

Child Protection and Abuse Response Policy

Milwaukee Mennonite Church

Introduction

Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. (Luke 18:16)

We are blessed to have many children in our congregation, and we value them as an integral part of our church. We believe that young children are capable of knowing and talking about God. Thus we not only welcome the presence of children of all ages in our worship services, but we affirm their participation in worship, in Christian Education, and all church activities. We are committed to maintaining a caring community where all of our church activities and facilities are safe, especially for children, and where we can all learn to see ourselves, and to treat everyone we meet, as people created in the image of God.

To this end, we sadly acknowledge the prevalence of child abuse in our society, and we choose to be proactive in creating an environment of transparent accountability when it comes to protecting children from abuse.

The [Wisconsin Department of Children and Families](#) defines four basic types of child maltreatment:

1. Physical neglect: “failure, refusal or inability on the part of a parent, guardian, legal custodian or other person exercising temporary or permanent control over a child, for reasons other than poverty, to provide necessary care, food, clothing, medical or dental care or shelter so as to seriously endanger the physical health of the child.”
2. Physical abuse: “physical injury inflicted on a child by other than accidental means.”
3. Sexual abuse “includes the following:
 - any person having sexual intercourse or sexual contact with a child 15 years of age or younger;
 - any person having sexual intercourse or sexual contact with a 16- or 17-year old child without his or her consent;
 - any person inducing a child to engage in sexually explicit conduct in order to videotape, photograph, etc., that child or videotaping, photographing, etc., a child for such purposes, or producing, distributing, selling or otherwise profiting from such a videotape, photograph, etc.;
 - a person responsible for a child’s welfare encouraging or permitting the child to engage in sexually explicit conduct for the purpose of videotaping, photographing, etc.;
 - any person causing a child to view or listen to sexual activity;
 - any person exposing genitals to a child; and

- any person permitting or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution.”
4. Emotional abuse: “emotional damage for which the child’s parent, guardian or legal custodian has neglected, refused or been unable for reasons other than poverty to obtain the necessary treatment or to take steps to ameliorate the symptoms.”

Child abuse prevention within our church community

We must be prepared in both knowledge and practice to prevent all types of child abuse and neglect and to strengthen families. This policy applies to all church ministries, including but not limited to Christian Education, youth activities, service projects, mentoring, and nursery.

We commit to:

1. Creating a Child Protection Team of at least two individuals to implement and facilitate the actions in this policy. The Child Protection Team members will be appointed by the Gifts Discernment Team and Leadership Team as part of the regular annual gifts discernment process.
2. Offering regular, age-appropriate trainings in child protection, abuse response, and child safety to the entire congregation.
 - a. Every year: training and materials will be offered to all adults in the congregation and especially to teachers and leaders of children. Training may be specific to child abuse or may be on a related topic such as child safety, child development, healthy family relationships, or any protective or risk factor for abuse.
 - b. Every two years: training for all children ages 6 to 17 on topics related to child abuse and child safety, such as safe touch for elementary-aged children or dating violence for adolescents. This training should be appropriate to the child’s age group. Parents must be included in the selection of material and involved in the screening of any books, movies, or other materials. Parents will be invited to participate in training with their child(ren).
3. Making our church facility safe for children (in partnership with our building host, Martin Luther Lutheran Church).
 - a. Place windows in all doors where children or youth ministry is conducted.
 - b. Place a fully stocked first-aid kit in the church building.
4. Providing safe and adequate supervision to children.
 - a. Two adults will be present at activities involving children, especially at overnight activities involving children and when activities are being conducted in homes or other private locations.
 - i. A second adult will assist and supervise childcare workers and CE teachers as a mobile teaching assistant. The teaching assistant will move between the nursery and all of the CE classrooms each Sunday, spending time within each as needed..
 - b. Youth ages 17 years or younger may only teach/care for children when a trained (i.e., as described in 2.a. above), supervising adult is also present.

- i. An exception to this is congregational meetings. Youth may provide childcare in the same building where a congregational meeting is being held, and the Child Protection Team will appoint one or more adults to check in with the childcare during the meeting.
 - c. A parent must always be notified ahead of time and give consent for his or her child to be transported away from church facilities.
 - d. No physical discipline (hitting, slapping) may be used. When a child misbehaves, a caregiver may use redirection and/or verbal means to guide the child's behavior. If this does not work, the child will be taken to his or her parent for further action.
5. Attending to related personnel issues.
 - a. Each year, each teacher and leader of children will be presented a copy of the congregation's child protection and abuse response policy and asked to acknowledge that he or she has read and will abide by the policy.
 - b. A background check, including child abuse and sex offender registries and criminal history, will be conducted on final candidates for all church staff positions before hiring. A background check will also be run on all Christian Education teachers, youth leaders, and nursery workers. These background checks must be conducted in all the states the individual has lived in the previous twenty years.
 - c. Individuals must have regular attendance in the church for at least six months before being allowed to be a teacher or leader of children or youth.
6. Dealing appropriately with known offenders
 - a. Any individual who is known to have been convicted of a child sexual offense will be prohibited from:
 - i. unsupervised contact with children.
 - ii. Involvement in children's or youth ministry (formal or informal).
 - b. All parents of children and youth must be notified if there is a registered sex offender attending church at the time this information becomes known. New families to the church must be notified of this information within two months of beginning to attend church.
7. Dealing appropriately with offenders and allegations of abuse.
 - a. When a child discloses abuse or child abuse is suspected, one or more of the following will be notified immediately:
 - i. National Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-4ACHILD
 - ii. Milwaukee Child Protective Services 414-220-SAFE (7233).
 - iii. The Milwaukee Police Department: 911 or 414-933-4444.
 - b. If there is uncertainty as to whether a situation requires reporting, it will be referred to a Child Protection Team member or to another church leader knowledgeable in the area of child abuse.
 - c. When an allegation of abuse is made, a member of the Child Protection Team and a member of the Leadership Team will be informed immediately. The alleged offender will be removed immediately from all responsibilities involving contact

with children until the conclusion of the investigation. All parents whose children may have come into contact with the alleged offender will be notified within forty-eight hours that allegations have been made and reported to the authorities.

- d. When child abuse allegations have been made, the Pastoral Care Team will offer care to all involved, and appropriate referrals will be made by them or by the Child Protection Team.

Child abuse prevention within our other communities

1. As a church, we will participate in at least one project each year that provides concrete goods to families in Milwaukee.
2. As a church, we will participate in at least one project each year that provides concrete goods to families outside the Milwaukee metro area.

Approved 3/19/17

