



Living Hope Presbyterian Church

Sexual Misconduct Policy

Purpose: To establish proper preventative measures to protect individuals against sexual misconduct as well as to specify courses of action in the case of allegations or an actual incident regarding sexual misconduct

Standard of Conduct: All workers, volunteer, paid, full-time and part-time, of Living Hope are expected to comply with the established policy on Sexual Misconduct. Any actions contrary to the church policy will be dealt with swiftly and may include disciplinary measures up to and including termination, as well as legal ramifications when applicable.

Definitions

Child Sexual Abuse – Includes, but is not limited to, any contact between a child (person under age 18) and an adult when the child is begin used for the sexual stimulation of the adult or of a third person. The behavior may or may not involve touching. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered forced whether or not “consented” to by the child. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child, provided the child is four years older than the victim” (National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse, 1992).

Sexual activity – may be violent or non-violent, touching or non-touching, and is an exploitation of a child’s vulnerability and powerlessness. It involves children in sexual behaviors for which they are not personally, socially, and developmentally ready.

Sexual Misconduct – inappropriate behavior relating to or involving a sexual nature

a) Pre-screening of Workers

1. All paid workers, part-time and full-time, will fill out an application, a volunteer affidavit and be interviewed by a designated authority in the church.
2. All paid workers, full-time and part-time, will provide at least two (2) professional/personal references upon application to be conducted prior to any service with the church. The references are to be conducted by an authority within the church. The authority should note any information they tried to secure but could not verify or obtain.
3. All volunteer workers will read the sexual misconduct policy and fill out a volunteer affidavit.
4. All workers, volunteer, paid, full-time and part-time, will provide a valid form of ID (i.e., state driver’s license, social security card, or other acceptable form of ID).
5. All workers, volunteer and paid, full-time and part-time, will sign a release for Criminal Records Check (SP4–164 http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/ucmprd/groups/webcontent/documents/form/s_001769.pdf) to be used at the church’s discretion.
6. All full-time and part-time paid workers will sign a release for Criminal Records Check and undergo a criminal background check prior to any activity of employment with the church.

7. All workers in a position with direct relation to children must have been members of Living Hope for a minimum of six (6) months prior to filling the position.

8. No applicant or volunteer ever convicted of a sexual related crime is eligible for service in a position with direct relation to children.

9. Any applicant or volunteer who is a survivor of child abuse in the past must meet with a staff member prior to service in a position with direct relation to children.

b) Common Supervisory Policies and Procedures

1. No minor should be alone with only one adult on church premises or in any church-sponsored activity, unless in a counseling situation or one-on-one mentorship situation. If there is a counseling situation or a one-on-one mentorship situation either the door should be opened, or, if this is impractical, the door must have a window and another adult must be in the building. When a teacher and a minor child are in a room alone the door must be kept open. They are not considered alone if door is open.

2. Have adults (age 18 or older) present with teenage volunteers.

3. Any supervisor is responsible to address suspicious behavior or any behavior that may be contrary to church policy and to document and report such occurrences to the proper authorities.

c) Reporting Procedures

1. All allegations must be taken seriously.

2. First persons to learn of an incident of sexual misconduct should not undertake an inquiry alone or question the reported or alleged offender.

3. All allegations should be reported to the established authority in writing as soon as possible.

4. The established authority will notify the parents or legal guardian.

5. All situations will be handled forthrightly with due respect for people's privacy and confidentiality.

6. Full cooperation will be given to civil authorities when applicable.

7. No accused will be addressed by anyone other than the established authorities until the safety of the child or victim is secured.

8. No victim involved in an allegation or anyone responsible for reporting an allegation will be retaliated against.

d) Investigation of an Allegation

1. All allegations will be investigated expeditiously by established authorities.

2. Any accused worker will be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is completed.

3. All details, interviews, and information will remain confidential to those legitimately involved in the investigation. Any individual or group responsible for a breach in this confidentiality is subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

4. No individual involved in an allegation or anyone responsible for investigating an allegation will be retaliated against.

Guidelines for Consideration Regarding Sexual Misconduct

Have a set procedure for handling discipline. Set procedures, particularly ones known by the parents, reduce the likelihood of abuse accusations.

Know the difference between discipline and abuse. Again, set procedures help along these lines.

Report and/or Record suspicious or unusual behavior. When noticing any suspicious behavior, it is vital for your organization and yourself to record and even report the activity. It may be determined later that you were present and noticed, but did not record or report it. You may be held liable.

Do not attempt counseling unless you are trained as a counselor. Refer youth and children to those who can help them. Don't agree to keep a confidence that may endanger the lives or health of a young person or of others.

Do not force yourself on a minor. "Force" here is understood as invading the personal space of the minor. Respect the young person's personal sense of space.

Beware of how you touch a young person Hugs should be from the side. If you hug frontally, do not prolong the hug. Seek to keep some distance between you and young people. Never touch an area that would normally be covered by a bathing suit. Be aware that many youth and children tend towards over stimulation, even in the most innocent of touching situations.

Always be in view of others. If you must talk alone with a young person, do so in a place where you can be seen by others.

Supervise private activities in pairs. If you must be in private quarters with your group (i.e. changing clothes, putting on bathing suits, or showering) then have another adult supervisor with you.

Be aware of what you share. Youth may have crushes on staff/volunteers and may seek to know more about your private life. They may also fixate on what you talk about and let their imaginations run wild. Use discretion in what you share with youth. Also, do not ask personal questions of youth.

Romantic lives of adults should never be shared with youth. Don't unpack your baggage on youth.

When serving as a driver, avoid unexplained times between leaving and arrival. The "two deep" rule is a good one. Always have two other passengers in the car at all times.

Do not allow program participants into private quarters. When adults have private quarters on retreats or when hosting a function at home, youth and children should not visit you privately. (I.E. no private chats in a bedroom or separate den.)

