



PROTECTION AND ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY

Northwest Yearly Meeting of Friends

Last updated: September 1, 2016, Northwest Yearly Meeting

I. Background Principles

Safeguarding the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of young people and other disabled individuals may be one of the most important responsibilities for ministry organizations. The physical, mental and sexual abuse of children and disabled adults 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.

Abuse accusations within a ministry can demoralize everyone involved – the victim, the victim’s parents, the ministry and its leaders, the family of the abuser, and the community.

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, youth or disabled adults under our care and supervision. (Insert name of church) will take necessary steps, both legally and morally, to protect and report the abuse of children with/to whom we minister.

This policy reflects North Valley Friends Church’s commitment to provide:

- A. Protective supervision and care for all children, youth and disabled adults.
- B. Guidance and protection for paid and volunteer workers who minister to/with children, youth or disabled adults.
- C. Protection for the various ministries of NVFC.
- D. Information and instruction regarding policies and procedures relating to the protection of children, youth and disabled adults, and the prevention of abuse.

II. Definitions

The following definitions will be used for the purposes of the Abuse Prevention and Protection Policy of North Valley Friends Church:

A. **Abuse** – Any recent act or failure to act which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation; or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk or serious harm.

1. **Sexual Abuse** – sexual contact between a child/youth/disabled adult and an adult (or older, more powerful youth).

Behavioral Indicators of Sexual Abuse: Advanced sexual knowledge or behavior, depression – often crying without reason, promiscuous behavior, withdrawal from activities, running away, walking or sitting difficulties, bruising/bleeding in the genital area, frequent headaches/stomachaches, or extreme fatigue.

2. **Physical Abuse** – intentional, deliberate behavior that causes bodily harm. It can take several forms including assault, shaking, kicking, choking, bone fractures or other non- accidental injuries, in general.

Behavioral Indicators of Physical Abuse: Hostile, aggressive behavior toward others, fear of parents and other adults, destructive behavior (self, others, property), unexplainable bruises or fractures, burns, facial injuries (often reoccurring).

3. **Neglect** – meaning a child or disabled adult who is without proper parental care and control, or subsistence, education, medical or other care or control necessary for his/her well-being because of the conduct or omission of his parents, guardian or other custodian.

Behavioral Indicators of Neglect: Depressed, poor impulse control, regularly displays fatigue, steals food, reports that no caregiver is at home, poor hygiene, lack of basic food and clothing, lack of education as required by law.

B. Child/Youth: An unmarried person under the age of eighteen (18) who is not an emancipated minor.

C. Disabled Adult: A cognitive, emotional, or physical impairment for a person over the age of eighteen (18).

D. Staff worker: A person who is paid by the church to perform a specific function, e.g., assistant pastor, youth coordinator, children's coordinator, senior pastor, secretary or janitor.

E. 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.

F. Occasional Worker: A volunteer who does not have a regular assignment and serves as a substitute when needed.

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

H. Two Adult Rule: Adults working with children should observe the "two adult rule" during all church sponsored events where feasible ("Rule of Three" if the "Two Adult Rule" is not feasible). This suggests that an adult is never with a child up to age 13 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.

I. Rule of Three: At least three individuals (at least one being a previously screened adult) must be present at every function and in each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area during all activities involving children, youth or disabled adults.

III. Specific Policies

Each local church is required to follow the Minimum Abuse Policy Standards. In addition each local church is encouraged to implement a Child Protection and Abuse Prevention

Policy. This sample may be used intact or as a guide to write your own. Each local church is required to abide by all state and local laws.

A. Screening Requirements: In order to adequately protect our children and disabled adults these are the procedures for screening paid and volunteer ministry staff.

1. All workers, paid and volunteer, who minister to/work with children or disabled adults must complete a "Screening Form for Ministry Workers" to be filed in the church office. These forms are confidential and will be kept in a locked area.

2. In addition to "A-1" above, all NEW workers who minister to/with children or disabled adults 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.

3. All volunteer candidates must be regularly (average 3 times/month) involved at (name of church) for six months or more before they will be considered for any ministry position involving contact with children, youth, or disabled adults.

4. All workers, paid and volunteer, who minister to/work with children or disabled adults must agree in writing that they have read and agree to follow (name of church) abuse prevention policies.

5. All workers, paid and volunteer, who minister to/work with children or disabled adults will submit form 2, the Applicants Interview Form/Applicant Statement.

B. Confidential File: Contents of the "confidential file" should be kept PRIVATE AT ALL TIMES. Access to these records will be restricted to:

1. The senior pastor or appointed designee.
2. The presiding clerk of the local meeting.
3. The clerk of the elders of the local meeting.
4. NWYM superintendent or his/her designee.

C. Restrictions:

1. Any person who may pose a threat to children, youth or disabled adults will be prohibited from working in any ministry involving children, youth or disabled adults. Persons who have a founded report of abuse against another person of any age, have a criminal record which includes any crime of violence, or are under investigation for a crime are NOT eligible for any type of volunteer or paid work with minors or disabled adults in (name of church here) or activities.

If there is a previous conviction of another crime not including abuse against another person or any crime of violence, there must be a lapse of at least one year from the time of conviction before serving with children, youth or disabled adults.

If there is more than one criminal conviction not including abuse against another person or crime of violence, applicants will need to be approved by the local Christian Education Committee or Elders.

2. Adults volunteering to work with any ministry, program or event generally should have attended a Friends Church for at least six (6) months before they will be considered for ministry to/with children, youth or disabled adults. Exceptions might be made for people who are well-known, for people with special expertise, or on a case-by-case basis as approved by the local Christian Education Committee, Elders, or in compliance with local church policies.

3. Current and prospective workers with children within North Valley Friends Church shall be screened as directed by this policy.

D. Supervision: No adult is ever to be alone with a minor or disabled adult.

E. Physical Contact: Adults working with children, youth or disabled adults must use only appropriate physical contact at all times including, but not limited to, touching a child's hand, no tickling and/or 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 place, but not in a private location in the church.

F. Discipline: Adults working with children, youth or disabled adults are never to spank, hit, grab, shake, threaten violence or otherwise physically discipline. Physical restraint should only be used in a situation where it is deemed necessary to prevent harm. Disciplinary problems should be reported to the appropriate coordinator or supervisor and/or parent or guardian.

G. Immediate Reporting: Adults working with children, youth or disabled adults must immediately report to the specific program supervisor, any behavior that appears to be abusive or potentially inappropriate. This does not affect or replace any requirement for a report of child abuse under state law or any other law.

H. Occasional Workers: There may be situations where "occasional" volunteer workers are required to fulfill a specific ministry with children. Occasional workers may serve as a substitute worker though they may not have been through worker screening or training, but may only serve alongside a worker who has been through the screening and training. This exception applies to a one-time/emergency situation. Substitutes must comply with screening requirements. These situations are described in II-E and II-F under Definitions. Please refer to II-H for the "two adult rule."

I. Annual Review: 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. Restroom Visits: When taking young children to the restroom, be especially careful to give them as much privacy as possible. Diapers can be changed by an approved individual and must follow the two-adult rule.

When using the restroom, a screened adult shall accompany children, youth, and disabled adults to and from the restroom. Before any child, youth or disabled adult enters the restroom, the screened adult will enter the restroom to make sure that it is safe. If assistance is required, the screened adult will assist the individual with the door propped open so that a second screened adult can visually monitor the assisting adult. It is required that two screened adults be present when assistance is needed in the restroom.

When restrooms are directly accessible to children from the room where children's activities are taking place and not accessible to the general public, children can be allowed to utilize the restroom alone.

L. Nursery Policies: Establish and strictly follow a sign-in-sign-out system for all nursery-age children. Know the adults who will be picking up the children.

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 who are authorized by the church. Drivers will carry permission slips for each child that has been duly signed by the child's parent(s) or guardian(s). Permission slips should include liability waivers for each activity. These slips may be signed annually and kept in an appropriate file.

3. Each driver must complete a ministry screening form that will authorize a criminal history check. In addition, each driver will be responsible to have a current driver's license and proof of insurance.

4. The "two adult rule" is especially important when providing transportation when feasible. It is advisable for two or more children to be present in each vehicle. A caravan of vehicles is a unique case where multiple screened adults are rotating drivers, e.g. three vehicles with five drivers.

N. Sexual Offender Chaperone Policy: In the event that a registered or known sex offender is attending North Valley Friends Church, the following steps must be taken to manage risk.

1. Obtain a record of the sex offender's prior criminal convictions.

2. If the sex offender is on probation, identify his/her probation officer and assess the conditions that have been imposed. In some cases, sex offenders are not allowed to attend church. If the probation officer says the offender is free to attend church, ask the officer if he/she recommends the offender attend church, and if so, under what conditions. Obtain this information in writing, or create a detailed written account of the officer's response. This information should be kept in a locked file.

3. Condition the sex offender's right to attend church services and activities by having him/her sign a "conditional attendance agreement" that imposes the following conditions:
 - The sex offender will always be in the presence of a designated chaperone while on church property.
 - The sex offender will not attend any youth or children's functions while on the church property, except for those involving his or her own child/children, and only in the presence of a chaperone.
 - A single violation of these conditions will result in an immediate termination of the sex offender's privilege to attend the church.

O. Social Networking Practices: With the increasing number of people using new media communication over traditional forms, it is important to maintain healthy boundaries and practices for adults communicating with children/youth. If a parent or child reports inappropriate communication from any adult, a report to the education clerk or pastoral staff should be made.

IV. Training and Education

A. Designated church leadership shall be responsible to ensure adequate training and education is provided for all workers serving minors or disabled adults to maintain compliance with following sections B, C and D.

B. All staff and volunteers who work in any capacity, directly or indirectly with children, youth or disabled adults shall receive training regarding the detection of child abuse and the implementation of this policy and its procedures.

C. All staff that 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 and compliance with its directives.

D. All primary leaders, including pastors, presiding clerk, and the clerks of elders, trustees, and Christian Education Board must complete abuse prevention training approved by Northwest Yearly Meeting.

V. Screening Requirements Review

A. In order to adequately protect our children, the following procedures should be fulfilled for screening paid and volunteer workers serving minors or disabled adults:

1. Complete the Screening Form for Ministry Workers adopted by the church.
2. Complete an oral applicant interview with the Christian Education clerk or designee.
3. Conduct criminal history check every three years through the state and/or local police departments and federal agency.

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. Senior pastor 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 senior pastor or a mutually agreed upon third party.

D. All prospective employees of North Valley Friends Church will be screened, regardless of the position for which they are applying.

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 kept 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.

VII. Reporting and Responding to Witnessed or Suspected Abuse

A. The church is obligated to follow and be in compliance with all state reporting laws.

B. Proper responses to allegations of 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.

C. In the case of an allegation of abuse against a worker serving in the ministry of the church, the following steps shall be taken:

1. The person(s) in charge of the program or activity shall document all efforts used when dealing with the allegation.

2. The allegation will be reported as soon as possible to the proper church authority and to the Northwest Yearly Meeting superintendent.

3. The incident shall be reported as soon as possible to the applicable insurance company and/or attorney.
4. The accused shall be relieved of duties until the prompt investigation of said accusation occurs.
5. Follow the counsel of an attorney and/or insurance company representative when reporting to Services for Children and Families while following all state reporting laws.
6. If the victim is under the age of 18, his/her parents or guardian shall be notified as soon as possible.
7. If the victim is a disabled adult, his/her caregiver/guardian shall be notified as soon as possible.
8. If the accused is under the age of 18, his/her parents/guardian shall be notified as soon as possible.
9. The alleged victim must be supported by all the love and care that is reasonably possible.
10. The accused must be treated with dignity, support and Christian love.
11. 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.