

Child Protection Policy
Central Christian Church, Indianapolis, Indiana
Revised: May 12, 2018

Section I: Statement of Purpose

Central Christian Church is committed to maintaining a safe and healthy environment in which children and youth can learn about, experience, and grow in God's love.

Recognizing that the church is a public place where all are welcome, the purpose of this policy statement is to provide faithful ministry to children and youth that includes a plan for the prevention of child abuse or neglect and for the response of the church should child abuse or neglect occur or be alleged. Should an incident occur the church will demonstrate care for the well-being of any alleged victim. The victim will not be blamed or held responsible in any way. Care will be shown for the well-being of the parents/guardians of any alleged victim. Care will be shown for the well-being of any children who have witnessed the alleged abuse or neglect.

Care will be shown for the well-being of any alleged perpetrator, with such person referred for specialized counseling as deemed appropriate. Persons accused of child abuse or neglect will be offered pastoral care regarding matters of faith and/or referred to a professional counselor.

Persons found guilty of child abuse or neglect will be offered pastoral care regarding matters of faith and their relationship with the church and/or referred to professional counselors specializing in the care of the psychological aspects of committing child abuse or neglect.

Survivors of childhood abuse need the love and acceptance of Central's church family. Persons who have such a history are encouraged to seek the support and confidential counsel of a qualified pastor or therapist, if they desire help in overcoming the trauma of such abuse. They are also encouraged to reflect on if working with children may affect them and/or the children in any negative way.

This policy applies to all persons who serve in a ministry involving children and youth, including employees and volunteers who serve as teachers, helpers, caregivers, counselors, choir directors, or in any other capacity where children or youth are present. This policy shall be reviewed every five years or sooner if needed by the Child Protection Team in consultation with the Moderator, with recommended changes being presented to the board for approval.

Section II: Definitions

As used in this policy:

1. "Child/children/youth/minor" means any person who has not yet reached his/her eighteenth birthday.
2. "Employee(s)" means any person, including ministers, who are provided compensation for their service on behalf of Central Christian Church.
3. "Volunteer(s)" means anyone who works with children or youth in a non-paid position.
4. "Child Protection Team" means the group appointed by the Moderator to oversee this policy and ensure that Central Christian Church is in compliance.
5. "Abuse" includes, but is not limited to, the following types of violent acts:
"Physical Abuse" includes, but is not limited to, striking, spanking, shaking, and slapping.
"Verbal/Mental Abuse" includes, but is not limited to, humiliation, degradation, and threats.
"Sexual Abuse" includes, but is not limited to, inappropriate touching and exposure.
6. "Neglect" includes, but is not limited to, failing to supply or obtain the necessary food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision, which results in a child's serious impairment or endangerment.

Section III: Child Protection Team

A Child Protection Team of five individuals from Central Christian Church will be appointed by the Moderator in consultation with the pastor(s). Initially two will serve one-year terms and three will serve two-year terms. Following the initial group, each person will be asked to serve a two-year term.

One of the staff pastors will be identified to work alongside the Child Protection Team. This person will be chosen in conversation between the Moderator and the pastors and will be reaffirmed each year when new Child Protection Team members are affirmed or at such time of a pastoral change.

The responsibilities of the Child Protection Team will be:

- 1) Helping the ministries of Central Christian Church understand and follow the Child Protection Policy.
- 2) Planning and offering training to all of Central's staff and volunteers who work in ministries with minors.
- 3) Ensuring that all appropriate paperwork is on file for any volunteers/staff who work with children.
- 4) Reviewing and revising/updating the Child Protection Policy.
- 5) Overseeing any complaints/disciplinary processes and working with the pastoral staff and Moderator to resolve and maintain appropriate records of these proceedings.
- 6) Maintaining confidentiality.

Section IV: Requirements for Those Working with Children

1. Volunteers must be active participants at Central Christian Church for at least six months prior to serving in ministries with children or youth. The request for others to be allowed in such positions will go to the Child Protection Team and be handled on a case-by-case basis.
2. Volunteers and employees who work with children and youth must agree to a background check at Central's expense. Because the background check may take a few days, employees may begin their work prior to the completion of the criminal record check only if another employee or volunteer is present in the room. Background checks will be done upon initial service at Central and repeated every five years or sooner, if requested.
3. Volunteers and employees who work with children and youth on behalf of Central Christian Church must fill out and sign a Children/Youth Ministry Worker Form (see Appendix A) that shares information and verifies that they have read this policy and agree to adhere by its guidelines. This form will be required from each volunteer and employee upon initial service at Central.
4. Volunteers and employees who work with children and youth must complete training as offered through Central Christian Church. The Child Protection Team will determine the content of the training.
5. Volunteers and employees must be at least 18 years old to be in a leadership position with children and youth, unless the "Minor Screening Process" approves the participation of a minor as an employee or volunteer. Volunteers and employees must be four or more years older than the youth or children under their care.
 - a. The "Minor Screening Process" shall consist of a written parental/guardian statement which states that the parent/guardian knows no reason why the minor should not be permitted to serve as an employee or volunteer in a ministry to children or youth. The note from parent or guardian will help determine whether or not to approve the volunteer service or hiring of the minor.
6. Central shall not knowingly enlist in any church-sponsored activity or program for minors an employee or volunteer who has been convicted of child abuse or neglect or for whom there is an open case or current allegation of such behavior, without prior approval by the Child Protection Team.
7. The Child Protection Team shall work with the Volunteer Team leader and the coordinator for each youth-serving program (example: Worship & Wonder, Young Disciples) to assure completion of requirements by each staff person and volunteer serving in ministries with minors. Forms and other documentation will be secured in the personnel filing cabinet.

Section V: General Guidelines for Children's/Youth Ministries

Central Christian Church commits itself to the following guidelines:

1. Volunteers and employees are expected to respect the children, youth and any other adults with whom they work and treat them with dignity.

2. All children will be treated fairly, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, mental or physical capacity, or national origin.
3. It is the intention of Central Christian Church to practice a two-adult rule. By this we mean that each ministry with children and youth will have two adults in leadership. Exceptions can be made to this rule when reasonable: appropriate adult/child ratio (especially in nursery setting), proximity of other adults (example: splitting a large group of children into two smaller groups for an activity where one adult supervises each group in adjacent/open rooms). If there is a question regarding appropriateness, two adults should be required.
4. Ministries with children and youth should practice an open-door policy whenever reasonably feasible. This may mean:
 - a. The door is physically left open
 - b. Doors in spaces where children and youth meet contain windows so that there is a clear view in and out
 - c. Parents and other interested adults are welcome to participate in and witness the ministries within which children participate.
5. Appropriate physical contact with children will be practiced by all volunteers and employees with attention to the age, development and situations of the children. Recognizing that there are circumstances that warrant other behavior (example: removing a child from a dangerous situation or rubbing the back of a young child to help them focus, general guidelines for appropriate physical contact are:
 - a. Ask before touching (example: May I give you a hug?)
 - b. Allow the minor to initiate physical contact
 - c. Consider what is age appropriate (example: A four-year-old may sit on the lap of an adult, while a fourteen-year-old should not)
6. Overnight experiences always require a minimum of two adults. Gender of participants as well as anticipated sleeping arrangements should be considered when inviting adults to supervise.
7. Off campus trips require a minimum of two adults.
8. At no time is it appropriate for any adult employee or volunteer who is serving in a children's or youth ministry role to be in a dating relationship or have sexual involvement with a minor.
9. Recognizing that it is often difficult for children to report inappropriate incidents involving either peers or trusted adults, a means for safely reporting will be provided and communicated. The Child Protection Team will develop, communicate about, and administer this reporting tool.
10. Central Christian Church will keep on file permission and release forms for minors who participate in our ministries. These will serve the four-fold purpose of ensuring that:
 - a. we have needed information about minors and parents
 - b. we have permission from parents/guardians for minors' participation in ministries and activities
 - c. we have parental release from liability
 - d. we only publish pictures/video of minors for whom we have permission.

Section VI: Discipline Procedures

1. At no time is any employee or volunteer to administer or threaten corporal
 - a. punishment to any child. Discipline will be handled on an individual basis depending on the verbal ability and age of the child. A child who is disobedient, disruptive, or disrespectful will be verbally corrected. Employees and volunteers will attempt to resolve conflict through negotiation and discussion of possible solutions.
2. Any child who is found to be uncooperative or disruptive may be removed to an area of quiet reflection. In some circumstances it may be necessary to ask a parent or guardian to remove the child from the classroom.
3. While corporal punishment is never acceptable, we recognize that at times physical involvement in discipline is necessary (example: picking up and removing a child who is hurting another child). Any physical involvement in discipline should be done with consideration for what is age appropriate and in a calm manner.

Section VII: Abuse and Neglect of Minors

1. Abuse and neglect of children and youth will not be tolerated.
2. Survivors of childhood abuse need the love and acceptance of Central's church family. Persons who have such a history are encouraged to seek the support and confidential counsel of a qualified pastor or therapist, if they desire help in overcoming the trauma of such abuse. They are also encouraged to reflect on whether or not working with children may affect them and/or the children in any negative way.
3. Alleged physical, verbal, mental, and sexual abuse or neglect will be confronted and investigated immediately.
4. All children's/youth workers must understand they are mandatory reporters
 - a. according to Indiana law. The Child Protection Team will provide more information and guidance to all workers during training.
5. All actions concerning the church's handling of an incident will be thoroughly documented. Those documents will be responsibly handled by the Child Protection Team with consideration for both confidentiality as well as what information needs to be archived for the use of future Child Protection Teams
 - a. and pastors.
6. Investigations will be handled with due respect for all parties' privacy and confidentiality.
7. Care will be shown for the well-being of any alleged victim and the victim will
 - a. not be blamed or held responsible in any way.
8. Care will be shown for the well-being of the parents/guardians of any alleged victim.
9. Care will be shown for the well-being of any children who have witnessed the alleged abuse or neglect.
10. Care will be shown for the well-being of any alleged perpetrator, with such person referred for specialized counseling as deemed appropriate.

11. Central will cooperate with local authorities in the investigation of any allegations of abuse or neglect.
12. Central will cooperate with the Indiana Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the investigation of any allegations against an ordained or licensed Disciples minister.
13. If accused of child abuse or neglect, volunteers and employees will be immediately removed from active service until the allegations have been cleared. Employees will receive full compensation until the allegations are substantiated or dismissed.
14. Persons accused of child abuse or neglect will be offered pastoral care regarding matters of faith and/or referred to a professional counselor.
15. Persons found guilty of child abuse or neglect will be offered pastoral care regarding matters of faith and their relationship with the church and/or referred to professional counselors specializing in the care of the psychological aspects of committing child abuse or neglect.
16. A person proven to have committed child abuse or neglect while on church property or during a church-sponsored activity will be held completely and solely liable for all costs incurred by Central relating to the abuse or neglect. Said costs are to include, but are not limited to, all costs of litigation and any settlements agreed upon by parties to any litigation resulting from any abusive act of commission or omission. Reparations for said costs will be sought by Central to the fullest extent of the law.
17. Possessing, using, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while working with youth is not allowed. Volunteers and employees will be immediately removed from active service in these circumstances.

Section VIII: Reporting Procedures

Central Christian Church commits itself to the following reporting procedures:

1. In accordance with Indiana Law, any adult who observes behavior they believe to be abusive or neglectful must contact the Marion County Child Protective Services (or the appropriate agency if the behavior occurs outside of Marion County) as soon as all persons involved are safe. At Central, the Child Protection Team also will be contacted to facilitate the process of reporting and care. If any clergy staff is alleged to have abused or neglected a minor, the Moderator will also be contacted to facilitate the process of reporting and care.
2. In accordance with the policy of the Indiana Region of Christian Church, any adult who observes behavior they believe to be abusive or neglectful on the part of a minister will be asked to contact the Region through a signed, written complaint. The accused will be invited to submit a written, signed response. At Central, the Senior Pastor will be contacted to facilitate the initial reporting process for any other ministers on staff. If the Senior Pastor is alleged to have abused or neglected a minor, the Moderator will be contacted to facilitate the initial reporting process.
3. As appropriate, the church's insurance company and/or legal counsel will be notified.

4. If the allegations regarding a volunteer are found to be true, the Child Protection Team will have the authority to determine the conditions for further volunteering in the future by this individual. The identity of the victim and the victim's family will be protected at all times.
5. If the allegations regarding an employee are found to be true, the Senior Pastor and/or Moderator will bring this information to the personnel committee and the personnel committee will act in accordance with Central's Personnel Policy. The identity of the victim and the victim's family will be protected at all times.
6. If the allegations regarding a volunteer or employee are found to be untrue, the Child Protection Team and pastoral staff will offer an opportunity for healing, for all parties involved. That process could involve other persons in the congregation, pending the permission of the individual(s) involved.

Section IX: Availability of Policy

In an attempt to clearly communicate our intentions and practices regarding the safety of children and youth in our care, this policy will be made available on our website as well as by email or printed copy to anyone who inquires. Every attempt will be made to communicate the existence of this policy with all parents of minors we serve.

Section X: Contact Information

To Report Suspected Abuse or neglect – Report to be done by the adult who observes the behavior; the Child Protection Team will also be notified as soon as possible. Notification to Child Protection Team should be in writing.

Marion County Child Protective Services – 1-800-800-5556

Additional Report of Suspected Abuse or Neglect by a Minister – Report to be done by the adult who observes the behavior; the *Senior Pastor or Moderator* will assist this report. Notification to the region must be in writing.

Christian Church in Indiana
1100 W. 42nd St.
Indianapolis, IN 46208
Phone: 317/926-6051

For Background Checks:

Background checks will be done through The Insurance Board, Central Christian Church's insurance company. All volunteers and employees will fill out a form granting permission for the background check. Central Christian Church will pay for all background checks. Other child related checks (such as Child Protective Services History Check) may be done at the discretion of the Child Protection Team.