

CHILD/YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

***SUNSET CHURCH OF CHRIST
SPRINGFIELD, MO
Fourth Revision November, 2016
Reviewed March 2024***

PREFACE

We live in an age where child/youth abuse is a reality in our society. Under the direction of the elders, the following child/youth safety policies have been adopted at Sunset Church of Christ, Springfield, MO. These guidelines are to be implemented and followed carefully by anyone working with children or youth. Adherence to the guidelines will not only protect children/youth, but will also lessen the potential that staff or volunteers would be accused of any inappropriate behavior.

MYTHS & FACTS ABOUT CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Myth #1: Child sexual abuse occurs only among strangers. If children stay away from strangers, they will not be sexually abused.

Fact: National statistics indicate that in approximately 85% of the cases, the offender is known to the victim. He/she is usually a relative, family member, family friend, babysitter, or older friend of the child.

Myth #2 Children provoke sexual abuse by their seductive behavior.

Fact: Seductive behavior is not the cause. Responsibility for the act lies with the offender. Sexual abuse sexually exploits a child not developmentally capable of understanding or resisting and/or who may be psychologically or socially dependent on the offender.

Myth #3 The majority of child sexual abuse victims tell someone about the abuse.

Fact: According to a study by Dr. David Finkelhor, close to 2/3 of all child sexual abuse victims may not tell their parents or anyone else because they fear being blamed, punished, or not believed.

Myth #4 Men and women sexually abuse children equally.

Fact: Men are the offenders 94% of the time in cases of child sexual abuse. Men sexually abuse both male and female children. Seventy-five percent of male offenders are married or have consenting sexual relationships. Only about 4% of same-sex abuse involves homosexual perpetrators; 96% of the perpetrators are heterosexual.

Myth #5 If the children did not want it, they could say, "Stop!"

Fact: Children generally do not question the behavior of adults, and have been taught to obey adults. They are often coerced by bribes, threats, and use of a position of authority.

Myth #6 All sexual abuse victims are girls.

Fact: Studies on child sexual abuse indicate one of four females under the age of 18 and one of six to eight males under the age of 18 are child sexual abuse victims.

Myth #7 Family sexual abuse is an isolated, one-time incident.

Fact: Studies indicate that most child sexual abuse continues for at least two years before it is reported. And in most cases, it doesn't stop until it's reported.

Myth #8 In family sexual abuse, the "non-offending" parent always knows.

Fact: While some "non-offending" parents know and even support the offender's actions, many, because of their lack of awareness, may suspect something is wrong, but are unclear as to what it is or what to do.

Myth #9 Family sexual abuse only happens in low-income families.

Fact: Family sexual abuse crosses all classes of society. There is no race, social, or economic class that is immune to family sexual abuse. Incest is estimated to occur in 14% of all families. Ten to 20% of American children are incest victims; 90% of the victims are female and 90% of the abusers are fathers or stepfathers.

Myth #10 Non-violent sexual behavior between a child and an adult is not damaging to the child.

Fact: Nearly all victims will experience confusion, shame, guilt, anger, and a poor self-image. Child sexual abuse can result in long-term relationship problems and be perpetuated from generation to generation. Dr. Nicholas Groth, who has worked extensively with sexual offenders, reports that 60% of convicted sexual offenders have reported histories of child sexual abuse victimization.

This material provided by: Rape & Abuse Crisis Center of Fargo/Moorhead
P O Box 2984
Fargo, ND 58108

KNOW & OBSERVE TOUCHING POLICY

1. Touching and affection should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. As teachers/volunteers, our behavior must foster trust at all times; it should be above reproach.
2. It should always be in response to a child's/youth need for care taking, comforting, encouragement, or affection. Physical affection should be appropriate to the age of the child/youth. Physical contact with the child should never be based upon the needs of the adult.
3. A child's/youth's preference not to be touched should be respected. Never force affection on the reluctant child/youth.
4. Affection displayed should only be given when in the presence of other adults. It is much less likely that touching will be inappropriate or misconstrued when two adult workers are present and the touching is open to observation. This rule is especially important when diapering or helping a young child change clothes or use the bathroom.
5. Teachers are responsible for protecting children/youth under their supervision from inappropriate touching by others. Inappropriate touching or other questionable behavior by others must promptly be discussed with the education coordinator in charge for appropriate action or referral.
6. Children should never assist other children in diapering or using the bathroom.

SUNSET CHURCH OF CHRIST

CHILDREN/YOUTH PROTECTION PLAN

General Purpose Statement:

Sunset Church of Christ seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the following practices, our goal is to protect the children and youth of Sunset Church of Christ from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations.

Definitions:

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child/youth” or “children/youth” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18).

Training

Sunset Church of Christ will provide training on this child/youth protection policy to all child/youth workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes as needed. All workers will be required to attend and complete these training events.

Selection of Workers:

All employees and all persons who desire to work with the children/youth participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes:

- a. Six Month Rule - No volunteer will be allowed to work with children/youth until she/he has been a member of Sunset Church of Christ for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children/youth.
- b. Written Application - All persons seeking to work with children/youth must complete and sign a written application provided by Sunset elders. The applicant(s) will be required to provide basic information and previous experience with children/youth, previous Sunset Church of Christ affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The Sunset elders may approve or disapprove any application. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at a site selected by Sunset Church of Christ elders.
- c. Personal Interview - Upon completion of the application all applicants will have a face-to-face interview to discuss their suitability for the position within the education departments at Sunset Church of Christ.

- d. Reference Checks - At least two of the applicant's references will be checked before an applicant is permitted to work with children/youth. These references should be of an institutional nature, organizations where the applicant has worked with children/youth in the past as opposed to personal or family references. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file.
- e. Criminal Background Check - A national criminal background check will include a sex offender registry search and is required for all employees (regardless of position) and children/youth volunteers. Youth volunteers who:
- Participate in our Bible schools/VBS/preschool/day care center
 - Plan/participate in overnight activities with children/youth
 - Mentor minors (one-on-one) and have occasional one-on-one contact with minors (i.e., church-sponsored athletic team coaches and vehicle drivers)
- Before a background check is run, prospective workers and volunteers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing Sunset Church of Christ to run the criminal background check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, she/he will be unable to work with children/youth.
- f. Disqualifying Offense - A disqualifying offense will keep an individual from working with children/youth. That will be determined by the elders of Sunset Church of Christ in light of the surrounding circumstances. Convictions for an offense involving children/youth and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from working with children/youth. Failure to disclose any criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.
- The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at a location off premises under lock.

Two Adult Rule

It is our goal at Sunset Church of Christ to maintain a minimum of two adult workers at all times when children/youth are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some children/youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, the classroom doors should remain open and there should be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation.

Open Door Policy

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

Responding to Allegations of Child/Youth Abuse – Mandated Reporter

For purposes of this policy, “child/youth abuse” is any action (or lack of action) which endangers or harms a child/youth’s physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child/youth abuse occurs in different ways and includes:

- Physical abuse – any physical injury to a child which is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- Emotional abuse – emotional injury when the child/youth is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- Sexual abuse – any sexual activity between a child/youth and an adult or between a child/youth and another child/youth at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- Neglect – depriving a child/youth of their essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

In the event that a staff/volunteer (teacher, assistant teacher, etc) involved in the care of children/youth at Sunset Church of Christ becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child/youth under his/her care this should be reported immediately to Social Services Department/Children’s Division/Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-392-3738 as mandated by state law. If you suspect abuse, you MUST make a report to the Child Abuse Hotline immediately, in the presence of another member of Sunset Church of Christ. Do not question the child in such a way that you ask leading questions and do not say anything that can plant an idea in a child’s head. SIMPLY LISTEN, COMFORT WITH YOUR WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS, then report the incident to the Hotline. The law specifically states that “the person who has the most direct knowledge of the situation must make the report”—it cannot be passed to someone else. ALL persons who witness the child’s abuse/neglect MUST make a Hotline report. And, of course, immediately document both the incident and that the call was made.

At the time such report may be made, at least two of the church elders should be notified immediately of the suspected abuse or neglect of a child under our care. The elders of Sunset Church of Christ understand that any children/youth workers are determined to be “Mandated Reporters” as prescribed by state law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at Sunset Church of Christ during our sponsored programs/activities/ministries, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child/youth will be notified.
2. The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children/youth pending an investigation.
3. Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report.
4. We will comply with the state’s requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists.
5. We will cooperate with any investigation of the incident by state or local authorities. In the event there is no investigation of the incident by state or local authorities, a team will

be formed to investigate the circumstances of the incident. The team should act only in consultation with our insurance company and/or attorney.

6. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position with children/youth.
7. Minister or legal counsel will be our spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he/she is alleged to be involved. All other workers should refrain from speaking to the media.
8. A visit with the elders will be arranged for those who desire it.

Teenage Worker

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children/youth during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to such workers:

- teenage workers must be at least age 14,
- teenage workers will have a face-to-face interview to discuss his/her suitability for a position within the education departments at Sunset Church of Christ, and
- teenage workers must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children/youth.

Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children/youth at Sunset Church of Christ. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children/youth when deciding whether to place a child/youth under our care. In general children/youth with the following symptoms should not be dropped off:

- fever (100°F or higher), diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours,
- green or yellow nasal discharge,
- eye or skin infections, and
- other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease.

Children/youth who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children/youth and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child/youth be picked up for the day.

Medications Policy

It is the policy of Sunset Church of Christ not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children/youth under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. (see "Sick Child Policy" above).

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children/youth with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such

children/youth should address their situation to the elder and deacons in charge of Education to develop a plan of action.

Discipline Policy

It is the policy of Sunset Church of Christ not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with the elder and deacons in charge of Education if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

Restroom Guidelines

Children up to and including fourth grade age are urged to use the restroom BEFORE classes begin. If a classroom restroom is not available, teachers/helpers should assist them in taking a child to the restroom during class time (if no hall monitor is available). The teachers/helpers should check the restroom first to make sure it is empty, and then allow the child inside. The teachers/helpers should then remain outside the restroom door. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the teachers/helpers should open the restroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the teacher/workers should prop open the restroom door and leave the stall door open as he/she assists the child.

Accidental Injuries to Children/Youth

In the event that a child/youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

- Minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises: workers will provide first-aid (band-aids etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child/youth's parents or guardian of the injury at the time the child/youth is picked up from our care.
- Any accident or incident that could result in potential injury should be reported by teachers to the deacon or elder in charge of education. This report should be made as soon as possible, followed by a written report of the incident.
- For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple first-aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called. (Once the child/youth has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

Children & Youth Ministries, Teachers, Volunteers & Employees Application

SUNSET CHURCH OF CHRIST - CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION FORM

The desire of the eldership is to provide the safest and most secure environment for the children entrusted to our care. Consequently, we maintain a children/youth ministry-screening program. Anyone either presently working in or anticipating working with any children/youth is subject to screening. Thank you for your cooperation.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION:

Legal Name _____

Current Street Address _____

City

State

Zip

Phone _____

(Home)

(Work)

(Cell)

Date of Birth ___/___/___ Marital Status: Single ___ Married ___ SS # ___ - ___ - ___

Is Your Spouse a Member of Sunset Church of Christ? _____ Email: _____

Please list the name and location of any church you have attended in the past ten years:

TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

How Many Years Teaching Bible School? _____ Grade and/or Ages Taught? _____

Were You A Coordinator or Supervisor? _____ # Years? _____ Department? _____

Teacher's Helper? _____ # Years? _____

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND (Please List):

Special Training: _____

CHILDREN/YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

AUTHORIZATION

I hereby certify that I have read and completed the application on the reverse side. My answers are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

I hereby authorize all persons, schools, organizations and law enforcement agencies to supply Sunset Church of Christ with any information concerning my character or background in connection with working with children and I hereby release them from liability or damages which may occur as a result of their response to this request.

I understand that Sunset Church of Christ will refresh its background checks every three years. I give Sunset permission to redo a background check on me if I am still a member of the congregation

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Acknowledgement of Receipt of the Children/Youth Protection Policy

I Acknowledge I have received a copy of the Sunset Church of Christ Children/Youth Protection Policy.

Signature: _____ Date: _____
