



Creating a Safe Sanctuary for Children of Mennonite Church of the Servant

The following policy was affirmed by the church at the Church Life Meeting on July 19, 2014.

The following precautionary guidelines are offered in a spirit of care for the most vulnerable among us. We recognize that the care of children rests not just with parents but the entire church community, and we encourage everyone to be diligent about the care of our children.

1. Children should not leave the building alone, and children and youth should not leave the building with an adult other than their parents without prior notice to the parents.
2. Anyone who sees a child leaving the building alone or finds a child alone outside the building without a parent should assist the child in finding his/her parent.
3. Children should not be in the kitchen without an adult supervisor present. Cutting knives will be kept in an upper cupboard.
4. A first aid kit will be kept in the kitchen.
5. Parents of nursery-age children should take their children to the bathroom before the worship service begins, so that nursery volunteers do not need to leave the room to take children to the bathroom.
6. Any time children's or youth activities are going on, at least two adults should be in the building. Field trips (with a group of youth, for example) should be accompanied by at least two adults.
7. Any non-MCS member who cares for children (e.g., babysitter during worship or at retreat) will undergo a background check. This will also apply to child-care volunteers who have attended MCS for less than six months, or any other child-care volunteers as determined by the shepherds.
8. If an MCS adult observes, hears about, or sees a physical or behavioral indicator of suspected child abuse by someone connected with the congregation, he or she is encouraged to follow the guidelines of Matthew 18: as soon as possible, meet directly and privately with the alleged abuser to ascertain the facts and, if necessary and the problem is minor or inadvertent, to counsel the abuser and ensure the safety of the child(ren). If this is not successful or the problem is major, the second step is to take a shepherd, and perhaps an additional person from the congregation, along. (In cases where it is not safe to take the first step, one may begin with step 2.) If these interventions fail, contact the Kansas Department of Children and Families or call 911. In some cases, where suspected child abuse is personally observed, it may be necessary to intervene immediately between the child and the suspected abuser to prevent further harm. The priorities are the safety of children and making sure that persons are not falsely accused.
9. This document defines child abuse as any physical injury, physical neglect, emotional injury, or sexual act inflicted on a child (see *A Guide to Reporting Child Abuse & Neglect in Kansas*, published

by the Kansas Children's Service League and the Kansas Department of Children and Families). This guide notes:

Several indicators, including a child's behavior, may indicate the occurrence of child abuse.

Behavioral indicators... have a valid place in decision making. They provide important clues for potential reporters to pursue. However, the presence of a single behavioral indicator does not necessarily prove that child abuse or neglect is occurring. The reporter is alerted to the possibility of child abuse and neglect by the:

- Repeated occurrences of an indicator
- Presence of several behavioral and physical indicators
- Appearance of serious injury or death.

Draft 061614 by L.B.