

## Safe Church Policy and Procedures Overview

Creede Community Church

Approved 5/28/2023

*Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the Kingdom of Heaven belongs." (Matthew 19:14)*

We at Creede Community Church believe that our church should be a safe church for all those who come in good faith. Most important, it should be a safe church for the children, youth, and vulnerable adults who are entrusted to us.

The physical or sexual abuse of a child is a tragedy no matter where it occurs; it is especially so when it takes place in a house of God. Abuse in a church is the ultimate violation of a sacred trust.

Acknowledging that child abuse is a reality, and that no church is immune from that possibility, we therefore enact this policy to establish and enforce rules and procedures to eliminate, as much as possible, the risk of abuse in our programs and activities for children and youth.

To that end, this policy:

- Requires that classes and classrooms be configured to eliminate the possibility of children being isolated, and mandates specific rules for each program and activity for children and youth, inside and outside the church building, to ensure safety;
- Provides a systematic, regular program of education about child abuse for the congregation, parents, youth volunteers and staff, children, and visitors;
- Requires that those who work with children and youth, paid staff or volunteer, be screened and educated about the issues of abuse, and trained to recognize signs of abuse;
- Establishes a procedure to ensure that all allegations of emotional, physical, or sexual abuse against a child, by an adult or another child, be taken seriously and dealt with swiftly and appropriately, and that all involved be supported and treated with respect and compassion;
- Encourages this congregation to find appropriate ways to continue to live in our mission of "Sharing God's love, using our talents and resources, to serve our community and encourage spiritual growth by following Christ's teachings."

### Safe Church Team

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### Abuse Response Team

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## Children and Youth Ministries

### Policy

- Maintaining child and youth safety within our church and understanding our practices is a matter for covenant within our congregation.
- Whenever possible, at least two non-related (for the purposes of this policy “related” means spouses, partners, intimates, family members) adults should be involved in any youth activity.
- When two adults cannot be present in a child and/or youth activity, random checks by another unrelated adult should be employed.
- The first page of our policy will be clearly posted at the official points of entry into our building, in the office, and in the education hallway.
- These guidelines and policies in their entirety will be clearly available in all classrooms and common spaces.
- All volunteers working with children and youth programs must participate in training at least once every three years.
- For the purpose of our Safe Church policies, youth will be considered to be any minor who participates in a church-sponsored youth ministry program. Adult leaders will be clearly identified beforehand.
- All designated youth volunteers must be at least seven years older than the children and youth with whom they are working.
- Volunteers within seven years of the youth do not count toward the requirement of two unrelated adults.
- Trained youth over the age of 14 may supervise Nursery activities, or assist a non-related adult with Sunday School activities.
- No one under the age of 25 will be allowed to drive other participants in any church-sponsored activity or event that requires the group to travel together to a destination outside the church building.
- Use of email, cell phone texting will be limited to group communications. Adult volunteers should avoid “friending” children and youth on social media or online sites.

### Procedures

#### General Ministries

#### Sunday School

1. Windows are required in all classroom doors and must remain uncovered. Or the doors must remain open.
2. Education and screening (see pp. 7 & 8) is required for all prospective teachers and other volunteers.
3. All activities will be kept in plain view.

4. Acceptable supervisory methods include the following:
  - a. Two teachers per class in the classroom.
  - b. One teacher per class and a roaming screened volunteer.
  - c. Other methods may be used with approval of the Board of Christian Education.

If a child needs assistance in a bathroom for whatever reason, when possible the child's parent will be asked to provide that assistance.

### **Nursery care**

1. Education and screening (see pp. 7 & 8) is required for volunteers and paid workers.
2. All activities will be kept in plain view.
3. If a child out of diapers needs assistance in the bathroom, when possible the child's parent will be asked to provide that assistance.
4. Acceptable supervisory methods include the following:
  - a. Two unrelated, trained and screened volunteers.
  - b. One trained and screened volunteer, and a roaming screened volunteer.
  - c. Other methods may be used with approval of the Board of Christian Education.

### **Youth (6th-12th grade) Programming**

1. Open spaces or rooms with windows in their doors will be used.
2. A minimum of two unrelated adults must be present for all activities. If two adults cannot supervise, then the activity must be cancelled.
3. Education and screening (see pp. 7 & 8) will be required for all adult volunteers
4. All volunteers must be adults over the age of 21 and be a minimum of 7 years older than youth they are supervising.
5. Education (see page 6) is required for all youth every year.
6. All participants are required to submit a signed legal guardian/parent permission slip for any youth activity that takes place off church property.
7. All activities must be kept in plain view.
8. Any contact with youth using text or email messages will be only as group texts with at least two unrelated adults included in the recipients.

### **Specific Ministries**

#### **Overnights**

1. All activities must be kept in plain view using open spaces or rooms with windows in their doors or with doors open.
2. Education and screening (see pp. 7 & 8) is required for all adult volunteers.
3. Multiple adult volunteers will be required for all activities.
4. All volunteers must be adults over the age of 21.
5. All participants must receive an appropriate child and youth safety statement that will be reviewed with group at beginning of the overnight.
6. All youth participants must have a signed permission slip from a parent or legal guardian.

7. All activities must be kept in plain view.
8. Lights must be kept on except during specified sleeping hours or movie-watching.
9. Overnights must have a designated lock time.
10. Adult supervisors must actively seek to prevent inappropriate or abusive youth/youth behavior.

### **Confirmation**

1. All activities must be kept in plain view using open spaces or rooms with uncovered windows in their doors.
2. All one-to-one meetings between confirmand and mentor will occur at church and will be visible and subject to supervision
3. Education and screening (see pp. 7 & 8) will be required for all mentors.
4. Education (see page 7) within the past year is required for all youth and their parents.
5. All activities must be kept in plain view.
6. All off-site activities require a minimum of two non-related, screened volunteers.
7. All youth participants must have a signed legal guardian/parent permission slip.

### **Out of Town Trips**

1. A ratio of one adult to every five kids is recommended.
2. At least two non-related adult volunteers must be present for all activities.
3. Education and screening (see pp. 7 & 8) will be required for all adults.
4. All activities must be kept in plain view.
5. An appropriate child and youth safety statement must be provided to all participants and reviewed, as necessary.
6. All participants must have a signed legal guardian/parent permission slip. If the child or youth is not a regular attendee of the church, the church must provide the parent with information about the Safe Church Policy with the permission slip.

### **Hired and Non-Owned Vehicles**

1. Anyone driving on behalf of the church must be approved by a Safe Church Team representative.
2. All drivers must be 25 years of age or older.
3. Designated drivers will provide a copy of their driver license, proof of insurance, and auto registration before the event.
4. A motor vehicle record search should be performed on each designated driver annually.
5. All vehicles used for church trips should be in good condition and well maintained.

### **Pastoral Counseling for Youth and Adults**

1. This policy will be clearly posted.
2. Continuing education of appropriate and ethical boundaries is required of the pastor.
3. When a child or youth receives pastoral care, another adult must be present in building.

### **Rides for Children and Youth**

1. Drivers for authorized youth outings are considered volunteers and are required to receive the same education and screening required of other volunteers (see pp. 7 & 8).
2. When traveling as a group, all the authorized and approved cars in the caravan must follow a planned route and must arrange a plan of communication for the time of travel.
3. Two screened non-related adults must be present at the church until all youth have been picked up.
4. Creede Community Church is not responsible for any parental ride arrangements to and from activity sites.

### **Outside Groups Using Our Facilities**

1. Outside groups using the church building will receive a tour of the areas they are using that will include safety features and where to access the Safe Church Policy (which is posted throughout the building and on the church website).

## Recurring and Continuing Education about Child Abuse

Important components of a Safe Church Policy are recurring and age-appropriate education about child safety/child abuse prevention and the Creede Community Church Safe Church policies and procedures. Consistent and routine education will be provided to the congregation including our children and youth.

### Policy

- Children and youth volunteers will be educated about child safety prior to beginning their ministries.
- Education and training about child abuse will take place on a regular and systematic basis within the church and its programs.
- Adult and youth in the congregation who will be engaging in broad and potentially risky ministries, such as a youth mission trip or being a Confirmation mentor, will be provided with additional child safety educational opportunities.
- The Safe Church Team will provide opportunities to inform the congregation about State of Colorado mandated reporting laws.

### Procedures

The education and training component includes the following:

1. The Safe Church Policy and Procedures Overview page will be distributed to the entire congregation at the Annual Congregational meeting and upon request.
2. Annual training on child abuse for the pastoral staff, the church moderator, the vice-moderator, and adult volunteers. This training will be publicized, and individuals from the congregation will also be invited to attend.
3. Annually provide information to parents of all children in Sunday School about the issue of safety. Suggestions of age-appropriate materials for parents to discuss with their children will be provided at or near the beginning of the fall term.
4. A review of Safe Church Policy and Procedures for all Sunday School teachers and volunteers for child and youth activities as part of the regular recruitment process.
5. Information about the Safe Church Policy and Procedures provided to new members as part of their new member classes.
6. Posting a Summary Page of the Safe Church Policy and Procedures in multiple designated areas of the church.

## Volunteer and Paid Staff Screening

All volunteers and staff will be carefully screened and educated before beginning their ministry with children and youth at Creede Community Church. A Safe Church Team will facilitate the screening process to ensure 1) that the screening of volunteers and paid staff is adequate and complete, 2) that the privacy of the volunteers is protected, 3) and that recurring and continuing education is available to volunteers, children, youth and other members of our congregation. The following policy statements reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving our church as a place of safety and protection.

### Policy

- No adult who has been convicted of child abuse (that is, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect or physical abuse) will be accepted as a volunteer to work with children and youth for any church sponsored activity.
- Frequent and long-term volunteers will have a bi-annual background check to keep screening as up to date as possible.
- Each volunteer must have been a member of Creede Community Church for at least six months or a regular worship attendee for one year prior to volunteering in children and youth ministries.  
*Exception:* Prospective volunteers who work with children/youth in Creede (e.g., as an employee of Creede Schools, CELC, Recreation Center, etc), and have been screened accordingly, may volunteer if: they have been a regular attender of CCC for at least two months, serve alongside another approved volunteer, and comply with the rest of the education/screening requirements outlined in this policy (see pp. 7 & 8).
- Paid staff and volunteers working with children and youth shall attend training and educational events, as referenced above in policy.

### Procedure

1. The Safe Church Team will create a screening process based on criminal justice protocols and the latest research in the field of child abuse prevention and follow Creede Community Church policies for background check procedures.
2. All adult volunteers will complete a Voluntary Disclosure Form before beginning their ministry with children and youth.
3. Background checks will be required for all applicants and volunteers over the age of 18.
4. The Safe Church Team will review applications and background checks which will remain confidential to protect the privacy of our members, including keeping the files in a locked cabinet as stated in the Creede Community Church By-laws for background check procedures as outlined by the Personnel Committee.



### **The Safe Church Team**

As part of this policy, a Safe Church Team of three people will be established to provide ongoing review and implementation of the policy. Team members will undergo background checks and training on the issue of child abuse before being allowed to serve. The team will conduct screening of staff, teachers, and volunteers who work with children and youth and oversee the educational component of the policy. These appointed positions will be approved by the Church Board. It is recommended that one Safe Team member be a representative from the

Trustees, a second member be a representative from the Board of Christian Education, and the third member be from the congregation at-large. The three members of the Safe Church Team cannot serve simultaneously on the abuse response team.

Members of the Safe Church Team will commit to a three-year term, in such a manner that the term of one member expires each year. A Safe Church Team member may serve two consecutive terms, and then shall be ineligible for one year. The Safe Church Team is tasked with ensuring the confidentiality of all volunteers and potential volunteers.

With assistance from the Board of Christian Education, The Safe Church Team will be responsible for organizing and scheduling education and training sessions, providing educational materials, and informing members of the congregation about educational and training sessions and materials available.

The Safe Church Team will review these policies and procedures on an annual basis and will take any suggested changes to the Church Board for approval. If changes are needed before the annual review, those changes will also be approved by the Church Board.

### **The Abuse Response Team**

The Abuse Response Team will consist of the church moderator, the vice-moderator, a past moderator, and the current pastor. Its responsibilities are spelled out in detail in the Allegations of Abuse and Congregational Response section of the policy (see pp. 10 & 11).

The members of the Abuse Response Team have the responsibility of receiving and acting on allegations of abuse.

## **Allegations of Abuse and Congregational Response**

### **Policy**

It is the policy of The Creede Community Church that allegations of physical and sexual abuse of children and youth are to be taken seriously and resolved fully and responsibly.

- Volunteers, clergy and other paid staff members working directly with children and youth who have knowledge of or suspicion of abuse of children must immediately report that knowledge or suspicion to an Abuse Response Team member within the church who is designated to deal with such incidents.
- It is the hope of Creede Community Church that anyone with knowledge or suspicion of abuse will approach a member of the Abuse Response Team.
- The Abuse Response Team will in turn immediately report any incidents to the local authorities as detailed in the procedures section below.
- The Abuse Response Team will cooperate with all aspects of the investigation.
- While an allegation or investigation is pending for an individual volunteer or staff member, he or she must suspend activities within child or youth programs at Creede Community Church.

### **Procedures**

1. All allegations of abuse shall be regarded seriously, and alleged victims will be treated with respect and courtesy. Concerns will be reported immediately to child protection officials (by calling the Child Abuse Hot Line, 1-800-4CO-Kids, 1-800-426-5637) or by calling Rio Grande/Mineral County Social Services at 719-657-3381 and ask for Child Protection Services. Alleged victims or alleged perpetrators will not be interviewed by church personnel.
2. All childcare or youth workers are mandated to report any suspected or known child abuse immediately to proper church authorities. These authorities will be the church moderator, the vice-moderator, and the past moderator who will function as the Abuse Response Team. If a youth worker cannot follow the normal procedure of reporting an incident to a member of the Abuse Response Team for any reason he or she should contact The Child Abuse Hot Line, 1-800-426-5637.
3. If the alleged perpetrator is a member of the pastoral staff or is a moderator, the church youth worker will inform the non-accused members of the Abuse Response Team. The Abuse team members may contact the Conference Minister or Associate Conference Ministers of the Rocky Mountain Conference by calling the RMC office at 303-984-9118.
4. The Abuse Response Team will immediately contact The Child Abuse Hot Line, or the Rio Grande/Mineral County Department of Social Services at 719-657-3381.
5. When an allegation of abuse is made, it is suggested that the recipient of the report write down what has been alleged using the child's/reporter's words. The recipient of the report is to take down the information without asking investigative or leading questions to the child. This can hurt the investigation. This report should be made available to the investigating

authorities. All reported information is confidential and not to be shared with anyone outside the investigating personnel.

6. The Rio Grande/Mineral County Department of Social Services will be the investigative body and deal with the alleged perpetrator concerning the accusation.
7. The moderator is designated as the only spokesperson for communication with the media if there are media requests for comment or information. If the allegation is against the moderator, this responsibility will go to the past moderator. During the investigative stage of any allegation, the church spokesperson should limit statements to the fact that the church takes any allegation seriously and is fully cooperating with authorities. Under no circumstances should a spokesperson discuss any aspect of a case. When an allegation is resolved, members of the pastoral staff and/or the moderator should consult with the Church Board before issuing any statement or making any comment.
8. The Safe Church Team and the Abuse Response Team will continually work to foster a safe and affirming environment.