

CHERRYDALE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Amended & Approved by Church Council July 2015

I Purpose

1. To help Cherrydale United Methodist Church provide a caring and secure environment for children and youth in all phases of church life.
2. To help Cherrydale United Methodist Church reduce its legal risk and liability exposure.

II Biblical Foundation

Cherrydale United Methodist Church seeks to express God's love of children and provide for their personal wholeness. This caring community seeks to prevent child abuse of any form to our children and youth and to be in ministry to families where abuse may occur. The Bible is foundational to our understanding upon which all policies, procedures and ministries must stand.

And they were bringing children to him, that He might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it He was indignant, and said to them, "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.

(Mark 10:13-16)

Jesus teaches us explicitly that children have the right and the keys to the Kingdom of God. He demonstrates this through loving blessing and trustworthy touch. Our goal in response to this Biblical mandate is to maintain a safe, secure and loving place where children may grow, a place where caregivers, teachers, and leaders (both paid and volunteer) minister appropriately to their needs.

III Virginia's Child Abuse Law

A. Definition of Abuse

Under section 63.1-100 of Code of Virginia (1950), as amended, an abused child is defined as one who is less than eighteen years of age, whose parents or other persons responsible for his/her care create or inflict, or threaten to create or inflict, or allow to be created or inflicted upon a child physical or mental injury by other than accidental means, or create a substantial risk of death or disfigurement, or impairment of bodily or mental functions. This includes the following: failure to provide care necessary for health; abandonment; committing or allowing sexual exploitation; endangerment or neglect. Child abuse may be physical, sexual, emotional, or mental, and may be the result of actions or the failure to act (e.g., lack of care for a child).

B. Mandated Reporters

Section 63.2-1509 of Code of Virginia requires any person 18 years of age or older associated with or employed by any public or private organization responsible for the care, custody or control of children who, in their professional or official capacity, have reason to suspect that a child is an abused or neglected child, to report the matter immediately to the local department of the county or city wherein the child resides or wherein the abuse or neglect is believed to have occurred or to the Department's toll-free child abuse and neglect hotline.

In addition, although not required by law to do so, anyone else who knows or reasonably suspects child abuse should report such suspected child abuse immediately. Such a report is confidential, and the person making the report is immune from liability for making the report, unless it is proven that such a person acted in bad faith or with malicious intent.

IV Types of Child Abuse

A Definition

Child abuse refers to an act committed by a parent, caregiver, or person in a position of trust (even though he/she may not care for the child on a daily basis) which is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child's physical or mental health or welfare. The State of Virginia recognizes five types of child abuse and neglect. The definitions and explanations in this section are from the Virginia Department of Social Services.

B Types of Abuse

1. Physical Abuse

Physical abuse "causes or threatens to cause non-accidental physical injury." For instance, physical abuse can include bruises, lacerations, fractures, or internal injuries. Physical abuse is any act that, regardless of intent, results in a non-accidental physical injury to a child an act of physical abuse involves two things:

1. An action on the part of a caregiver (e.g., parent, person acting in the stead of a parent, other person responsible for a child), and
2. An effect upon a child, such as a physical injury or a particular behavior.

2. Neglect

Neglect can be defined as a caregiver's failure to provide for the child's developmental and related needs. As with physical abuse, neglect involves two things:

1. An omission on the part of the caregiver.
2. An effect upon the child. The effect may be physical, behavioral, emotional, or cognitive/developmental. Virginia recognizes physical neglect, abandonment, and medical neglect.

Examples of caregiver neglect include: failure to provide a child with adequate food, clothing, shelter or supervision; not attending to a child's medical needs; and abandoning a child.

3. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is defined as any illegal sexual act upon a child. This includes: incest, rape, indecent exposure, fondling, child prostitution and child pornography. Sexual abuse comprises a range of inappropriate sexual behaviors a caregiver may perpetrate on a child, including: non-touching offenses, such as indecent exposure and exposing a child to pornography; touching offenses, such as fondling and inanimate-object penetration; sexual exploitation, such as prostituting a child or using a child in pornography; and sexual intercourse, which includes rape, incest, and sodomy.

4. Emotional Maltreatment

Emotional maltreatment is called "Mental Abuse" in Virginia Code. Emotional maltreatment includes patterns of the following behaviors: ridicule, rejection, intimidation, ignoring a child, indifference, and

bizarre discipline. Emotional maltreatment is perhaps the most difficult form of abuse to define, yet its consequences can be devastating. In addition, it is likely that some element of emotional maltreatment is involved in other forms of abuse and neglect. It can be very hard to tell the difference between less-than-optimal parenting and emotional maltreatment. Remember, like neglect, emotional maltreatment hinges on the consequences to the child. If the child has persistent, adverse reactions to caregiver behaviors like the ones mentioned above, emotional maltreatment may be suspected.

5. Substance-Exposed Newborns

Substance-exposed newborns are required to be reported to Child Protective Services by health care providers.

V Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse

In an effort to create the safest possible environment within Cherrydale United Methodist Church, several abuse prevention and protection measure will be utilized. Before becoming a Sunday School teacher or child care assistant, a candidate must have attended church or Sunday School regularly at Cherrydale for at least six months. If unusual circumstances necessitate a shorter period of time, some alternative basis for demonstrating responsibility and suitability for such a position may be relied upon instead. Other measures include screening of paid and volunteer workers for past child abuse convictions or past convictions which were later expunged, provision for regular training on child abuse issues to paid and volunteer staff members, use of the two-adult guideline standards for appropriate classroom discipline, and open classrooms.

A. Staff and Volunteer Screening

Before beginning the first year of service following the adoption of this policy, every person employed at Cherrydale United Methodist Church as a paid or volunteer worker in a program involving children or youth under the age of 18 (e.g., children's Sunday School teachers, nursery workers, youth leaders, etc.) will be asked to sign a statement that he/she has never been convicted of child abuse or had such a conviction expunged. This statement shall be part of a screening form (Section VIII), which will also ask for the following: general information, criminal convictions, prior church membership, and prior church volunteer work. Screening forms will be required on an annual basis.

In addition, paid adult (18 years of age and older) program staff employed by the church will be required to authorize a national criminal background check. Church-sponsored groups, such as Early Years Preschool, shall provide certification that criminal background checks have been carried out for each leader. Where appropriate, Cherrydale United Methodist Church also may require a valid state driver's license or other photographic identification to confirm identity. Background checks for paid adult staff will be required at least every five (5) years.

In addition to the screening process described above, every adult hired for a paid staff position, and every person who accompanies children or youth on an overnight trip or program sponsored by Cherrydale United Methodist Church, shall first have undergone a criminal background check, the cost of which shall be borne by Cherrydale United Methodist Church.

All completed screening forms and criminal background checks shall be maintained in a locked and secured file drawer under the joint direction and control of the pastor and the chairperson of the Church Council.

No one who has had a child abuse conviction or expungement—or who refuses to complete the screening form—will be permitted to work with Cherrydale United Methodist children or youth.

B. Staff Training

Before beginning the first year of service following the adoption of this policy, all paid and volunteer nursery workers, children's Sunday School teachers and youth workers, will be required to read Cherrydale United Methodist Church's Child Protection Policy and sign a statement indicating that they have read and understand the policy and agree to abide by it. This statement shall be part of the screening form (Section VIII). If the teacher or worker does not sign the statement, that person will not be permitted to serve until the policy has been read and the form signed.

Persons also will be required to attend one training session related to the church's policy during the course of their first year of service following the adoption of this policy. These training sessions will be offered by the church and held at various times throughout the school year.

C. Two Adult Guidelines

Whenever possible, teachers will be assigned in teams of two or more per Sunday school hour to every class of children. Concerted effort will be made to recruit sufficient numbers of volunteer teachers to permit such team teaching. If an adult needs to leave a class or activity with a child, that person shall inform another adult or nearby teacher. Other church-sponsored or community groups of children or youth who meet at the church should have two or more leaders present whenever possible. When the group includes both boys and girls, both male and female leaders should be present. If the group stays overnight at the church, or if a church-sponsored group leaves the premises, two or more leaders must be present and should include at least one male and one female, if the group is of mixed gender.

D. Classroom Discipline

All teachers and workers will use following discipline measures. If a child is behaving inappropriately, the teacher or worker will tell the child specifically what he/she is doing is not acceptable and state what the expected behavior is, e.g., "We do not throw the blocks. We use blocks for building." If this measure is not effective, the child will be guided to another activity. If inappropriate behavior continues, the child may be placed at a table to work alone away from the other students. If the child's disruptive behavior continues after these steps have been taken, the child may be taken to his/her parent if on site or another Children's Ministries staff person and left under such person's supervision. No physical punishment or verbal abuse, e.g., ridicule, are to be used at any time. If isolating the child within the classroom or removal of the child from the room becomes necessary, the situation will be discussed with the child's parents or guardian as soon as possible.

E. Open Classrooms

Classrooms and childcare rooms may be visited without prior notice by church staff, parents, or other volunteer church workers. Windows on the classroom doors should never be totally blocked so as to prevent visual observation of the classroom from the hallway. Brief observations of child care rooms

and classrooms of children or youth may be conducted by Children's Ministries staff, the Pastor, and /or other church staff during Sunday school hours.

VI Reporting Child Abuse

All allegations of child abuse will be treated seriously. Should there be an allegation of child abuse occurring at Cherrydale United Methodist Church or by staff or volunteers at the church-sponsored activities, the matter should be reported immediately to the pastor, the Lay Leader and the chairperson of the Church Council (If the allegation involves the pastor, the matter should be reported to the Lay Leader and chairperson of the Church Council only). Together, these individuals shall ensure that an appropriate investigation is commenced and that the following procedures are followed:

- 1 Immediately notify the Pastor. If the Pastor is not available or if the allegation involves the Pastor, notify the Pastoral Assistant.
- 2 The Pastor (or Pastoral Assistant) will immediately notify the Virginia Department of Social Services Child Protective Services (1-800-552-7096) of the allegation. It is advisable to have the complainant present with the reporter at this time.
- 3 The Pastor (or Pastoral Assistant) will immediately notify the parent(s) if it is not documented that they have previous knowledge of the allegation.
- 4 Immediately begin documenting all procedures and conversations pertaining to the allegation, including times and dates.
- 5 The Pastor (or Pastoral Assistant) will immediately notify the District Superintendent (703-820-7200). The District Superintendent will contact the Conference Response Team. The Response Team will send a representative to Cherrydale United Methodist Church within 24 hours to conduct an investigation.
- 6 The Pastor (or Pastoral Assistant) will immediately notify the church's insurance company (Peerless Indemnity Insurance Company Policy # CBP 1077518) and legal counsel.
- 7 Observe the confidentiality for both the alleged victim and the accused until advised to the contrary by the Response Team.
- 8 The Pastor should extend whatever care and resources are necessary, but under no circumstances should the Pastor or any church leader or member investigate the allegation. In providing care to the principals (alleged victim and the accused) and their families, the Pastor or church leader should under no circumstances be drawn into a discussion of the truth or falsity of the allegation, because it could contaminate the investigation. Do not assign blame or take any steps that involve establishing or refuting the allegation.
- 9 Do not confront the accused with the allegation unless and until advised by the Response Team to do so. However, the accused shall be relieved of all duties/contact with children and youth until the investigation is complete.

10 Pray for all persons affected by the allegation and the church.

VII Policy Review

The Child Protection Policy and Procedures of Cherrydale United Methodist Church shall be reviewed annually by the Church Council. A verification follow-up report will be made each year at Charge Conference to insure the integrity of the policy and procedures.

VIII PRIMARY SCREENING FORM FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH WORKERS

Cherrydale United Methodist Church
3701 Lorcom Lane
Arlington, VA 22207

Please complete the following, sign, date, detach, and return this form to verify that you have read, understood, and accepted the Child Protection Policy and Procedures of Cherrydale United Methodist Church.

Full Name (including maiden name): _____

Present Address: _____ City: _____

State ____ Zip: _____ Daytime Phone: _____

Name(s) of church(es) you have attended regularly during the past five years:

Have you worked with children or youth before? If so, list on back all previous church and non-church experience (provide names, dates, and addresses):

Have you ever been convicted or pleaded guilty to a crime?
If yes, explain on back:

Personal References (not former employers or relatives):

Name _____ Phone _____

Name _____ Phone _____

I have read and I understand the foregoing Child Protection Policy and agree to abide by it. I have not been convicted of child abuse nor have I had any child abuse convictions expunged. I authorize any person or church listed above to give you any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my character and fitness to work with children or youth, and I hereby release any such person or church from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind that may result as a result of any compliance or attempt to comply with this authorization.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

AGREEMENT: I have read the above Child Protection Policies and Procedures of Cherrydale United Methodist Church, and agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Changes to file:

2/24/13 formatting changes

11/2013:

Updated Sections III & IV to reflect current state Code and DSS definitions

Updated Administrative Board to Church Council & staff titles (i.e., Sunday School Superintendent)

Clarified who is required to have background checks and sign screening forms in Section V

Clarified reporting procedures

Updated church insurance policy information

Combined Agreement with Primary Screening Form

7/2015:

Specified criminal background check is required for adults only.

Church Council/Administrative Board Approvals:

Approved by Administrative Board November 1999

Amended by Administrative Board September 2000

Amended & Approved by Church Council November 2013

Amended & Approved by Church Council July 2015