Bethany Christian Reformed Church: Safe Church Policy

Introduction:

This policy is intended to serve as a general framework to help create a safe and secure environment for Bethany CRC ministries by setting policy and providing guidelines for the screening of staff and volunteers, for preventing harmful behavior, and for properly reporting and responding to such incidents. We pray that functioning within these guidelines will reasonably safeguard our fellowship from abuse and liability and will allow us to remain a pure and wholesome witness to God’s loving nurture.

Screening—The church has adopted a procedure for screening volunteers and paid

staff. This procedure is described in this policy.

Prevention—All volunteers and paid staff will agree to comply with these personal

protection policies.

Reporting and Responding—Individuals who become aware of possible child abuse

will report according to the Procedure for Reporting Allegations of Abuse and the laws of the State of New Mexico. The person reporting will notify a member of the Personal Protection Team as soon as possible regarding child abuse involving any church ministry. We will show care and support for the individuals and families who are party to the allegations.

Definitions of Terms Used:

Volunteer—any worker who is not compensated for ministry activities at Bethany

Christian Reformed Church.

Paid staff—any worker who is compensated for ministry activities at Bethany

Christian Reformed Church.

Ministry leader—a volunteer worker who is designated to head a ministry.

Public place—a place within sight and sound of others.

**Child, Youth, or Minor**—person under the age of 18 years.

**Adult**—person age 18 years or over.

Screening Policy

The following screening procedure will be used for both volunteer and paid staff.

Reasons for screening include:

1. It communicates to church members that the church is serious about protecting

 our children from abuse by requesting information that may enable church

 leaders to screen an individual out of a program or position in which the

 individual may pose a risk to children.

1. It may reduce incidents of abuse by deterring an individual that poses a threat to

 children and does not want to risk exposure from volunteering for a position.

1. It helps ensure that volunteer and paid staff are persons of integrity in Bethany CRC and the community.

The screening procedure will consist of as many as four steps:

1. Profile for Personal Protection: All members, non-members, and staff, age 18

and over, desiring to serve or currently serving in Children or Youth Ministry will

complete the Profile for Personal Protection.

2. Interview: The ministry leadership team may interview an individual if his/her Profile for Personal Protection indicates further information would be helpful in determining whether or not said person is appropriate to be a volunteer in Children or Youth Ministry.

3. Reference Checks: Some individuals desiring to serve in ministry may be

requested to provide references if further information would be helpful, such as a

new member unknown to others or if there are questions regarding a

response on the application. All references will remain confidential.

4. Criminal Record Checks: Examples of those requiring criminal record checks

include pastors, paid staff, Senior High Youth Leaders, and those participating in youth one-to-one mentoring. All volunteer and paid staff serving in ministry to children or youth will submit to steps of screening and will not serve in these ministries until approved. Any applicant for a volunteer position may withdraw without prejudice from the screening process. Anyone with a conviction of child abuse will be denied a paid staff or volunteer position working with children or youth. Further, the church reserves the right to reject any applicant for any reason. All screening information will be kept confidential with access limited to those individuals who make decisions about placing applicants in available positions.

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Profile for Personal Protection

All adults (age eighteen or older) seeking a volunteer or paid position with children or

youth must complete this Profile for Personal Protection. References and criminal background checks may be required for some individuals per church policy. This profile

will be kept confidential with access limited to those individuals who make decisions

about placing applicants in available positions. Thank you for your assistance as we seek to promote a safe environment for everyone involved in the Children and Youth

Ministries offered by Bethany Christian Reformed Church.

Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 Last First Middle

Address\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_City\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_State\_\_\_\_ Zip\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

How long have you attended Bethany CRC? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Are you a member at Bethany CRC? Yes\_\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_\_

What other churches have you attended regularly during the past five years?

Briefly tell us about your last five years of church and non-church work involving youth.

Have you ever been convicted of, pled guilty or no contest to charges of child abuse or neglect, sexual misconduct, or other crimes against children? Yes\_\_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been dismissed or terminated from a volunteer or paid position for charges of child abuse or neglect? Yes\_\_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_\_

Is there any circumstance or pattern in your life which would make it inappropriate for you to serve with minors or would compromise the integrity of Bethany Christian Reformed Church? Yes\_\_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_\_

(Contact your pastor or elder if you need assistance with this question.)

The information contained in this profile is correct to the best of my knowledge. If references are needed, I authorize the references provided to give you any information (including opinions) they have regarding my character and fitness for youth work. If a criminal record check is sought by Bethany CRC, I give my permission to check my criminal history with the authorities. I release all persons including, but not limited to, Bethany CRC, its employees, volunteers, agents or contractors, employers, similar organizations, and/or releases from any and all liability damages of whatever kind or nature arising out of or related to the gathering of information pursuant to this application. 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 that I have read and understand.

Signature\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 **Bethany Christian Reformed Church**

 **Personal Protection Guidelines**

**General Guidelines:**

1. All adult volunteers and paid staff must complete a Profile for Personal Protection

 before serving with children. Some volunteers and paid staff may require

 additional screening.

 2. Two adult volunteers will serve in these ministries whenever necessary.

 (One adult volunteer will serve for every six children if there are more than twelve

 children needing care).

 3. Bethany CRC prefers that all adult persons who serve in these ministries have

 attended a Bethany ministry for six months or have been members of Bethany

 for at least six months and all persons have a completed Profile for Personal

 Protection on file. Non-members may serve with a completed Profile for Personal

 Protection on file and possible additional screening.

 4. Youth in third grade and above may serve as volunteers in some ministries under

 direct adult supervision.

 5. Ordinarily, only scheduled volunteers or substitutes will serve.

 6. No volunteer will be allowed to take a child from the scheduled room to another

 part of the church except to a restroom as provided below.

 7. Volunteers are to arrive ten minutes before the ministry begins to provide

 supervision for the children. Parents are requested to remain with their children

 until volunteer supervision arrives.

 8. The parent (guardian) should be notified as soon as possible when a child has

 been crying for 10 minutes, is ill or injured. If a child needs medical attention,

 the parent (guardian) should be notified as soon as possible.

 9. The Bethany CRC Agreement and Release Form must be signed by the parent

 (guardian) if the ministry takes place off-site for an extended period of time.

 10. All volunteer and paid staff will be within sight and sound of other people or will

 make arrangements to be accountable to another appropriate person.

 11. Middle School Youth Group leaders will be adults 19 years of age or older and

 at least 3 years older than the eldest participant in the group and

 High School Youth Group leaders will be adults 21 years of age or older and at

 least 3 years older than the eldest participant in the group.

 12. Volunteers will be required to review the policies at least annually. To assist

 them, training will be provided at least annually for volunteers to review the

 Personal Protection Policy.

 13. Persons refusing to follow or violating policies may be required to relinquish

 their responsibilities for the ministry served.

**Arrival and Dismissal Guidelines:**

 1. A parent (guardian) will leave his/her child at the designated reception place (for

 Children’s Worship, this is at the front of the sanctuary at the announced time).

1. A parent (guardian) must sign in his/her child with each Nursery visit. Special care instructions should be written in the designated area of the sign-in register.

 3. A name-tag is placed on each child. Carry bags should be labeled with the

 name of the child.

 4. Adult volunteers will remain in these ministries until all children have been

 claimed by a parent (guardian).

 5. A parent (guardian) of children ages 0-4 will remain on church grounds during

 scheduled ministry time and/or attending a Bethany ministry for which this

 ministry is being provided.

 6. Children with special needs will be assisted as pre-arranged with the parent

 (guardian).

 7. Volunteers are to arrive 10 minutes before the ministry begins to provide

 supervision for children and youth. Leaders are not responsible for children or

 youth who arrive for ministries earlier than 10 minutes prior to starting time.

 Parents are required to remain with children or youth until the adult volunteers

 arrive. Children or youth should stay no longer than 10 minutes after the ministry

 ends.

**Restroom Assistance Guidelines:**

1. An adult volunteer will change diapers or clothes only in the sight of another

 volunteer.

 2. Volunteers will not change diapers or assist with toilet needs if a parent has

 requested to be contacted and wishes to assist their own child.

 3. Children should use the closest restroom to their ministry area. If occupied, an

 adult volunteer may escort the child to a different restroom.

 4. For children who do not require assistance in the restroom, the adult volunteer

 must remain outside the restroom or stall door.

 5. For children who require assistance, the adult volunteer must assist the child with

 the restroom stall door ajar or restroom door ajar (as appropriate).

 6. Children and youth who are fully toilet-trained do not need restroom assistance.

 7. The restroom(s) may be continuously monitored if ministry needs require that

 level of supervision (e.g., Vacation Bible School).

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 **Behavior Policy**

**General Guidelines:**

1. Appropriate behavioral guidelines are to be communicated regularly with

children and youth.

1. Children and youth are to refrain from pushing, hitting, kicking or injuring

 anyone in the classroom.

1. Children and youth are expected to be considerate of others when talking and use an appropriate voice level
2. Children are expected to be obedient and follow the instructions of

 volunteers.

 2. Volunteer and paid staff are encouraged to engage in physical contact with care

 to avoid the appearance of impropriety. Gentle, casual touching on the head,

 arms, and hands will be permitted. Displays of affection ought to be limited to

 such actions as a brief hug, an arm around the shoulders, a pat on the back, or

 a handshake. These displays should only take place in a public area. Displays of

 affection between participants will also be monitored.

 3. Corporal punishment is not permitted. A volunteer or paid staff may not inflict or

 threaten to inflict unnecessary, unreasonable, irrational, or inappropriate force

 upon a child or youth.

 4. All conversation will be wholesome. Abusive verbal discipline (yelling, hurling

 insults, threatening) is not permitted.

 5. Expectations of the behavior of children or youth must reflect their age and level

 of comprehension. Similarly, discipline must reflect their age and level of

 comprehension.

 6. Children and youth are to be reminded of the kind of behavior that is acceptable

 for the setting. Older children and youth may benefit from having these

 expectations in written form.

 7. Appropriate forms of discipline are to be reviewed with volunteers and staff before

 church-sponsored ministries begin a new season. Periodic reminders are to be

 given as needed.

 8. If a child’s misbehavior continues after an appropriate warning is given and/or

 intervention is made, volunteers will request assistance from the ministry

 leadership team.

 9. Upon mutual agreement between the volunteer and a ministry team leader,

 the parent (guardian) will be notified of his/her child’s inappropriate behavior.

 10. Any suspected use of alcohol or drugs by participants must be reported to the

 ministry leadership team.

1. It is never appropriate for a volunteer or paid staff to date a participant.

**One-to-One Guidelines:**

 1. When a child or youth meets with an adult volunteer or paid staff, this meeting

 will occur in a public place.

 2. The volunteer or paid staff person will keep a record of each meeting.

**Overnight Outing Guidelines:**

1. Bethany CRC Agreement and Release form will be required from each participant. Forms will be available from the ministry leadership team or the church office.
2. Permission for transportation will be received from the parent (guardian).

 3. When activities are held away from the church site, the on-site officials and the

 ministry leaders hold authority over the participants and the participants are

 responsible for following the rules and guidelines of both.

 4. Sleeping areas will be off limits to members of the opposite sex.

 5. Male/female contact will not be allowed after the designated bedtime.

 6. Two or more adults of both genders must be present at any

 co-educational overnight outing.

**Transportation Policy:**

See separate Child/Youth Activity Transportation & Participation Agreement

 and Transportation Policy.

**Bethany CRC Hall Monitor Policy**

1. Hall monitors must complete a Profile for Personal Protection before they are appointed to serve.
2. Hall monitors shall be responsible for supervision of halls and entry ways of BCRC during such events as worship and fellowship gatherings. A ministry leader of each ministry (e.g., Youth Group) is responsible for designating one person as hall monitor for each meeting/event.
3. Each hall monitor will review guidelines at each time of service.
4. At least one hall monitor will conduct checks whenever a children’s or youth ministry is in session.

5. Duties of hall monitors:

 a. Periodically check all the rooms and events in session until the ministry ends

 and all the children or youth are gone.

 b. Periodically check bathrooms until the program ends and all the children or

 youth are gone.

 c. Periodically check unoccupied rooms until the ministry ends and all the

 children or youth are gone.

 d. Hall monitors may escort a child to the restroom according to restroom

 guidelines.

 e. Hall monitors will be available to assist volunteers with special short-term

 classroom needs or emergencies.

 f. Hall monitors will direct children or youth found in the hallways to their

 classroom or to their parent (guardian).

 g. Hall monitors must immediately report urgent concerns or suspicions to the

 appropriate ministry leader.

*See Procedure for Reporting Allegations of Abuse regarding reasonable suspicion of abuse.*

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 ***Procedure for Reporting Allegations of Abuse***

Anyone who has reason to believe that a child or youth has been or is likely to be

physically harmed, sexually abused, or emotionally abused is required to report the matter to a Bethany CRC staff member **ASAP**. Following consultation between a staff member and the person suspecting abuse/neglect, council members and the pastor will be made aware of the situation and a report will be made to both contacts below:

* + - 1. Statewide Central Intake (SCI) of the New Mexico

 Children, Youth and Families Department (NMCYFD):

 **1-855-333-SAFE**

* + - 1. Gallup Police Department (GPD): **505-726-1693**

**Definitions of Child Abuse**

The following definitions for physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse can be found in the Acts of Synod, 1992, or in the Acts of Synod, 1995.

1. Physical Abuse—Any non-accidental human act that results in physical pain or injury to a child—whether or not it leaves a cut or wound, or a mark or a bruise. Physically abusive behavior ranges from slapping, pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, and biting to more severe forms like choking, severe spanking, beating, hitting with an object, burning, stabbing, and shooting. In other words, physical abuse is any intentional means of inflicting pain or injury to another person. It is sometimes a single event, but can also be a chronic pattern of behavior.
2. Physical Neglect—Not doing what one is supposed to be doing to meet the physical needs of someone in his or her care. Neglect interferes with or prevents a child’s normal development.
3. Sexual Abuse—The exploitation of a child or any sexual intimacy forced on a child for the sexual stimulation or gratification of another person. Child sexual abuse can refer to taking advantage of a child who is not capable of understanding sexual acts or resisting coercion. Examples of non-physical sexual abuse includes people exposing themselves, displaying pornographic material, photographing a child for pornographic materials, obscene telephone calls, ―peeping Toms,‖ and requests to engage in sexual activity (where no physical contact occurs). Examples of sexual abuse involving physical contact includes: fondling of body parts such as breasts, crotch, buttocks, or sexual organs; intercourse, oral and/or anal sex.
4. Emotional Abuse—Attempting to control a child’s life through words, threats, and fear, destroying a child’s self-worth through harassment, threats, and deprivation.

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**Procedure for Responding to Alleged Offenders who are**

**Volunteers or Paid Church Staff**

1. If the Bethany CRC Council learns from police officials or NMCYFD that allegations of child abuse are under investigation or that formal charges have been leveled or are planned against a volunteer or paid staff:

* + - * 1. The Bethany Council shall be presented with written

 documentation specifying the nature of the allegations, in as

 much detail as possible.

* + - * 1. The Bethany Council shall give the alleged offender an opportunity

 to address the allegations in accordance with the articles governing

 church discipline in the most recent version of the CRC Book of

 Order (see below under 6).

* + - * 1. The Bethany Council may recommend to the Administration Team

 that the alleged offender be removed/suspended from any child or

 youth volunteer or staff position (with pay when applicable) and

 without prejudice pending the outcome of any investigation.

2. If the Bethany Council learns from police officials or NMCYFD that criminal charges have been filed against the alleged offender, s/he will be removed/suspended from any volunteer or staff position (with pay when applicable) and without prejudice pending the outcome of any investigation.

3. If a volunteer or paid staff admits sexual, physical, or emotional abuse against a

child or youth, the admission will be reported to the police immediately and

will also be reported to the Bethany Council. The volunteer or paid staff will be removed from office or position.

4. If a volunteer or paid staff confesses or is found guilty of sexual, physical, or

emotional abuse against a child, s/he will be removed from office or position.

5. If the Administration Team of Council learns from police officials or NMCYFD that

criminal proceedings have concluded, the matter should be revisited.

 a. If criminal charges are dropped, or the result is either

 no conviction or acquittal, the Administration Team of

 Council should decide whether to rescind its earlier

 action and/or take additional action.

1. If prosecution results in conviction, the offender is subject to termination of position and denied reinstatement to any position serving children or youth.
2. The church will follow applicable Church Order Articles in the admonition and discipline of members and office bearers. See link for the full Book of Church Order:

<http://www2.crcna.org/site_uploads/uploads/resources/2011_churchorder.pdf>

7. We will ensure that pastoral care is provided for the individuals and families who

 are party to the allegations.

 **Bethany Christian Reformed Church**

 **Personal Protection Team Mandate**

The Personal Protection Team (PPT) will assist the church/council in providing oversight of the personal protection for children and adults in the ministries of Bethany Christian Reformed Church. The emphasis will be on: 1) protecting children/youth from abuse; 2) providing guidelines for all adults in the supervision of children/youth;

3) providing a response system for handling alleged incidents of child abuse; and

4) promoting a safe environment for everyone involved in the ministries offered by Bethany Christian Reformed Church.

**The PPT will consist of the Pastor, a member of council, and at least one member of the congregation.**

 - The PPT members will include both genders.

 - One member of the team should be a qualified professional in the social work,

 counseling, or mental health field.

 -Members from the congregation will serve for three years, in a regular rotation.

 -The Bethany Council will approve the members of the PPT from the

 congregation.

 -The members of the PPT from the congregation and the Administrator will serve

 as the primary individuals involved in policy recommendations.

 -The PPT will appoint the Chairperson of the Team. The Pastor will act as

 spokesperson. In his/her absence or unavailability, the Vice-President of

 Council will act as spokesperson.

**The PPT will be accountable to the Council for the following:**

* + - 1. Recommend policies and procedures for reducing the risk of child

 abuse for everyone involved in the ministries of Bethany CRC.

* + - 1. Assist the ministry leadership team in providing information and

 training to the congregation on the Bethany Personal Protection

 Policy, definitions of child abuse, recognizing signs of child abuse,

 and appropriate behavior when working with youth.

* + - 1. Provide oversight of all reports of child abuse related to volunteer

 or paid staff involved in Bethany ministries.

* + - 1. Provide oversight of the response to alleged offenders who are

 officers, volunteers, or paid staff of Bethany CRC.

* + - 1. Communicate with the classis, media, and civil authorities as

 appropriate.

* + - 1. Clarify whether the Personal Protection Team or the first-hand

 reporter maintains a liaison with police officials.

* + - 1. Notify our legal counsel as needed whenever a reasonable

 suspicion of child abuse has occurred related to volunteer or paid

 staff involved in Bethany CRC ministries.

* + - 1. Notify our insurance agent as appropriate when directed by legal

 counsel.

* + - 1. Ensure that pastoral care is provided for the individuals and

 families who are party to the allegations.

 10. Provide disclosure and confidentiality as appropriate to:

 a) protect victims from further abuse

 b) protect alleged offenders from unfair prejudice

 c) prevent additional persons from being victimized and

 d) promote healing.

1. Maintain records on history of child abuse allegations reported at

 Bethany and inform Chair of Council as necessary. Perform other

 duties as requested by Bethany Council.