

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF SALT LAKE CITY YOUTH PROTECTION SUPERVISORY AND REPORTING POLICIES

PURPOSE

First Congregational Church intends to provide a safe environment for the youth who participate in its programs and use its facilities. We, the members of First Congregational Church, recognize and deplore the disturbing rise in reports of child abuse and seek to prevent its occurrence within our community. We commit ourselves to carry out policies to protect the youth in our care from abuse and inappropriate behavior by paid employees and volunteers and to respond appropriately to allegations of misconduct.

DEFINITIONS

1. **Child:** Any person under 18 years of age.
2. **Child Abuse:** Causing harm or threatening harm to a child's health or welfare. "Harm or threatened harm" involves damage or threatened damage to the physical or emotional health and welfare of a child through neglect or abuse, and includes, but is not limited to: causing non-accidental physical or mental injury, incest, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, molestation, or repeated negligent treatment or maltreatment.

POLICY

It is the policy of First Congregational Church of Salt Lake City that child abuse, including sexual abuse of minors, by persons employed by or volunteering services to the church is contrary to Christian principles and will not be tolerated. All paid personnel and volunteers of the church must comply with applicable state and local laws regarding incidents of actual or suspected child abuse and with the procedures outlined in this document. These policies shall be made available to all paid employees and youth activity volunteers so that they be made familiar with the problem of child abuse and the steps that First Congregational Church has taken to address it. A binder containing these policies and associated forms shall be kept in the church office. Failure to comply with the church's policies may result in corrective action, probation, suspension, removal from volunteer activity or termination of employment.

PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

We can reduce the risk of child abuse by adhering to practices and procedures that avoid situations that may allow abuse to occur. Continued disregard of these practices and procedures undermines our goal of creating a safe environment for children and is grounds for terminating a volunteer or an employee's services. The following practices and procedures are intended to provide a safe environment for children and reduce the legal risks of employees and volunteers.

3. **Two Adults.** Two (2) supervisors 18 years of age or older shall be present during any group activity involving youth under the age of 18 years that takes place off the church grounds or

on church grounds when others are unable to observe the activity. One of these supervisors must be at least 21 years

4. Visibility. When an adult is involved in an activity one-on-one with a child, the adult and child shall remain in view of others.
5. Classrooms. The doors of Sunday school classrooms that do not have windows into a hallway shall remain ajar while children are in the classroom unless noise becomes a problem.
6. Nursery Attendants. Two (2) attendants shall staff the nursery when child care is provided during church services or church-sponsored events open to the community. At least one of these attendants must be 21 years or older.
7. Nursery Identification System. The nursery shall institute an identification procedure. A child shall be released only to a person who has been designated by the person leaving the child.
8. Permission for Youth Activities. All youth under the age of 18 years must obtain written parental permission for all church-sponsored activities. Parents must receive a written description of the activity including location, times and emergency phone numbers for reaching participants. A signed permission slip must accompany participants and must include information regarding emergency contacts if needed
9. Permission for Unsupervised Contact. Paid employees and volunteers should avoid situations that lead to unsupervised and unobserved contact with youth. In exceptional cases when an adult is to transport a single youth or spend time alone with a youth the written consent of that child's parent or guardian must first be obtained.
10. Church/Sunday School Attendance. Persons under the age of 18 shall not be permitted to wander the church during the service. All children in the building who are not with a parent or guardian must be in the sanctuary listening to the service, in their assigned Sunday school class or taking part in an adult-supervised activity.

REPORTING

1. It is the legal responsibility and the policy of First Congregational Church to report immediately any knowledge or suspicion of child abuse that is brought to the attention of church officers. Under state law this report must be made to the nearest peace officer, law enforcement agency or the state Department of Human Services (538-4377).
2. State law imposes the same responsibility on any person who has reason to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse. The law grants persons, officials or institutions immunity from any civil or criminal liability that might arise from making a good faith report, but also makes the failure to report suspected child abuse a Class B misdemeanor.
3. Persons should immediately report any knowledge or suspicion of abuse or inappropriate behavior involving children at the church or during church activities to the Moderator, or in the Moderator's absence, an Associate Moderator.

RESPONSE

1. When child abuse is alleged or suspected the safety of the child is paramount and shall be secured before any other steps are taken.

2. The parents or guardians of any affected child shall be notified immediately.
3. Persons accused or suspected of child abuse or serious inappropriate behavior shall be suspended with pay from employment or removed from youth volunteer activities while the incident is investigated.
4. Any investigation of alleged or suspected child abuse shall be turned over to the appropriate civil authorities. Church officials shall not attempt to investigate alleged or suspected child abuse on their own.
5. The Moderator, or in the Moderator's absence, the ranking Associate Moderator shall designate a spokesperson to deal with questions directed to the church from the media and congregation concerning an alleged incident of child abuse.
6. All efforts at handling the incident shall be documented. A single file shall be established and maintained in the church office documenting all communications and steps taken to respond to allegations of abuse.
7. Information about alleged or suspected incidents and the individuals involved shall be kept confidential. Information may be shared only with persons who either have been authorized by the Moderator or are required by law to receive such information.
8. Any inappropriate conduct or relationships between an adult volunteer and a member of a youth group or a child shall be confronted and investigated immediately.
9. Commission of child abuse, inappropriate conduct towards children and inappropriate relationships between adults and members of youth groups or children are grounds for dismissal from employment or removal from youth volunteer activities.

EMPLOYEE/VOLUNTEER CERTIFICATION

I have read and been provided a personal copy of the Youth Protection Supervisory and Reporting Policies. I have been given an opportunity to read and ask questions about the policy, I understand the expectations outlined in these Policies and will strive in good faith to comply with their provisions.

Printed Name

Signature

Date

Signature of Witness