

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

and Related Documents

**Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren
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Child Protection Policy

Introduction:

Our task as Christians is to shape our church so that all people have what is required for spiritual and physical well-being. In particular, as the Church, we are called by God to provide for children:

“People were bringing little children to Jesus to have Him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, He was indignant. He said to them, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.’ And he took the children in His arms, put His hand on them and blessed them.” Mark 10:13-16

Children are vulnerable. They cannot fend for themselves. They are often powerless in the decisions that shape their lives. We adults have the ability and opportunity to guide them to the knowledge of God’s love for them. As we work to improve their lives today and tomorrow, we are showing our own response to God’s love in our lives.

Over the past several decades, our society has become a more perilous place. There are more reported incidents of abuse and the number of lawsuits has risen dramatically. Our policy does not represent a lack of trust and confidence in the many members of our congregation who work with children; just the opposite is true. We recognize our responsibilities to ensure that the church is a safe place for all individuals, children and youth. When we participate together in carrying out our policy and following these guidelines, we are protecting our children and the adults who minister to them in the name of Jesus Christ.

Our mission is to provide an environment for our children that is safe from all forms of abuse and neglect. To be both effective and successful in these efforts, the entire congregation must understand and embrace the policies that will lead to our goals. Therefore, it is essential to have a program to educate the congregation of the concerns and needs in this area. We will conduct training sessions and will retrain the congregation yearly or more frequently as necessary, strongly encouraging participation in training by our volunteers and requiring it for our paid staff.

Statement regarding abuse:

God embraces children with love, placing their nurture and care in our hand. We believe that children should be safe from all forms of abuse and neglect. We, the church, will be advocates for children and establish clearly defined safeguards, policies and procedures for their protection.

(Child Abuse Prevention handbook, A Manual for the Church of the Brethren, 1991.)

We recognize the seriousness and sinfulness of physical, sexual and emotional abuse. This type of mistreatment violates the very image of God. It causes serious damage to the soul, body, and spirit of the one abused. It also causes harm to the soul and spirit of the abuser. If abuse does occur, we will seek and support healing measures for all in need.

Recognizing God's love and concern for children/youth, it is our desire to reflect God's love to those in our care. **Our mission is to provide an environment for our children which is safe from all forms of abuse.** To be both effective and successful in these efforts, the entire congregation must understand and embrace the policies which will lead to this goal. We believe it is our responsibility to:

1. Protect the children/youth to whom we minister from being physically, sexually or emotionally abused while under our care.
2. Guard our volunteers and staff from being falsely suspected or accused of wrongful behavior toward a child/youth.
3. Educate volunteers and staff in ways to recognize abuse and appropriate reporting procedures.

What constitutes child abuse?

There are three kinds of child abuse: physical, sexual, and emotional. Physical abuse is inflicting bodily injury on a child. Sexual abuse is using a child under 18 years of age in, or exposing a child to, sexual activities (including a child who is developmentally unable to give consent), with or without his/her consent. Emotional abuse is demanding that the child do more than he/she is able to do, severely criticizing or humiliating him/her for not living up to a demand, or placing upon him/her such unclear requirements that the child cannot understand what he/she is supposed to do.

(From A Cry for Help)

Child Protection Team

The function of the Child Protection Team is to carry out the intent of this Child Protection Policy. The Child Protection Team is responsible for:

- providing training for individuals on the Child Protection Policy
- maintaining records of individuals who have completed training and have been approved to work with children/youth
- educating the congregation on the need to provide a safe environment for our children
- investigating reports of abuse internally
- reporting suspected abuse to the proper authorities and/or advising one who reports abuse to a team member of mandatory reporting laws
- following up regarding mandatory reporting with one who reported abuse to a team member
- reviewing and updating the Child Protection Policy
- all other aspects of this Child Protection Policy
- arranging for meetings to review and advise as needed

The following is a list of the individuals on the Child Protection Team and the primary areas for which they will provide training on the Child Protection Policy:

Member of Team	Oversight Responsibility
Associate Pastor	Sunday School Teachers, Nursery Staff, Bible School Volunteers, Other Nurture-related children's programs
Pastor of Youth & Young Adults	Youth / Junior High Advisors
Administrator for Children's Outreach Programs	Staff / Volunteers of the Children's Outreach Programs
Chairperson of Nurture Commission	Pastors

Policy Administration

The Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren Child Protection Policy applies to all church-sponsored or church-affiliated activities in which children/youth participate. Such activities may include, but are not limited to: Nursery, Sunday School, Children's Church, Vacation Bible School, Children's Choirs, Junior High and Youth Groups, and Children's Outreach Ministries Programs (Mechanic Grove Christian Child Care, Mechanic Grove Christian Kindergarten, Wee Friends Preschool, Christian Love Around School Program). The Child Protection Policy of Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren will be administered by the Child Protection Team and shall be applied to any person who is hired, appointed, or who volunteers to work with children/youth.

Please note: Outside groups using the facility at Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren are not bound by this Child Protection Policy even if the group includes children who are a part of the congregation of Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren (For example:

Released Time or facilities rentals). Outside groups using this facility are governed under their own policies for their organization.

- A. All persons who work with children/youth as volunteers will:
1. Receive orientation regarding our congregation's Child Protection Policy and the **Child Protection Covenant** (see pages 13-14). Orientation will include the following:
 - a. Facts of child abuse
 - b. Rationale for the emphasis on protecting children/youth from abuse in the church
 - c. Identify policies and procedures for protection including but not limited to mandatory reporting requirements
 2. Regularly attend Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren for a continuous six (6) months prior to working with children and/or youth. (Even babysitters who are utilized for adult events and classes must be fully credentialed whether they are paid by Mechanic Grove or no.)
 3. Begin ministry only after completed forms are on file.
 - a. Once forms are received, a summary of the key points of this policy will be provided to volunteer or staff member along with information about how to access or obtain a copy of the entire policy.
 4. Approval for those who will accompany children or youth overnight is contingent upon Criminal Records Checks and Child Abuse Clearance documentation.
 5. Reorientation will take place for all persons who work with children and youth when policy is updated or changed.
 6. Because parents are encouraged to be involved and to feel free to pitch in and help with activities, they will all be asked to follow the same procedures since it is natural for them to be working with and to assist children other than their own in a group situation.
- B. Paid church staff and paid and volunteer staff in Children's Outreach Ministries programs (Mechanic Grove Christian Child Care, Wee Friends Preschool, Christian Love Around School Program) must complete an interview process, Criminal Records Check, Child Abuse Clearance, and FBI fingerprinting documentation before being allowed to work with children. They must also complete numbers 1, 3, 4, and 5 listed above in Section A.

No person who has been convicted or has pled guilty or no contest to any form of child abuse will be accepted as a volunteer or staff member to work with children or youth in any church-sponsored activity or ministry of the church. Any volunteer or employee who has been accused of wrongdoing by a child or parent (whether on church grounds or at church activities or not) will recuse him or herself from service until such time as the matter is resolved to the satisfaction of the Child Protection Team.

Guidelines for Ministry with Children/Youth:

Two-Person Rule: At least two approved persons will be present during any church-sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children/youth. If it is not possible for two adults to be present in the same room, an adult “roamer” may monitor activity in the rooms and bathrooms. Youth may serve as the second person after having completed the orientation and having signed a **Child Protection Covenant**. A youth worker is defined as someone who is in grades 7-12.

Open Door Policy: When there is no window in the classroom door, or if the window is obstructed, the door will be left entirely open so that persons passing by can easily observe.

Parental Permission: Parents should be well informed of all information regarding the events in which their children will be participating. In a situation where an adult has a legitimate reason to be alone with a child, parental consent will be obtained. Written parental consent will be obtained on a per event basis for all off-site church-sponsored group activities. Consent will include permission to provide medical treatment for all events involving physical risk.

Overnight Rule: All adult chaperones (supervisors, sponsors, parents, advisors, and helpers) must be approved by the Child Protection Team and must have background-checks filed with the church before they can accompany children/youth on an overnight activity. Parental permission will be obtained for all overnight activities. Both male and female adult chaperones must be present at all times for overnight events if children/youth from both genders are participating.

Non-Sponsored Activities: Overnight activities for youth are sometimes held in conjunction with other organizations, in which case, Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren does not have the authority to approve all adults. In such cases, Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren does not guarantee that the sponsoring organization has adopted a Child Protection Policy but at least one approved and fully credentialed adult from Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren will be present along with the adults from the other organization.

Transportation: Anyone transporting children/youth during a sponsored function (youth/junior high trip, nursery school field trip, etc.) must be 21 years of age or older, hold a valid senior driver’s license, carry current insurance on automobile being used and obey all traffic laws, including speed limit and use of seat belts. In addition, when renting a vehicle for transporting children/youth, a call must be made to the insurance company (Church Mutual Insurance Company) to obtain additional insurance. In most cases, this will be done by the Pastor for Youth and Young Adults. All drivers for church sponsored functions must verbally covenant to refrain from the use of mobile phones except those whose use is “hands-free” and drivers must also covenant to refrain from using text messaging at any time while the engine is engaged.

Physical Discipline: No physical discipline shall be administered at any time. However, physical intervention to protect a child from harming self or others does not constitute physical discipline and may be necessary.

Diapering, Toileting and Changing a Child's Clothes: These will be done in the presence of two persons or in prominent areas, while maintaining the child's right to privacy.

Expressions of Affection: Adults must use caution when allowing expressions of affection toward children/youth. True expressions of affection contribute to a warm healthy relationship. Adult workers should NOT stop loving and touching children, rather remember to place reasonable limits on physical interaction. Workers will:

- Respect a child's/youth's refusal of affection.
- Be aware/sensitive to what makes a child feel uncomfortable.

Touching or observation of private areas (except as necessary, such as changing diapers), having an older child sit on an adult's lap, or any kiss close to the mouth is inappropriate.

Exceptions: If a situation arises during which any of the policy goals cannot be reasonably met due to unavoidable circumstances (e.g. 2 adult rule), the adults involved will accommodate the policy as far as they are able, act in accordance with the spirit of the policy and report the situation to a member of the Child Protection Team. However, it is the intent of this policy that such exceptions are rare.

Rental of Mechanic Grove facilities: Situations in which Mechanic Grove's physical facilities are rented by outside parties are not covered under this policy nor are they overseen by Mechanic Grove's Child Protection Team. However, those responsible for the rental are also responsible, per the law, to adhere to mandatory reporting requirements as they are applicable to the specific situation. Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren is not responsible for the renter or his/her guests.

Guidelines for Reporting Suspected Abuse:

A. We believe that all workers in children/youth ministry have a personal responsibility and a moral obligation to report any suspected abuse to a member of the Child Protection Team and to cooperate in any subsequent investigation whether the suspected abuse takes place on church grounds or during church activities or not. In addition, when abuse is suspected by a paid employee or church volunteer, reporting it to appropriate authorities is not only a moral necessity, but is also mandatory by law.

The volunteer or paid staff making observation or receiving disclosure of suspected abuse will report as follows:

1. Intervene immediately if an incident is in progress. The safety of the child must be the church's primary concern.

2. Get another adult to come and be a second witness and to assist with the situation.
 3. Notify the parents or guardians of the victim, unless the parent or guardian is the alleged abuser. Take any necessary steps to assure the child's safety until the parents arrive.
 4. Contact a member of the Child Protection Team to report the observation or disclosure immediately and to assist in completing the **Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse** form.
 5. Take necessary steps to report the incident to appropriate legal authorities.
 6. All efforts should be made to maintain confidentiality and to protect the victim throughout the process. Do not talk with other witnesses about what happened so that your memory is not altered by what they say they saw. Appropriate investigation and action may be taken within the church by the Child Protection Team as well as through legal authorities.
- B. All paid AND volunteer workers are mandated by Pennsylvania State laws to report any suspected case of child abuse/neglect. According to 23 Pa.C.S., anyone who comes in contact with children in the case of employment, practice of profession, or volunteerism "shall report or cause a report to be made to the Department of Public Welfare when they have reasonable cause to suspect on the basis of their professional or other training or experience, that a child coming before them in their professional or official capacity is a victim of child abuse." Under the law, it is the individual's responsibility to make a report immediately.

If an individual suspects child abuse or has received a report that there is suspected child abuse, he/she should act immediately, including the following steps:

1. If there is suspicion of physical abuse, two adults should be present if the child is asked to show any bruising or scars. If the report is being made with regard to physical abuse, the reporter will need to include information about physical marks, if they are present. So, this should be done just before filing the report.
2. **Make the report immediately.** There are two ways to make the report: by phone or via Internet submission. *The Internet submission is the preferred method because it provides a written report immediately,* but at least one of these methods should be followed.
 - a. Childline is the state reporting system and should be the first line of contact, whether by phone or Internet. If filing online, you will be asked to create a log-in and password. When asked to identify your organization, please include Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren.

- i. Web Address:
<http://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home>
 - ii. Phone Number: 1-800-932-0313, option 1
3. If the suspected abuse is an issue in which the State Police should be involved (i.e. an immediate threat is imminent), they may be contacted at (717)299-7650 or (717)299-0441. Along with the call to the state police, a report should still be made to Childline (see #2 above).
4. If the parents/guardians are not suspected to be the perpetrator(s), they should be contacted next.
5. Next, a copy of the Childline report should be provided to a member of the Child Protection Team. The Child Protection Team should be aware of all reports of suspected abuse which affect the church!
6. It is important to note again that all efforts should be made to maintain confidentiality and to protect the victim throughout the process. Do not talk with other witnesses about what happened so that your memory is not altered by what they say.
7. To follow up with a report that has been filed, the local Children and Youth of Lancaster County may be contacted at (717) 299-7925. Once a report is accepted by Childline, they immediately share the report with the local agency. At that point, a case manager is assigned. When the local agency is contacted, the one who reported the abuse will be directed to this case manager.

Please note that the church will follow procedures to handle a report of abuse as well, which is why reporting the information to a member of the Child Protection Team is so important.

Periodic Policy Review

The Child Protection Team shall assume responsibility for reviewing this policy periodically. Nurture Commission, under the direction of its current chair, will review this policy every three years (or sooner as needed).

Defining & Recognizing Child Abuse

A. The legal definition in the State of Pennsylvania reads as follows:

Child abuse. The term "child abuse" shall mean intentionally, knowingly or recklessly doing any of the following:

1. Causing bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.

2. Fabricating, feigning or intentionally exaggerating or inducing a medical symptom or disease which results in a potentially harmful medical evaluation or treatment to the child through any recent act.
 3. Causing or substantially contributing to serious mental injury to a child through any act or failure to act or a series of such acts or failures to act.
 4. Causing sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any act or failure to act.
 5. Creating a reasonable likelihood of bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.
 6. Creating a likelihood of sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any recent act or failure to act.
 7. Causing serious physical neglect of a child.
 8. Engaging in any of the following recent acts:
 - i. Kicking, biting, throwing, burning, stabbing or cutting a child in a manner that endangers the child.
 - ii. Unreasonably restraining or confining a child, based on consideration of the method, location or the duration of the restraint or confinement.
 - iii. Forcefully shaking a child under one year of age.
 - iv. Forcefully slapping or otherwise striking a child under one year of age.
 - v. Interfering with the breathing of a child.
 - vi. Causing a child to be present at a location while a violation of 18 Pa.C.S. § 7508.2 (relating to operation of methamphetamine laboratory) is occurring, provided that the violation is being investigated by law enforcement.
 - vii. Leaving a child unsupervised with an individual, other than the child's parent, who the actor knows or reasonably should have known:
 - a. Is required to register as a Tier II or Tier III sexual offender under 42 Pa.C.S. Ch. 97 Subch. H (relating to registration of sexual offenders), where the victim of the sexual offense was under 18 years of age when the crime was committed.
 - b. Has been determined to be a sexually violent predator under 42 Pa.C.S. § 9799.24 (relating to assessments) or any of its predecessors.
 - c. Has been determined to be a sexually violent delinquent child as defined in 42 Pa.C.S. § 9799.12 (relating to definitions).
- 2) Causing the death of a child through any act or failure to act.

- **Restatement of culpability.**--Conduct that causes injury or harm to a child or creates a risk of injury or harm to a child shall not be considered child abuse if there is no evidence that the person acted intentionally, knowingly or recklessly when causing the injury or harm to the child or creating a risk of injury or harm to the child.
 - **Child abuse exclusions.**--The term "child abuse" does not include any conduct for which an exclusion is provided in section 6304 (relating to exclusions from child abuse).
- B. To create a safe, Christian, nurturing environment for children, we also need to know the symptoms or signs of child abuse, whether it be physical, sexual, or emotional. In this way, we can be instrumental in preventing further abuse and in meeting the requirements of the law for mandatory reporting. Knowing the signs to report in a suspected abuse case is a safeguard against being prosecuted or sued for neglecting, ignoring or not reporting possible abuse situations. One or two symptoms are not often a reason for concern. Multiple symptoms are a better indicator of possible abuse.

1. Physical Abuse

Physical signs of physical abuse might include:

- Bruises and welts
- Lacerations and abrasions
- Abdominal injuries, evidenced by constant vomiting, localized tenderness and/or swollen abdomen
- Burns, especially patterned and dry burns
- Frequent and/or unexplained fractures and skeletal injuries

Behavioral signs of physical abuse might include:

- Talking about abuse
- Expressing explicit or implicit fear of adults
- Displaying behavior extremes such as aggressiveness or withdrawal
- Avoiding physical contact with others
- Wearing unseasonable clothing to hide injuries

2. Sexual Abuse

The precise legal definition of child sexual abuse or molestation varies from state to state, but in general, includes any form of sexual contact or exploitation in which a minor is being used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator. In a more common sense, child sexual abuse is:

“Any sexual activity with a child – whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day care situation, a foster/residential setting, or in any other setting, including on the street by a person unknown to the child. The abuser may

be an adult, an adolescent or another child, provided the child is four years older than the victim.”

(Source: *National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse*, 1992)

Child sexual abuse may be violent or non-violent. All child sexual abuse is an exploitation of a child’s vulnerability and powerlessness in which the abuser is fully responsible for the actions.

Child sexual abuse is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behavior for which they are not personally, socially, and developmentally ready. Child sexual abuse includes behaviors that involve touching and non-touching aspects.

Types of abuse that involve touching include:

- Fondling
- Oral, genital, and anal penetration
- Intercourse
- Forcible rape

Types of sexual abuse that do not involve touching include:

- Verbal comments
- Pornographic videos
- Obscene phone calls
- Exhibitionism
- Allowing children to witness sexual activity or pornography

Physical signs of sexual abuse may include:

- Lacerations and bruises
- Nightmares
- Irritation, pain, or injury to the genital area
- Difficulty with urination
- Discomfort when sitting
- Torn or bloody underclothing
- Venereal disease

Behavioral signs of sexual abuse may include:

- Anxiety when approaching an area
- Nervous or hostile behavior toward adults
- Sexual self-consciousness
- “Acting out” of sexual behavior
- Withdrawal from church activities and friends

Verbal signs may include the following statements:

- I don’t like (a particular adult).
- (A particular adult) does things to me when we’re alone.
- I don’t like to be alone with (a particular adult).
- (A particular adult) fooled around with me.

3. Emotional Abuse

Physical signs of emotional abuse are less apparent or obvious than in instances of physical or sexual abuse.

Physical signs of emotional abuse may include:

- Speech disorders
- Lags in physical development
- Failure to thrive: listlessness, unresponsiveness

Behavioral signs of emotional abuse may include:

- Unpleasant behaviors: hard to get along with, demanding, destructive, cruel, causes trouble, won't let others alone
- Avoids others, is unusually shy, anxious to please, is too submissive
- Shows low self-esteem: accepts unpleasant treatment from others without protest
- Either inappropriately adult – takes charge of other children; or inappropriately infantile – sucks thumb, rocks constantly

4. Neglect

Physical signs of neglect may be evident when the child:

- Appears tired, listless, almost always dirty for days at a time
- Goes to school without breakfast, often without lunch or lunch money
- Wears dirty or inappropriate clothes
- Seems often to be alone for long periods of time
- Obviously needs glasses, dental care or other medical attention

Behavioral signs of neglect may be evident when the child:

- Is frequently absent from or late to school
- Begs or steals food
- Causes trouble in school by often not doing homework, using alcohol or drugs, engaging in vandalism or sexual misconduct

Child Protection Covenant

All who work with Children and Youth at Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren are encouraged to pray about and to embrace the following covenantal concepts with God:

- I accept the call to serve the Lord through working with children and/or youth at Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren.
- I remember how Jesus welcomed the children, took them in his arms, and blessed them.

- I know that I follow Jesus' example when I value young people and care for them with love and gentleness.
- I recognize the importance of the responsibility entrusted to me.
- I realize that my words and actions toward children and youth will influence their faith in God and their lives for many years to come.
- I promise to be responsible in all of my attitudes and actions, especially toward the children or youth under my care.
- I will not engage in any unbecoming conduct and I will be a good example to the children or youth entrusted to my care both during my time with children or in my personal life because I recognize that every aspect of my life reflects who I am in God to the children who look up to me.
- I will pray and study God's Word regularly, and do my best to reflect God's love to children and those with whom I minister to children.
- I accept the responsibility of my ministries to children or youth with gladness and I will strive to honorably fulfill my responsibilities with integrity.
- With the prayers and encouragement of the members of Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren, with the support of the Child Protection Team, and with God's guidance, I am committed to serve in ministry to children or youth as I have been called to do.

Response Plan to Suspected Child Abuse

Whether suspected child abuse takes place on church grounds, or during church activities or not, it should be immediately reported to a member of the Child Protection Team, and the person reporting the suspected abuse should cooperate in any subsequent investigation. An incident report shall be created (**Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse – add page number**), which documents the incident and any subsequent conversation or contact as it takes place. The suspected abuse should be reported promptly to Childline (see pages 17-18) either with or without the aid of a member of the Child Protection Team if one is not immediately available.

1. A member of the Child Protection Team will follow-up on the report in the following ways:
 - a. Speak with the child/youth/vulnerable adult who is alleged to have been abused. In some cases, a child may be more at ease if the person who reported the incident is part of this conversation. Staff and volunteers should not question for details or ask leading questions.

- b. Determine the next steps. The Child Protection Team may review its specific plan for follow-up in any particular situation with legal counsel at any time in the process.
 - c. If not already done, report disclosure, per result of consultation, to CHILDLINE at 1-800-932-0313. Even though all staff and volunteers are legally mandated to report suspected abuse, we have always encouraged reporting as a necessary part of moving toward wholeness for all involved.
 - d. Notify parents/guardians of the alleged abuse and its communication to Childline, contingent upon advice from Child Protective Services or law enforcement agencies when the alleged abuser is the parent or guardian.
2. In addition to the mandatory report to Childline, if the alleged abuser is a volunteer or paid staff of Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren, the Child Protection Team will investigate and arbitrate the situation. If a conflict of interest exists between the perpetrator and a member of the Child Protection Team, the Child Protection Team will assign an alternate person(s) to review that particular situation.

The Child Protection Team will contact the alleged offender to:

- a. Present him/her with a formal complaint informing him/her of the time and nature of alleged abuse.
 - b. Outline the procedure that will be followed.
 - c. Hear alleged offender's response (verbal or written)
3. The Child Protection Team may also:
- a. Consult an attorney regarding compliance with state reporting laws and cooperation with the investigation.
 - b. Make available a summary response to the complainant.
 - c. Notify the church's liability insurance carrier.
 - d. If the alleged abuser is a volunteer or paid staff member at Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren, the alleged offender will be temporarily removed from his/her position(s) while a confidential investigation is being conducted (which may or may not [but will likely] include information from the government case worker. If applicable, the alleged offender may continue to receive employment compensation until such time as charges are filed or the investigation is resolved.

If allegations are unsubstantiated:

1. Investigations will cease.
2. Every effort will be made to exonerate, reconcile, and restore the person who had been accused.

3. A public statement by the Child Protection Team will be made if the person who had been accused so chooses.
4. The Child Protection Team will respond with love, care and concern to the complainant(s), to the congregation, and the person who was accused and his/her family.

If the allegations/investigations demonstrate poor judgment or unwise behavior but not abuse:

1. The Child Protection Team will hold the offender responsible and accountable for the behavior. Grace and mercy will be extended in the context of repentance, accountability and justice.
2. Education and/or counseling will be required to correct behavior patterns.
3. Persons will be removed from susceptible church ministry settings for a period of six months after which, persons may or may not be reinstated.
4. Actions taken will be communicated to the complainant(s) and to the congregation as necessary.

If allegations/investigations substantiate child abuse:

Once the legal obligation to report the case of child abuse has been met, then proceed with the following.

1. Ministry to the Victim:
 - a. Ministry will be done with confidentiality, sensitivity and care.
 - b. Pastoral care and spiritual support will be provided.
 - c. One person will be named by the Child Protection Team and offered to the victim(s) to serve as an advocate, supporter, and interpreter of the process.
 - d. A list of qualified counselors/therapists will be provided.
 - e. In the case of multiple victims, opportunity will be made for these persons to meet together for mutual support and prayer.
2. Ministry to the Offender:
 - a. Specialized counseling will be offered by the pastoral staff, if appropriate
Conference of the Church of the Brethren, Section III, U)
 - b. If the abuser is a volunteer or paid staff of Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren, the individual will be permanently removed from susceptible positions in the church's ministry.

- c. Pastoral care and spiritual support will continue for the offender and his/her family during rehabilitation.
 - d. Rehabilitation will be monitored by the Child Protection Team. At the conclusion of rehabilitation there will be full reinstatement into church life with help to use spiritual gifts in non-susceptible ministries.
3. Ministry to the Congregation:
- a. The Child Protection Team will report to the Church Moderator and Church Board Chairperson any **confirmed** abuse and follow-up, including disciplinary action taken.
 - b. Trained professionals will be made available to assist the congregation in addressing their concerns to bring healing.
4. Ministry to the Accused/Offender's Family;
- a. Ministry will be done with sensitivity and care, providing support and prayer.
 - b. One person will be named and offered to the family to serve as a advocate, supporter, and interpreter of the process.
 - c. A list of qualified counselors/therapists will be provided.

Important Phone Numbers

Child Line **1-800-932-0313**
State Police **299-7650** or **299-0441**
Children and Youth Social Services **299-7925**
Child Abuse and Neglect (General Information) **1-800-422-4453**

Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse

Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren

To be completed by a member of the Child Protection Team, with the cooperation of the person reporting the incident.

1. Name of worker (paid or volunteer) observing or receiving disclosure of child abuse:

2. Victim's Name: _____
- Victim's age: _____

3. Date/place of initial conversation with/report from victim:

4. Brief summary of signs and/or conversation with victim:

5. Name of person accused of perpetrating the abuse:

Relationship of accused to victim (paid staff, volunteer, family member, other):

6. Reported to a member of the Child Protection Team: (date & time: _____)

7. Reported to government authorities: (date & time: _____)

8. Call to victim's parent/guardian: (date & time: _____)

a. Name of person contacted:

b. Brief summary of conversation:

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(person reporting the incident)

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(member of the Child Protection Team)

Resources

Annville Church of the Brethren 495 Maple Street Annville, PA 17003	Child Protection Policy
Association of Brethren Caregivers 1451 Dundee Avenue Elgin, IL 60120	Bibliography of additional resources
Atlantic Northeast District Church of the Brethren 500 East Cedar Street Elizabethtown, PA 17022	Policy samples
Beacon Heights Church of the Brethren 2810 Beacon Street Fort Wayne, IN 46805	Safe Church Policy
Brandts Church of the Brethren Box 251 St. Thomas, PA 17252	Risk Management Policy
Christian Science Monitor April 5, 2002 edition	“Sex Abuse Spans Spectrum of Churches”
Church Mutual Insurance Company P.O. Box 357 3000 Schuster Lane Merrill, WI 54452-0357	Recommended Screening Services
Disciples Home Missions www.discipleshomemissions.org/familyandchildren/preventchildabuse.htm	
Donnels Creek Church of the Brethren 6562 Detrick-Jordan Pike PO Box 21 North Hampton, OH 45349	Child Protection Policy

Ethics for Congregations in the Church of the Brethren
Ethics in Ministry Relations 1996

Adopted by 1996 Annual Conference
Adopted by 1996 Annual Conference

National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse
330 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20447

Miscellaneous publications

Oakton Church of the Brethren
10025 Courthouse Road
Vienna, VA 22181

Guidelines for Children's Safety

Pennsylvania Department of Health
652 West 17th Street
Erie, PA 16502

Miscellaneous publications

Pennsylvania Law on Provisions and Responsibilities for Reporting Suspected Child Abuse
Domestic Relations (Title 23), Chapter 63, Child Protective Services