

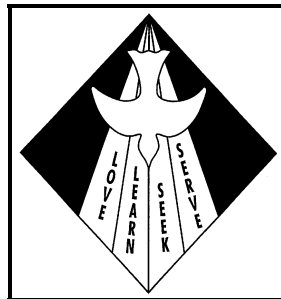
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Personal Protection Policy

Brookside Christian Reformed Church

2003-2004



"Let the children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Matthew 19:14

"Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people." Ephesians 5:1-3

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Brookside Christian Reformed Church Introduction

As gracious recipients of God's overwhelming love, we as members of Brookside Christian Reformed Church desire to be a fellowship of believers that freely **loves** and is loved, that eagerly **learns** God's truths, that passionately **seeks** the lost and that joyfully **serves** God and His people. Growth in these areas will best flourish in the context of a safe and secure environment.

This policy is intended to serve as a general framework to help create that safe and secure environment for Brookside ministries by setting policy and providing guidelines for the **screening** of staff and volunteers, for **preventing** harmful behavior, and for properly **reporting and responding** to such incidents. We pray that functioning within these guidelines will reasonably safeguard our fellowship from abuse and liability and will allow us to remain a pure and wholesome witness to God's loving nurture.

Screening—The church has adopted a procedure for screening volunteers and paid staff. This procedure is described in this policy.

Prevention—All volunteers and paid staff will agree to comply with these personal protection policies.

Reporting and Responding—Individuals who become aware of possible child abuse will report it according to the Procedure for Reporting Allegations of Abuse. The person reporting will notify a member of the Personal Protection Team as soon as possible regarding child abuse involving any church ministry. We will show care and support for the individuals and families who are party to the allegations.

Definitions of Terms Used:

Volunteer—a worker who is not compensated for ministry activities at Brookside Christian Reformed Church

Paid staff—any worker who is compensated for his ministry activities at Brookside Christian Reformed Church

Ministry leader—a volunteer worker who is designated to head a ministry

Public place—a place within sight and sound of others

Child, Youth, or Minor—person under the age of 18

Brookside Christian Reformed Church

Screening Policy

The following screening procedure will be used for both volunteer and paid staff. Screening will be used for several reasons:

- It communicates to church members that the church is serious about protecting our children from abuse by requesting information that may enable church leaders to screen an individual out of a program or position in which the individual may pose a risk to children.
- It may reduce incidents of abuse by deterring an individual that poses a threat to children and does not want to risk exposure from volunteering for a position.
- It helps ensure that volunteer and paid staff are persons of integrity in Brookside and the community.

Unless otherwise waived by the Administration Team, the screening procedure may consist of as many as four steps:

1. **Profile for Personal Protection:** All members, nonmembers, and staff, age 18 and over, desiring to serve or currently serving in Children or Youth Ministry will complete the Profile for Personal Protection.
2. **Interview:** The ministry leader, Children's Ministry Assistant, or Youth Ministry Coordinator may interview an individual if their Profile for Personal Protection indicates further information would be helpful in determining whether or not said person is appropriate to be a volunteer in Children or Youth Ministry.
3. **Reference Checks:** Some individuals desiring to serve in ministry may be requested to provide references if further information would be helpful, such as a new member unknown to others or if there are questions regarding a response on the application. All references will remain confidential.
4. **Criminal Record Checks:** Some individuals may be required to consent to a criminal record check. Examples of those requiring criminal record checks include pastors, paid staff, Senior High Youth Leaders, 78ers Leaders, Teen Mentoring Leaders, and those participating in youth one-to-one mentoring.

All volunteer and paid staff serving in ministry to children or youth will submit to steps of screening and will not serve in these ministries until approved. Any applicant for a volunteer position may withdraw without prejudice from the screening process. Anyone with a conviction of child abuse will be denied a paid staff or volunteer position working with children or youth. Further, the church reserves the right to reject any applicant for any reason. All screening information will be kept confidential with access limited to those individuals who make decisions about placing applicants in available positions.

Brookside Christian Reformed Church Personal Protection Guidelines (Ages 0-4)

General Guidelines

1. All adult volunteers and paid staff must complete a Profile for Personal Protection before serving with children. Some volunteers and paid staff may require additional screening.
2. Two adult volunteers will serve in these ministries whenever they are scheduled. One adult volunteer will serve for every six children if there are more than twelve children needing care.
3. The volunteers for a ministry may not be exclusively from the same family.
4. Brookside prefers that all adult persons who serve in these ministries have attended a Brookside ministry for six months or have been members of Brookside for at least six months and all persons have a completed Profile for Personal Protection on file. Nonmembers may serve with a completed Profile for Personal Protection on file and possible additional screening.
5. Youth age 11 and above may serve as a volunteer in some ministries under direct adult supervision.
6. Ordinarily, only scheduled volunteers or substitutes will serve.
7. No volunteer will be allowed to take a child from the scheduled room to another part of the church except to a restroom as provided below.
8. Volunteers are to arrive ten minutes before the ministry begins to provide supervision for the children. Parents are requested to remain with their children until volunteer supervision arrives.
9. If a child needs medical attention, the parent (guardian) should be notified as soon as possible.
10. Volunteers will be required to review the policies at least annually. To assist them, training will be provided at least annually for volunteers to review the Personal Protection Policy.
11. Anyone refusing to follow the policies or anyone violating the policies may be required to relinquish his or her responsibility in the ministry they serve.

Arrival and Dismissal Guidelines (ages 0-4)

1. A parent (guardian) must register a child before leaving them in the scheduled ministry for the first time. Registration materials will be available by the reception area.

2. Parent (guardian) will leave their child at the designated reception place. Parent (guardian) will be allowed in the ministry area only for calming or assimilating a child to his new environment.
3. Parent (guardian) must sign in their child with each visit. Special care instructions should be written in the designated area of the sign-in register.
4. A nametag is to be placed on each child. Carry bags should be labeled with the name of the child. A tag will be given to the parent (guardian) to claim the child from these ministries.
5. Two adult volunteers will remain in these ministries until all children have been claimed by a parent (guardian).
6. Parent (guardian) of children ages 0-4 will remain on church grounds during scheduled ministry time and/or attending a Brookside ministry for which this ministry is being provided.

Restroom Assistance Guidelines (ages 0-4)

1. An adult volunteer will change diapers or clothes only in the sight of another adult volunteer.
2. Volunteers will not change diapers or assist with toilet needs if a parent has requested to be contacted and wishes to assist their own child.
3. Children should use the closest restroom to their ministry area. If occupied, an adult volunteer may escort the child to a different restroom.
4. For children who do not require assistance in the restroom, the adult volunteer must remain outside the restroom or stall door.
5. For children who require assistance, the adult volunteer must assist the child with the restroom stall door ajar or restroom door ajar (as appropriate).

Policy for Obtaining Parent (Guardian)

1. The parent (guardian) should be notified as soon as possible when a child has been crying for 10 minutes, is ill or injured.
2. A volunteer will use the beeper system to obtain the parent (guardian) if utilized for this ministry. If unavailable through the beeper system, a volunteer will go to the parent (guardian) and return with them rather than bringing the child to them.

Brookside Christian Reformed Church Personal Protection Guidelines (Ages 5-18)

General Guidelines

1. All adult volunteers and paid staff must complete a Profile for Personal Protection before serving with children or youth. Some volunteers and paid staff may require additional screening.
2. Volunteers will serve in teams of at least two adults or one adult with the hall monitor.
3. One adult must remain in a classroom with the children or youth at all times.
4. Brookside prefers that all adult persons who desire to serve have attended a Brookside ministry for six months or have been members of Brookside for at least six months and all persons have a completed Profile for Personal Protection on file. Nonmembers may serve with a completed Profile for Personal Protection on file and possible additional screening.
5. Youth age 11 and above may serve as a volunteer in some ministries under direct adult supervision.
6. If a child needs medical attention, the parent (guardian) should be notified as soon as possible.
7. The Brookside Agreement and Release must be signed by the parent (guardian) if ministry takes place off-site for an extended period of time.
8. All volunteer and paid staff will be within sight and sound of other people or will make arrangements to be accountable to another appropriate person. Classroom door windows will allow for an unobstructed view of the room.
9. 78ers and Senior High Youth Group leaders will be adults and at least 3 years older than participants.
10. Volunteers will be required to review the policies at least annually. To assist them, training will be provided at least annually for volunteers to review the Personal Protection Policy.
11. Anyone refusing to follow the policies or anyone violating the policies may be required to relinquish his or her responsibility in the ministry they serve.

Arrival and Dismissal Guidelines

1. Volunteers are to arrive 10 minutes before the ministry begins to provide supervision for children and youth. Leaders are not responsible for children or youth who arrive for ministries earlier than 10 minutes prior to starting time. Parents are requested to remain with children or youth until the volunteers arrive. Children or youth should stay no longer than 10 minutes after the ministry ends.
2. Two adults or one adult and the hall monitor will remain until all the children or youth have been dismissed or claimed by a parent (guardian) as appropriate.
3. Parents (guardians) of children second grade and under must escort their children to the classroom unless other arrangements have been made with the volunteer or staff. Children in second grade and under will be dismissed to a parent (guardian).
4. Children with special needs will be assisted as pre-arranged with the parent (guardian).
5. At least two leaders will remain until all children and youth have been picked up from a ministry such as GEMS, Jr. GEMS, or Cadets.

Restroom Assistance Guidelines

1. Children and youth in Pre-K and above do not need restroom assistance.
2. Children and youth are encouraged to take care of their personal needs to the best of their ability.
3. The volunteer will escort him/her to the restroom and will wait outside the restroom door for 2nd grade and under.
4. Children or youth with special needs will be assisted as pre-arranged with the parent (guardian).
5. The restroom(s) may be continuously monitored if ministry needs require that level of supervision, for example, Vacation Bible School.

Brookside Christian Reformed Church Behavior Policy

General Guidelines

1. Appropriate behavioral guidelines are to be communicated regularly with children and youth.
 - a. Children and youth are to refrain from pushing, hitting, kicking or injuring anyone in the classroom.
 - b. Children and youth are expected to be considerate of others when talking and use an appropriate voice level.
 - c. Children are expected to be obedient and follow the instructions of the volunteer.
2. Volunteer and paid staff are encouraged to engage in physical contact with care to avoid the appearance of impropriety. Gentle, casual touching on the head, arms, and hands will be permitted. Displays of affection ought to be limited to such actions as a brief hug, an arm around the shoulders, a pat on the back, or a handshake. These displays should only take place in a public area. Displays of affection between participants will also be monitored.
3. Corporal punishment is not permitted. A volunteer or paid staff may not threaten to inflict, inflict, or cause to inflict unnecessary, unreasonable, irrational, or inappropriate force upon a child or youth.
4. All conversation will be wholesome. Abusive verbal discipline (yelling, hurling insults, threatening) is not permitted.
5. Expectations of the behavior of children or youth must reflect their age and level of comprehension. Similarly, discipline must reflect their age and level of comprehension.
6. Children and youth are to be reminded of the kind of behavior that is acceptable for the setting. Older children and youth may benefit from having these expectations in written form.
7. Appropriate forms of discipline are to be reviewed with volunteers and staff before church sponsored ministries begin a new season. Periodic reminders are to be given as needed.
8. When misbehavior continues, volunteers should request assistance from their ministry leader, Children's Ministry Assistant and/or the Youth Ministry Coordinator.

9. Upon mutual agreement between volunteer and the Children's Ministry Assistant, Youth Ministry Coordinator, or his/her designee, the parent (guardian) will be notified of the inappropriate behavior of their child or youth.
10. Any suspected use of alcohol or drugs by participants must be reported to the Youth Ministry Coordinator.
11. It is never appropriate for a volunteer or paid staff and a participant to date each other.

One-to-One Guidelines

1. When a child or youth meets with an adult volunteer or paid staff, this meeting will occur in a public place. *
2. The volunteer or paid staff person will keep a record of each meeting.

Overnight Outing Guidelines

1. Brookside Agreement and Release form will be required from each participant. Forms will be available from the Youth Ministries Coordinator or the church office.
2. Permission for transportation will be received from the parent (guardian).
3. When activities are held away from the church site, the on site officials and the ministry leaders hold authority over the participants and the participants are responsible for following the rules and guidelines of both.
4. Sleeping areas will be off limits to members of the opposite sex.
5. Male/female contact will not be allowed after the designated bedtime.

*See definition, p. 3.

Hall Monitor Policy

1. Hall monitors must complete a Profile for Personal Protection before they are appointed to serve.
2. The ministry leader of each ministry such as Jr. GEMS, GEMS or Cadets is responsible for designating one person as hall monitor for each meeting/event.
3. Each hall monitor will review guidelines at time of service. At the conclusion of the classes/event, they will complete the Hall Monitor Log acknowledging completion of duties.
4. At least one hall monitor will conduct checks whenever a children or youth ministry is in session.
5. Duties of hall monitors:
 - a. Periodically check all the classrooms/events in session until the ministry ends and all the children or youth are gone. A check is defined as looking through the classroom window.
 - b. Periodically check bathrooms until the program ends and all the children or youth are gone. A check is defined as opening the bathroom door and assessing for appropriate behavior.
 - c. Periodically check unoccupied classrooms until the ministry ends and all the children or youth are gone. A check is defined as opening the classroom door, turning on the lights, and validating that the classroom is unoccupied.
 - d. Hall monitors may escort a child to the restroom according to restroom guidelines.
 - e. Hall monitors will be available to assist volunteers with special short-term classroom needs or emergencies.
 - f. Hall monitors will direct children or youth found in the hallways to their classroom or to their parent (guardian).
 - g. Hall monitors must immediately report urgent concerns or suspicions to the appropriate ministry leader. See *Procedure for Reporting Allegations of Abuse* regarding reasonable suspicion of abuse.

Transportation Policy

This policy applies to adults while serving in ministry to children or youth who may transport non-family related children or youth in church-sponsored ministries.

1. The following procedures must be in place:
 - a. Ordinarily, when transporting only one child or youth in a vehicle, two non-related adults are required. When transporting two or more children or youth in a vehicle, one adult is required.
 - b. Children or youth (12 and under) are seated in the back seats of the vehicle.
 - c. Drivers document in the transportation logbook each pick up and drop off in a church owned vehicle.
 - d. Ordinarily, permission (normally a signed permission slip) for transporting has been received from the parent (guardian).
2. Adults must have a valid driver's license and proof of insurance before transporting children or youth. Driving record checks may be required on all drivers of the church vehicles.
3. Drivers need to abide by state and provincial requirements for seat belt use, air bag safety, and car seat use.
 - a. Passengers are to wear seat belts whenever the vehicle is in service. Drivers may not transport more passengers than available seatbelts.
 - b. For safety, children under the age of 12 may not sit in the front seat if there are passenger airbags.
 - c. As required by law, car seats will be used for younger children.

Note: This policy does not cover adults or minors who transport family-related children or youth to/from church-sponsored events. This policy does not cover parents (guardians) who request or give permission for an adult or minor to transport non-family related children or youth to/from church sponsored events.

Brookside Christian Reformed Church Procedure for Reporting Allegations of Abuse

Anyone who has reason to believe that a child or youth has been or is likely to be physically harmed, sexually abused, or emotionally abused is urged to report the matter to a Child Protective Services. The procedure here is specifically written to address reporting and responding to child abuse that relates to volunteers or staff involved in Brookside ministries.

1. An individual who hears of or witnesses child abuse or has reasonable suspicion of child abuse is urged to report to police officials (616-456-3400) or Child Protective Services (CPS) (616-247-6300). Ordained clergy and other mandated reporters are required by law to orally report suspected abuse or neglect immediately and file a written report within 72 hours after making the oral report.
2. The individual with first-hand information leading to a reasonable suspicion of child abuse is urged to report the suspicion of abuse. In most circumstances the identity of the person making a report will not be revealed without consent unless required for the purposes of a court hearing. Therefore, the individual with first-hand information must fill out the appropriate report to police officials or to CPS.
3. In the event an individual is uncertain as to whether child abuse has occurred, the individual is encouraged to consult CPS or one of the pastors to assist with such assessment.
 - a. This consultation should take place as soon as possible (authorities should be notified within 24 hours) after the individual hears information or witnesses behavior causing him/her to have a reasonable suspicion of child abuse.
 - b. The individual will not be prohibited from reporting what he/she may believe is a reasonable suspicion of child abuse.
4. In the case of a report to police officials or CPS regarding child abuse that relates to volunteers or staff involved in Brookside ministries, the reporter will notify a member of the Personal Protection Team as soon as possible.
5. It is the responsibility of the police or CPS to notify the alleged offender of the allegations against him/her. Neither the first hand reporter nor the Personal Protection Team should communicate with the alleged offender until police officials or CPS has interviewed him/her.
6. State law protects persons from liability when they report actual or suspected abuse, as long as they do not act maliciously.

Brookside Christian Reformed Church
Procedure for Responding to Alleged Offenders who are Volunteers
or Paid Church Staff

1. If the Personal Protection Team (PPT) learns from police officials or Child Protective Services (CPS) that allegations of child abuse merit serious investigation or there is the possibility of formal charges against a volunteer or paid staff:
 - a. The PPT should be presented with written documentation specifying the nature of the allegations and with known information.
 - b. The PPT shall give the alleged offender an opportunity to address the allegations.
 - c. The PPT may recommend to the Administration Team that the alleged offender be removed/suspended from any child or youth volunteer or staff position (with pay when applicable) and without prejudice pending the outcome of the investigation.
2. If the Administration Team learns from CPS or police officials that criminal charges have been filed against the alleged offender, the alleged offender will be removed/suspended from any volunteer or staff position (with pay when applicable) and without prejudice pending the outcome of the investigation.
3. If a volunteer or paid staff admits sexual, physical, or emotional abuse against a child or youth, the admission should be reported to the police immediately and will also be reported to the PPT and Administration Team of Council. The volunteer or paid staff will be removed/suspended from office or position.
4. If a volunteer or paid staff confesses or is found guilty of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse against a child, he/she will be removed from office or position.
5. If the Administration Team of Council learns from CPS or police officials that criminal proceedings have concluded, the matter should be revisited.
 - a. If criminal charges are dropped, or the result is either no conviction or acquittal, the Administration Team of Council should decide whether to rescind its earlier action and/or take additional action.
 - b. If prosecution results in conviction, the offender is subject to termination of position and denied reinstatement to a position serving children or youth.
6. The church will follow Church Order Articles 81-84 in the admonition and discipline of members and office bearers.
7. We will ensure that pastoral care is provided for the individuals and families who are party to the allegations.

Brookside Christian Reformed Church Personal Protection Team Mandate

The Personal Protection Team (PPT) will assist the church in providing oversight of the personal protection for children and adults in the ministries of Brookside Christian Reformed Church. The emphasis will be on 1) protecting children/youth from abuse; 2) providing guidelines for all adults in the supervision of children/youth; 3) providing a response system for dealing with alleged incidents of child abuse; and 4) promoting a safe environment for everyone involved in the ministries offered by Brookside Christian Reformed Church.

The PPT will consist of the Senior Pastor, Chair of Council, Pastor of Pastoral Care, three members of the congregation, and the Administrator ex-officio.

- The PPT members will include both genders.
- One member of the team will be a qualified professional in the social work, counseling, or mental health field.
- The members from the congregation will serve for three years, with a rotation of members each year. The Administration Team will approve the members of the PPT from the congregation.
- The members of the PPT from the congregation and the Administrator will serve as the primary individuals involved in policy recommendations.
- The PPT will appoint the Chairperson of the Team. The Senior Pastor will act as spokesperson. In his absence or unavailability, the Chair of Council will act as spokesperson.

The PPT will be accountable to the Administration Team for the following:

1. Recommend policies and procedures for reducing the risk of child abuse for everyone involved in the ministries of Brookside Christian Reformed Church.
2. Assist the Youth Ministries Coordinator in providing information and training to the congregation on the Brookside Personal Protection Policy, definitions of child abuse, recognizing signs of child abuse, and appropriate behavior when working with youth.
3. Provide oversight of all reports of child abuse related to volunteer or paid staff involved in Brookside ministries.
4. Provide oversight of the response to alleged offenders who are officers, volunteers, or paid staff of Brookside Christian Reformed Church.
5. Communicate with the Abuse Prevention Advisory Panel of classis, media, and civil authorities as appropriate.
6. Clarify whether the Personal Protection Team or the first-hand reporter maintains a liaison with police officials.
7. Notify our legal counsel whenever a reasonable suspicion of child abuse has occurred related to volunteer or paid staff involved in Brookside ministries.
8. Notify our insurance agent as appropriate when directed by legal counsel.
9. Ensure that pastoral care is provided for the individuals and families who are party to the allegations.
10. Provide disclosure and confidentiality as appropriate to a) protect victims from further abuse b) protect alleged offenders from unfair prejudice c) prevent additional persons from being victimized and d) promote healing. Refer to disclosure policy on pages 151-152 in *Preventing Child Abuse* by Beth Swagman.
11. Maintain records on history of child abuse allegations reported at Brookside and inform Chair of Council as necessary. Perform other duties as requested by the Administration Team.

Definitions of Child Abuse

The following definitions for physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse can be found in the *Acts of Synod, 1992*, or in the *Acts of Synod, 1995*.

1. **Physical Abuse**—Any nonaccidental human act that results in physical pain or injury to a child—whether or not it leaves a cut or wound, or a mark or a bruise. Physically abusive behavior ranges from slapping, pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, and biting to more severe forms like choking, severe spanking, beating, hitting with an object, burning, stabbing, and shooting. In other words, physical abuse is any intentional means of inflicting pain or injury to another person. It is sometimes a single event, but can also be a chronic pattern of behavior.
2. **Physical Neglect**—Not doing what one is supposed to be doing to meet the physical needs of someone in his or her care. Neglect interferes with or prevents a child's normal development.
3. **Sexual Abuse**—The exploitation of a child or any sexual intimacy forced on a child for the sexual stimulation or gratification of another person. Child sexual abuse can refer to taking advantage of a child who is not capable of understanding sexual acts or resisting coercion. Examples of non-physical sexual abuse includes people exposing themselves, displaying pornographic material, photographing a child for pornographic materials, obscene telephone calls, "peeping Toms," and requests to engage in sexual activity (where no physical contact occurs). Examples of sexual abuse involving physical contact include fondling of body parts such as breasts, crotch, buttocks, or sexual organs; intercourse, oral and anal sex.
4. **Emotional Abuse**—Attempting to control a child's life through words, threats, and fear, destroying a child's self-worth through harassment, threats, and deprivation.

Examples of How Child Abuse is Defined by Law

Excerpts from Michigan's *Child Protection Law*, P.A. 1975, No. 238, are as follows:

"Child abuse means harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare by a parent, legal guardian, or any other person responsible for the child's health or welfare or by a teacher or teacher's aide which occurs through nonaccidental physical or mental injury; sexual abuse; sexual exploitation; or maltreatment."

"Child neglect means harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare by a parent, legal guardian, or any other person responsible for the child's health or welfare which occurs through either of the following:

Negligent treatment, including the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care. Placing a child at an unreasonable risk to the child's health or welfare by failure of the parent, legal guardian, or any other person responsible for the child's health or welfare to intervene to eliminate that risk when that person is able to do so and has, or should have, knowledge of the risk."

"Sexual abuse means engaging in sexual contact or sexual penetration as defined in section 520a of the Michigan penal code."

"Sexual exploitation includes allowing, permitting, or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution, or allowing, permitting, encouraging, or engaging in the photographing, filming, or depicting of a child engaged in a listed sexual act as defined in section 145c of Act No. 328 of the Public Acts of 1931."