

Bethel Christian Reformed Church

Safe Church Policy and Practices

Revised - September 26, 2014

General Purpose Statement

Bethel Christian Reformed Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children of Bethel Christian Reformed Church from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term “worker” includes both paid and volunteer persons who work with children.

Selection of Workers

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

a) Six Month Rule

No person will be considered for any position involving contact with minors until she/he has been involved with Bethel Christian Reformed Church 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. There may be an exception made if there is a background check form for the person/persons on file in the church office.

b) Criminal Background Check

Those wishing to be involved with children's/youth ministry must complete Bethel's Ministry Application and Background Check form which allows Bethel Christian Reformed Church to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form s/he will be unable to work with children.

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Council of Bethel Christian Reformed Church on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence,

dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency, and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a 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 in the Bethel Christian Reformed Church Office.

c) **Code of Conduct**

Before a person begins working with children/youth, they must read and sign the COC agreement.

It is our goal that a minimum of two workers will be in attendance when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open and/or there will be a window(s) and there should be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher. We attempt not to allow a minor to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation. There may be incidences of a parent or guardian giving permission for a child to be with a single caretaker.

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

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

- **Physical abuse** – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- **Emotional abuse** – emotional injury when the child 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 and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- **Neglect** – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at Bethel Christian Reformed Church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to a Pastor, Elder/Deacon or the Consistory for further action including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

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

1. The parent or guardian of the child 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 pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation.
3. Civil authorities will be notified, and the church will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. Bethel Christian Reformed Church will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
5. The Senior Pastor, Council Chair or designee will be our spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he or she is alleged to be involved. We will seek the advice of legal counsel before responding to media inquiries or releasing information to the congregation. All other representatives of the church should refrain from speaking to the media.
6. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.

Open Door Policy

Classroom doors should remain at least partially 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.

Teenage Workers

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 during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- Must be at least age 13
- Must be under the supervision of an adult and not left alone with children.

Check-in/Check-out Procedure

For children below age 4, a procedure will be followed. The child will be dropped off by a parent or guardian, to an approved childcare provider known by them. Only the parent/guardian or designee will be allowed to pick up the child.

Sick Child Policy

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

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours
- Green or yellow runny nose
- Eye or skin infections
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease

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

Medications Policy

It is the policy of Bethel Christian Reformed Church not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with employed personnel to develop a plan of action.

Discipline Policy

It is the policy of Bethel Christian Reformed Church 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 employed church personnel if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.