

## OUR THEOLOGICAL TASK

**“Let the little children come to me: do not stop them...” (Mark 10:14)**

Our children and youth receive the kingdom of God through trusting faith. They are entitled to find church and school places where they will find adults they can trust. *DIVINE WORD EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH* is committed to care for, support and protect all children who enter its doors to share the love of God in Jesus Christ. The Church, above all institutions, is called to welcome and nurture the child. Our goal is to maintain a safe, secure, loving place where children may grow, and where those who care for them may administer to their needs in responsible ways.

The dramatic rise of physical and sexual abuse among children and youth in our society necessitates a prevention program. *DIVINE WORD EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH* has instituted policies and procedures to reduce the risk of child abuse in our church and church-related activities. Our program benefits: parents, teachers, other adult staff and volunteers as well as the youth themselves. We believe that this program will help reduce the risk of child abuse occurring at *DIVINE WORD EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH* as well as minimize adult, staff and volunteers being placed in positions of risk.

We uphold that to report abuse is to be a witness to the world of the love and justice of God and recognize that reporting abuse is a form of ministering to the needs of those crying out for help. To report abuse can help to stop existing abuse and prevent further abuse. We are committed to protect and advocate for children and youth. The Church, at all levels of its organization, is entrusted with the responsibility of providing an emotionally safe, spiritually grounded, healthy environment for children and youth in which they are protected from abuse.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Definitions .....	3
Codes of Law .....	4
Standards	
Criteria for Authority Figures & Assistants .....	4
The Six Month Rule .....	4
Policy Instruction .....	5
Screening Procedures .....	5
Responsibilities of Volunteers & Paid Staff	
Two Adult Rule .....	6
Adult Child Ratios .....	6
Residential Camping .....	6
Transportation .....	7
Counseling .....	8
Interpersonal Boundaries .....	8
Discipline .....	9
Open Door Policy .....	11
Electronic Media .....	11
Maximum “Youth” Age .....	11
Screening Procedures.....	12
Implementation: Prevention Policy Checklist .....	14
Prevention Policy Board Duties .....	16
Reporting Abuse or Alleged Abuse .....	17

## DEFINITIONS

**CHILD ABUSE** - Any act committed by a person in a position of trust (parent, guardian, caregiver, Sunday school teacher, pastor, or other) which harms or threatens to harm a child's welfare, physical, spiritual or mental health. (Further definitions of abuse and neglect vary according to state law.)

We recognize Child Abuse may fall into four categories:

**PHYSICAL ABUSE** - Inflicting bodily harm to children constitutes physical abuse. Instances of physical abuse include any physical act of undue force such as assault with knife, strap, or other implement; burns, fractures, and bruises resulting from being beaten, pushed down, shaken, pinched, slapped or thrown. ***Physical abuse does not always leave visible marks.***

**SEXUAL ABUSE** - Any time a child is used for the sexual stimulation of an adult or older child, abuse has occurred. The child is powerless either to consent to or resist such sexual acts. This includes fondling, sexual intercourse, forced participation in sexual acts, incest, exploitation for the purpose of pornography or prostitution, and/or exposure to adult sexual activity.

**EMOTIONAL ABUSE** - Emotional abuse deeply affects a child's self-esteem by submitting him/her to verbal assault or emotional cruelty. It does not always involve injuries we can see. The child receives the message that he/she is not good. Emotional abuse can include closed confinement (being shut in a small area), making racial or gender remarks, excessive punishment, use of profanity, knowingly permitting drug or alcohol abuse, ignoring or encouraging peer abuse.

**NEGLECT** - Not hearing or addressing a child's basic needs for health, welfare or safety may result in harm to the child. It can include any of the following acts of negligence or maltreatment:

- Failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing;
- Abandonment;
- Refusal to seek treatment for illness;
- Inadequate supervision;
- Health hazards in the home, school, or church;
- Ignoring a child's need for contact, affirmation, stimulation and nurture;
- Unsafe transportation.

These definitions will be expanded upon, be covered in our training program for better clarification.

## CODES OF LAW

A child protection program is mandated by statute, which means there are state laws which declare a child's right to be free from abuse and neglect. Illinois has child abuse reporting laws with varying definitions of child abuse and varying provisions as to who may and who must report, penalties for not reporting, and required action following the report.

## STANDARDS

### 1. CRITERIA FOR AUTHORITY FIGURES & ASSISTANTS

**MINIMUM AGE:** The following standards for Authority Figures (whether volunteers or paid staff) are designed to separate Authority Figures from the group they are serving by age or enough years to reinforce recognition of the Authority Figure's role.

**AUTHORITY FIGURES** are the primary leaders of youth and children's activities.

To work with youth (grades 6th and above), the Authority Figure must be a minimum of 18 years of age.

To work with children (infant – 5th grade), the Authority Figure must be a minimum of 18 years of age.

**ASSISTANTS** are persons who lend aid to the "Authority Figure" and act at the direction of the "Authority Figure", including volunteers. Assistants must be:

A minimum of 12 years of age and 4 years older than the participants; and in the judgment of a staff member, competent to assist in the activity.

An Assistant may not be counted as an adult in the child/adult ratios.

**2. THE "6 MONTH RULE":** *DIVINE WORD EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH* employs a six-month rule in the selection of volunteers wishing to give service in the areas of children and youth ministries. This rule discourages pedophiles who seek to benefit from the desperate need for volunteers of many churches, but also from churches willingness to easily trust.

Volunteers, seeking to serve in areas of children and youth ministries must be members in good standing of *DIVINE WORD EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH* for a minimum of six months. The six month rule will be waived for clergy if they accept a call to *DIVINE WORD EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH* from another congregation. Persons not meeting this minimum requirement may serve only in an assistant capacity with two other non-related adults, unless a floater is present (see "Two-Adult Rule", pg.6).

**3. POLICY INSTRUCTION:** *DIVINE WORD EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH* will ensure that regularly scheduled (i.e., at least annually) training focused on current issues of child protection is available to and received by those working with children and youth. Attendance at this training will be required of all new paid staff members, and new adult volunteers who work with children and/or youth.

Documentation of attendance will be part of the Church permanent records. Records will be updated at least annually so that if an incident occurs, the church has proof that they followed the policy.

Over a period of two years the training will include:

- The definition and recognition of child abuse.
- The Church's policy and procedures on child abuse and the reasons for having them.
- The need to maintain a positive classroom environment, including appropriate discipline and age-level characteristics.
- The appropriate behavior for teachers and leaders of child/youth events.
- Child abuse reporting responsibilities and procedures.
- Definition of appropriate interpersonal boundaries (ways of touching students, appropriate language, etc.)
- All forms used by the church for application, background checks, reporting, and teacher files.

#### **4. SCREENING PROCEDURES**

The screening process will include:

- An application
- An interview
- Disclosure Form
- Reference Checks
- Background Checks
- Any Federal and State Laws as appropriate.

*DIVINE WORD EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH* suggests that a bank of potential occasional volunteers be created by introducing the church's policies and procedures to new members in their initial membership orientation so that at the end of their first six months they can and will hopefully want to go through the process and screening procedures to become a trained volunteer.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES OF VOLUNTEERS & PAID STAFF**

#### **1. THE TWO ADULT RULE**

A minimum of two non-related adults are to be utilized in all programming with children and youth. When impossible to staff with two non-related adults, there must be an additional adult serving as a "floater" with visual and physical access to all areas. A floater could be the Pastor, Sunday School Superintendent or a screened volunteer who can move in and out of classrooms, recreation areas and meeting rooms functioning as an additional set of eyes and hands.

#### **2. ADULT/CHILD RATIOS**

Note: All ratios must be understood in light of first having two adults present at all times. Example: Recommendations state that there must be 1 adult to 10 children at four years of age. You must have 2 adults at all times, so really for the first 10 youth, you must have 2 adults.

**Day School & Nursery Program** These programs **MUST** meet the respected codes of the state as the minimum ratio.

- Infants (6 weeks -14 months) 1 Adult to 4 Infants **MAX 12**
- Toddlers (15-23 months) – 1 Adult to 5 Toddlers **MAX 15**

- 2 years of age – 1 Adult to 8 Children **MAX 16**
- 3 years of age – 1 Adult to 10 Children **MAX 20**
- 4 years of age – 1 Adult to 10 Children **MAX 20**
- 5 years of age – 1 Adult to 20 Children **MAX 20**
- Kindergarten– 1 Adult to 20 Children **MAX 20**
- Mixed Age Groups: follow the youngest child ratio.

**Other Church Programs** – Follow the Day Care/Nursery program ratios for young children and the following for older youth:

- Grades 1-4 = 1 Adult to 10 Children
- Grades 5-8 = 1 Adult to 15 Children
- Grades 9-12 = 1 Adult to 20 Children

### 3. RESIDENTIAL CAMPING

Any overnight event is classified as residential camping. In residential camp settings, whether at Church camps, lock-ins, youth trips or a youth related overnight event, the adults supervisors must always be the same sex as the campers.

- Grades 1-3 = 1 Adult to 8 Children
- Grades 4-8 = 1 Adult to 10 Children
- Grades 9-12 = 1 Adult to 12 Children

#### Rooming

In a dormitory (cabin type) setting:

At least two adults of the same gender as the residents should be assigned to each room of youth or children. Follow “Adult/Child Ratios” to determine when to add additional adults.

Adults should not share the same bed with a youth or child under any circumstances.

Adults should not be alone with a youth or child in a room.

In a motel/hotel setting:

Select a hotel with rooms opening to the interior (i.e. a closed hallway) of the building. Where possible, select adjoining rooms on a single hallway.

When two adults cannot be assigned to a room housing youth, the youth should be roomed separately from the adults. If adjoining rooms are available with doors that can be left in the open position, a single adult in each of the adjoining rooms is acceptable.

An adult should not share a bed with a child/youth.

Where adults need to be assigned to separate rooms, it is recommended that one adult room be located between every two youth rooms on the hall.

Adults should develop a rotating schedule allowing for the hallway to be monitored throughout the night.

If room checks are needed; they should involve two adults of the same gender as the room residents.

### 4. TRANSPORTATION

Traveling to or from programmed events:

All drivers should be screened in the same manner as other leadership for an event including a review of their motor vehicle record.

When private vehicles are used to transport children and youth for programmed church related events, leaders should ensure that appropriate insurance is being maintained by both the church and the private driver.

All drivers must be 22 years of age or older.

Where possible, it is recommended that two adults be placed in each vehicle or the vehicles teamed in minimum groups of 2 that stay together at all times.

On all planned transports a signed permission slip must be on file. In the absence of such a form, the church staff person should call a parent or relative to sign the form or pick up the child.

### Transporting Children and Youth to and from home:

It is often out of the pastor, children's or youth leaders control as to the manner and procedures by which children or youth arrive for and depart local church events. It is, however, likely that these persons may occasionally be asked to drive a child or youth. We offer the following guidelines:

Church related staff should make every effort to not transport a youth or child unless a second adult is in the vehicle with them.

In all matters of transportation every effort will be made to ensure that Drivers have proper rest, nutrition and freedom from supervision in order to ensure safe operation of the vehicle.

## **5. COUNSELING**

### Open-Door Counseling

At any counseling session with children and youth the door of the room used should remain open for the entire session. Ideally, the session will be conducted at a time when others are nearby, even if they are not within listening distance. Counseling sessions conducted behind closed doors are a breeding ground for false allegations of abuse. Closed doors also make it too easy for the abuser to have the privacy and isolation he or she needs to carry out abusive acts. When someone is troubled and seeks counseling, it is critical to resist the any request to meet in secret, even if the child or youth makes that request.

### Limited Counseling Sessions

Whenever someone seeks counseling, it is important to determine in the initial meeting if you are actually qualified to address the needs effectively. If you do not believe you are qualified, refer the member to another counselor. In the event you do agree to counsel them, agree to a limited number of sessions (two or three) and then refer the member to another counselor if the problems have not been resolved. In this way, if you cannot successfully help the member, you will at least not delay the counseling process.

## **6. INTERPERSONAL BOUNDARIES**

Youth ministry [more so than children's ministry] can be described by many adjectives, but the first one is almost always *relational*. Youth [and many children] get involved, and stay involved, with ministries because the ministries offer opportunities to experience relationships with peers and adults that are both spiritually and emotionally healthy. Whether they can articulate this or not, the youth and children want and need to see good examples from the adult leaders of appropriate ways to relate to others. Adults who model respectful and nurturing behaviors that do not interfere with another's privacy provide these types of good examples. Youth and children follow the lead of the adults in this regard; therefore, it is important for the adult workers to be clear about appropriate behaviors. Adult workers must be attentive to:

- appropriate dress codes, (set prior to start of function)
- appropriate use of language,
- appropriate demonstrations of affection and encouragement.

## **7. DISCIPLINE**

### Maintaining a Positive Environment at Church

Maintaining a positive environment (classroom, practice, Sunday school etc.) will encourage good behavior by the students and improve the learning process. As the teacher or leader in the learning environment, you will always want to find the most positive way of speaking and working with the young people in your care. Keeping your voice on a level tone goes a long way in keeping the noise level in the classroom to an appropriate level. The louder you talk, the louder the noise level will be. Always find as many positive ways to acknowledge the students in your care as possible.

Appropriate Discipline – A well-designed and managed program contributes to good behavior by:

- Limiting the number of children in a classroom
- Having adequate staff
- Discouraging competition
- encouraging children to express feelings, and be empathetic
- Developing and discussing rules of conduct

The purpose for setting disciplinary guidelines is to enable children to develop internal control mechanisms that foster growth and promote societal values. ***Children must be trained in basic rules of conduct.***

### Age-Level Characteristics

Knowing what is appropriate for each age level enhances the learning by students. Each level has its own unique aspects that when they are acknowledged and planned for, produces more learning and less discipline problems. Here are some sample ideas, more can be found in curriculum resources and educational textbooks.

Ages 3-6:

*Moral Development:* Preschoolers are very “me-oriented.” They are the center of their own worlds. Their entire view of right and wrong – along with their faith – is based upon what influential models (such as parents and teachers) tell them.  
*Cognitive Level:* Preschoolers’ play is symbolic of real life.

Ages 6-8:

*Moral Development:* For younger children, the moral code is “an eye for an eye.” If they are pinched, they pinch back. Personal values are rooted in a “law and order” approach. Things that benefit young children are almost always seen as right, whereas harmful things are almost always viewed as wrong. The world, like their faith, is black and white.

*Cognitive Level:* Young children think in concrete terms about the ideas and concepts they are learning. They need help understanding symbolic or abstract ideas.

Ages 9-12:

*Moral Development:* Children at this age begin to see shades of gray in their world. They question authority more and understand that individual values can impact the lives of others. They also begin to understand that doing “wrong things” means more than just “getting into trouble” or facing punishment from parents or teachers. Faith becomes a working, personal faith.

*Cognitive Level:* Older children continue to think in concrete terms, although by the end of childhood they can more readily understand abstract concepts.

### Suggested Discipline Steps

1. If a child or youth is behaving inappropriately, the leader or worker will tell the child specifically what he/she is doing that is not acceptable and state the expected behavior, e.g., “We do not throw blocks. We use blocks for building.”
2. If measure #1 is not effective, the child or youth will be guided to another activity.
3. If inappropriate behavior continues, the child or youth may be placed at a table to work alone away from the other students. If the child or youth’s disruptive behavior continues after these steps have been taken, the child or youth may be taken to the Pastor or the primary leader for the activity and left under his/her supervision, with others around or contact the parents.
4. No physical punishment or verbal abuse, e.g., ridicule, are to be used at any time.
5. ***If isolating the child or youth within the classroom or removal from the room becomes necessary, the situation should be discussed with the parents or guardian as soon as possible.***

### Discipline While on Trips

Create a covenant. In order to make events safe and beneficial for everyone involved, guidelines must be followed. Children, youth, adults and parents are required to sign a covenant outlining the actions that will be taken by the adult leaders attending the event if set guidelines are broken. These policies are important for all who are members or guests of the event to follow and understand. Suggested guidelines to follow help reinforce positive behavior:

1. Warning for first infraction, unless a major infraction.
2. Child or youth will be escorted for a time by an adult chaperone.
3. Child or youth will call home to conference with a parent.
4. Child or youth will be sent home at parent’s expense.
5. Child or youth will not be allowed on next outing.

## **8. OPEN DOOR POLICY**

Classrooms or child care rooms may be visited without prior notice by church staff, parents or other volunteer church workers, e.g. Sunday School Superintendent, at any time. Brief observations of child care rooms and classrooms of children or youth are conducted by the pastor or primary leader during all activities.

## **9. ELECTRONIC MEDIA**

*DIVINE WORD EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH* recognizes that electronic media has become a staple of youth communication. Recognizing the difficulties of controlling a wireless environment, all participants will be asked to turn off devices during any youth and children’s programs.

This includes, but is not limited to cell phones, players or I-Pods, Laptop computers, and any other hand held devices. We believe that participants should be focused on the program, not on an electronic device.

## **10. MAXIMUM “YOUTH” AGE**

*DIVINE WORD EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH* will consider a child eligible for youth programs until their graduation from high school but not to exceed their 20<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## SCREENING PROCEDURES

According to the dictionary, “to prevent” is “to stop something effectually by forestalling action and rendering it impossible”. It is the hope, that within the activities of *DIVINE WORD EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH*, we might prevent the abuse of children, youth and vulnerable persons in our care. The initial and most fundamental step to prevention is the careful screening of the persons who will have access to children less than 18 years of age. Although we recognize the integrity of an overwhelming number of the persons with discerned calling to ministries with children and youth we realize that abuse still occurs in the church. Therefore, we believe that all persons should be properly screened and all screening documents kept on file.

The following steps should be followed in screening volunteer and paid applicants:

### COMPLETED APPLICATION FORM

An application/information gathering form should be required on all persons seeking to be in ministry to children and youth and kept on file. An application should include the following information:

- Name
- Address
- Phone Number
- Emergency Contact Person
- Gifts, Skills, Relevant Training
- Education
- Minimum of 2 References (Not immediate family)
- Church Membership (Including how long a member)
- Pastor's Name & Phone Number (Just *DIVINE WORD EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH* is appropriate if member)
- Why the Person wants to serve in this position
- When they are available

You should not ask for information about marital status or handicapping conditions as stated in Federal/State discrimination guidelines. We should also be sensitive to age and sex discrimination guidelines; however, adequate information may be requested to insure compliance with this policy's minimum standards.

### CONDUCT AN INTERVIEW WITH APPLICANTS

We recommend an interview be conducted with all applicants and offer the following tips to aid the interview process.

- Prepare a list of questions. In doing so, read the application and note areas for exploration.
- It aids the interview process if specific questions are used so that the questions are standard for all applicants.
- Be aware of red flags. These “flags” are indicators of issues which must be explored further in order for you to be assured that all information is collected concerning a prospective paid employee or volunteer. Some of these “flags” might include:

Many addresses over a short period of time. This could indicate that a person is trying to be anonymous. But it could also indicate that they were a college student who moved a lot to keep rent low.

Wants to work with only one age group.

If someone would like to work with only one specific age group, it could indicate that person has targeted that age group for molestation. Or, it could mean that is the age group for which they are trained and that experience has shown they do not work well with other ages. Also be aware of young adults who seem overly committed to one age group.

Does not want/need/like close supervision. The interview may indicate that the person does not like to be closely supervised. This might raise questions about motivation for applying for this work.

The interviewer needs to be able to explore issues as they arise during the interview and depart from the set of prepared questions to do so.

### DISCLOSURE

*DIVINE WORD EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH* requires all persons having access to children and youth to complete a disclosure form and keep it on file. A sample form is attached.

### REFERENCE CHECKS

It is recommended that a minimum of two references be contacted on all applicants having access to children and youth. One of the references must be the applicant's pastor (clergy person's District Superintendent) and the other must be a non-relative. A recommended reference form is attached.

Suggestion: Have applicant give reference forms to references with the church's address on it to mail back directly to *DIVINE WORD EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH*.

## BACKGROUND CHECKS

*DIVINE WORD EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH* will regularly check with their insurance company to see what their requirements are in this area.

*All volunteers or paid staff should submit to:*

- a. Social Security Number Verification To determine all present and past places of residence.
- b. Criminal Convictions Check – All counties of residence are individually checked at the courthouse level or at the state level where applicable.

## FEDERAL AND STATE LAW

The requirements of any and all Federal laws or State laws in which a church or church agency is located affecting or relating to employment or child abuse must be complied with, and in any case where there is a conflict between such laws and the procedure outlined in this document, said laws shall prevail and the procedure outlined in the document shall be modified to the extent necessary to eliminate such conflict. Such exceptions to this policy shall apply only to the related provision.

## IMPLEMENTATION: PREVENTION POLICY CHECKLIST

The key to implementing a Child Protection Policy at *DIVINE WORD EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH* is communication with the Church congregation regarding the need for a policy, to whom it applies, and how it is implemented.

### 1. Educate the Congregation

Send a letter to the congregation stating that the policy has been amended. Explain in the letter, the need for the policy, to whom it will apply and how it will be implemented.

Write newsletter articles and speak to it from the pulpit.

Post a synopsis of the policy statement.

### 2. Implement a process for recruiting, screening and "hiring" workers (paid staff and volunteers) who will work with children and youth. A thorough screening process for staff (including clergy) and volunteers will:

- Deter persons who engage in predatory behavior from applying for a position,
- Identify possible predators,
- Show the church's commitment to protecting children and youth.

### 3. Formally Train Staff and Volunteers

All workers (staff and volunteers) are required to attend training on the church's policy(s), procedures and expectations for working with children and youth (e.g., hand washing, two adult rule, sign in and sign procedures, what to do if an accident occurs, reporting an alleged incident of child abuse, information on state child abuse laws, and the like).

Provide continuing education for all adult volunteers and paid staff who are working with children and youth. As a part of implementing the process insure that all who have been working with children and youth participate.

### 4. Institute Procedures

- A. Standards
- B. Responsibilities
- C. Screening Procedures

### 5. Make the physical setting safe and conduct periodic safety inspections. For example:

- All classroom doors should have windows or a half door, if an office has no window in the door, the door should remain open during counseling sessions or private meetings.
- The bathrooms should not be isolated or far removed from classroom/play areas.
- Consider using hall monitors.
- Sign in/out procedures especially for younger children (age 10 and younger).
- All other aspects of safety should be considered as well to minimize the risk of serious injury when accidents occur.

6. Communicate regularly with parents.

- Provide advance notice and full information/disclosure about event and activities, with written permission forms and information on who will be supervising and working with the children and youth.
- Give information to families about the church's policy and procedures for preventing child abuse.
- Encourage parents to communicate with someone in authority about any concerns, fears or worries about their children and/or a volunteer or staff person.
- Know the church's families.
- Be prepared for how to handle sensitive and confidential matters with families and concerned church members.

7. Maintain adequate liability insurance coverage.

- The coverage must apply to all the different activities of the church, at and away from church premises. The church should work with a knowledgeable insurance agent who knows the needs of a church.
- Remember, too, that the least expensive insurance may have significant gaps in coverage.
- The church should understand what coverage they have for sexual misconduct.

8. Be prepared for the worst at all times.

- This is our church; it won't happen here" is a naïve viewpoint that can create an environment and opportunities for accidents and abuse to happen while prevention steps are crucial, also be prepared for the worst, and never make assumptions about what might or might not happen in a church.
- This also means being prepared with a plan for responding immediately to allegations of abuse, including state reporting obligations.

9. Always remember that this is a Church!

The Church is a sanctuary, and churches make a commitment to protect children each and every time a child is baptized.

Churches should be role models in the community for the time and attention given to the care of children and youth.

10. Keeping the records safe and secure is of paramount importance in this process.

- Limit the number of persons who know the outcomes of the background and criminal checks to the appointed clergy persons, the Council President and perhaps one other designee.
- Copies of the applications and the actual reports should be "double locked" –in a locked file cabinet in a locked office.

11. No Exceptions!

- No one is exempt from the screening, even the woman who has been working with children for sixty (60) years.
- The key to explaining this need is the reality that the procedure is designed to protect not just the children, but also the adults from false accusations.
- Another key to explaining this need is that if all current staff and volunteers are properly screened then new staff and volunteers more readily understand the need.

## **PREVENTION POLICY BOARD DUTIES**

This policy will be implemented by an ongoing "Board" nominated by the Council. One Pastor, the Council President, the Day School Director and the chair persons of the Board of Education and the Board of Youth shall be the minimum required members. Listed below are the duties:

1. The Board shall meet at least twice per calendar year.

2. The Board shall report directly to the Church Council.

3. Education:

- Formally educate all volunteers and employees.
- This might mean that multiple training sessions will need to occur in order to reach all persons, especially seasonal volunteers/staff (sport coaches, Vacation Bible School teachers, new staff, etc.)
- Monitor continuing education.
- Educate all children and youth.

- Informally educate your congregation annually about the contents of the policy and why it is necessary. Possible avenues of education for the congregation are: the church newsletter, web-site, an annual letter, etc., when new members join the church (in their orientation session), during Child Abuse Prevention Month (in April each year), in a children and youth brochure or resource packet.
4. Ensure compliance with the policy.
  5. Be available to answer questions about the policy.
  6. Review and renew the policy annually or as needed.
  7. Evaluate Board functions.
  8. Assist, with investigations, when called upon.
  9. Other duties, as needed
  10. Know your intervention resources in your area and make that information available to your church.
    - Child Abuse Hotline
    - Department of Human/Children Services in your county
    - Area Child Protective Services
    - National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse 1-312-663-3520
    - National Child Abuse Hotline 1-800 4-A-CHILD
    - Parents Anonymous 1-800-421-0353

#### REPORTING ABUSE/ALLEGED ABUSE

Seeing abuse, and hearing the truth of abuse, is most difficult at best. Abuse is a highly emotional issue that has at its core the violation of trust and the common understandings of healthy, whole, loving relationships. People most often want to believe the best of others, and therefore, they have difficulty believing that an acquaintance or friend is capable of abuse. With emotions stirred by this volatile issue, our vision is often clouded and the voices unheard.

All reports of child abuse must be taken seriously and handled in ways that care for the well-being of both the abused and the accused. All cases of suspected abuse must be reported directly to the Pastors or the School director. They will then take appropriate action in notifying the Department of Children's and Human Services.

NOTE: If in doubt, these departments would prefer that a call be made to discuss what has been witnessed or suspected. These agencies have trained and responsible personnel who can make the appropriate determination about whether something is suspect. Reports must meet statutory definitions of abuse before they will be pursued. Efforts of individuals to investigate before calling the appropriate state agency are discouraged. Failure to report suspected abuse or neglect can result in criminal charges for mandated reporters.