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## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

### 1. Goals of this Policy

All children, members, volunteers, officers, and staff of Redding Reformed Fellowship (“the Church”) should be able to enjoy a safe, fair, and healthy environment in which to grow in Christ and develop healthy Christian friendships. To this end, we adopt this policy in order to:

- a. Protect children by identifying and preventing abusive behavior, and promoting safe and healthy behaviors.
- b. Protect our members, volunteers, and officers by helping them to avoid situations that might lead to allegations against them, including false allegations.
- c. Provide guidance and clarity to the Church about identifying, reporting, and responding to abuse.
- d. Promote the honor of Christ, whose kingdom is established in justice and righteousness, and who shows special care for the weakest of his people.

### 2. Definitions

- a. For the purposes of this policy:
  - i. A “child” or “youth” is anyone under the age of 18.
  - ii. A “youth event” or “children’s ministry” is any program or event for children, sponsored and publicized by the Church, whether on the Church premises, at the home of a church officer or member, or at another location, including any transportation to and from such an event.
  - iii. A “church officer” is a pastor, elder, deacon, or trustee.
  - iv. A “youth worker” is a volunteer engaged in children’s ministry.
    1. Examples include: Sunday School coordinators, teachers, and regular substitute teachers, and nursery coordinators and workers.
    2. Ordinarily, they will be 18 years or older, and communing member in good standing.
    3. In every case, they will be approved by the Session.

- b. The Church recognizes at least four types of abusive behavior that we are seeking to prevent.
  - i. **Child emotional abuse** is an act toward a child that causes, or is likely to cause, harm to the child's psychological, social, spiritual, or moral development.
  - ii. **Child physical abuse** is a non-accidental physical injury of a child resulting from harm inflicted by a parent or caregiver, regardless of whether there was an intention to hurt the child. Physical discipline, such as spanking or paddling, is not considered abuse as long as it is reasonable and causes no bodily injury to the child.
  - iii. **Child sexual abuse** includes:
    - a Sexual contact that is accomplished by force or threat of force, regardless of the age of the participants,
    - b All sexual contact between an adult and a child, regardless of whether there is deception, or the child understands the sexual nature of the activity, and
    - c Sexual contact between an older and a younger child where there is a significant disparity in age, development, or size, rendering the younger child incapable of resisting.
    - d Sexually abusive acts may include sexual penetration, sexual touching, or non-contact sexual acts such as exposure or voyeurism. Child sexual abuse also includes any conduct constituting sexual abuse under California law.
  - iv. **Child neglect** is a willful failure by a parent or guardian to provide a child with the basic necessities of life. These basic necessities may be physical (food, shelter, supervision), medical, educational, or emotional.
- c. The Church will be attentive to **potential indicators of abuse**. These potential indicators include physical symptoms evident on a child's body, as well as emotional symptoms evident in a child's behavior. These indicators are not conclusive evidence of abuse, but they are important clues that we must be attentive to, so that abuse does not go undetected.
- d. The Church recognizes that **effects of abuse**, though often hard to see, can be devastating and long-lasting. These effects may be emotional, physical, or spiritual. We therefore commit ourselves to preventing abuse as far as it is in our power. We also commit ourselves to responding to abuse victims in love, wisdom, and truthfulness.
- e. The Church recognizes that **people who abuse children** use authority, trust, or physical force and threats to gain access and control over children

so they can perpetrate the abuse. These people may be strangers, but more commonly they are acquaintances, close friends, or family members.

### 3. Screening

- a. The Church requires screening for all church officers and youth workers. This screening will include at least the following steps:
  - i. Reading and signing the “Youth Worker Agreement” (Appendix 1)
  - ii. A background check conducted by a professional agency, paid for by the Church.
- b. Screening will be repeated at least every three years.
- c. Records of this screening will be maintained by the Session.

### 4. Safe Behaviors

- a. We will be **transparent**.
  - i. Wherever adults are teaching or caring for children, there should ordinarily be an open window and/or an open door. This should always be the case when there is only one worker and one child together.
  - ii. Parents and other adults, especially the coordinators of the Sunday School and nursery, will be welcome to look in on classrooms and nursery rooms.
  - iii. Church officers and youth workers will never counsel a child alone, either at the church or at another location. Any private counseling of a child will be conducted with an open door, and a parent or other adult church member present in the building.
- b. We will be **accountable**.
  - i. Youth events, including transportation to and from an event, will be supervised by at least two church officers or youth workers, not related to each other.
  - ii. The nursery is not staffed, but is available for mothers and their children during the service.
- c. We will be **clear**.
  - i. Youth workers and church officers will model healthy displays of affection. These may include: kind words, high fives, pats on the shoulder, and side hugs.
  - ii. Youth workers and church officers will avoid unhealthy touching. These may include: touching any part of a child’s body that would be covered by a bathing suit, tickling, playing with hair, lap sitting, prolonged hugs, kisses.
  - iii. Youth workers and church officers will avoid showing favoritism or special attention to a child or group of children.

- iv. Youth workers and church officers will answer children's questions about bodies and sex in a biblical, mature, sanctified, and age-appropriate manner.

## 5. Policy Violations

- a. In the unlikely event that observing the provisions of this policy is impractical or not in a child's best interest, a youth worker or church officer may request advance approval to deviate from this policy by submitting a "*Policy Exception Request*" (Appendix 2) to a church officer.
- b. If, in an emergency, a youth worker or church officer deems it necessary to deviate from this policy without advance approval, then a church officer should be promptly notified of the exception, and the reason it was necessary, using the "*Policy Violation Report*" (Appendix 3).
- c. The Church encourages everyone to be observant about the policy's implementation. If a deviation from this policy is observed, everyone is encouraged to remedy the situation, and to report the deviation to a church officer, even if there is no suspicion of abuse, using the "*Child Safety Incident Report*" (Appendix 4).
- d. The Session will maintain records of any reported policy exceptions, violations, and incidents.

## 6. Responding to Abuse

- a. For the honor of Christ, and the protection of the weak, the Church encourages everyone to make a report to a church officer if they **witness** abuse, receive a **report** of abuse, or **reasonably suspect** abuse. A verbal report should be accompanied by a written report (use Appendix 4).
- b. Child abuse is not only a sin, but also a serious crime. It is therefore proper to report child abuse to state authorities, who are ordained by God for punishing wickedness (Romans 13:1-5).
- c. In the event that abuse is reported, the Session will:
  - i. Conduct an investigation.
  - ii. Communicate the outcome of the investigation to the reporter, and to the parents of children mentioned in the report.
  - iii. If necessary, these matters may be reported to appropriate civil authorities.
- d. Contact information:
  - i. In most cases, start by speaking to, calling, or emailing a church officer (pastor, elder, deacon, or trustee). Their contact information is available in the church directory.
  - ii. In a non-emergency, to directly report a concern to the authorities, call the Shasta County Health & Human Services Agency: 1-530-225-5144
  - iii. In an emergency, if a child's safety is threatened, call 911.

**7. Training and Dissemination**

- a. The Session will ensure that there is regular public teaching in the Church on the subject of child safety. One goal of this teaching should be to inform the congregation of this policy.
- b. The Session will also ensure that youth workers and church officers regularly review this policy.

## APPENDIX 1: YOUTH WORKER AGREEMENT

*This form is to be completed by all youth workers and church officers.*

### **Answer the following questions, True or False.**

1. I have never been convicted of, nor pled guilty or no contest to, a crime. (Exclude convictions that have been sealed, expunged or legally eradicated, misdemeanor convictions for which probation was completed and the case was dismissed, or offenses about which inquiry is not permissible in this state. Also exclude infractions such as traffic violations.) \_\_\_\_\_ True      \_\_\_\_\_ False

If not true, please briefly describe the nature of the crime(s), the date and place of conviction and the legal disposition of the case. The Church will not deny a position to any applicant solely because the person has been convicted of a crime. The Church, however, may consider the nature, date and circumstances of the offense, as well as whether the offense is relevant to the duties of the position applied for.

2. I have never been accused of, participated in, or been convicted of sexual misconduct. \_\_\_\_\_ True      \_\_\_\_\_ False

If not true, give a short explanation of the incident. Please indicate the date, nature and place of the incident.

3. No civil lawsuit alleging actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment exploitation, or misconduct, physical abuse, or child abuse has ever resulted in a judgment being entered against me, been settled out of court, or been dismissed because the statute of limitations has expired. \_\_\_\_\_ True      \_\_\_\_\_ False

If not true, give a short explanation of the lawsuit. Please indicate the date, nature and place of the incident leading to the lawsuit; where the lawsuit was filed; and the precise disposition of the lawsuit.

4. I have never terminated my employment, professional credentials, or service in a volunteer position, or had my employment, professional credentials or authorization to hold a volunteer position terminated for reasons relating to allegations of actual, or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, or physical abuse, or child abuse. \_\_\_\_\_ True      \_\_\_\_\_ False

If not true, give a short explanation. Please indicate the date of termination; name, address, and telephone number of employer or volunteer supervisor; and nature of the incident(s) leading to your termination.

Read and initial each item to signify your agreement.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ I have received a copy of the Church's Child Protection Policy and agree to abide by its terms.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ I agree to nurture and protect children and never to engage in behavior that may harm them.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ I agree to do my best to prevent abuse and neglect of children involved in church services and activities.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ In the event that I observe or hear of any inappropriate behaviors involving children or possible violations of the Child Protection Policy, I agree to immediately report my observations to a church officer.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ I acknowledge my obligation and responsibility to protect children and agree to report known or suspected abuse of children to appropriate church leaders and other authorities in keeping with this policy.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ I understand that the Church will not tolerate abuse or other harm of children and I agree to comply in spirit and action with this position.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ I understand that it is my duty to self-report any arrests, charges, investigations, and convictions, or any other information pertaining to my reliability in caring for children.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ I hereby give permission to the Church and its agents to make a thorough investigation of my past employment and background and release from liability all persons, companies, or corporations supplying such information. I also release the Church from any liability that might result from making such investigation. I understand that any false statements or implications made by me in this application or other required documentation shall be considered sufficient cause for discharge or denial of employment or voluntary service.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

## APPENDIX 2: POLICY EXCEPTION REQUEST

*This form is to be completed by a youth worker when he or she anticipates needing to deviate from the Child Protection Policy. Submit the completed form to any church officer.*

*Note: this form is to be used only if the request is being made in advance of the policy exception. To report a policy deviation that has already happened, use the Policy Violation Report (Appendix 3).*

1. Date
  
2. Name
  
3. Relevant policy section
  
4. Exception requested
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Please explain why you believe this exception is necessary





## APPENDIX 4: CHILD SAFETY INCIDENT REPORT

*This form is to be completed by anyone who observes any violation of the Child Protection Policy, boundary violations, disclosures of abuse, child safety concerns, or other behavior or allegations of behavior that might jeopardize the safety of a child. Proof or direct knowledge of a behavior or incident is not necessary to submit this form, and so some lines on this form may not be applicable. Provide whatever information you do have, and attach additional sheets if extra space is required. Submit the completed form to a church officer.*

1. Date of incident, if known.
  
2. Name(s) and contact information of child(ren) harmed, potentially harmed, or otherwise affected.
  
3. Name(s) and contact information of individual(s) who accidentally or intentionally violated the Policy, or otherwise harmed or potentially harmed the above child(ren), or who otherwise engaged in concerning behavior.
  
4. What policy, if any, was violated?
  
5. Where did the incident or behavior occur?
  
6. Was there an ongoing activity at the time of the incident?
  
7. Describe the incident or behavior.
  
8. Did you witness this incident or behavior firsthand? If not, how did you find out about it?
9. Who was present at the time of the incident or behavior?

10. Who, other than those listed above, knows about this incident or behavior?
11. Have any law enforcement or child protection agencies been contacted about this incident or behavior? If so, please provide the following details about each report:
- Name of Agency
  
  - Date of report
  
  - Means of communicating with the agency
  
  - Report #
  
  - Name of the individual who contacted the agency
  
  - Name(s) of other individual(s) present when agency was contacted
12. Were any child protection professionals or experts, other than those listed above, contacted about this incident or behavior? If so, indicate the individuals or agencies contacted, the date of the contact, and the result of the contact.
13. What additional steps have been, or will be, taken to respond to this incident or behavior?

14. What, if anything, can be done to prevent future similar incidents or behaviors or improve response procedures?

15. Individual submitting this report:

Name:

Signature:

Date: