

Making Your Church Safe from Child Sexual Abuse

Recommendations for
Great Plains Conference (GPC) Free Methodist Churches

Adopted by _____ FMC on _____

Signed: _____
(Chairman, LBOA)

It is no secret that the reputation of Christ's church has recently been badly eroded due to documented child abuse. It seems wise for our church, for the following reasons, to adopt and enact policies which address this issue:

- A. To protect our children and youth from sexual molestation.
- B. To protect our church and our Lord from disdain.
- C. To protect our church staff and volunteers from allegations of sexual abuse.
- D. To protect our local church from legal risk and liability.

Below are our policies adopted to achieve the above objectives.

OUTLINE:

- I. "Primary Screening" for Paid Employees & Regular Volunteers in Children and Youth Ministry
- II. Policies for Occasional Volunteers
- III. Supervisory Policies

I. "Primary Screening" for Paid Employees and Regular Volunteers in Children and Youth Ministry

- A. Direct questions about prior criminal convictions for sexual abuse or related crimes will be asked of ALL workers in this category. A written questionnaire or documented oral interview will be used. (See attachment #1.) (Also see Note #1.)
- B. References (written and/or oral) will ALSO be utilized for persons new to the church family, and the reference form will ask specific questions about working with children and youth. (See Attachments 2,3.)

II. Policies for Occasional Children and Youth Volunteers

- A. A "Six Month" Rule will be followed: Volunteers are only permitted to work with children or youth after they have been regular attenders for six months. It is anticipated that this will discourage persons seeking access to children.
- B. To avoid the six month delay for persons who have transferred from other churches, a reference call may be made to the volunteer's previous church. The reference call will ask a specific question about concerns regarding working with children or youth. (See Attachment 3.)

III. Supervisory Policies

- A. All regular volunteers and paid employees working with children and youth will certify in writing that they have read these supervisory policies as well as information regarding child abuse, including instruction on recognizing the effects of abuse. (This document and Attachments 5-9 will be utilized for information.) Attachment 4 will be used to verify this requirement.
- B. A "Two Adult" Rule will be followed for children and youth events.
Preferably, one of these adults will be a parent, or a person over 21 years of age. It is anticipated that this will not only reduce the risk of abuse, but also reduce the risk of false accusations.
- C. Windows on classroom doors will not be covered by curtains. Doors w/o windows will be left open during classtime if possible.
- D. Department leaders are encouraged to make random visits to all classrooms.
- E. In larger churches where "everybody doesn't know everybody," a system should be established that identifies a child and the child's parent or guardian. Children should only be released to the proper adult. (Initial here if this policy is approved. _____)
- F. Activities will be supervised by church personnel until all children are in the custody of their parents or legal guardians.
- G. For overnight activities, all adults will be cleared in advance with the proper departmental leaders, keeping in mind #II above.
- H. Children are the responsibility of their parents during activities where there is no specific programming for children; children should be encouraged to remain in areas of the church where adult supervision is available.

I. Persons who have abused children or youth in the past will not be permitted to work with these age groups. They will be sensitively encouraged to find another area of ministry. (See Note #2.)

J. Suspicious or inappropriate conduct will be reported to appropriate leadership. All workers will be informed to whom they should report. In cases of inappropriate, but not abusive, behavior, warnings are to be issued and the situation subsequently monitored closely but discreetly. Continued violation of warnings or a single serious violation incident will be cause of termination of responsibilities.

K. Workers will report to a supervisor when a child or youth exhibits a change in personality or behavior which may indicate possible abuse.

L. The church will report cases of documented abuse to legal authorities. (See attachment #6 for clarification of what entails abuse.)

NOTE 1: For appointed pastors, this screening will be the responsibility of GPC's Board of Ministerial Education and Guidance, and complaints will be directed to the conference superintendent.

NOTE 2: Though a person's religious conversion can and should make a difference in a person's life, we do not assume that a person with a prior conviction of child abuse presents no risk. It is understood that a "conversion" defense would likely be viewed with derision by a court. Such an individual will be encouraged to work in an area of ministry not involving access to children or youth.

NOTE 3: We are rightly concerned about requesting or divulging confidential information about persons. The form, "Primary Screening Form for Paid Employees and Regular Volunteers in Children and Youth Ministries" (Attachment 1) requests workers to give consent for the release of just such relevant information.

NOTE 4: This document has blanks you may complete, and utilizes words such as "will" instead of "may" or "should" in order to make it easy for your church to adopt these "recommendations." Upon adoption, a copy of your policy (whether it is this policy or a similar one) will be forwarded to the GPC office.

NOTE 5: Most of the information above is condensed and adapted from a policy prepared by Rev. Dottie Miller and adopted for the Spring Arbor, MI, FMC. Rev. Miller utilized *Reducing the Risk II: Making Your Church Safe from Child Sexual Abuse*. The Free Methodist Church of North America has officially adopted that material for setting policy for prevention of sexual abuse. For more complete information, see www.reducingtherisk.com. A video to assist in training volunteers is available from this group.

Attachments:

1. Primary Screening Form for Paid Employees and Regular Volunteers in Children and Youth Ministries. (May be used as a written questionnaire or an oral interview.)
2. Reference — Written Form for Applicants
3. Reference — Record of Oral Contact with a Reference...
4. Form for Signature of Regular Workers & Paid Volunteers
5. Child Sexual Abuse Knowledge Inventory
6. What Is Child Sexual Abuse?
7. Symptoms of Molestation
8. The Effects of Child Sexual Abuse
9. Child Molestation Supplement

Resources for Children:

I Can't Talk About It (for girls)
Something Must Be Wrong With Me (for boys)
Both are by Doris Sanford, Multnomah Publishing.

Resources for Adults:

Good 'N' Angry by Les Carter, Baker Publishing
Released from Shame by Sandra Wilson, Intervarsity Press
Perfect Every Time by Rineheart, NavPress
A Door of Hope by Frank, Here's Life Publishing
Secrets of Your Family Tree by Carder et. al., Moody Press
Taking Hold of Tomorrow by Hayford, Regal Books
The Lies We Believe by Thurman, Nelson Publishing

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Primary Screening Form for Paid Employees and Regular Volunteers for Children or Youth Workers for the Free Methodist Church.

(This form can be used as a written questionnaire or an oral interview.)

This form is to be completed by all applicants for any position (volunteer or paid) involving the supervision or custody of minors. It is being used to help the church provide a safe and secure environment for those children and youth who participate in our programs and use our facilities.

1. Name: _____ Date: _____

2. Identity must be confirmed with a state driver's license or other photographic identification.

Yes, identity has been verified with a state driver's license or other photographic identification.

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____

3. Have you ever been convicted of or pled guilty to a crime?

No

Yes (If yes, please explain.)

4. Personal References

Name _____	Name _____
Address _____	Address _____
City _____	City _____
State _____ Zip _____	State _____ Zip _____
Phone (_____) _____	Phone (_____) _____

5. List the most recent church where you have been active.

Church Name _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Phone (_____) _____

How long did you attend?

Did you work with children or youth at the church?

- Yes
- No

The information contained in this form is considered to be correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references or churches listed in this form to give you any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my character and fitness for children or youth work. In consideration of the receipt and evaluation of this form by the Free Methodist Church, I hereby release any individual, church, or any other person or organization, including record custodians, both collectively and individually, from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind or nature which may at any time result to me, my heirs, or family on account of compliance or any attempts to comply with this authorization. I waive any rights that I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any person or organization identified by me in this form.

In service to this congregation, I agree to be bound by the bylaws and policies of the Free Methodist Church and to refrain from unscriptural conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of the Church.

I further state that I have carefully read the foregoing release and know the contents thereof and I sign this release of my own free will. This is a legally binding agreement which I have read and understand.

Applicant signature _____ Date: _____

Witness signature _____ Date: _____

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Reference: Written Form for Applicants for Work with Children or Youth

Free Methodist Church

_____ is applying to become an employee or volunteer with children or youth at the Free Methodist Church, and has given your name or church as a reference. This position means being in close contact with children, and we want to ensure that this relationship will be a healthy one. Please complete the form below and use the enclosed envelope to send us your evaluation of this person's character and integrity. Your response will remain confidential.

1. Describe your relationship with this person.

2. How long have you known this person, and in what capacity?

3. Please use the following scale to respond to questions a through e. (1 = low; 6 = high)

a. Emotional maturity?	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Following through with commitments?	1	2	3	4	5	6
c. Ability to relate to children?	1	2	3	4	5	6
d. Ability to relate to youth?	1	2	3	4	5	6
e. Spiritual maturity?	1	2	3	4	5	6

4. Do you have any concerns regarding this person working with children or youth?

No

Yes Please explain:

Church Name _____

Your Name _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Phone (_____) _____

Thank you for taking time to complete and return this reference form.

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Record of Oral Contact with a Reference or Church Identified by an Applicant for Youth or Children's Work

1. Name of Applicant: _____

2. Reference or church contacted. (If it is a church, identify the church AND the person contacted, AND their position.)

3. Date and time of contact:

4. In what capacity do the reference or church representative know the person in question?

5. Person contacting the reference or church (your name):

6. Method of contact (telephone, personal conversation, etc.):

7. Say: _____ is applying to become an employee or volunteer with children or youth at the Free Methodist Church, and has given your name or church as a reference. This position means being in close contact with children, and we want to ensure that this relationship will be a healthy one. May I have a few moments of your time to ask some important questions? Your response will remain confidential.

Do you have any concerns regarding this person working with children or youth?

No

Yes If yes, ask them to please explain:

8. Summarize any further relevant conversation about the applicant's life or ministry.

Your legible signature: _____

Your position: _____ Date: _____

**Signature of Paid Workers & Regular Volunteers
That They Have Read Required Information
Concerning Supervisory Policies and Child Abuse**

By my signature and checkmark below, I certify that I have read, understand, and to the best of my ability will implement the following:

- The Free Methodist Church's "Supervisory Policies" concerning child abuse prevention and reporting.

By my signature and checkmarks below, I certify that I have read and understand the following:

- "Child Sexual Abuse Knowledge Inventory"
- "What Is Child Sexual Abuse?" and "Symptoms of Molestation"
- "Effects of Child Sexual Abuse"
- "Child Molestation Supplement"

Name (please print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Child Sexual Abuse Knowledge Inventory

- T or F 1. Child sexual abuse always involves physical contact with children.
- T or F 2. Most child molesters are male.
- T or F 3. Child molesters are usually strangers.
- T or F 4. Victims of sexual abuse suffer no long-term effects.
- T or F 5. One out of five molesters begin their activity before age eighteen.
- T or F 6. Only a small percentage of victims are male.
- T or F 7. Most churches screen workers for potential molesters.
- T or F 8. Church leaders cannot be held liable for child sexual abuse.
- T or F 9. Some child sexual abuse victims have won settlements of over \$1,000,000 from churches.
- T or F 10. A child molester who has experienced a religious conversion no longer presents a threat to children.
- T or F 11. Child sexual abuse is a criminal offense in all 50 states.
- T or F 12. A child molester may have over 500 victims in a lifetime.
- T or F 13. Churches have in the past been supportive of victims of child sexual abuse.
- T or F 14. Child molesters are seldom known by the victim.

What is Child Sexual Abuse?

The 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 sexual stimulation of the perpetrator.

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 behaviors 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, and forcible rape. Types of abuse that do not involve touching include verbal comments, pornographic videos, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, and allowing children to witness sexual activity.

The full extent of child sexual abuse in our country is not known. Current conservative estimates suggest that from 500,000 to over 1,500,000 children are sexually abused each year. The possibility that the number is higher is likely because the greatest percentage of these cases goes unreported. A national retrospective study on the prevalence of child sexual abuse found that 27 percent of adult women and 16 percent of men claimed to have experienced some form of child sexual victimization. Over 25 percent indicated this occurred before the age of nine (Finkelhor, Hotelling, Lewis and Smith, 1990).

Child sexual abuse occurs in all demographic, racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and religious groups. Strangers account for less than 20 percent of the abusers. Estimates indicate that when a known assailant commits the abuse, half of the time it is a father or stepfather, and the rest of the time it is a trusted adult who misuses his or her authority over children.

Symptoms of Molestation

Church workers and staff members should be alert to the physical signs of abuse and molestation, as well as to behavioral and verbal signs that a victim may exhibit. Some of the more common signs are summarized below (Sloan, 1983).

Physical signs 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

Symptoms of Molestation continued

Behavioral signs may include:

- ◆ anxiety when approaching church or nursery area
- ◆ refusal to go to school
expresses dislike; doesn't want to see friends. "I just want to stay home with you."
- ◆ nervous or hostile behavior toward adults
- ◆ fear of specific persons, situations, strangers
child verbally declares they don't want to go to a particular person's house, or shies away when around them or around strangers
- ◆ sexual self-consciousness
- ◆ "acting out" of sexual behavior
- ◆ changes in type of fantasy play
expresses extreme victimization/ violence in play
- ◆ withdrawal from church activities and friends
isolates self, is sullen: "Leave me alone!"
- ◆ personality change
outgoing child-leader who becomes withdrawn, change in school performance
- ◆ poor self-image/low self-esteem
increases negative self-talk: "I'm not good; I can't do anything right."
- ◆ fear of being alone
"Please stay with me. Don't turn out the light!"
- ◆ excessive attempt to control environment/fear of unknown
often becomes extremely anxious over unknown aspects of life. "What if our house catches on fire?" or "Mom, I'm afraid."

Verbal signs may include the following statements:

- ◆ I don't like [a particular church worker]
- ◆ [A church worker] does things to me when we are alone
- ◆ I don't like to be alone with [a church worker]
- ◆ [A church worker] fooled around with me

The Effects of Child Sexual Abuse

The personal violation of child sexual abuse causes the victim to experience many losses...including loss of childhood memories, loss of health social contact, loss of the opportunity to learn, loss of bodily integrity, loss of identity and self-esteem, loss of trust, loss of sexual maturity, and loss of self-determination. All of these personal violations mean that victims of child sexual abuse lose the child's right to a normal childhood. In adulthood it may also mean the loss of the capacity to appreciate sexual intimacy as nurturing, holy, and loving. (The Report of the Winter Commission, 1990, Vol. 1, p.118)

Child sexual abuse robs children of their childhood and can potentially scar its young victims for life. Too often in the past, the effects of abuse were minimized or dismissed. Children were viewed as being resilient. Research has shown that children can suffer significant pain from even a single abusive incident. Church members must be aware of the pain and long term suffering that can accompany such abuse. Abuse can result in abnormal fears, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), aggressive behavior, sexual acting out, depression, diffused sexual identity, and poor self-esteem (Kendall-Tackett, Williams, and Finkelhor, 1991). The incidence of sexually transmitted disease is also a possible outcome.

The degree of damage depends upon several factors including the intensity, duration, and frequency of the abuse. In addition, the *relationship* of the perpetrator to the child matters. If the abuser is a known and trusted authority figure in the child's life, the degree of impact increases dramatically.

*An additional burden for the parishioner or client is a sense of being betrayed by God and the Church. This betrayal by one's pastor represents a major obstacle to the parishioner or client's personal faith. The damage to one's spiritual life done by this experience is often profound and long term (Marie Marshall Fortune, *Sexual Violence: The Unmentionable Sin*, p. 107)*

Possible Long-Term Affect of Sexual Abuse

Consequences of child sexual abuse can plague victims into adulthood. When church leaders, pastors, and respected congregational workers perpetrate the abuse, lifelong religious confusion and deep feelings of enmity toward God and the church can occur.

1. Lack of trust
2. Confusion of family roles
3. Depression, self-pity, suicide
4. Anger, unresolved and repressed
5. Emotional blocking, turning off sexually, hypersexuality
6. Denial of experience
7. Isolation—social, shyness, alone, self-protective
8. Dissociation, psychotic "blacking out"
9. Sexualization of relationships
10. Anxiety, fears, phobias
11. Sexual dysfunction
12. Eating disorders
13. Substance abuse
14. Promiscuity
15. Disassociation from emotions
16. Possible perpetration of sexual abuse on others
17. In *USA TODAY* on January 2, 2002 and article on brain research stated, "According to the Institute of Psychiatry at Medical University of South Carolina, repeated sexual abuse causes physical changes in the brain. This may explain why abused children often use illegal drugs. According to Carl Anderson of McLean Hospital, damage to this area of the brain may cause an individual to be particularly irritable and use outside means to calm self."

Child Molestation Supplement

This section contains additional illustrational materials for instructional use.

- ◆ "Sexual abuse occurs when dependent, developmentally immature children and adolescents become involved in sexual activity which they do not understand fully and to which they cannot freely give informed consent." (Sean Sammon, *Slayer of the Soul*, p. 6)
- ◆ In 2001, approximately 903,000 children were found to be victims of child maltreatment. Maltreatment categories typically include neglect, medical neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and psychological maltreatment. More than half of child victims (57 percent) suffered neglect; 2 percent suffered medical neglect; 19 percent were physically abused; 10 percent were sexually abused; and 7 percent were psychologically maltreated. (National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect)
- ◆ In one study done in 1989, 453 pedophiles were found to have committed in their lifetimes 106,916 acts of child molestation against 67,112 different victims. That is an average of 236 victims per molester!
- ◆ One in three sexual assault victims is under the age of 12. Forty-three percent of those are 6 and younger, 34 percent are 7 to 11. (National Center for Victims of Crime)
- ◆ A 1996 National Institute of Justice study estimated that each year child sexual abuse in America costs the nation \$23 billion. Ninety to 95 percent of all sexual abuse cases are never reported to the police.
- ◆ A history of childhood sexual abuse leads to a lower health-related quality of life and a greater number of health problems, psychiatric symptoms and diagnoses. Research shows that survivors of childhood sexual abuse have "more medical problems, higher medical use, more physical symptoms, lower health status, and more medical procedures. (American Psychological Association: *Understanding Child Sexual Abuse: Education, Prevention, and Recovery*.)
- ◆ "Single mothers are particularly vulnerable to the designs of the pedophile. This person will offer to be a friend to the child participating in sports, taking on hiking trips, etc. The mother, anxious for the children to have a male image, often readily goes along with these offers from 'such a nice person.' The fixated pedophile is 'very good' to the child as one might expect in pursuing a sexual experience. Pedophiles will go so far as to date or marry a single mother to gain access to her children." (Delaplane, D. and A. Delaplane. *Victims of Child Abuse, Domestic Violence, Elder Abuse, Rape, Robbery, Assault, and Violent Death; A Manual for Clergy and Congregations. Special Edition for Military Chaplains.*)
- ◆ Hurting a child is a violation of trust. Unfortunately, it happens every day. And when the abuse is sexual, it can leave a lasting psychological wound that is difficult to heal. JAMA
- ◆ Children with disabilities are 4 to 10 times more vulnerable to sexual abuse than their non-disabled peers (National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse, 1992)
- ◆ Approximately 2 out of 3 molesters who are caught will sexually abuse again in the future.
- ◆ As much as 56 percent of reported child molestation cases are committed by adolescents, mostly male. (Roger Katz, "Psychosocial Adjustment in Adolescent Child Molesters" in *Child Abuse and Neglect*.)
- ◆ Between 1986 and 1996 the estimated number of sexually abused children increased 83 percent. (National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect)
- ◆ It is estimated that there are 60 million survivors of childhood sexual abuse in America today
- ◆ Approximately 60 percent of the male survivors samples report at least one of their perpetrators to be female (Mcndol, 1993).
- ◆ The typical child sex offender molests an average of 117 children. (National Institute of Mental Health, 1988).
- ◆ "Most sexual offenders are male. One in four offenders is a member of the child's family or a person who has been entrusted with the care of the child. Approximately half are friends of the child or family." (*Child Sexual Abuse: Guidelines for Community Workers*, p. 23)
- ◆ Child molesters can be classified as either preferential or situational. Preferential molesters have a preference for sexual activity with children and will seek them out. Situational molesters do not, but take advantage of a situation to sexually abuse children if it occurs. Sexual abuse may range from a once-in-a-lifetime act to a long-term pattern of behavior. Most offenders are situational and that number is increasing faster than those of preferential child molesters. (*Breach of Trust, D-2*)
- ◆ More than 2 million cases of child abuse and neglect are reported each year in the United States. An estimated 150,000 to 200,000 new cases of sexual abuse occur each year. (American Medical Association. JAMA Patient Page: Protecting Our Children... Sexual Abuse of Children Is Common, and Too Often Undetected)