

Child Protection Policy

Hope Church

Mission Statement

The purpose of the United Methodist Church is “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Matthew 28:19

The Mission statement of Hope Church is “To be a place where absolutely everyone experiences God’s love, a place of theological thought and conversation, and a community learning to live Christ-centered lives.”

Purpose

Hope Church’s purpose for establishing this Child Protection Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety, spiritual growth and emotional well-being of all of our children and youth, which is our sacred trust.

Statement of Covenant

Therefore, as a Christian community of faith, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure safety, spiritual growth and emotional well-being of all of our children and youth as well as the workers with children and youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will educate all of our workers with children and youth regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods; we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse; and we will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

Procedures for Worker Selection

All workers with children and youth, compensated or volunteer, including clergy, will undergo and thorough screening process. The staff person/persons responsible for the event must ensure that all workers comply with this policy.

The primary screening procedure will consist of the following components:

- A confidential Volunteer Information Form that must be completed by all paid and volunteer workers with children and youth.
- A Personal Interview of all potential volunteers and paid staff.
- Reference Checks of personal, employment and/or past church references. A written record will be made of that contact.
- Criminal Background Check for all paid and volunteer workers over the age of 18 years old.

All paid and volunteer workers with children and youth must be 13 years of age or older and have completed and been approved through the Hope Church Child Protection Process. Children under the age of 13 may assist with two leaders.

We will not knowingly allow individuals who have been convicted of or plead guilty to or have a DCFS indicated report related to child abuse to work with children or youth.

A confidential file of all paid and volunteer workers with children and youth shall be maintained in a locked file drawer. The applications will be screened by the staff person responsible for that program area.

Procedures for Worker Training and Supervision

1. For the safety of the volunteers and the children/youth, two adults will be present at all activities including children/youth. If there are two adults present, we recommend that they not be of the same immediate family.
2. Special attention will be given to overnight activities and group activities away from the church. Two adults will be present at all activities. For adequate supervision, the following ratios of adults to children is recommended: Infants-Preschool 1:4, K-5th grades 1:6, 6-8th grade 1:7, and 9th-12th grades 1:8.
3. Conscious efforts will be given to eliminate any high-risk areas within the church facility. All nursery, classroom, and office doors will have windows or doors will remain open when in use. These windows are not to be covered. Children and youth should be able to be seen at all times by observers.
4. Any worker assisting a child in the bathroom must leave the bathroom door ajar during their assistance. Children who are using the bathroom independently may have the door closed.
5. All children Infant-5th grade must be accompanied by a responsible caregiver to all Hope Church activities. Upon leaving the child at a church sponsored activity, the person is required to check the child in using the designated system. When the electronic check-in system is used, each child must be wearing a printed badge to enter the classroom/program. A security ticket must be presented with a matching code in order for the child to be released. When the security bracelet system is used, the bracelet code must be documented on the child activity sheet. The same bracelet needs to be presented in order for the child to be released. In the event of a misplaced security ticket, the caregiver should be directed to the Director of Childcare to obtain ID verification.
6. In the event of suspected, reported, or discovered child abuse or violation of the Child Protection Policy of Hope Church, volunteers or paid staff shall immediately notify the associate pastor.

Responding to Allegations of Abuse

The official spokesperson for Hope Church will be the Lead Pastor and/or her/his appointee. All inquiries or requests for information from the media, attorneys or any other parties shall be referred to the official spokesperson. No other person than the official spokesperson is to release any information regarding any alleged incident of child abuse without the express approval of the official spokesperson or her/his appointee. Take all allegations seriously and do not judge the situation.

Reporting Allegations of Abuse Occurring During Hope Church Programming

1. Worker/Volunteer who has the initial concern regarding the treatment of the child will do the following in order:

- **Assure the safety of the child/youth involved and any other people at risk.**
- **Immediately contact the staff or volunteer in charge of the activity and report the incident.**

- **Immediately document a written account of the incident and give to the staff person and the police, if they are involved. The account should include a description of the incident, noting date, time and all persons involved.**
- **Maintain the confidentiality of the alleged victim, alleged perpetrator and all others involved. This includes not speaking with press or making other public statements. Those will be handled by the Lead Pastor and/or her/his appointee.**

2. Staff will do the following immediately upon notification that an incident has occurred.

- **Assure the safety of the child/youth involved and any other people at risk.**
- **Make sure the accused is separated from the child(ren) and/or youth.**
- **Notify the Lead Pastor.**
- **Contact the parents of the alleged victim.**
- **Immediately document all contacts and information received. This should be done separately from the volunteer/worker account.**
- **Assure that proper authorities are contacted.**
- **Maintain the confidentiality of the alleged victim, alleged perpetrator and all others involved. This includes not speaking with press or making other public statements. Those will be handled by the Lead Pastor and/or her/his appointee.**
- **Contact the church insurance company, attorney, and the District Superintendent.**

3. The Lead Pastor and/or his appointee will use a prepared public statement based on the Child Protection Policy to answer the press and to convey news to the congregation. Care should be taken to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.

- **If it is alleged that the pastor was a perpetrator of abuse, contact the District Superintendent immediately. Procedures are outlined in the 2012 Book of Discipline for these persons.**
- **The Vermillion River District Superintendent's address and phone numbers are: Rev. Jim Barnett, District Superintendent, 110 West Water, Pontiac, IL 61764. Office (815)844-3530.**