

Children and Youth Protection Procedures Bethel Mennonite Church

1. Understanding and Identifying Physical and Sexual Abuse:

A. Definitions:

- i) Child Sexual Abuse – occurs when anyone engages in sexual contact or sexualized behaviors with a child. It includes any form of physical contact for a sexual purpose or any other behavior involving contact which may be considered sexual behavior directed towards a child. It does not include normal affectionate behavior towards children and excludes normal health and hygiene care.
- ii) Physical Abuse – occurs when anyone inflicts physical harm on a child or another person, or uses force that is unwarranted by the situation.
- iii) Applicant – means all prospective Bethel employees, contract workers or volunteers, who work with children.
- iv) Employee – includes anyone who is hired or approved by Bethel and is financially reimbursed for his/her services.
- v) Volunteer – is a member or adherent of Bethel who offers his or her services to Bethel without any obligation to do so. This person offers his or her services willingly and without pay. Includes but is not limited to; Children’s Sunday School superintendent and assistant, Sunday School and Bible School teachers, teachers assistants, Nursery workers, God’s Girls and Abraham’s Lot leaders, Junior High Youth Activity coordinators, Youth Activity coordinators, Mentors and Mentoring coordinators.
- vi) Department Leader – the volunteer or employee responsible for overseeing the identified children or youth activity of the church.

B. Signs of Sexual and Physical Abuse:

- i) Physical Signs – include but are not limited to, lacerations and bruises; irritation, pain or injury to the genital area; difficulty with urination; discomfort with sitting; torn or bloody underclothing; venereal disease.
- ii) Behavioral Signs – include but are not limited to, anxiety when approaching the church or nursery area, nervous or hostile behavior toward adults, sexual self-consciousness, “acting out” sexualized behavior, nightmares, withdrawn from church activities and friends.
- iii) Verbal Signs – may include phrases like “I don’t like (a particular church worker)”, “(A church worker) does things to me when we’re alone”; “I don’t like to be alone with (A church worker)”; “(A church worker) touched me”.

2. Screening Process:

- Screening is to be used with all applicants and church employees, full-time, part-time, compensated or volunteer, including clergy, according to the guidelines set forth below, prior to working with children or youth. Any conflict of interest situations shall be referred to the Ministry Chairperson, Congregational Chairperson or designee. The Chair of the Ministry of Nurture will be responsible to coordinate the screening process requirements of the screening form, interviews and training.
 - A. Screening Form – The “Screening Form for Children or Youth Worker or Volunteer” will be completed prior to any initial children or youth assignment. Volunteers and employees only need to have one Screening Form on record with the church. The completed form shall be submitted to the department leader for review (department leader forms shall be reviewed by the Ministry Chairperson). Completed copies of the forms will be kept in a confidential file by the church secretary.
 - B. Interview - Prior to working with children or youth, the department leader, or designee, will conduct an interview with the applicant. The interview will cover, at a minimum, expectations for the position, job responsibilities, and the children and youth protection policy and procedures (for initial appointment only). Evidence of the interview shall be recorded on the “Screening Form”.
 - C. Applicant Precautions – Bethel recognizes the fallibility of all persons, either through personal choices, victimization, developmental issues or other factors which may influence an applicant’s ability to carry out the safeguards in this policy. At a minimum, the following conditions may require additional consideration or possibly exclusion from the privilege and responsibility of working with children or youth at Bethel:
 - i) Adult survivors of child abuse should meet with the Pastor before working with children or youth.
 - ii) Misrepresenting personal information on the “Screening Form” will be considered a serious breach of trust and may impact the applicant’s consideration for working with children and youth.
 - iii) Those individuals with emotional or developmental challenges which may limit their ability to carry out the intent of this policy will be considered on an individual basis.
 - iv) Those individuals with a past criminal history, especially crimes against others, may be excluded from working with children or youth.
 - v) No one with a criminal history of abusing or neglecting children will be permitted to work with children or youth.
 - D. Training – All volunteers or employees will attend an annual training session on child and youth protection safeguards. The Chair of the Ministry of Nurture shall designate the development of the curriculum for the training and make the necessary arrangements. The training content should alternate annually and cover such topics as;

- i) Bethel's Children and Youth Protection Policies and Procedures;
- ii) Understanding appropriate and inappropriate touch and how to deal with touch which is inappropriate;
- iii) Recognition of signs and symptoms of child abuse;
- iv) Understanding of common "abuse and harassment" language;
- v) Other areas pertaining to reducing the risk of child sexual and physical abuse.

Evidence of attendance at the annual trainings will be maintained by the church secretary.

3. Guidelines for Church Workers and Facilities

- A. The "Two Person" Rule:
 - i) No one-to-one activities with children/youth unless in full view of others.
 - ii) No one-to-one adult/youth sleeping arrangements in a retreat/overnight setting. On all overnight occasions, a minimum of two workers must be in attendance.
 - iii) When working with children (for activities other than Sunday School or Vacation Bible School), two adults, or one adult and one teenager, should be present for all activities. For the junior high or youth program, both workers must be at least 21 years old.
- B. Obtain Parent Permission – church workers should obtain the consent of the child's parent or guardian before going out alone with the child/youth. Workers should notify an appropriate church leader of such a meeting in advance. For the youth mentor program or youth pastor at Bethel, parent permission should be obtained annually.
- C. Classroom Doors – All classrooms and other areas used by children or youth must have a window in the door or the door must be left open during use unless two adults are present.
- D. Provide Adequate Personnel – Programs that involve children and youth should always include adequate supervisory personnel. Supervision should be maintained before and after the event until all children are in the custody of their parents or guardians.
- E. Use a Church Nursery Identification Procedure – Nursery personnel should clearly identify the child and the child's parent or caretaker.
- F. Improper discipline, including corporal punishment or other forms of discipline which are physically or emotionally abusive, are prohibited.

4. Reporting Procedures for Church Workers

Allegations against volunteers and employees will be handled by the Pastor. As a mandated reporter, the Pastor will report any suspicion of child abuse to the Children's Services office in the

county of the child's residence. In situations where the Pastor is involved in allegations of child abuse, the Congregational Chairperson shall assume the role of mandated reporter.

- A. Children/youth workers have a personal responsibility and moral obligation to report any suspected abuse to the Pastor or the Department Leader. This includes confidentially sharing with the Pastor or Department Leader concerns or suspicions of unhealthy behavior that may be observed by anyone working within children or youth ministries or activities. The Pastor, or designee, is responsible for contacting the child or youth's parents/guardians about any concerns or suspicious behaviors that have been shared about their children.
- B. All efforts at handling the incident must be documented.
- C. If the alleged abuser is the parent/guardian, the Pastor's communication with the parent/guardian will be contingent upon advice from Children's Services.
- D. If the alleged abuser is a volunteer or worker at the church, the Pastor will request support from at least one person knowledgeable in reporting guidelines and care of victims and perpetrators to assist in following up. At the Pastor's discretion, other knowledgeable people may be asked to assist, but the number of persons involved should be limited for confidentiality reasons.
- E. Any time a report to Children's Services is made, the Administrative Council will be informed.
- F. The pastor may also consult an attorney regarding compliance with state reporting laws, and cooperation with the investigation.

5. Guidelines for Ministry after an Investigation:

- A. If allegations are unsubstantiated by Children's Services:
 - i) Investigations shall cease.
 - ii) Every effort will be made to exonerate, reconcile and restore said member.
 - iii) The Pastor, with support from selected others, will respond with love, care and concern to the complainant(s) and to the accused and his/her family.
- B. If allegations/investigations demonstrate poor judgment or unwise behavior, but not child abuse:
 - i) Grace and mercy will be extended in the context of repentance, accountability and justice.
 - ii) Education and/or counseling will be required.
 - iii) The person will be removed from church ministry settings until deemed appropriate by the Pastor.

- iv) Actions taken will be communicated to the complainant, as appropriate and at the discretion of the Pastor.
- C. If the Children's Services investigation substantiates child abuse:
- i) Ministry to the victim and family:
 - Ministry will be handled with sensitivity and care.
 - Pastoral care and spiritual support will be offered.
 - A list of qualified counselors/therapists will be provided.
 - ii) Ministry to the offender:
 - The individual will not be permitted to participate in child and youth ministries.
 - Specialized counseling will be required.
 - Pastoral care and spiritual support will continue for the offender and family during rehabilitation, if appropriate.
 - The Administrative Council may remove the individual from membership, after careful consideration of issues of repentance, safety, and the goal of reconciliation.
 - iii) Ministry to the congregation:
 - Trained people will be made available to assist anyone affected in the congregation by addressing their concerns in order to bring healing.
 - iv) Ministry to the accused/offender's family:
 - Ministry will be offered with sensitivity and care providing support and prayer.
 - A list of qualified counselors/therapists will be provided.
- D. Records related to the suspected abuse will be kept confidentially on permanent file.

We wish to acknowledge:

Millersville BIC Church, whose policy was borrowed and adapted.; Virginia Mennonite Conference, whose policy was borrowed and adapted; Waterloo North Mennonite Church, whose policy was borrowed and adapted.

List the most recent places of employment in the last five years:

Name Address Supervisor Phone

Name Address Supervisor Phone

Name Address Supervisor Phone

List all educational institutions attended in the last five years:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

I have read “Children and Youth Protection Policy and Procedures” of Bethel Mennonite Church and agree to observe the safeguards, procedures and guidelines listed. I also give permission to verify the above information.

Applicant’s Signature Date

Parent’s Signature (if applicant is under 18) Date

(For church use)

PERSONAL INTERVIEW RESULTS (please use back of page for additional comments):

Printed name of person completing interview and reviewing application Signature

Church Position Date