

# **SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY FOR BEAVERDAM MENNONITE CHURCH**

**Amended: May 16, 2013  
Originally Adopted August, 2006**

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## **SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY FOR BEVERDAM MENNONITE CHURCH**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Beaverdam Mennonite Church (BMC) seeks to be a gathering place where all church activities and facilities are safe for everyone, especially children. In Christ, we seek to be people who offer healing, hope, and refuge to all who have experienced brokenness, harm, or pain. Sadly, child abuse is prevalent in our society and it is hurting children, adults, families, and societies everywhere.

To help protect children, BMC has adopted the following Safe Sanctuary Policy (original August 2006). It is important that all BMC paid staff and volunteers understand and implement these guidelines to help prevent any and all abuse against children. This policy applies to all church ministries including but not limited to Sunday School, youth activities, Vacation Bible School, mentoring relationships, and nursery care. *Note: Sessions with BMC Spiritual Formation Director have a separate policy for Safe Practices.*

### **B. PURPOSE**

These procedures are designed to reduce the risk of any and all abuse in order to:

1. Provide a safe and secure environment for children, youth, adults, members, volunteers, visitors, and paid staff.
2. Assist BMC in evaluating a person's suitability to supervise, oversee, and/or exert control over the activities of children and youth.
3. Satisfy the concerns of parents and staff members with a screening process for paid staff and volunteers.
4. Provide a system to respond to alleged victims of sexual abuse and their families, as well as the alleged perpetrator.
5. Reduce the possibility of false accusations of sexual abuse made against volunteers and paid staff.

### **C. DEFINITIONS**

The following terms used herein are defined as follows:

1. *Paid Staff*: Any pastor, minister, preacher, or employee of BMC who is paid.
2. *Children/Youth/Minor*: Any person who has not reached his/her 18th birthday or the age of majority as defined by state law.
3. *Adult*: Any person who has reached his/her 18th birthday or as defined by state law.

4. *Volunteer*: Means any unpaid person engaged in or involved in activities and who is entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors or adults.
5. *Youth Sponsor*: (From BMC “A Guide to Serving”) youth sponsors are adults who organize and oversee monthly events which promote Christian fellowship with the youth. The youth sponsors will be recommended by the youth superintendents and approved by the Christian Education Cabinet.
6. *Sexual Abuse*: The employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any minor or adult to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of such conduct or rape, and in cases of caretaker or inter-familial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of minor or adult, or incest with a minor or adult, or as defined by federal and state law. This includes and is not limited to unwelcome sexual remarks, jokes, advances, leering, whistling, or sexual gestures; sexual touching, fondling, molestation, assault, or other intimate physical contact; compelling another person to engage in a sexual act by threats or fear or undue influence; and providing or displaying pornographic materials to another person.
7. *Emotional Abuse*: Verbal or nonverbal conduct including mental exploitation, degrading communication, or humiliating or threatening conduct that may or may not include bullying or as defined by state law.
8. *Bullying*: A person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending him or herself. Bullying can take on many forms; verbal bullying which includes derogatory comments and bad names; bullying through social exclusion or isolation; physical bullying such as hitting, kicking, shoving, and spitting; bullying through lies and false rumors; having money or others things taken or damaged by students who bully; being threatened or being forced to do things by students who bully; racial bullying, sexual bullying, cyber bullying (via cell phone or internet).

## **D. PROTECTION AND PREVENTION**

The following procedures are to be used with paid staff and volunteers who are entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors. All information collected should be maintained in confidence.

1. **Education**: The awareness and prevention of abuse are fundamental to providing a safe environment for worship and work within BMC. Education about child abuse prevention, recognition, and reporting are vital parts of this policy.
  - a. Annually, training and materials will be offered to all interested adults in the congregation, and mandated for paid staff, volunteers, teachers and leaders of children. Training *must* include:

-Reviewing the Safe Sanctuary Policy;

-Training on preventing, recognizing, and reporting child abuse (according to PA state law);

Training *may also* include a related topic such as child safety, child development, healthy family relationships, or any protective or risk factor for abuse;

-Participants in the annual training must sign an affidavit confirming that they have never abused or violated a child physically or verbally, and that they have participated in the annual training. These will be maintained in confidence.

- b. Every year, before the fiscal year begins, the Christian Educational Cabinet (CEC) will meet to review the Safe Sanctuary Policy, make any necessary changes to the policy (always in accordance with PA law\*), and plan a training event as outlined above in 1.a. CEC will report to, and submit any changes to the policy, to Administrative Council.

\* <http://www.pacode.com/secure/data/049/chapter21/subchapEtoc.html>

- c. Youth sponsors will be asked to receive appropriate training for CPR and First Aid.

2. Criminal Background Check: BMC will conduct a criminal background check on all paid church staff, and reserves the right to conduct a background check for any volunteers who are entrusted with the care and supervision of minors, or a person who directly oversee and/or exert control or oversight over minors in the congregation. All criminal background checks will be updated periodically and will be maintained in confidence. Persons refusing to have a background check will be denied serving in any role with children or youth. Persons whose background checks reveals the conviction of or pleading guilty to any physical and/or sexual abuse of minors, or other serious crimes against persons, or against whom such charges are pending, will be evaluated by the CEC and/or Pastor and discerned by the congregation regarding any involvement with the youth.
3. One Year Rule: All volunteers will be permitted to work with children or youth only after they have regularly attended BMC for one year, have been approved by the CEC, have participated in the annual training and signed the appropriate affidavit as detailed in 1.a. Exceptions to this rule may be granted at the discretion of the CEC.
4. All youth sponsors must be at least 5 (five) years older than the children or youth with whom they are working.
5. FIRST AID KITS are located in the basement in the Kitchen, and on the top of the coat rack on the first floor North entrance.

### **Confidentiality**

Information obtained through the screening, application, reference check, interview, and criminal background check will be kept in confidence, unless otherwise required by law. All information discovered or obtained through the above-referenced means will be kept in a secure location and access to it will be restricted if possible. These materials will be archived for seven years and then destroyed.

## **E. SUPERVISION PROCEDURES**

1. All doors to children and youth classrooms will remain open at all times unless there are windows in the doors or interior walls.
2. A designated person/s will be assigned to roam in and out of classrooms. This person will be asked to vary the times and frequency of these short visits.
3. There will be at least two adults with children at all times. If it is only possible for one adult to be in a classroom, the designated “roamer” will be made aware so that more frequent periodic checks of the classroom can be made.
4. Adults shall not have one-on-one activities with children or youth, especially of the opposite gender, unless in full view of others.
5. There will be an adequate number of screened and trained paid staff or volunteers present at events involving minors. Efforts will be made to keep adult to child ratios to 1:4 for infants and toddlers, 1:10 for 2 year olds through kindergartners, 1:20 for elementary aged children. Supervision will increase in proportion to the risk of the activity.
6. Young children will be accompanied to the restroom and the paid staff or volunteer wait outside the facility to escort the child back to the activity. Whenever possible, the escort will be the same sex as the minor.
7. All parents/guardians, whose children or youth are participating in the ministries of BMC, will complete a medical release form for their children. These forms will be kept in the church secretary’s office and updated annually. Copies of these forms will be made and kept in a transportable organizer, along with a first aid kit, to be taken by the youth sponsors when youth go on trips or off church property events.
8. If a teacher will be absent, they need to contact an individual from a pre-approved list of substitute teachers who have participated in the annual training
9. Parents and volunteers working with preschool age children are asked to accompany them at all times and to make sure they are always in the care of a responsible adult. Each child participating in BMC programs will be supervised at all times by a teacher or volunteer until returned to the care of the parent or adult responsible for the child.
10. Discipline provided by BMC volunteers or staff will be age-appropriate. Techniques will usually include redirection, verbal reminders, removal of child from his/her group for a short time, or loss of privileges. Parents/guardians will be informed of chronic or extremely disruptive or dangerous behavior. A BMC volunteer or staff will never administer physical punishment or use abusive or derogatory language with a child.

## **F. TRIPS or OFF CHURCH PROPERTY EVENTS**

1. Children and youth will not be transported (except in an emergency situation) without securing written or verbal permission from a parent or guardian in advance. Special events

that require transportation of participating children to sites off church property will require written permission and a completed Emergency Medical Authorization form from a parent or guardian. Copies of these forms will be made and kept in a transportable organizer, along with a first aid kit, to be taken by the youth sponsors when youth go on trips or off church property events.

2. All volunteers or staff will tell parents or guardians where the youth are meeting, how long they will be meeting, contact information for the leaders, and any other information concerning the activities in which they will be participating.
3. Legally licensed parents, volunteers, or staff will drive children or youth to all youth events unless written parental or guardian permission is given for the legally licensed youth to either drive or ride with another youth. Youth cannot leave an event with friends unless written or verbal permission communicated to the youth leader is given by a parent or guardian.
4. When children or youth are transported to an event, every rider will have access to a seat belt and will use it properly. All vehicle transportation will be in accordance with all PA Vehicle Laws.
5. Youth Misconduct: If volunteers, staff, or leaders believe the behavior of any child or youth member is inappropriate, threatening, or dangerous, the child or youth may be asked to leave. The parents or guardians of the child or youth will be contacted and will be responsible, at their own expense, to pick up the child or youth. If necessary the child or youth may be restricted from attending future events at the discretion of the CEC.

## **G. RESPONSE TO OFFENDERS AND ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE**

1. BMC will respond promptly to investigate any accusation of abuse. All accusations of abuse will be taken seriously. It is important to be appropriately respectful to the needs and feelings of those who allege abuse and those who have been accused of abuse.
2. When a child discloses abuse to an adult, or abuse is suspected, Pennsylvania law has mandated that persons who come into contact with minors are obligated to report suspected child abuse to **ChildLine or law enforcement (911). ChildLine is a unit of the Department of Public Welfare (DPW) responsible for operating the state's toll-free child abuse hotline (1-800-932-0313).**
3. Anyone who observes abuse of a minor during any church function, or observes any questionable or inappropriate behavior between a minor and adult during any church function, will take appropriate steps to immediately intervene and provide assistance. Any inappropriate conduct shall be reported immediately to the Pastor and a member of CEC who will report to the full CEC. Remember to maintain clear professional boundaries and refer the minor to another individual with supervisory authority.
4. The Pastor and CEC shall give leadership to the processing of any such reports and will assign a Spokesperson who will respond to media or prepare a statement for the media if the need shall arise, subject to the approval of BMC's attorney.

5. If there is uncertainty as to whether a situation requires reporting, it will be referred to the Pastor or CEC. When notification of abuse is made, the pastor and/or CEC will be informed at once.
6. The incident shall be reported to BMC's insurance carrier. BMC will cooperate with authorities and the insurance carrier.
7. In the case that allegations of abuse by a church staff or volunteer are made, the alleged offender will be removed immediately from all responsibilities involving contact with children until the conclusion of an investigation made by ChildLine or law enforcement. All parents whose children may have come into contact with the alleged offender will be notified within 48 hours that allegations have been made and reported to the authorities.
8. BMC will uphold the *Ministerial Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedure* and *Justice Making: The Church Responds to Clergy Misconduct* of Mennonite Church USA. Copies of these policies are kept in the Pastor's Office and are reviewed and administered by Administrative Council and Ministerial Committee.

## **H. SEXUAL OFFENDER AT BMC**

1. Any individual who is known to have been convicted of a child sexual offense must not be allowed any unsupervised contact with children, and may not be involved in children or youth ministries (formal or informal).
2. All parents or guardians of children and youth in the church 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 2 (two) months of their beginning to attend church.
3. BMC may allow a person known to be a sexual offender to attend or become a member of the congregation but they must adhere to specific guidelines. If the offender is on parole, all applicable parole restrictions must be divulged, documented, and enforced in cooperation with the offender's parole officer or court designee.
  - a. A known sexual offender cannot participate in any of the child or youth programs in any way.
  - b. An Accountability Group of five or six persons shall be formed to support and work with an offender who is participating in BMC. The formation of this group will be approved by the Administrative Council (suggested members: Elder, Congregational Chair, trained professional, Pastor, etc.) This group will work with the offender to develop a protection plan that the offender is encouraged to share with the congregation.
  - c. A known sexual offender must report in and be assigned to an escort, chosen from the Accountability Group, who will accompany him or her at all times while on church property and will make sure the sexual offender has left the property after the service.

- d. The identity of the sexual offender will be disclosed to the congregation, either through written or verbal communication.
- e. A single violation of these conditions will result in an immediate termination of the sex offender's privilege to attend BMC.
- f. In some cases BMC may not allow a person known to be a sexual offender to remain or become a member of the congregation if:
  - (1) That person refuses to abide by the above policies
  - (2) For any reason the conditions for attendance as outlined in Item 3. Are not feasible or enforceable
  - (3) The offender's crimes are so frequent or heinous that exclusion is the only appropriate option
  - (4) One or more of the offender's victims attends the church. This will be a decision made by the Pastor, Ministerial Committee, and Administrative Council.

#### **I. AMENDING/TERMINATING THIS POLICY**

**This policy may be amended or terminated by Administrative Council.**

Amended: May 16, 2013

Original: August 2006



## Beaverdam Mennonite Church

### Safe Sanctuary Policy

### Acknowledgment

These guidelines have been designed to guide and assist you when working with minors. The information establishes general practices and guidelines and should not be construed in any way as a contract of employment or continued employment. BMC reserves the right to make changes in the content or application of this program and to implement those changes with or without notice.

The terms defined herein are defined for the purposes of the program and do not suppose or establish a legal relationship. These terms are not defined for the purposes of creating a legal relationship with the BMC or any related or associated entity and instead are to be used with this document.

I have received a copy of the BMC's Safe Sanctuary Policy. I understand it is my responsibility to become familiar with and adhere to the information contained herein. I understand that these policies are the property of the BMC.

I acknowledge that I have 1) reviewed BMC's Safe Sanctuary Policy and 2) participated in the Annual Training, or reviewed training materials.

*The questions listed below are included in order to help provide a safe and secure environment for our children and youth. All information is held strictly confidential.*

Have you ever been accused, charged, or convicted of abusing or molesting a minor? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no

Have you ever been arrested for any offense excluding minor traffic violations? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no

Are there any circumstances involving your life-style, traits, tendencies or background that would call into question your ability to work with children or youth? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no

If you answer Yes to any question above, please explain:

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Print Name

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Signature

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Date

## Background Check Authorization

**Print Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Last) (First) (Middle)

**Former Name(s) and Dates Used:** (ex: maiden name) \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Address:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Since:** \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_  
(Street) (City) (State/Zip)

**Previous Address:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Since:** \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_  
(Street) (City) (State/Zip)

**Social Security Num.** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date of Birth:** \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

**Telephone Num:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Driver's License Num/State:** \_\_\_\_\_

The information in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I hereby authorize the **Beaverdam Mennonite Church** to conduct a comprehensive review of my background causing a consumer report and/or an investigative consumer report to be generated for employment and/or volunteer purposes. I understand that the scope of the consumer report/investigative consumer report may include, but is not limited to the following areas: verification of social security number, current and previous residences, employment history, education background, character references, drug testing, civil and criminal history records from any criminal justice agency in any or all federal, state, county jurisdictions, driving records, birth records, and any other public records.

I further authorize any individual, company, firm, corporation, or public agency (including the Social Security Administration and law enforcement agencies) to divulge any and all information, verbal or written, pertaining to me to Beaverdam Mennonite Church. I further authorize the complete release of any records or data pertaining to me which the individual, company, firm, corporation, or public agency may have, to include information or data received from other sources.

I understand that if my background check identifies a pending adjudication or conviction for any prescribed offense(s), approval to work or volunteer in the church may be withheld or revoked. I acknowledge that the church may withhold, suspend, or revoke a credential if I have ever, as an adult or a juvenile, been convicted, adjudicated or placed on term of probation or parole for any felony-level crime or offense. I hereby consent to the release by Beaverdam Mennonite Church of the fact of my approval or non-approval by the church. I hereby release Beaverdam Mennonite Church, the Social Security Administration, and its agents, officials, representatives, or assigned agencies, including officers, employees, or related personnel both individually and collectively, from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind, which may, at any time, result to me, my heirs, family, or associates because of compliance with this authorization and request to release. I acknowledge that I have read the foregoing release, understand it, and agree to the terms and conditions therein.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**(Signature)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**(Date)**

## Beaverdam Mennonite Church (BMC) Youth\* Code of Conduct

*\*Youth denotes all persons under the age of 18*

### BMC Youth Ministry requests your commitment to the following code of conduct:

- Respect God
- Respect others: one another, staff, and leaders
- Respect yourself
- Respect property
- No possession or use of alcohol, drugs or tobacco
- No fighting, weapons, fireworks, lighters or explosives
- No offensive or immodest clothing
- No offensive, degrading, humiliating or threatening language, or bullying
- Participation with the group is expected

### Youth who fail to comply with these expectations may be sent home at the expense of the parent/guardian.

Activities may include, but are not limited to: many and varied outdoor and indoor games and activities as planned and supervised by the Youth Sponsors/Leaders; Bible study inputs and singing, crafts, local field trips with special permission; etc. If you desire to limit your youth's participation in any event, you must submit your wishes in writing to the Youth Sponsors prior to the event.

Name of youth: \_\_\_\_\_ has my permission to attend all youth activities sponsored by BMC.

By signing below, I acknowledge and accept the risks of physical injury associated with participation in Youth program activities. Except for gross negligence on the part of the Sponsor/Leader, I accept personal financial responsibility for any bodily or personal injury sustained during the activity. Further, I promise to hold harmless the sponsoring organization and its representatives for any injury related to the activity. If a dispute over this agreement or any claim for damages arises, I agree to resolve the matter through a mutually acceptable arbitration process.

**I have read the rules of conduct and give my permission for my youth to attend BMC youth activities.**

**Parent/Guardian signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**I have read and agree to abide by the stated code of conduct.**

**Youth signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**BMC Transportation Consent**

For the period beginning on the date of the signature below through August 31, \_\_\_\_\_, I give consent for my youth \_\_\_\_\_ to be transported in a motor vehicle driven by Youth Sponsors/Leaders and to participate in youth program activities taking place at locations other than the church property. I understand that there may be times when an individual sponsor will need to transport my youth but I will have been contacted for my consent to do so.

**Parent/Guardian signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**BMC Photo Release**

May BMC use photographs/videos of your youth to promote activities and programs of the church youth group to the public? These photos may be used in promotional brochures, slide shows, or church sponsored web pages.

**Please check one:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, BMC youth sponsors/leaders have my permission to use photographs or videos of my youth for church related promotion to the public.

\_\_\_\_\_ No, BMC youth sponsors/leaders do not have my permission to use photographs or videos of my youth for church related promotion to the public.

**Parent/Guardian signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Beaverdam Mennonite Church (BMC) Emergency Medical Authorization**

Purpose: To enable parents and/or guardians to authorize the provision of emergency treatment for children who become ill or injured while under BMC authority when parent or guardian cannot be reached.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ M / F (circle one) Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Residential Parent or Guardian:**

Mother: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Father: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Contact: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to youth: \_\_\_\_\_

Doctor: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Dentist: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Medical Specialist: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Local Hospital: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Allergies: \_\_\_\_\_

Medications: \_\_\_\_\_

Last Tetanus Shot: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

**PART I OR II MUST BE COMPLETED:**

**PART I TO GRANT CONSENT FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT**

In the event reasonable attempts to contact me or other parent or guardian have been unsuccessful, I hereby give my consent to (1) the administration of any treatment deemed necessary by the listed doctor, dentist, or medical specialist, or in the event the designated preferred practitioner is not available, by a licensed physician or dentist; and (2) the transfer of the child to the above hospital or any hospital reasonably accessible. This authorization does not cover major surgery unless the medical opinions of two other licensed physicians or dentists, concurring in the necessity for such surgery, are obtained prior to the performance or such surgery.

Facts concerning the child's medical history to which a physician should be alerted:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of parent or guardian:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PART II REFUSAL TO CONSENT (Do not complete if you completed PART I)**

I do not give consent for emergency medical treatment for my child. In the event of illness or injury requiring emergency treatment, I wish the authorities to take the following actions:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of parent or guardian:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_