

People's Church

Religious Education Safety Policy

Purpose

The leaders of People's Church place the highest value upon the physical, intellectual, social and spiritual growth of all church participants. We are deeply committed to providing a safe and caring religious community free of violence (physical and sexual abuse, intimidation, coercion, and sexual harassment). We recognize that religious communities are particularly vulnerable to incidents of abuse because of the high level of trust and the strong reliance and need for volunteers, especially in children and youth programming. Therefore, we have developed the following policies to ensure a safe environment for all church participants.

Religious Education Volunteer Screening

- 1) Each teacher and assistant will sign the Religious Education Teacher Contract (see attached).
- 2) General Guidelines:
 - a) Volunteers have been active church participants for six months.
 - b) Advisors for the high school youth must be at least 25 and middle school advisors must be at least 21 years of age.

Supervision Policy and Guidelines

- 1) There will be 2 teachers assigned to each youth classroom. If only 1 adult is in the room for brief periods, the classroom door will remain open.
- 2) IN the event of a teacher shortage on a given Sunday, leaving only 1 teacher in a classroom, the DRE or designated representative will check in with the group during class time.
- 3) Drivers for high school events will be 25 years or older (21 for middle and elementary school events), and a copy of each driver's license will be on file in the church office.
- 4) Cars must be currently registered and insured and be in running order according to state laws, and drivers must be well-rested and free of the influence of alcohol and drugs that may impair their ability to drive.
- 5) Seatbelts must be worn by each person in the vehicle.
- 6) There will always be at least two children in a vehicle with an unrelated adult chaperone.

Off-site and Overnight Activities

- 1) A permission slip signed by parent or guardian is required for all off-site and overnight activities. This will include a contact number where a responsible adult can be reached if an emergency situation arises during the activity. The permission slip will also include current medical information.
- 2) Each driver will have a copy of the permission slip for each youth passenger in their vehicle.
- 3) Middle and high school guidelines:
 - a) Events will follow district youth conference rules.
 - b) Youth will be supervised by at least one adult chaperone at all times.

Emergency and First Aid Procedures

- 1) Emergency telephone numbers are posted by all office and kitchen phones.
- 2) First aid kits are kept in the kitchen, the church office and the DRE office.
- 3) Rubber gloves are included in all first aid kits, and their use is strongly recommended when treating an injury involving bodily fluids.
- 4) The "Accident and First Aid Report" must be completed by the person administering first aid and submitted to the church office as soon as possible for review and filing.
- 5) A first aid kit will be taken on all off-site activities.
- 6) Annual RE teacher training will include health and safety awareness and the church's emergency procedures.

Nursery and Classroom Procedures

- 1) Some children have dietary restrictions and special health considerations. This information must be given to the teachers/ child care workers. Who should be attentive to these considerations.
- 2) At the end of the RE period, large surfaces (tables, mats, etc.) should be sprayed with Lysol and used plastic cups should be taken to the kitchen for washing/sanitizing.

For the nursery only:

- 1) Each child will be signed in and out by the parent/guardian.

- 2) Each diaper bag must have an outer identification label.
- 3) For diaper changes, a disposable pad must be used on the changing table, and/or the table must be cleaned with a Lysol wipe. Nursery staff will wash their hands after each diaper change.
- 4) Clean sheets should always be available and used on the crib.
- 5) The bag of soiled diapers must be taken to the dumpster.

Abuse Policy

Code of Conduct

No minister, adult leader, RE teacher or any other person working in a paid or voluntary capacity shall pursue a personal friendship or engage in sexual behavior of any kind with People's Church youth. (See Heartland District "Child and Youth Safety and Protection Guidelines" sections on "Friendship and Youth" and "Sexualized Behavior".)

Abuse Reporting Procedures

1) An Incident Response Team will be established to deal with any reports of abuse. Such abuse could be physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional in nature. The Team will be comprised of the minister and at least two other church members selected by the Board of Trustees and based upon appropriate professional qualifications (i.e. psychology or social work background).

*Current Incident Response Team Members – Don Miller **recruit 2 new members

2) All volunteers must immediately report suspected cases of abuse to the minister and/or DRE. An incident report must be completed, including the date and time of the incident.

3) A member of the Incident Response Team must file the report with Protective Services to protect the victim and the church, and to bring necessary help to the abuser. Although this section particularly addresses children, the same support and reporting will be expected with adult victims of abuse.

4) If necessary, the incident will be reported to the church's insurance company and attorney. It will not be handled without professional outside assistance.

5) If necessary, the proper civil authorities will be contacted following the guidance of the insurance company and attorney. Involved church members will

not attempt in-depth investigation of the incident, but should leave this to professionals who are familiar with these cases.

6) If necessary, the text of the prepared public statement will be used to communicate with the press and convey the news to the congregation. Involved church members should safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.

Confidentiality and Victims Rights

In all cases, the confidentiality of the suspected victim of abuse, the reporter, the alleged perpetrator and any other individuals involved in a case of suspected abuse is of the utmost priority. All conversations will be considered confidential in nature. Beyond reporting the incident and following all State of Michigan legal requirements in reporting abuse, the role of People's Church will be one of ministry and supporting individuals facing a crisis. (See Confidentiality statement in "Heartland District Child and Youth Safety and Protection Guidelines".)

Special Considerations

- 1) Alleged abuse by a minister or church leader
 - a) If there is a report of abuse by a minister, DRE or any member of the Incident Response Team, the alleged abuser will not be a participant in the process of receiving or investigating the allegations.
 - b) Situations involving alleged ministerial abuse shall be reported to the President of the Board of Trustees, to the UUA Department of Ministry, and to the Unitarian Universalist Ministers' Association.

- 2) Harassment of church employees
 - a) Allegations of harassment of church employees by persons in a position to affect the employee's job security should be handled in accordance with federal and state employment discrimination guidelines.
 - b) Abuse or harassment by persons who do not have a direct influence on the employee's job security will be treated as adult-on-adult abuse and handled as described below.

- 3) Adult-on-Adult Harassment or Abuse
 - a) Complaints of harassment or abuse directed toward adult members of the church community by adult strangers on the property should be handled by the police.
 - b) Complaints of harassment or abuse directed toward adult members of the church community by an adult church participant should be handled in accordance with the board policy on disruptive people (which is under development as of 11/05)

Responding to Allegations of Abuse

- 1) All incident report forms will be accessible to the proper authorities.
- 2) The spokesperson for People's Church will be the minister with the guidance of the President of the Board of Trustees, the DRE and any members of the Team being consulted. Please see the statement of "Confidentiality and Victim's Rights" before proceeding.

Incident Response Procedures

- 1) Ensure the safety of the victim.
- 2) Follow reporting procedures.
- 3) Document all efforts to report and follow up on the incident.
- 4) Do not prejudge the situation, but take the allegations seriously and report all concerns immediately. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care, safety and confidentiality of the victim are the priority.
- 5) Treat the alleged perpetrator with dignity and support. If the accused is a church worker, that person should be temporarily relieved of his or her duties while the incident is under investigation. If the individual is a paid employee, the Board will make the decision to either maintain or suspend income until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.

Appendix I

BASIC SIGNS OF ABUSE

Physical signs may include:

- Lacerations and bruises
- Irritation, pain, or injury to the genital area
- Difficulty with urination
- Discomfort when sitting
- Torn or bloody underclothing
- Venereal disease

Behavioral signs may include:

- Anxiety when approaching church or classroom area
- Nervousness or hostile behavior toward adults
- Sexual self-consciousness
- “Acting out” of sexual behavior
- Withdrawal from church activities and friends

Verbal signs may include the following statements:

- I don't like (name).
- (Name) does things to me when we're alone.
- I don't like to be alone with (name).
- (Name) has fooled around with me.

ACCIDENT AND FIRST AID REPORT

Date & Time: _____

Name of injured person: _____ Age _____

Name and title of person administering first aid: _____

Nature of Injury: _____

How injury occurred: _____

First aid provided: _____

Were bodily fluids involved? (Circle) Yes No

If yes, type of fluids: _____ Were rubber gloves worn? Yes No

Signature of Person administering first aid: _____

ACCIDENT AND FIRST AID REPORT

Date & Time: _____

Name of injured person: _____ Age: _____

Name and title of person administering first aid: _____

Nature of Injury: _____

How injury occurred: _____

First aid provided: _____

Were bodily fluids involved? (Circle) Yes No

If yes, type of fluids: _____ Were rubber gloves worn? Yes No

Signature of Person administering first aid: _____

People's Church Report of Suspected Incident of Abuse

1. Name and title of worker observing or receiving disclosure of abuse: _____

2. Victim's name: _____

Victim's age/birth date: _____

3. Date/place of initial conversation with or report from victim: _____

4. Victim's statement (give your detailed summary here): _____

5. Name of person accused of abuse: _____

Relationship of accused to victim (paid staff, volunteer, family member, other): _____

6. Reported to minister/DRE: _____

Date/time: _____

Summary: _____

7. Call to victim's parent/guardian/family member: _____

Date/time: _____

Spoke with: _____

Summary: _____

8. Call to Family Independence Agency (PHONE: 337-4900) _____

Date/time: _____

Spoke with: _____

Summary: _____
