health care setting, hospital, regional treatment center, nursing home, intermediate care facility for the developmentally disabled or licensed and unlicensed care attendants.

■ The Minnesota Department of Education, 651-582-8546, or by fax, 651-634-2277, if the alleged perpetrator is employed by a public preschool, elementary school, middle school, secondary school, or charter school when the child is a student in the school. Reports received regarding staff working in private or parochial schools are sent directly to law enforcement.

■ Your local law enforcement agency if the alleged perpetrator is staff working in a private or parochial school, someone outside the family and not a staff person at a regulated facility. Examples of non-family, non-facility caretakers include athletic club staff and babysitt

4. The Pastor or staff member will notify the parent or legal guardian of the child (unless the suspected abuse or neglect has occurred in the home).

5. The pastor or the Leadership Board will notify the appropriate legal counsel.

6. The pastor or the Leadership Board will notify the church's insurance agent that an abuse report has been filed with the appropriate local or state agency.

You are not required to take this information beyond the Children's Ministry Pastor, but you are free to call Law Enforcement and/or the Mower County Department of Health and Human Services (507- 433-9700) yourself.

Criteria needed for a child abuse or neglect investigation

- The alleged victim is a child under the age of 18.
- The alleged perpetrator is a parent, guardian, foster parent, relative caregiver, paramour, any individual residing in the same home, any person responsible for the child's welfare at the time of the alleged abuse or neglect, or any person who came to know the child through an official capacity or position of trust (for example: health care professionals, educational personnel, recreational supervisors, members of the clergy, volunteers or support personnel) in settings where children may be subject to abuse and neglect.
- There is a specific incident of abuse or neglect or a specific set of circumstances involving suspected abuse or neglect.
- There is demonstrated harm to the child or a substantial risk of physical or sexual injury to the child. □

Information the reporter should have ready to give to the Hotline

- Name, address and age of victim(s)
- Name and address of parent(s)/caretaker(s) and siblings
- Relationship of caretaker(s) to victim(s)
- Details of the abuse, including specifics of the incident(s), □ location and severity of injuries, any pattern of neglect or □ abuse, and any physical evidence.
- Any explanation provided by the child

- Any other relevant information that would expedite the investigation, such as directions to the victim's house (especially in rural areas) or information about potential risks to the investigator.

Confidentiality

All reports of child abuse or neglect shall be held in absolute confidence. No person shall communicate any information concerning the alleged event to any person except as necessary to cooperate with any official investigation. Any breach of this confidentiality by an employee of the church shall be cause for immediate discipline, including possible dismissal from duties and/or termination from employment.. The pastor, in consultation with the official conducting the investigation may authorize limited additional disclosure if necessary to protect other children from harm in the near future, particularly where the person responsible for the abuse cannot be identified, but in no case shall the identity of the victim or the accused person be disclosed except as required by law.

Investigation of alleged abuse or neglect

No person shall attempt to conduct a detailed investigation either through examination or interrogation of the child, the accused person or a witness. It is acceptable to obtain a reasonable amount of information to have cause to believe a child has been abused or neglected. Interviews shall be conducted only by authorized officials of the agency to whom the suspected crime has been reported or, when appropriate, by legal counsel or persons representing the church in an official capacity. All employees and volunteers of the church shall cooperate with the official investigation as requested.

Suspension of church related duties

A person accused of child abuse or neglect will be suspended from all church related duties involving children. This would include all childcare, teaching, transportation or sponsorship duties. The Church Staff is not authorized to conduct an investigation of the incident but is allowed to monitor any such investigation and receive confidential information concerning the incident as may be necessary to determine issues concerning continuation of employment and compensation. The person accused should be suspended on 'paid leave' until the investigation is completed. This removal from duty should occur in such a way that an innocent person is not immediately deemed guilty. There are false claims made each year. If the allegation is determined to be unsubstantiated, the employee can be returned to their prior position.

Caring for the Afflicted

The Elders Ministry Team shall encourage and assist the child and the parents in securing appropriate counseling, care and support. In the event the abuse or neglect involves a member or employee of the church, the staff shall encourage and assist the individual in securing appropriate pastoral care and support, including third party counseling, being mindful of the potential for a conflict of interest. All persons shall act towards the child, the parents and the accused in accordance with the principles of Christianity at all times.

I _____ have read the above policy and I agree to follow the procedure outlined.

Signature _____ Date _____

Code of Conduct for those who work with Children and Youth

- I, _____, agree to do my best to protect children and youth involved in Faith church activities and services.
- I agree to not physically, sexually or emotionally abuse or neglect a child or youth.
- I agree to comply with the policies for general conduct with children and youth as defined in this Safety Policy.
- I agree to comply with the Guidelines for Appropriate Affection with children and youth.
- I agree that if I observe any inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations with children or youth, I will immediately report my observation to the Children’s Ministry Pastor, the Student Ministry Pastor, or to another pastor of Faith Church.
- I acknowledge my obligation and responsibility to protect children and youth and agree to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to appropriate church leaders and state authorities in accordance with these policies.
- I understand that the church will not tolerate abuse of children and youth and agree to comply in spirit and in action with this position.

Name: _____ Date _____