

Martins Mennonite Church (MMC)

Safe Sanctuary Abuse and Safety Policy

(Martins Day Care, while a mission of MMC, has their own established guidelines and forms that are state mandated.)

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I. MMC Safety and Sexual Abuse Prevention Policy

A. Introduction

The Church at Martins Mennonite (MMC) seeks to be a people who are growing together in Christ Jesus. Characteristic of our fellowship is to be a love for one another, modeled by Christ, that seeks the highest and best for each other. In this regard, exploitation of vulnerable persons or the use of positions of power within the institutions of the church or family are unacceptable, to be avoided, and counter to following Christ in word and deed.

All members, staff, and volunteers representing MMC are to exemplify the standards of Christ in their conduct. MMC members, non-members who identify with MMC, guests, employees, and volunteers have the right to pursue their activities and worship in an environment that is safe where there is zero tolerance concerning all forms of abusive conduct and to be free from false or wrongful, or unfounded allegations of misconduct.

B. Goal

MMC has determined the need to develop a policy for addressing safety issues and preventing and dealing with all forms of abuse within MMC involving (any)(every)one who is part of MMC. This need regarding abuse stems from the awareness that it is not only a major problem in society, but it has also become a serious and widespread problem in the church. Abuse can happen anywhere. That churches are not immune to abuse stems from the church's tendency to be trusting.

As a local Body of Christ, MMC is to be recognized as a sanctuary. All people need to feel safe whenever and wherever the Church (people of God) gather together.

In its recent history, MMC has NOT experienced any serious 1) safety issues, 2) sexual/gender harassment or 3) misconduct of a sexual nature. Instead of burying our heads in the sand and thinking that MMC is somehow immune from such happenings, we want to be proactive in developing a policy that will be preventative in nature and make a strong pronouncement that MMC is a sanctuary and misconduct will NOT be tolerated.

C. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to share MMC's position on safety issues and "abusive behaviors and the expectations of appropriate behaviors." This policy seeks to offer guidelines aimed at prevention procedures, documentation of incidents and integrating offenders.

The following are reasons that MMC is developing a policy:

1. From a legal perspective, it has been made clear (especially at the U.S. Supreme Court level) that having policies in place is crucial in defending safety and sexual abuse issues (litigation).
2. The MMC policy will serve as an educational tool to reinforce prevention.
3. Mennonite Church USA at both the Executive and Conference levels highly encourages congregations to develop a policy.

Therefore, in Christ, MMC seeks to be a people who offer healing, hope and refuge to all who have experienced brokenness, harm or pain.

A copy of this policy and attached forms shall be added to the "MMC Guidebook, Explanatory Documents." The responsibility for administering this policy shall rest with the newly developed position of two persons called MMC Safety Team whose responsibilities will be to: 1) Remind department heads to review this at least annually, 2) Keep a log that persons trained have read and understood the materials (e.g. I received _____, I've read and understood it _____, signed _____) and 3) Keep logs, etc. in a designated locked file.

II. Definitions

- A. Abuse:** constitutes Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment, Child Sexual Abuse, Physical Abuse, Physical Neglect, and Emotional Abuse.
- B. Adult:** means a person eighteen (18) years of age or older.
- C. Applicant:** means all prospective MMC employees, contract workers (persons who might be hired to serve MMC, but have no formal affiliation with MMC) and volunteers.
- D. Child or Children:** refers to a person under the age of 16 years, unless otherwise indicated.
- E. Child Sexual Abuse:** occurs when anyone engages in sexual contact or sexualized behavior with a child. It includes any form of physical contact for a sexual purpose or any other behavior involving contact which may be considered sexual behavior directed towards a child. It does not include normal affectionate behavior towards children and excludes normal health and hygiene care.
- F. Children's/Youth Program:** means a program where children/youth are supervised, cared for and/or educated separate from, and not under the direct supervision of, their parents/caregiver.
- G. Elder Team:** the Pastor(s) and three elected MMC members who are responsible for the spiritual welfare of the congregation.
- H. Emotional Abuse:** occurs when anyone attempts to control or exploit a child, or another person for one's own benefit or gain, through the use of derogatory language, threats, or intimidation. Often times implied in the use of "secrecy" language.
- I. Employee/Staff:** includes anyone who is hired or approved by MMC and is financially reimbursed for his/her services.
- J. Member:** means a member of MMC as defined by the MMC Constitution and Bylaws.
- K. MMC:** means Martins Mennonite Church.
- L. MMC Safety Team:** Two MMC members who will administer this policy.
- M. Ohio Conference:** refers to the Ohio Conference of the Mennonite Church USA.
- N. Pastor Congregation Relations Committee:** (PCRC) monitors the overall relational health of congregational life.
- O. Physical Abuse:** occurs when anyone inflicts physical harm on a child, or another person, or uses force that is unwarranted by the situation.
- P. Physical Neglect:** means to fail to meet the physical needs of a child in one's care. It constitutes harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare by failing to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care or failing to intervene to eliminate a risk when able to do so.
- Q. Sanctuary:** a place or environment of hospitality and safety for all persons that is free from sexual misconduct and encourages respect, care of one another, equality and kinship in Christ. (Adapted and used with permission from the former Kingview Mennonite Church, Scottdale, Pennsylvania.)

- R. Sexual Assault:** is a criminal act involving unwanted or forced sexual contact and/or activity.
- S. Sexual Harassment:** is any behavior which subjects a person to unwanted verbal or physical attention of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment may involve one incident or a series of incidents that consist of verbal, emotional, mental or physical conduct, or any combination thereof. It includes a wide range of behaviors, from innuendo to lewd comments, to sexual jokes, to unwanted or inappropriate touching, to overt demands for sexual favors.
- T. Sexual Violence:** conduct of a sexual nature which is non-consensual, and is accomplished through threat, coercion, exploitation, deceit, force, physical or mental incapacitation, and/or power of authority.
- U. Volunteer:** is a member or non-member of MMC who offers his/her services to MMC without any obligation to do so. This person offers his/her services willingly and without pay.
- V. Youth:** refers to a person aged 16 or 17, unless otherwise indicated

III. Prevention Procedures

A. Education

The awareness and prevention of abuse are fundamental to providing a safe environment for worship and work within MMC. Education, then, is a vital part of this policy. The following are offered for the ongoing education of MMC:

3 Fundamentals for Churches

- *Responsibility to Education*
We have a responsibility to educate ourselves about being free from any form of abuse or injury. We will also strive to be informed about sexual offenses and offenders.
- *Assurance of Safety*
 - A. Emotional
We have a responsibility to create the policies and procedures to assure that adults, children, and youth will be as safe as possible in our congregations from emotional abuse.
 - B. Sexual
We also have a responsibility to create the policies and procedures to assure that adults, children, and youth will be as safe as possible in our congregation from sexual violence in the form of sexual abuse, sexual assault, and harassment.
 - C. Physical
We also have responsibility to provide a safe physical environment. Program staff members are encouraged to be certified in CPR and First Aid training.
- *Congregational Home for All People*
We are called to treat every person with worth and dignity. We are also called to offer a congregational home to all who are seeking one like ours. In the case of an adult, youth or child with a history of sex offenses, we must honor setting appropriate limitations to congregational involvement. That commitment means that only in some cases will a person be completely denied access to ministry and fellowship.

*Borrowed from the Balancing Act: Keeping Children Safe in Congregations Training
www.courses.neari.com

- *Background Checks*
Criminal background checks will be required for all employees (staff) and all adults who are affirmed by the MMC discernment process for a formal term of service (excludes any who are asked to assist or resource on an infrequent basis) with children and/or youth. Exceptions to this requirement will be made for persons who previously had background checks providing a copy can be transferred to MMC. Persons who desire to serve our youth, will, once background checks are cleared, be affirmed for involvement with our youth as long as they continue regularly attending MMC. Persons refusing to have a background check run will be denied serving in any role with children or youth. Any person whose background check reveals the conviction of or pleading guilty to any physical and/or sexual abuse of children or other serious crimes against person (e.g. domestic violence, etc.), or against whom such charges are pending, will be evaluated and discerned by the congregation regarding any involvement with youth.
- **TORNADO/SEVERE WEATHER SAFETY PLAN**
According to Orrville Fire Department, the following procedure should be followed in case of a Tornado/Severe Weather Warning signaled by a siren.
 - 1) Everyone (including anyone who may be in the Pavilion/youth room or outdoors) should proceed in a calm and orderly manner to the basement hallway and interior rooms.
 - 2) If there is time, the following should be taken along or have available:
 - cell phone
 - First Aid Kit from the Conference Room
 - Flashlight
 - 3) If there is not enough time, persons (especially those who may have difficulty negotiating steps may proceed to the upstairs Men's and Women's restrooms.
- **FIRE/GENERAL EVACUATION PLAN**
A fire is indicated by word of mouth.
 - 1) Exit the building according to the escape routes posted in the room you are occupying.
 - 2) Persons exiting from the South door, or if exiting from the Pavilion/Youth Room should meet on the playground.
 - 3) Persons exiting from the East door should cross both driveways and meet on the grassy area next to the field.
 - 4) Persons exiting from the West door should meet across the drive by the conifer trees (pines).
 - 5) Persons providing leadership are responsible for notifying people in restrooms and other areas.
- Do not stop to get coats or shoes in the event of a fire. Persons providing leadership are responsible to become familiar with fire escape routes and fire safety procedures.

1. Copies of this policy will be distributed to every MMC household.

2. All staff and volunteers involved with children or youth, or in providing pastoral care, will understand this policy and will receive appropriate training (i.e. short training meeting, packet of material read and signed that completed, video, etc.).

3. Workshops/Seminars (group or individual) and /or printed resources relating to issues pertaining to working with children and youth shall be made available and promoted on an ongoing basis.

4. The MMC Pastor Congregation Relations Committee (PCRC) is requested to review this policy with the MMC Safety Team annually to maintain the effectiveness of this policy.

5. A list of all church members and persons who attend who are CPR/First Aid certified will be kept with the First Aid Kit in the Conference Room and in the Youth Room.

The Following are Meant to be Guidelines Only
The intent of this list is to create and instill an awareness
of vulnerability to civil and criminal liability.

WE ENCOURAGE:

1. Teaming up with another adult member when counseling minors or when counseling needs to happen one-on-one, do so in full view of others.
2. Having two adults present at all times at every function and in each classroom, vehicle or other enclosed area when supervision is needed. If the two adults are related, a third unrelated adult must be present. If it is only possible for one adult to be in a classroom, another adult will be appointed to make a random check of all primary and junior high classes at a time of his/her choosing during the class session.
3. Meeting in public places.
4. Advising parents or other members of your activities (who you are meeting with, and where you are meeting or going to go).
5. Being accountable.
6. Having two adults take younger children to the bathroom.
7. Having two adults present when changing children's clothing.
8. Having two adults present when changing children's diapers.
9. Keeping physical contact to a minimum (e.g. A hello hug, but even then ask permission before giving the hug.).
10. Having two adult workers (minimum) on extended field trips (e.g. all day or overnight), and these adults must be over the age of twenty-one. It is also encouraged to have one adult per seven girls/boys.
11. Keeping groups together, use "buddy system" for older children, in which groupings of two to four persons partner together.
12. Obtaining a signed release form from parent or guardian for children that are attending church or related activities without regular parent attendance.
13. Obtaining a release form from parent or guardian if the church provides transportation. If no transportation permission slip is available, verbal consent may be obtained from a parent or guardian.
14. Having a window in the door of all meeting rooms and offices.
15. Remembering the three safe places to touch a child: hand, shoulder, upper back.
16. Responding to children rather than react to them.

NOTE: Exceptions to the transportation guidelines are noted on the transportation permission slip. There may be times when an individual sponsor will need to transport your youth. One-on-one meetings or transportation is permissible with parental consent.

WE DISCOURAGE:

1. Meeting with minors behind closed doors.
2. Holding "secret" meetings with minors.
3. Meeting alone with a minor, especially of the

- opposite sex.
- 4. Checking a minor for injuries under clothing without another adult present.
- 5. Sitting older children on your lap, kissing, or embracing children inappropriately.
- 6. Allowing an older child to take a younger child to the restroom.
- 7. Transporting a child by yourself.
- 8. Having one-on-one activities with children/youth unless in full view of others.
- 9. Having one-on-one adult/youth sleeping arrangements in a retreat/overnight setting.

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- 10. Touching a person's private areas except when necessary, as in the case of changing a diaper.
- 11. Hitting a child.
- 12. Using abusive or derogatory language with a child.
- 13. Touching a child against his/her will.

Rules:

- 1. "Five years older rule" - Leader should be 5 years older than the youth they are leading. (Less than 5 years will be designated "supervised apprentice".)
- 2. No workers under the age of 16, (if younger they must be accompanied by an adult), should be in charge of young children because they do not have the maturity and judgment that is needed to be fully responsible for young children.
- 3. Windows in all classroom doors or walls for observation.
- 4. At any counseling sessions with children or youth, the door of the room used should remain open for the entire session.
- 5. Always give the parents advance notice and full information regarding the events in which their children will be participating. Parents then should give written permission for their child's participation. This protects the church because it proves the parents were informed of the event and gives them the chance to prevent their child from participating.
- 6. When children or youth are transported to an event, every rider will have access to a seat belt and will use it. (NOTE: In Ohio all children under age 15 must be belted or driver faces a 2-point citation plus a fine!)
- 7. Once on church property, children and/or youth will not be permitted to leave the church grounds without parental consent, until an event is concluded, unless escorted by parent(s)/guardian(s).

Providing parents with advance notice and full information about activities must be a guiding principle in a church's ministries with children and youth. Advance information encourages parents to support the ministry by scheduling their child's participation.

Advanced information can help parents and children decide whether the content and substance of the event are suitable for their child's participation. **Most importantly, advanced information demonstrates that the church takes it's ministries**

seriously enough to plan thoroughly and the provide for the safest possible experiences.

IV. Processing Incidents of Safety Negligence or Abuse

Any questionable or inappropriate behavior should be reported immediately to the PCRC and Elder Team.

PCRC and Elder Team shall give leadership to the processing of any such reports.

A witness (or in cooperation with an advocate) shall record the incident in writing and give to PCRC.

PCRC will notify the accused in writing within 48 hours of being reported and also notify the reporting person of this action.

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If the accusation involves a staff member, that person shall immediately discontinue his/her assignment until cleared of charges.

Different Elders will be available to minister to 1) the accuser, and 2) the accused.

An incident will be reported to the appropriate authorities in situations defined by state and local laws. Also, the liability insurer for for MMC will be notified about any incident by the PCRC/Elder Team as appropriate.

The confidentiality of all persons involved will be safeguarded. All records relating to the matter will be maintained in confidential files.

All procedures listed in this section concerning the processing of incidents of safety negligence or abuse will be strictly followed.

The MMC Safety Team will serve as spokespersons for any inquires regarding an incident.

V. Integrating Offenders

The goal is the restoration of the accused offender whether guilty or falsely charged.

An accountability group of five or six persons shall be formed to support and work with an offender who is participating in MMC. This group shall include a PCRC member, an Elder, a person recommended by Ohio Conference with related professional qualifications, a Pastor, and a person of the offender's choosing and affirmed by MMC Council. This group shall work with the offender to develop a protection plan that the offender is encouraged to share with the congregation.

VI. Amending/Terminating this policy

This policy may be amended or terminated by Church Council.

