

Child Protection Policy
for
Prairie Edge Christian Reformed Church

(updated May, 2019)

Prairie Edge Christian Reformed Church has a concern for the children, young adults, and others who participate in the programs it offers. To assure the safety of these people and to promote proper and appropriate behavior, Prairie Edge Christian Reformed Church has adopted a number of policies aimed at eliminating opportunities for abuse within our programs. These policies focus on leadership and on placing barriers to abuse within the program.

Prairie Edge Christian Reformed Church takes great pride in the quality of our adult leadership. Being a leader is a privilege, not a right. The quality of our programs and the safety of our youth members require qualified and properly trained adult leaders. One leadership requirements is adherence to the Prairie Edge Child Protection Policy.

All volunteers and all paid staff must review and agree to abide by the rules of conduct as set forth in the Prairie Edge Christian Reformed Church Child Protection Policy. Upon completion of the review the volunteer or leader will be required to sign the agreement statement indicating he or she has read, understands, and agrees to follow the Prairie Edge Christian Reformed Church Child Protection Policy. For those volunteers and leaders who continuously serve review and re-signing is required every three years.

Prairie Edge Christian Reformed Church shall require all persons involved in any Prairie Edge Christian Reformed Church children and youth ministry program to undergo a background check. The background check will be conducted by a council approved background provider. The check will include a check of the sex offender registry, and criminal history. The results of the background check will be reviewed by the Executive Committee. Adverse findings from the Executive Committee will be reported to the full council. Background checks must be conducted every

three years coinciding with review and signing of the Child Protection Policy.

It is the responsibility of the Council of Prairie Edge Christian Reformed Church to assure that all those in leadership positions for program activities for Prairie Edge Christian Reformed Church, whether for youth or adults, abide by the Child Protection Policy.

When situations of violations of the abuse policy are reported, it is required that notice be given to an official of the Council of Prairie Edge Christian Reformed Church, or to a committee it may appoint.

RULES OF CONDUCT

1) Adult volunteer leaders will only be permitted to work with youth or children after they have been members of the church for a period of six months or, after proper review by Council, are approved by Council as volunteer leaders. All adult volunteer leaders must complete all requirements of the Prairie Edge Christian Reformed Child Protection Policy.

2) Youths age 11 and above may serve as a volunteer in some ministries only under direct adult supervision. Youth Group leaders and volunteers must be adults and at least 3 years older than participants.

3) Either two adult leaders who have met the leadership requirements of Prairie Edge CRC or one leader who has met the leadership requirements of Prairie Edge CRC and a parent of a participant, both of whom must be at least 21 years of age, are required on all trips and outings. The church is responsible for ensuring that sufficient leadership is provided for all activities.

4) One-on-one contact between adults and youth members is absolutely prohibited. In situations that require personal conferences, the meeting is to be conducted in view of other adults and youths. Absolutely no one on one closed-door meetings are allowed!

5) It is understood that working with small children requires some bodily contact. Gentle, casual touching on the child's head, shoulders, arms and hand will be permitted. Kissing is inappropriate. Lap sitting is not appropriate for children over the age of five. Encourage children to sit next to you. Body-to-body hugs should be avoided. One arm hugs, side hugs or hand to arm hugs are acceptable. Do not give or receive back rubs.

6) Adult leaders must respect the privacy of youth members in situations such as changing clothes and taking showers on outings, and intrude only to the extent that health and safety require. Adults must protect their own privacy in similar situations.

7) Those children in the nursery who need restroom assistance may receive it from one of the adult nursery staff. One member of the same sex is to assist the children in the restroom and the door is to remain ajar for easy observation.

8) On outings, no youth is permitted to sleep in the tent or room of an adult other than his/her own parent or guardian. Sponsors are strongly encouraged to have separate shower and restroom facilities for males and females. When separate facilities are not available, separate times for male and female use should be scheduled and posted for showers. And separate times for adults should be scheduled and posted.

9) Proper clothing for all activities is required.

- 10) Discipline should be constructive and reflect values of the church. Corporal punishment is not permitted.
- 11) Verbal abuse, threatening behavior, harassment of any sort is prohibited.
- 12) Adult leaders must monitor and guide the leadership techniques used by junior leaders and ensure that church policies are followed.
- 13) A violation of any of these rules is to be reported to the Council or the committee it appoints immediately.

Reporting Procedures for Helping Victims of Abuse

1. If a child or young person discloses a problem, listen. Take the person seriously. Do not deny the problem!
2. Stay calm. Fear and anger are normal reactions. Give emotional support.
3. Tell the child or young person her or she is not to blame for what another person has done to him/her.
4. Report the suspected abuse to the Council president or the chairman of a committee it may appoint.
5. Keep the information confidential.
6. Note: Michigan law requires that child abuse be reported within 24 hours. This report needs to be made by the individual that reasonably suspects the abuse. It is

reasonable that the reporter will contact a church official prior to reporting the suspected abuse; however, the individual reasonably suspecting the abuse will file the report within 24 hours. **Michigan Child Protection Law P.A. 1975 No, 238 defines abuse as follows: “Child abuse means harm or threatened harm to a child’s health or welfare by a teacher or teacher’s aide which occurs through non-accidental physical or mental injury; sexual abuse; sexual exploitation; or maltreatment.”**

7. An individual who hears of or witnesses child abuse or has reasonable suspicion of child abuse is urged to report to police officials (269-329-4567) or Child Protective Services (CPS) (269-337-5046). Ordained clergy and other mandated reporters are required by law to orally report suspected abuse or neglect immediately and file a written report within 72 hours after making the oral report. In the case of a report to police officials or Child Protective Services regarding child abuse that relates to volunteers or staff involved in Prairie Edge Christian Reformed Church ministries, the individual reporting the offense will notify the President of Council or the chairman of a committee it may appoint as soon as possible.
8. The president of Council and/or the committee chairman will report to the church Council only if the alleged abuse has happened on or in church property or at a church function such as outings, retreats, field trips, etc. The person accused of abuse will be prohibited from leadership of volunteer activity.

9. If the Pastor is the alleged offender, the following steps will be observed: (Taken from the CRC Denomination policy.):

- a) The suspected abuse should be reported to the President of the church Council.
- b) Proper legal procedures require by law as detailed in step 7 above must be followed.
- c) The Classical church visitors and the Pastor-church Relations Pastor will be notified immediately.
- d) The church visitors will report in executive sessions to the next meeting of Classis.
- e) The Pastor and the Council will keep the incident confidential but again follow proper legal procedures.

10. If the President of Council learns from Child Protective Services or police officials that allegations of child abuse merit serious investigation or there is the possibility of formal charges against a volunteer or paid staff, the President of Council will suspend the alleged offender from any child or youth volunteer or staff position without prejudice pending the outcome of the investigation. If the President of Council learns from Child Protective Services or police officials that criminal charges have been filed against the alleged offender, the alleged offender will be removed/suspended from any volunteer or staff position and without prejudice pending the outcome of the investigation.