

NORTH VALLEY FRIENDS CHURCH
CHILD PROTECTION AND ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY

September, 2001, revised October 2002

I. Background Principles

The disturbing and traumatic rise of physical, mental, and sexual abuse of children has claimed the attention of our nation and society. We, at North Valley Friends Church are deeply aware of the responsibilities associated with caring for, teaching, and training children.

Why is abuse harmful? Abuse of all types damages trust. It inflicts deep spiritual, physical and/or emotional wounds. Abuse results in lies that are destructive, especially emotionally.

As a caring church, sensitive to the needs of our families, it is of utmost importance to establish a policy for all persons, paid or volunteer, who minister to/with children under our care and supervision. North Valley Friends will take necessary steps, both legally and morally, to prevent and report the abuse of children with/to whom we minister.

This policy reflects NVFC's commitment to provide:

- A. Protective care for all children.
- B. Guidance and protection for paid and volunteer workers who minister to/with children.
- C. Protection for the children's ministries of NVFC.
- D. Information and instruction regarding policies and procedures relating to the protection of children and prevention of child abuse.

II. Definitions

The following definitions will be used for the purposes of the Child Abuse Prevention and Protection Policy of NVFC:

A. **Abuse:**

1. Any physical injury which has been caused by other than accidental means, including any injury which appears to be at variance with the explanation given of the injury.
2. Any mental injury which includes only observable and substantial impairment of the child's mental or psychological ability to function caused by cruelty to the child.
3. Sexual abuse including, but not limited to rape, sodomy, sexual penetration and incest, as those acts are defined by law.

NOTE: The above three statements are quoted from ORS 418.760.

B. **Child:** An unmarried person under the age of eighteen (18).

C. **Staff worker:** A person who is paid by the church to perform a specific function, e.g. Youth Pastor or nursery supervisor.

D. **Volunteer Worker:** A person who does not receive pay and performs some sort of ministry or work, e.g. Sunday School teacher or small group leader.

E. **Occasional Worker:** A volunteer who does not have a regular assignment and serves less than ten (10) hours of volunteer work each year, e.g. nursery-worker.

F. **Emergency Worker:** A person who is called upon at the last minute to take the responsibility of a regular worker.

G. **Church Officer:** Persons who are appointed to fill an office in the church.

- H. **Two Adult Rule:** Adults working with children should observe the "two adult rule" **where feasible.** This suggests that an adult is never with a child without another person being present, except in public places in view of others or with parental permission. It is **recommended** that the second person be of the opposite sex.

III. Specific Policies

A. Requirements

1. All workers, paid and volunteer, who minister to/work with children through North Valley ministries must complete a "Screening Form for Children's Workers" to be filed in the church office. These forms are confidential, and will be kept in a locked file.
2. In addition to "A-1" above, all **NEW** workers who minister to/with children must have an "Applicant Interview" conducted by an appropriate interviewer. The results of the interview will be kept in a locked file with the person's completed Screening Form.

B. Locked File: Contents of the "locked file" should be kept **CONFIDENTIAL AT ALL TIMES.** Access to these records will be restricted to:

1. The Pastoral Ministry Coordinator.
2. The Presiding Clerk of the local meeting.
3. The Clerk of the Elders of the local meeting.

C. Restrictions

1. Persons who have a founded report of abuse against a child, have a criminal record which includes any crime of violence against a child, or are under investigation for a crime are not eligible for any type of volunteer or paid work with children in NWYM churches or activities.
2. Adults volunteering to work with children must have attended a Friends Church for at least six (6) months before they will be considered for ministry to/with children. Exceptions could be made for people that are well known e.g. local teachers, police, etc. If the volunteer has been active in a non-Friends church, he or she must give a reference to be contacted.
3. Current and prospective workers with children within NWYM churches shall be screened as directed by this policy.

D. Two Adult (Person) rule: Adults working with children should observe the "Two Adult Rule" **where feasible.** (See II-H under Definitions).

E. Adults working with children are required to use appropriate physical contact at all times, including, but not limited to, touching a child's hand, side rather than frontal hugging, no touching of private body areas. Appropriate touching takes into account the situation and location. For example, a hug may be appropriate in a public, but not in a private location in the church.

F. When there is a "one-on-one" situation it must be with parental permission and is strongly recommended to be in a public location.

G. Adults working with children should immediately report to the specific program supervisor, any behavior which appears to be abusive or inappropriate. Any physical or mental injury in evidence on any child in their care must be reported as required by state

and local laws.

- H. There may be situations where “occasional” or “emergency” volunteer workers are required to fulfill a specific ministry with children. These situations are described II. Definitions, above. Please refer to II.-H above for the "two adult rule."
- I. All policies, procedures and guidelines with respect to Child Protection, and Abuse Prevention should be reviewed each year to make certain they are up to date. It is suggested that the Christian Education Committee see that this is done.
- J. It is strongly recommended that windows be present in all classroom doors or other areas used by children. When the need arises to replace a door, we will replace it with this type of door. Church leaders and/or Sunday School Superintendents are expected to regularly observe all activities and frequently visit all areas. Also, keep doors open when possible.
- K. When taking young children to the rest room, be especially careful to give them as much privacy as possible. Unless unavoidable, only escort children of your gender, and then enter the rest room only if absolutely necessary.
- L. Establish and follow strictly a sign-in-sign out system for all nursery-age children. Know the adults who will be picking up the children! (Refer to nursery policy.)
- M. Transportation
 - 1. Transportation to church sponsored activities is to be provided only from the church to the activity and from the activity back to the church. Transportation between the home and the church and return is the responsibility of the parents or guardians to arrange.
 - 2. Transportation is to be provided only by drivers that are authorized by the church.

IV. Training and Education

- A. The Clerk of the Christian Education Committee or designated appointee shall be responsible for the training and education of all children's workers at the local church level.
- B. All staff and volunteers who work in any capacity, directly or indirectly with children and families, shall receive training regarding the detection of child abuse and the implementation of this policy and its procedures when they begin to work at NVFC and biannually thereafter.
- C. All staff who work in any capacity, directly or indirectly with children and families, shall receive a copy of this policy and shall sign a statement attesting to familiarity with its directives.

V. Screening Requirements

- A. In order to adequately protect our children, the following procedures should be followed for screening paid and volunteer children's workers.
 - 1. Complete the Screening form for Children's Workers adopted by the church.
 - 2. Conduct a biannual criminal background check through the state and/or local police departments and federal agency
 - 3. Complete an oral applicant interview with the Christian Education Clerk or designee when questions arise or the initial background screen reveals a criminal violation.

4. At this point, a more extensive criminal background check will be made through the federal authorities in order to verify that no criminal violation, which would disqualify the person from working with the youth, has occurred. The cost of this background check will either be paid by the applicant or can be covered out of the Christian Education committee budget.

VI. Applicant Interviews (Regarding the Abuse Policy)

- A. All worker candidates who expect to work with or minister to children will be interviewed by an appropriate person designated by the Christian Education Committee.
- B. Pastoral Staff candidate interviews will be conducted by the Clerk of Elders and reviewed by the Presiding Clerk of the local church. (This is in regards to the Abuse Policy)
- C. Any worker candidate may request that his/her interview be conducted by the Pastoral Staff or a mutually agreed upon third party.

VII. Applicant Interview Forms

Applicant Interview Forms and reference contact information will be completed by the interviewer and labeled "**CONFIDENTIAL.**" Any and all information gathered from the interview form shall be maintained confidential except to the extent required for reporting purposes. Completed forms will be stored in a locked file in an appropriate location with limited (controlled) access.

VIII. Procedure for Reporting Child Abuse Suspected or Witnessed.

A. Guidelines for Dealing With Child Abuse

If a child reports sexual abuse or improper touching:

- 1. Believe the child
- 2. Protect the child
- 3. Report the abuse (see the procedure below)

B. Who Should Report?

- 1. When a staff member or volunteer witnesses child abuse, or is told of child abuse by a party involved, that person must promptly contact the ministry leader and make a report, or cause a report to be made to the appropriate child protection services and local police agency. This is not to be discussed with the child in question.
- 2. When a staff member or volunteer has cause to believe that abuse has occurred, but has not observed the abusive conduct, such as abuse by a parent, that person must report the information to the ministry leader. A report will be made to the local authorities

C. How Should the Report be Made?

- 1. Witnessed or suspected child abuse shall be reported on Form - NWYM - F4 which is included in this packet.

2. The form shall be completed as soon as possible following the verbal report, and should be in as much detail as possible. Special attention should be given to time, place, what was witnessed or suspected, person making the report, indicators of abuse, family background, visible signs of any injury on the child, remarks by the child (without interviewing the child), etc.
3. All aspects of the report, verbal and written, shall be maintained confidential except to the extent required for reporting purposes to avoid mistaken accusation.

D. How Should the Written Report Be Followed Up?

The written reports shall be maintained at the church office. Only Pastoral Ministry Coordinator, Clerk of the Elders, and the Presiding Clerk shall have access to these reports.

IX. Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

- A. Proper responses to allegations of child abuse can minimize the pain and liability for all parties involved in a given situation. It is the church's' goal to respond to allegations in a manner that people's rights to privacy and confidentiality be maintained at the highest possible level. Adequate care and support for both the alleged victim and the accused shall be considered mandatory at all times.
- B. In the case of an allegation of child abuse against a worker serving in the ministry of the church, the following steps shall be taken:
 1. Report shall be made to Services for Children and Families and local authorities. (In reporting, follow the counsel of an attorney and/or insurance company representative.)
 2. The person(s) in charge of the program or activity shall document all efforts used when dealing with the allegation.
 3. The allegation will be reported as soon as possible to the proper church authority.
 4. The incident shall be reported as soon as possible to the applicable insurance company and/or attorney.
 5. The accused shall be relieved of duties until the prompt investigation of said accusation occurs.
 6. Parents of the alleged victim shall be notified as directed by local authorities.
 7. If the accused is under the age of 18, his/her parents shall be notified as directed by local authorities.
 8. The alleged victim must be supported by all the love and care that is reasonably possible.
 9. The accused must be treated with dignity, support and Christian love.
 10. All means must be taken to ensure confidentiality at all levels of this process.

Disclosure of information regarding the abuse or suspected abuse is prohibited, except as required for reporting purposes.

SCREENING FORM FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH WORKERS

The purpose of this form is to help North Valley provide a safe and secure environment for those children and youth who participate in our programs and use our facilities.

This application is to be completed by all applicants for any regular position involving the supervision or custody of minors. This is not an employment application form.

Today's Date _____

Name _____

Last

First

Middle

(Identity should be confirmed with a valid state driver's license or other current photo I.D.)

Present address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone (____) _____

Marital status _____ Spouse's name _____ e-mail _____

Birth date _____

List three former addresses with dates:

1. Please indicate the type of youth or children's work you prefer: _____

2. What is the minimum length of commitment you can make? _____

3. Do you have a criminal record for any misdemeanor or felony offense?

Yes ___ No ___ If yes, please explain. (Use back of this form if nec.)

4. If your criminal record includes a conviction for any offense involving drugs (use or possession), please explain.

5. If your criminal record includes a conviction for any offense of violence or sexual misconduct, please explain.

6. Have you ever been sued in a civil action where the allegation(s) included sexual misconduct? Yes ____ No ____ If yes, please explain. _____

7. Do you have a valid, current driver's license? Yes ____ No ____
If yes, please list the license number and state. _____

Church History and Prior Children or Youth Work
(Complete this section if not already on file at Yearly Meeting or local church)

8. How long have you attended this church? _____ Are you a member?
Yes ____ No ____

9. List (names and addresses) of other churches you have attended regularly during the past five (5) years. _____

10. List all previous church work involving children or youth. Show name and address of church and type of work with dates. _____

11. List all previous non-church work involving children or youth. Show name and address of organization and type of work performed with dates. _____

List three personal references (not former employers or relatives):

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone (_____) _____

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone (_____) _____

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone (_____) _____

APPLICANT'S STATEMENT

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references or churches listed in this application to give you any information (including options) that they may have regarding my character and fitness for working with children or youth. In consideration of the receipt and evaluation of this application by North Valley Friends, I hereby release any individual, church, youth organization, charity, employer, reference, or any other person or organization, including record custodians, both collectively and individually, from any and all liability for damages of compliance or any attempts to comply, with this authorization. I waive any right that I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any person or organization identified by me in this application. I understand that a criminal background check will be conducted.

I have read the CHILD PROTECTION AND ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY of North Valley Friends.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the policies and procedures of North Valley Friends in the performance of my services on behalf of the church.

I further state that I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THE FOREGOING RELEASE, AND KNOW THE CONTENTS THEREOF AND I SIGN THIS RELEASE AS MY OWN FREE ACT. This is a legally binding agreement which I have read and understood.

Applicant's Signature _____ Date ___/___/___

Applicant's Name _____ Birth date ___/___/___

Previous Names _____

Witness _____ Date ___/___/___

Note: If you are applying to be a volunteer worker you will be interviewed by the children's coordinator or youth pastor.

Note: All pages of this form are CONFIDENTIAL and will be filed in a safe, secure place.

Drivers License Number _____ State _____

Expires _____