

Kidron Mennonite Church

Child Protection and Abuse Response

Statement of Policies

Introduction

Each child is a special gift from God. We acknowledge the high value that Jesus placed on children during his earthly ministry. We seek to make all our church activities and facilities safe, especially for children. It is our responsibility as adults to do all we can to protect children.

Sadly, child abuse is prevalent; and it is hurting children, families, and societies everywhere. According to Ohio law:

Abuse includes:

1. *physical abuse* -- an unexplainable, non-accidental injury to the child,
2. *emotional and mental abuse* -- continual scapegoating or rejection of a child by parents which results in disturbed behavior, and
3. *sexual abuse* -- any sexually oriented act, practice, contact, or interaction in which the child has been used for sexual stimulation of an adult.
4. *Neglect* is typically defined in two ways. The first is emotional neglect. This is when the child is suffering severe negative emotional effects to a parent's failure to provide opportunities for normal experience that produce feelings of being loved, wanted, secure, and worthy. Physical neglect is when a parent fails to provide basic needs or a safe and sanitary living environment for the child. Examples include, but are not limited to: not providing adequate food or clothing, not following medical recommendations, lack of supervision that places a child at risk, or no heat in the winter." (<http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/2151.03>)

Child abuse prevention within our church community

We must be prepared in both knowledge and practice to prevent all types of child abuse and neglect, and to strengthen families. This policy applies to all church ministries including but not limited to Sunday School, youth activities, Vacation Bible School, mentoring, and nursery. **We commit to:**

1. Offer trainings:
 - a. Annually, training and materials will be offered to all adults in the congregation, and especially to teachers and leaders of children. Training may be specific to child abuse, or may be on a related topic such as child safety, child development, healthy family relationships, or any protective or risk factor for abuse.
 - b. Every two years for all children (ages 6-18) related to child abuse and/or child safety (possible topic for elementary age children: safe touch; possible topic for adolescence: dating violence). This training should be appropriate to the child's age group. Parents will be included in the selection of material and involved in screening of any books, movies, or other materials. Parents will be invited to participate in training with their child(ren).
2. Make our church facility safe for children:
 - a. Windows are in all doors where children or youth ministry is conducted (i.e. Sunday School rooms, pastor's office).
 - b. First Aid kits are available: 1) South Foyer (on top of mailboxes), 2) Second floor annex 3) Fellowship Hall kitchen (by the stove)
 - c. In the event of an emergency that requires evacuation, caregivers will be responsible for taking the children in their care to a designated meeting place. Parents/guardians should meet their children there as soon as possible. In the Education Center, evacuation routes are posted next to the doors of each room.
3. Provide safe and adequate supervision to children:
 - a. Superintendents are KMC members, approved through the gifts discernment process, and should complete basic training requirements as they are offered. All workers will complete a Children/Youth Ministry Application. A youth (18 years or younger) should never teach/care for children alone without a supervising adult available.
 - b. Annually, each teacher and leader of children will be presented with a copy of the congregation's Child Protection and Abuse Response Policy and asked to acknowledge that they have read and will abide by the policy.
 - c. Each child participating in KMC children's ministry programs will be supervised at all times until the child is returned to the care of the parent or adult responsible for the child. Exception: if parents authorize their child to be released on his/her own after Sunday school. Parents are responsible to supervise their children when they are on the church premises and not engaged in an organized children's event.

- d. Efforts are made to keep adult to child ratios to 1:4 for infants and toddlers, 1:10 for two-year-olds through kindergartners, and 1:20 for elementary-aged children. Occasionally this ratio may be increased due to last-minute cancellations by volunteers or to unexpectedly large numbers of children participating in a program or event.
 - e. Follow a “two-adult rule,” especially at overnight activities involving children and when activities are being conducted in homes or other private locations. A child will not be isolated with an adult.
 - f. A parent must always be notified ahead of time and give consent for their child to be transported away from church facilities.
 - g. Discipline provided by KMC volunteers or staff will be age-appropriate. Techniques will usually include redirection, verbal reminders, removal of child from his/her group for a short time, or loss of privileges. Parents/guardians will be informed of chronic or extremely disruptive or dangerous behavior. A KMC volunteer or staff member will never administer physical punishment.
 - h. Children will not be transported (except in an emergency situation) without securing written or verbal permission from a parent/guardian in advance. Special events that require transportation of participating children will require permission granted as part of the event registration form.
 - i. Every child who attends KMC children’s ministry program or special event must have a completed Registration form which includes Emergency Medical Authorization prior to the child attending the program or event. New guests attending weekly programs may be temporarily exempted from this requirement. Medical Authorization forms will be updated annually. Forms that have been on file for more than one year will be discarded.
 - j. Children who receive minor injuries while in the care of a KMC volunteer or staff member will be treated at the location of the event, and parents/guardians will be informed. Children who receive more serious injuries while in the care of a KMC volunteer or staff member will be treated at the location until a reasonable attempt has been made to contact the parents/guardians. If a parent/guardian cannot be located, the child will be treated according to the Emergency Medical Authorization.
 - k. Communicable disease protection: Any child who displays the following symptoms within 24 hours prior to the program or event should not attend the program or event: temperature of 100 degrees or higher, extremely runny nose or runny nose with yellow or greenish discharge, diarrhea, vomiting, excessive coughing, questionable rash, exposure to contagious illness, sore throat, stomachache.
4. Attend to related personnel issues:
- a. A background check, including child abuse and sex offender registries and criminal history, will be conducted on all church staff, including the pastor and custodians, before hiring. The church reserves the right to conduct a background check for any volunteer working with children in the congregation. These background checks must be conducted in all the states the individual has lived in the previous 20 years.
5. Deal appropriately with offenders and allegations of abuse:
- a. When a child discloses abuse or child abuse is suspected, Child Protective Services (330-345-5340) or the police (911) will be notified at once. If there is uncertainty as to whether a situation requires reporting, it will be referred to the pastor or other church leader knowledgeable in the area of child abuse. When notification of abuse is made, the pastor and/or other leader will be informed at once. The alleged offender will be removed immediately from all responsibilities involving contact with children until the conclusion of the investigation. All parents whose children may have come into contact with the alleged offender will be notified within 48 hours that allegations have been made and reported to the authorities.
 - b. When child abuse allegations have been made, pastoral care will be offered to all involved, by the pastor and/or appropriate referrals will be made by a Child Protection Team member.
 - c. Any individual who is known to have been convicted of a child sexual offense must not be allowed any unsupervised contact with children, and may not be involved in children’s or youth ministry (formal or informal).
 - d. All parents of children and youth in the church must be notified if there is a registered sex offender attending church at the time this information becomes known. New families to the church must be notified of this information within 2 months of their beginning to attend church.

Child abuse prevention within our other communities

The congregation commits to set annual goals for engagement with the community in ways that promote connection and support for children and families. The goals will be written by the Nurture Leadership Team or a group appointed by them.

This policy will be implemented and facilitated by the Child Protection Team of at least two individuals, appointed by the Nurture Leadership Team.