

Policy for Safety of Children & Youth

**Cross Creek Community Church
United Church of Christ**

**667 Miamisburg-Centerville Rd, Dayton OH 45459
www.crosscreekchurch.org**

Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes (a) child...welcomes me" (Matthew 18:5). Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of the church and in the realm of God.

Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to children. Cross Creek Community church is dedicated to the health, well-being and spiritual development of its children and youth. Through Christian education, theological reflection, and faithful practices, Cross Creek pays close and special attention to the faith development of our children and youth. The goal is to assist our children and youth in forming a meaningful Christian spirituality in keeping with the church's stated mission of becoming God's People.

The church must be a safe, holy and protective community for all, regardless of age or ability. However, the purpose of this policy is to specifically address the safety of our children and youth. It is unethical, inappropriate, or unacceptable behavior for any person to engage in any type of verbal, physical or sexual abuse of Cross Creek's children or youth (see definitions).

As a Christian community of faith, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth as well as all of the workers with children and youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will educate all of our workers with children and youth regarding the appropriate policies and methods; and will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law.

To that end, Cross Creek Community Church will ensure:

- ❖ Every reasonable effort is made to bring any misconduct to an end.
- ❖ Every report of misconduct will be taken seriously.
- ❖ All persons involved in an allegation will receive compassion, sensitivity, and concern.
- ❖ In so far as possible, the identities of all persons involved in a report will be maintained in confidence (that is, a strict need-to-know basis).
- ❖ The right of all persons to obtain justice in a fair hearing will be respected.

In all of our ministries with children and youth, Cross Creek Community Church is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child will be surrounded in steadfast love and established, strengthen and nurtured in faith.

I. Procedures for Child and Youth Protection

1. **General** - It is the responsibility of the entire congregation to create a climate which encourages safe practices and observance of policies.

2. During Spiritual Formation Sponsored Events

a. Great Adventure

- ❖ All Great Adventure Leader candidates will be screened prior to becoming a Great Adventure Leader (see Section II for screening procedures).
- ❖ All Great Adventure Leaders will fill out the Children's ministry covenant form (attachment 1). These forms will remain on file until 2 years after the end of the leader's tenure.
- ❖ Contact Information: The Spiritual Formation director will maintain emergency contact information for all regularly attending children and youth. This will consist of the name, address and phone number of a person other than the primary caregiver to contact in case of emergency.
- ❖ A great adventure facilitator will be available in the hallway to monitor classroom activities, be available to escort children to the restroom, etc
- ❖ Ideally, there will be at least two leaders per room. However, since that is not always possible, there will always be visual access to each classroom so the Great Adventure facilitator can monitor classroom activities.
- ❖ Youth are permitted to assist in classes as long as they have completed the screening process and have established a relationship in the church
- ❖ A responsible adult will sign-in/sign out for infants and toddlers for the Great Adventure Program. Children will only be released to the parent, guardian or responsible adult
- ❖ School-age children will remain in Church until released for the Great Adventure; they will be sent back to their parents at the end of church (at approximately the final song).

b. Vacation Bible School

- ❖ Primary leaders/guides for vacation bible school require screening. Other volunteers (meal preparers, musicians, etc) may not require screening; however, there should be at least 1 screened person for every unscreened person.
- ❖ Parents will receive a "security card" at the start of vacation bible school each day. Parents must turn in this card at dismissal each evening.

c. Youth Events

- ❖ All youth leaders will be screened (see Section II for screening procedures).
- ❖ Procedures when traveling off-site/overnight. Parental permission forms will be required of all events not in the immediate area of the church. Parental permission forms, medical insurance and information, and a parent/youth/covenant will be required of all off-site, overnight trips or events.

3. During Other Church Events

- ❖ Childcare and youth supervision for other church events (for example, choir practice, small groups, congregational meetings) is the primary responsibility of the event organizer. It is the responsibility of this person find safe supervision for children/youth.
- ❖ The Spiritual Formation Director can provide a list of previously screened personnel or assist in running the screening process for additional leaders.
- ❖ If the event organizer uses an unscreened person to watch children or youth, the parents of the children/youth should be notified to ensure they approve of the procedures
- ❖ During special events that involve care of youth/children, the front door should be locked whenever feasible.

II. Screening

Careful screening is one way to help prevent the abuse of children and youth. Screening calls for a careful gathering and review of information in search of those who can provide supervision and education in a safe and caring environment. Results of screens will remain confidential and will be maintained for 10 years after the volunteer leaves his/her duties.

1. **Background check** Attachment 2 is a form to be filled out for each person requiring screening.
2. **Frequency.** Once a background check has been performed, it will be updated every 5 years.
3. **References** In addition to a background check, potential leaders will also provide three references (Attachment 3). References will be contacted in the initial screening but not during background check updates.
4. **Training:** Initial training includes information on child abuse and indicators, prevention policy, and policies & procedures.

III. Reporting, Investigation, and Communication of Concerns

1. Discovery and Reporting: When information is received regarding alleged abuse or mistreatment of a child, those involved will immediately notify the Spiritual Formation Director and Senior Pastor and will cooperate fully in the investigation. The Spiritual Formation Director or Senior Pastor will notify the police when needed and report the abuse to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

Any needs the child or youth may have, medical or otherwise, will be addressed immediately. Parent(s) and/or legal guardians will be notified as quickly as possible.

The person suspected of abuse shall be removed with dignity from further contact with the children and youth until an appropriate investigation has taken place. Matter will remain confidential if at all possible.

Police will be notified, as required, after immediate concerns are dealt with.

When concerns are raised about an authorized minister of the United Church of Christ (ordained, commissioned or licensed), whether an employee or volunteer, the response committee will notify the Moderator of the Coordinating Council. Cross Creek Community Church will cooperate fully in any procedures of the United Church of Christ related to ministerial authorization, while retaining the right and responsibility to make decisions regarding employment and volunteer ministries within Cross Creek Community Church as it determines best.

2. Investigation – will a separate team be established to investigate?

All conversations shall be documented (in police report, if applicable) and will include:

- ❖ The name of the person observing or received the disclosure of the abuse, including the date, time and place of any action taken by this person
- ❖ The alleged victim's name, age, and date of birth
- ❖ Any statement made by the alleged victim
- ❖ The name of the person suspected of committing the abuse, date, time and place of any conversation or statement made
- ❖ Any action taken
- ❖ Date and time of call to the appropriate agency, name of worker spoken to, content of the conversation, case number assigned
- ❖ Date and time of call to law enforcement agency, name of officer spoken to and content of the conversation
- ❖ Date, time and content of any other contacts made regarding the incident

3. Adjudication (review and decision):

Any person who brings a concern or complaint forward, or who assists in investigation of such a report, will not be adversely affected in terms and conditions of employment, church membership or employment, or otherwise discriminated against or discharged.

If the person bringing the concern or complaint, or the accused person, is not satisfied with the disposition of the matter he or she has the right to appeal to the Moderator of the Coordinating Council who will refer the matter to the Coordinating Council for resolution.

Findings

- i. Finding that no sexual exploitation occurred. This may involve formal notification of those who had a “need to know” and thus were previously notified of the concern and investigation.
- ii. Finding that sexual misconduct has occurred and that the appropriate body of the church is called upon to take action, which may include one or more of the following:
 - Formal reprimand with defined expectations for changed behavior, with possible public notification;
 - Recommending or requiring a program of growth which may include education or counseling;
 - Probation, with terms of the probation clearly defined;
 - Dismissal from employment or volunteer leadership position; or, in extreme cases, boundaries and/or limitations may be placed on the individual regarding affiliation with the church.

4. Pastoral Care and Support: The Spiritual Formation Director and Senior Pastor will offer pastoral care and concern to all those included in the investigation. If appropriate, those involved in the investigation may be referred for outside counseling.

5. Notification of the Incident to the Council & Congregation:

6. Records: A written summary of the proceedings in such cases will be maintained. Confidentiality will be honored as much as possible in this process.

Education and Awareness

- ❖ Ongoing educational opportunities for the membership-at-large?
- ❖ Identify ways to inform members, neighbors, friends, visitors, and groups using facilities about policies and practices.

❖ Attachment 1
Youth & Childrens Ministry Covenant Form

Name: _____
Telephone: _____
Email: _____
Birthday: _____

As a children's ministry volunteer, I understand that I am a minister to the youth and/or children of Cross Creek in cooperation with their parents and our staff and the congregation as we journey and grow together in faith. I also understand that I will be supported and encouraged in this ministry by the children, parents, staff and congregation.

I understand that I will be ministering under the leadership of the Director of Spiritual Formation who will seek to support and encourage me in my particular area of ministry. I will maintain communication regarding what support, resources or training would be helpful to me as I carry out my roles in the children's ministry.

I have reviewed and understood Cross Creek's vision and mission statements for our ministries working with children and youth and I covenant to uphold them to the best of my ability.

I have reviewed and understood the policy for safety of children & youth and covenant to uphold them to the best of my ability.

Signature

Date

Attachment 2
AUTHORIZATION FOR RELEASE OF INFORMATION
Cross Creek Community Church, United Church of Christ
667 Miamisburg-Centerville Rd, Dayton OH 45459

This voluntary release is to be completed by all those regularly working with the children and youth at Cross Creek Community Church, UCC including all staff members. Any information obtained is strictly confidential and solely for the use of ensuring the safety of our children and youth.

Signature: _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian (If under 18) _____

Printed Name: _____

Previous Names: _____

Date: _____

SSN: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____

Previous Address: _____

I have never been found guilty, or pled guilty or no contest, to a criminal charge.

True Not true

No civil lawsuit alleging actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; or financial misconduct 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 Not true

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, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; or financial misconduct.

True Not true

With respect to my driving record, I have not had my license suspended or revoked within the last five years due to reckless driving or driving while intoxicated and/or under the influence of a controlled substance.

True Not true

Is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the responsibilities of the position for which you are applying?

Yes No

The covenants between persons seeking employment or sanctioned volunteer positions in the church require honesty, integrity, and truthfulness for the health of the church. To that end, I attest that the information set forth in this application is true and complete. I understand that any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of consideration for, or termination of, the position I am seeking to fill. I acknowledge that it is my duty in a timely fashion to amend the responses and information I have provided if I come to know that the response or information was incorrect when given or, though accurate when given, the response or information is no longer accurate.

*Beginning such relationships with an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for a continuing and healthy covenant between employees or volunteers and the church they seek to serve. To that end, I authorize **Cross Creek Community Church** and/or its agents to make inquiries regarding all statements I have set forth above. I also authorize all entities, persons, former employers, supervisors, courts, law enforcement, and other public agencies to respond to inquiries concerning me, to supply verification of the statements I have made, and to comment on and state opinions regarding my background and character. To encourage such persons and entities to speak openly and responsibly, I hereby release them from all liability arising from their responses, comments, and statements made in good faith and without malice.*

***Cross Creek Community Church's** hiring and authorized volunteer recruitment process involves the distribution of information regarding applicants with those persons in a position to recruit, secure, and supervise the position I am seeking to fill. To that end, I authorize **Cross Creek Community Church** and its agents to circulate, distribute, and otherwise share information gathered in connection with this application to such persons for these stated purposes. I understand that **Cross Creek Community Church** will share with me information it has gathered about me, if I request it to do so.*

Signature _____ Date _____

Attachment 3 References

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian (If under 18) _____

Date: _____

References:

Name 1: _____

Relationship: _____

Phone Number: _____

Name 2: _____

Relationship: _____

Phone Number: _____

Name 3: _____

Relationship: _____

Phone Number: _____

Preferred References:

One Family Member

One Non-Family Member

Previous Church or Non-Profit Agency

Definitions

Physical abuse: Any act of omission or an act that endangers a person's physical or mental health.

Verbal abuse: Any verbal act that humiliates, degrades or threatens any child or youth

Sexual abuse: Sexual exploitation for satisfaction of sexual drives. This includes, but is not limited to 1) incest; 2) rape; 3) prostitution 4) romantic involvement with any participant 5) sexual intercourse or sexual conduct with or fondling of a child or youth.