

## **Christ Our Shepherd Church Abuse Prevention Policy**

### **PURPOSE**

Christ Our Shepherd Church (“COSC”) seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for our children and youth. This Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Policy (“policy”) and Code of Conduct has been adopted by Christ Our Shepherd Church to help the church create safe environments for children and youth and for those who minister to them.

### **SCOPE**

This policy applies to every person at COSC including, but not restricted to, all current and future workers - whether compensated and/or volunteer, and whether full and/or part time. It covers all activities that take place under the covering of COSC ministry or program, whether they take place on or off church premises, including homgroups. All persons who have the responsibility of supervising the activities of children and youth are asked to carefully consider each statement in the Code of Conduct and within the policy before agreeing to adhere to the statements and continue in service to the church. Nothing in this document supersedes current DC Law concerning physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, neglect or economic exploitation.

### **GENERAL DEFINITIONS**

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions shall apply:

- A. “Church Personnel”: all persons who serve in any position or capacity within the church. It includes all those in any supervisory capacity, all assistants and all volunteers.
  - 1. “Adult”: shall be defined as an individual at least 18 years old, no longer in high school, and whose mental capacity is that of an adult.
  - 2. “Elders”: any member of the eldership of COSC.
  - 3. “Paid Personnel”: all persons who serve in any position or capacity within the church and who receive any type of remuneration for that position or capacity, whether employed in areas of ministry or other kinds of service.
  - 4. “Volunteers”, including any person who is approved by Paid Personnel for church related service, or who assists with or performs a service.
- B. “Children and Youth”
  - A. “Child”: anyone under the age of 12 years.
  - B. “Youth”: anyone who is at least 12 years old, but not yet 18 years old. For this policy, a youth may also be an individual who is 18 years old or older, but still in high school and receiving care from our youth ministry.
- C. Types of abuse
  - 1. “Physical abuse”: non-accidental physical injury, which is intentionally inflicted upon a child or youth.
  - 2. “Sexual abuse”: any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child or youth and an adult. This includes any activity, which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult, child or youth. This could include, but is not limited to: any risqué jokes, innuendo, unacceptable visual contact, unwelcome



casual touch, unwelcome and inappropriate hugs and kisses, and sexually suggestive pictures.

3. "Sexual abuse perpetrated by another child or youth": any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child or youth and another child or youth, when consent is not possible, or when one child or youth has power over the other child or youth. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of any of the children or youth.
4. "Emotional abuse": any act including confinement, isolation, verbal assault, humiliation, intimidation, infantilization, or any other treatment which may diminish the sense of identity, dignity, and self-worth.
5. "Neglect": failure to provide for a child or youth's basic needs.
6. "Economic exploitation": the deliberate exploitation, or wrongful use of a child's or youth's belongings, property or pictures.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT**

- Church Personnel agree to do their best to prevent abuse and neglect among children and youth involved in church activities and services.
- Church Personnel agree to not physically, sexually or emotionally abuse or neglect a child/youth.
- Church Personnel agree to comply with the policies for general conduct with children/youth as defined in this document.
- All Church Personnel agree to comply with the Statement of Belief and Moral Conduct (Appendix B) and Guidelines for Appropriate Affection (Appendix C) with children/youth.
- If Church Personnel observe any inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations with children or youth, Church Personnel agree to immediately report their observations to the Elders.
- All Church Personnel acknowledge their obligation and responsibility to protect children and youth and agree to report (Appendix E) known or suspected abuse of children or youth to Paid Personnel or Elders.
- Church Personnel understand that the church will not tolerate abuse of children and youth and agree to comply by this Code of Conduct and Policy.

## **SCREENING AND SELECTION**

- A. All Church Personnel who regularly work with or around children or youth shall be screened and selected utilizing at least the following:
  - a. A standard application (Appendix A) completed by the applicant that includes an authorization for the release of information to conduct background checks and agreement with the Statement of Belief and Moral Conduct (Appendix B).
  - b. The adult must have been attending COSC for at least 6 months and have a personal reference from one current member of the congregation.
  - c. Criminal records check in any state where the applicant has resided during the past five (5) years.
  - d. Sexual offender registry check in any state where the applicant has resided during the past five (5) years.



- e. Names of Church Personnel who have been cleared with background checks to work with children or youth will be noted in an available record kept on church premises.
- f. Criminal record checks and sexual offender registry checks will be conducted every three (3) years.

## **TRAINING REQUIREMENTS**

- A. A two hour child abuse awareness education and training online with Darkness to Light ([http://www.d2l.org/site/c.4dICIJOkgclSE/b.6143709/k.3D5F/Child\\_Sexual\\_Abuse\\_Prevention\\_Training\\_ONLINE.htm](http://www.d2l.org/site/c.4dICIJOkgclSE/b.6143709/k.3D5F/Child_Sexual_Abuse_Prevention_Training_ONLINE.htm)) or another training program approved by COSC, is required for all Paid Personnel and Elders.
- B. The same training mentioned in paragraph A above is highly recommended for any volunteers who regularly work with children or youth at COSC.

## **MONITORING AND SUPERVISION**

One aspect of monitoring and supervision involves having structural guidelines or standards for the ministries with children and youth. In addition to setting structural guidelines and standards, Paid Personnel must make sure the structural safeguards are followed. Ministries and activities must be monitored and supervised to accomplish that goal.

For the purposes of this section those guidelines and standards are as follows:

- 1. The required adult to child/youth ratio for chaperones for any ministry with children or youth shall be a minimum of 1 adult to 10 children/youth. For overnight trips, an adult to child/youth ratio for chaperones of at least 1 adult to 6 children/youth is preferred, with at least one male and one female adult if children/youth of both genders are present.
- 2. Church Personnel are prohibited from being alone with a child or youth or multiple children or youths where other adults cannot observe them.
- 3. An up-to-date list of Church Personnel who are permitted to be with youth and children will be kept on the premises and updated quarterly.
- 4. Each program will develop age-appropriate procedures to ensure the safety of children and youth using restrooms.
- 5. When supervising or assisting private activities such as dressing, showering or diapering infants or children, Church Personnel will remain in an area observable by other adults or work in pairs.
- 6. As a general concept, at least two unrelated Church Personnel should supervise activities and, if feasible, when both boys and girls are participating in an activity, the supervising Church Personnel shall include male and female adults. As an exception Sunday school may have , a single teacher in a classroom so long as there is more than one student in the class, the class is held at the same time as other classes in the same vicinity, and a supervising adult is available to randomly check in on class activities and assist with problems, bathroom requests, and the like. In camp or outing, when feasible, there should be two adults, one of each gender, for each group activity involving children/youth of both genders. Where not feasible, there shall be a roaming adult supervisor who circulates and randomly observes activities.

7. One-to-one counseling with children/youth will be done with permission of the individual's parent for the context of discipleship and ministry, in an open public place or where private conversations are possible but occur in full view of others.

## REPORTING

Any individual who observes or becomes aware of any actual, alleged or potential incident of abuse should follow these outlined steps:

- REMOVE: If the child/youth is in immediate danger at a church sponsored event, secure their safety by removing them from the situation.
- RESPOND: Do not formally interview the child/youth, but respond appropriately to their need or desire to share. Take down critical information gathered from conversation or observation.
- REPORT: Immediately report the matter and submit The Confidential Notice of Concern (Appendix E) to the Paid Personnel in charge of the program, and/or one the Elders.
- RECORD: The Confidential Notice of Concern (Appendix E) should be filled out by the observer. Blank copies of the Confidential Notice of Concern (Appendix E) are available at the children's education desk.

If anyone observes or becomes aware of any actual, alleged or potential incident of abuse occurring within a child/youth household, or by a member of the family (sibling, parent, or extended family) the same steps should be taken. Paid Personnel and Elders will respond to any immediate danger by reporting the incident to DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), 202-617-SAFE.

Because of the importance of proper reporting, Elders and Paid Personnel should understand the terms of the policy and be ready to help direct any such reports or allegations to the appropriate persons. The following steps should be taken once a concern has been filed:

### A. Investigation

Upon receipt of a report or allegation of child abuse at COSC, Paid Personnel with the Elders shall ensure that an appropriate investigation is commenced and appropriate procedures are followed as required by District of Columbia law. The process will include documenting all steps undertaken in handling the investigation.

### B. Confidentiality

All investigations shall be conducted in as confidential a manner as is compatible with a thorough investigation of the report or allegation. Reports and documentation will be kept in a secure area of the COSC office.

### C. Parental Notification

The parents of any minor involved in any allegation of abuse shall be immediately notified upon receipt of a report or allegation.

### D. Potential Responses

Upon any report of potential or alleged child abuse to Church Personnel, any individual associated with COSC and accused of such conduct will be temporarily relieved of any duties involving youth or children pending an appropriate investigation. It may also be determined, in coordination with parental recommendation, that the Elders may report the incident to DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), 202-617-SAFE.



## Appendix A. Standard Application



## Children/Youth Ministry Adult Volunteer Application

### GENERAL INFORMATION

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ DOB \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you attended COSC? \_\_\_\_\_

What homegroup do you attend? \_\_\_\_\_ How long? \_\_\_\_\_

COSC Congregant Reference: \_\_\_\_\_ Reference Phone \_\_\_\_\_

### MINISTRY INFORMATION

1. Please describe your desire to serve with COSC's children/youth ministry.

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2. How do you see your gifts/skills being used in the context of this ministry?

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3. What former/present experiences have you had with children/youth ministry?

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### LEGAL QUESTIONNAIRE

For the protection of the children/youth, we must ask the following questions. Answering "yes" will not automatically disqualify you for this ministry, but we ask that you please attach a written explanation for all "yes" answers.

1. Have you been convicted of an offense other than a minor traffic violation(s)?  Yes  No
2. Have you ever been convicted of a sexual offense, offense relating to children, abuse, or violent crime?  Yes  No
3. Have you ever been the subject of any disciplinary action, transfer or dismissal, as a result of an accident or mishap involving children?  Yes  No
4. Have you ever been accused, charged or alleged to have committed any act of neglecting, abusing or molesting any child?  Yes  No

### VOLUNTEER COMMITMENT

I acknowledge that I have read and will commit to uphold the Abuse Prevention Policy (including the Statement of Belief, Moral Conduct and Code of Conduct). I recognize that failure to adhere to these policies could lead to my removal from this volunteer position. It is also understood that my reference listed will be contacted and a background check will be done as part of my application process.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## **Appendix B. Statement of Belief and Moral Conduct**

I believe that the Bible is God's inspired and authoritative word, revealing that Jesus Christ is God's Son, that man is created in God's image, that He created us to have eternal life through Jesus Christ, that although all men have sinned and come short of God's glory, God has made salvation possible through the death on the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, that repentance, faith, love and obedience are fitting responses to God's initiative of grace towards us, that God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

I agree that my conduct and moral behavior, to the best of my knowledge, will be in accordance with biblical principles consistent with COSC teaching and that any conduct deemed to be immoral by scripture and the church Eldership will be grounds for dismissal. The following list includes behavior repeatedly mentioned in scripture as sin, though not exhaustive, is representative of our biblical understanding of immoral activity.

- A. Sexual Sin: pornography, pre-marital sex, homosexual relationships, adultery (Galatians 5:19, 1 Corinthians 6:18-20, Matthew 5:27-30)
- B. Intemperate Excesses: drunkenness, drug/alcohol abuse (Galatians 5:21, Romans 13:13, 1 Pet. 4:3)
- C. Unbiblical Spiritual Practices: any forms idolatry or occult practices, sorcery or witchcraft, engaging the dead or use of magic (Galatians 5:20, Deut. 18:9-11)
- D. Forms of Discord: excessive strife, jealousy, wrath, divisions (Gal. 5: 19-21, Matt. 5:21-22, 35-48)

With regards to the above mentioned we ask that you: 1) agree that these are forms of sin and 2) if you are struggling with any area of sin mentioned above, agree to disclose this sin and walk in accountability with an Elder at COSC.



## **Appendix C: Guidelines for Appropriate Affection**

Christ Our Shepherd Church is committed to creating and promoting a positive, nurturing environment for our children's and youth ministries to protect children and youth from abuse and Church Personnel from ignorant actions. Stating which behaviors are appropriate and inappropriate allows Church Personnel to comfortably show positive affection in ministry, and yet identify individuals who are not maintaining safe boundaries with children or youth.

- A. Love and affection are part of church life and ministry. There are many ways to demonstrate affection while maintaining positive and safe boundaries with children and youth. Some positive and appropriate behaviors are listed below:

- Brief hugs.
- Pats on the shoulder or back.
- Handshakes.
- "High-fives" and hand slapping.
- Verbal praise.
- Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms of children or youth.
- Arms around shoulders.
- Holding hands while walking with small children.
- Sitting beside small children.
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children.
- Holding hands during prayer.

- B. The following behaviors are considered inappropriate with children and youth in ministry setting:

- Tickling.
- Lengthy embraces.
- Kisses on the mouth.
- Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers.
- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, or other private rooms.
- Occupying a bed with a child or youth.
- Touching knees or legs of children or youth.
- Any type of massage given by a child or youth to an adult.
- Any type of massage given by an adult to a child or youth.
- Any type of massage given by a youth to another youth.
- Any form of unwanted affection.
- Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development.
- No form of contact or touch of underwear whether or not it is covered by other clothing.

**APPENDIX D: Agreement and Commitment**

*“Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” - Mark 10:13-16*

Read and initial each item to signify your agreement to comply with the statement.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to do my utmost to prevent abuse and neglect among children and youth involved in Christ Our Shepherd Church activities and services.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree not to physically, sexually or emotionally abuse or neglect any child or youth.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to comply with the Code of Conduct and Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Policy.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to comply with the Statement of Belief and Moral Conduct (Appendix B) and Guidelines for Appropriate Affection (Appendix C) with children/youth.

\_\_\_\_\_ In the event that I observe any inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations with children or youth, I agree to immediately report my observations.

\_\_\_\_\_ I acknowledge my obligation and responsibility to protect children and youth and agree to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to appropriate church leaders and state authorities in accordance with the Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Policy.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that Christ Our Shepherd Church will not tolerate abuse of any person and I agree to comply in spirit and in action with this position.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that notwithstanding the above Code of Conduct and Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Policy, I am subject to the laws of the District of Columbia.

I have read and commit to the guidelines set forth by this Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Policy.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_





**APPENDIX E: Confidential Notice of Concern**

Individual(s) of Concern: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of occurrence: \_\_\_\_\_

Time of occurrence: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Concern:

Inappropriate behavior with a child or youth

Policy violation with a child or youth

Possible risk of abuse

Other concern:

Name of child or youth against whom the action was committed: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the situation: What happened, where it happened, when it happened, who was involved, who was present, who was notified?

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***To be completed by Paid Personnel***

Has this situation occurred previously? Attach additional sheets, if needed.

What action was taken? How was the situation handled, who was involved, who was questioned, were police called? Attach additional sheets if needed.

What is the follow-up plan? Does anyone else need to be notified? Will the situation need monitoring? Would you like someone to call you to discuss this situation? Attach additional sheets, if needed.

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

