

Child and Youth Protection Policy

Sugar Creek Mennonite Church

Revised 2015

Introduction

Sugar Creek Mennonite Church desires to ensure that our church is a safe place for children and youth. Protecting our young people is an act of faithful stewardship. We believe it is better to act in a positive, proactive way by developing policies as a means of prevention. Adoption of these policies and procedures enables SCMC and our ministry to provide a safe and secure environment for each individual of our church family and its guests.

Purpose

It is the purpose of the SCMC congregation to encourage children, youth, and their families to grow in their relationship with God and one another. In order to do this, SCMC has a need to provide a safe and secure environment that includes a formal, written policy to help prevent the occurrence of child abuse. The following policies and procedures are for the protection of our children, youth, employees, volunteers, and our entire church family at SCMC.

Definitions

What is Child Abuse under Iowa Law? The Department of Human Services has the legal authority to conduct an assessment of child abuse when it is alleged that:

*the victim is a child (under the age of 13) or a youth (ages 13-18)

*The child is subjected to one or more of the eight categories of child abuse defined in Iowa Code section 232.68:

*Physical abuse – “Physical abuse” is defined as any non-accidental physical injury, or injury which is at variance with the history given of it, suffered by a child as the result of the acts or omissions of a person responsible for the care of the child.

*Mental injury – “Mental injury” is defined as any mental injury to a child’s intellectual or psychological capacity as evidenced by an observable and substantial impairment in the child’s ability to function within the child’s normal range of performance and behavior as the result of the acts or omissions of a person responsible for the care of the child, if the impairment is diagnosed and confirmed by a licensed physician or qualified mental health professional as defined in Iowa Code section 622.10.

*Sexual abuse – “Sexual abuse” is defined as the commission of a sexual offense with or to a child pursuant to Iowa Code chapter 709, Iowa Code section 726.2, or Iowa Code section 728.12, subsection 1, as a result of the acts or omissions of the person responsible for the care of the child.

*Child prostitution – “Child prostitution” is defined as the acts or omissions of a person responsible for the care of a child which allow, permit, or encourage the child to engage in acts prohibited pursuant to Iowa Code section 725.1. Notwithstanding Iowa Code section 702.5, acts or omissions under this paragraph include an act or omission referred to in this paragraph with or to a person under the age of 18 years.

*Presence of illegal drugs – “Presence of illegal drugs” is defined as occurring when an illegal drug is present in a child’s body as a direct and foreseeable consequence of the acts or omissions of the person responsible for the care of the child.

*Denial of critical care – “Denial of critical care” is defined as the failure on the part of a person responsible for the care of a child to provide for the adequate food, shelter, clothing or other care necessary for the child’s health and welfare when financially able to do so or when offered financial or other reasonable means to do so.

*Manufacturing or possession of a dangerous substance – “Manufacturing or possession of a dangerous substance” as defined in Iowa Code 232.2 subsection 6, paragraph p, occurs when the person responsible for the care of a child:

- Has manufactured a dangerous substance in the presence of the child *or*
- Possesses a product containing ephedrine, its salts, optical isomers, salts of optical isomers, or pseudoephedrine, its salts, optical isomers, salts of optical isomers, with the intent to use the product as a precursor or an intermediary to a dangerous substance in the presence of the child.

*Bestiality in the presence of a child – “Bestiality in the Presence of a Minor” is defined as the commission of a sex act with an animal in the presence of a minor as defined in 717C.1 by a person who resides in a home with a child, as the result of the acts or omissions of a person responsible for the care of the child.

*The abuse is the result of the acts or omissions of the person responsible for the care of the child.

*SCMC means Sugar Creek Mennonite Church.

Training

Annually, Circle of Grace training will be offered to all teachers, leaders of children and youth, and K-12 children and youth in the church. Circle of Grace is a Christian safe environment curriculum that helps to form and educate children and youth about the value of positive relationships with God and others. The Circle of Grace objectives are: Understand children and youth are created by God and live in the love of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit; Describe the Circle of Grace that God gives each of us; Identify and maintain appropriate physical, emotional, spiritual, and sexual boundaries; Identify all types of boundary violations; Demonstrate how to take action if any boundary is threatened or violated.

Facility

SCMC will be made safe for children and youth:

- a. Place windows in all doors where children or youth ministry is conducted (i.e. Sunday School rooms, pastor's office).
- b. A fully stocked first aid kit will be available in the church building.
- c. Follow a "two-adult rule" whenever possible. At least two employees or volunteers or any combination thereof will be present in any activity involving children and youth. Unapproved employees or volunteers may work with one approved employee or volunteer, but the unapproved person may never be alone with children or youth.

Reporting Procedures

Any person having cause to believe that a child's or youth's physical or mental health or well-being has been or may be adversely affected by abuse in the church setting or on a church sponsored function shall report that concern using the following procedure.

1. Assure the safety of the minor.
2. Any instance of suspected child abuse or molestation shall be reported to the pastor and/or an elder. It will be the responsibility of the pastor and/or elder(s) to contact the legal caregiver of the minor as appropriate.
3. Report the incident immediately to the Department of Human Services (DHS) by calling 1-800-362-2178.
4. The pastor and or elder(s) will document, via a written narrative, the circumstances surrounding the allegations. This shall be kept locked in the pastors' office.
5. In instances where child abuse is confirmed, appropriate corrective or disciplinary action shall be taken.

Worker Enlistment

SCMC's objective, in accordance with guidance received, is to focus on those who have regular, ongoing contact with children and youth not including those in large group settings or who only have occasional contact with children and youth.

All individuals should attend SCMC for six months before teaching or leading children or youth. If individuals have attended for less than six months, they can be an assistant under another adult who has been attending SCMC for at least six months.

Persons who shall be subject to sexual misconduct background checks include:

- Paid employees
- Individuals who are involved with overnight activities with minors
- Individuals who provide counseling with minors
- Individuals who are involved in one-on-one mentorship of minors

The Sexual Offender Registry will be utilized to perform background checks.

Resources

Dr. Resmiye Oral, M, University of Iowa Hospital, 200 Hawkins Dr., Iowa City, 319-356-8486 – diagnostic services.

Lon Marshall, Coral Ct #6, Coralville, 319-351-7392, office@cornerstonebrieftherapy.com – therapeutic services.

Henry County DHS, 205 West Madison, Mt. Pleasant, 319-986-5157.

Conclusion

It is hoped that within the Christian community of SCMC such policies and procedures will not be necessary and that any concern can be resolved through mutual discussion and a commitment to mutual respect. In this way, SCMC's ministry environment can be one that honors God and provides a safe context for personal and spiritual growth and discipleship.

Sugar Creek Mennonite Church

Children or Youth Worker

This form is being used to help the church provide a safe and secure environment for those children and youth who participate in our programs and use our facilities. This form is to be completed by anyone who will be working with children or youth in any position involving the supervision or custody of minors. This is not an employment application form.

Personal Information

Name _____ Date _____
 Last First Middle Maiden

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Email _____

I have been a regular attendee at _____ church for _____ years.
Member _____ years.

Have you ever been convicted of or pleaded guilty to a crime? No _____ Yes _____

If yes please explain (attach a separate page, if necessary)

Answering yes, or leaving this question unanswered will not automatically disqualify an applicant from child or youth work. If you prefer, you may discuss your answer in confidence with the pastor rather than answering it on this form.

Do you have a current driver license? No _____ Yes _____

I have read SCMC's child protection policy and will follow it. No _____ Yes _____

Signature _____ Date _____