



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

1 CHURCH STREET
PO Box 246
DEEP RIVER, CT 06417

REV. TIMOTHY E. HAUT, MINISTER
SYBIL R. HIGGINS, DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Child & Youth Abuse Prevention Policy

In our attempt to prevent the occurrence of child abuse in the Church, we are adopting the following policies, procedures and guidelines to protect our children, youth, staff, and volunteers. Child abuse, as defined in the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS), refers to physical injury or injuries inflicted upon a child or youth under the age of eighteen by a caretaker or school employee other than by accidental means or injuries which are at a variance with the history given of them. It also includes a condition that is the result of maltreatment such as, but not limited to malnutrition, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, deprivation or necessities, emotional maltreatment, or cruel punishment, or being neglected. (CGS Sections 17a0101 and 46b-120(a)(3)). In addition CGS Section 53-21 defines risk of injury to, or impairing the morals of children. Any person who willfully or unlawfully causes or permits any child under the age of sixteen years to be placed in a situation where the life or limb of the child is endangered, the health of the child is likely to be injured or the morals of the child are likely to be impaired, or does any act likely to impair the health or morals of any child, or if any person has contact with the intimate parts of a child under the age of sixteen years, or subject a child under the age of sixteen to contact with the intimate parts of such person, in a sexual or indecent manner likely to impair the health or morals of the child, will be guilty of injury, or risk of injury to, or impairing the morals of children.

A child is defined by Connecticut Law as any person under the age of sixteen, and youth as any person age sixteen or seventeen. In this policy, the terms child(ren) and youth are used.

Safety Policies and Guidelines

In order to provide a secure environment as possible, the Church adopts and adheres to the following practices:

Two Volunteer Rule:

At all events for which the Church is providing supervision of the youth ~ (i.e. recreational activities, child care), a minimum of two volunteers will be utilized. The rule will include coverage of the Sunday School classrooms.

Six Month Wait:

Prior to volunteering with youth, all individuals will be required to finish a six-month waiting period, including Confirmation mentors. For members of the Church, it will be finished six months from the date of joining the Church. For non-members, it will be finished six months from the date of application to become a volunteer. The waiting period is a requirement in addition to the application and interview process.

Supervision of Sunday School:

Supervision will be provided for Sunday School classes on a regular basis by the Director of Christian Education, and/or the Pastor(s). Observations may occur through the windows in the classroom doors or within the classroom itself. To insure the safety of the children, all Sunday School classes will maintain an "open door" policy. The Pastor(s), Director of Christian Education, Board of Christian Education, and the parents of the children in that specific class may visit the room at any time and without prior notice to the teachers. (Parents are asked to visit the rooms in a way that is not disruptive.)

Driving Policy:

Drivers are exempt from the "2 volunteer rule" if the passengers have parental permission to ride in a car with only one volunteer. Permission slips are mandatory in all cases, but verbal permission is acceptable in an emergency and then ratified in writing as soon as possible after the ride. All drivers will fill out Application for Volunteer Service for Youth Activities and will follow the six month wait period.

Diaper Change/Bathroom Policy:

For any child in the nursery or toddler room, the following practice will be used in regards to diapers:

1. Only soiled diapers will be changed unless a parent requests otherwise.
2. Diaper changes will occur in the nursery or toddler room in a hygienic manner. This includes the use of disposable gloves and requires that the adult changing the diaper wash his or her hands after the diaper change or otherwise disinfect his or her hands. The diapers will be disposed in a hygienic fashion.
3. Any child refusing/resisting the diaper change will not be changed. The parent shall be informed and the child maybe discharged from the room.

In the event that a toddler states he/she needs to use the bathroom, the following guidelines will be implemented:

1. One adult will accompany to the bathroom and wait outside in the bathroom doorway.
2. In the event of a toilet accident, the child's parent will be summoned to handle the situation.

Reporting Allegations

Mandated Reporter

Notification to Connecticut Department of Children and Families and to the local Police Department of suspected/alleged child abuse:

CGS Section 17-A Mandated reporters: To protect children whose health and welfare may be adversely affected through injury and neglect....the report of suspected child abuse...the following persons shall be mandated reporters: any medical or mental health practitioner...social worker...school guidance counselor...clergyman.....school teacher...

CGS Section 17a-103 Reports by others: Any person other than those enumerated in 17a-101 having reasonable cause to suspect or believe that any child under the age of eighteen is in danger or being abused or has been neglected as defined in 46b-120 may cause a written report and/or oral report to the Department of Children and Family.

These laws mean that the Pastors are legally bound to report suspected child abuse in the Church building or at home. Non-mandated reporters (including Sunday School Teachers and youth volunteers) may file a report on their own and they are encouraged to discuss the report immediately with the Pastor(s). It is recommended that Sunday School Teachers discuss any allegations with the Director of Christian Education. To file a report, call the Department of Children and Family and the Police.

DCF Care Line: 800 842-2288

Police: 911

Resources Available

The Response Committee and the Pastor(s) will maintain a list of recommended recourses for the families and victims of child abuse.

Response Committee

The Response Committee is responsible for screening volunteers who work with youth, keeping the list updated and responding to any allegations of misconduct. This Committee shall be made up of Pastor(s), the Moderator of Church Council, the Director of Christian Education, the Youth and Family Coordinator and one of the chairpersons of the following boards: Board of Christian Education, Trustees or Deacons. Any person who is an alleged abuser may not sit on this Committee during the investigation of the alleged abuse and until such time as the investigation proves the allegations to be substantiated or unsubstantiated by DCF and the Court.. The Board of Christian Education is responsible for filling vacancies on this Committee.

Response by the Committee to the Allegation

In the event of an accusation which implies sexual abuse, physical abuse and/or risk of injury to a minor, the alleged incident will be reported to the proper authorities (i.e. DCF, the Police) in compliance with State laws and regulations. The child's parent(s) or guardian(s) will be notified. The alleged perpetrator will be immediately removed from contact with the child or youth and allow to participate, to ensure safety.

Accusations which do not fit the above criteria will still be viewed seriously. Investigation into these types of incidents will be completed internally within the Church. Parent(s) or guardian(s) will be notified. Accusations of this type may include, but are not limited to, swearing and yelling.

If upon an internal investigation, there is a question as to whether physical or sexual abuse or risk of injury to a minor occurred, the internal investigation will be stopped and a report made to the proper authorities. The Church will allow and comply with investigations of these organizations.

Reporting of Incidents

All staff, teachers, aides and volunteers of the First Congregational Church of Deep River shall follow the following reporting procedures in order to promote accountability among all members of the Church. All information should be kept confidential.

1. Any and all incidents involving questionable and inappropriate behavior related to possible abuse shall be reported immediately, within 24 hours, to the Response Committee.
2. The Response Committee shall meet within 48 hours to discuss and implement an appropriate response.
3. All staff, teachers, aides and volunteers shall be informed and trained in this reporting response.

Response to the Media

In the case that an allegation has been made and the media request information, an appropriate person designated by the Committee shall be the sole spokesperson, utilizing a prepared statement which will include the following:

1. The Church's awareness of the accusation.
2. The Church's concern for the alleged victim.
3. The extensive steps the First Congregational Church has taken to reduce the risk and provide a safe environment for children.
4. Show the media the *Reducing the Risk* materials used.
5. Indicate that we have taken this risk seriously and have acted responsibly.
6. Describe the precautions and policies implemented.