



Taftsville Chapel Mennonite Fellowship Child & Student Safety Policy

At Taftsville Chapel Mennonite Fellowship, we are committed to the safety of the children, families, and volunteers at TCMF. In an effort to lessen the possibility of abuses occurring and to maintain conduct that is above reproach, we have developed the following guidelines for our children's ministry.

Commitment: We commit ourselves to treasure our children as precious in God's sight. We realize that it is our responsibility to protect them, to create a safe environment for them and to respond to their needs in case they are abused, neglected or hurt.

Definitions:

Physical abuse: When a child has a non-accidental injury

Emotional abuse: When an adult communicates (verbally and non-verbally) in coercive, psychologically harmful ways to a child

Sexual abuse: When an adult exposes a child to any sexual act

Emotional neglect: When a child is not loved, comforted or secure

Physical neglect: When a child is not given their basic needs

3-person practice: Three or more people present when a child or children (who are not close family members of the supervising adult) are present with an adult.

PREVENTION GUIDELINES:

➤ Taftsville Chapel Mennonite Fellowship will comply with the standards for abuse prevention provided by Mennonite Church USA (linked [here](#)) and Mosaic Mennonite Conference (linked [here](#)). In light of this:

- We will seek to have multiple adults working with children and students to reduce potential risks and opportunities for abuse.
- Whenever any worker is alone with children we recommend other

adults in close proximity and we insist on a “3-person practice” where the adult is never alone with only one child (who is not a close family member) in an enclosed room.

- In all electronic written communication between an adult leader and a minor (who is not in their family), the communication will include another trusted adult as a witness copied in communication (i.e. it is recommended that emails between an adult leader and a teenager or child CC the child’s parent or guardian).
- For web-based video conferencing or messaging, any communication between an adult leader and a child will be visible to another trusted person (i.e. there should not be private web-based chats that are secretive and exclusive between an adult leader and child/teenager).
- All classrooms and other spaces where children and students gather shall be open to unannounced visits by any Church Council or Spiritual Leadership Team member, child-care worker or any parent at any time.
- Adult leaders and care-takers of children will avoid giving exclusive gifts, special attention, and displays of favoritism to specific children in the church.
- Adult leaders will never inappropriately touch a child (as defined in the [Prevention Accountability Resource](#)).

PREVENTION STEPS

1. Before adults (18 years and older) begin to serve in Children and/or Student ministries, each worker working with minors will be asked to complete and sign a Voluntary Disclosure Form explicitly indicating that they have never been convicted of child abuse. The application will also include permission for a background check. All applications will be confidential and seen only by the Church Council.

2. No one will be a worker with children or students in the church unless they are faithfully associated with the church (generally six [6] months). Exceptions include new pastoral staff called by the church body and may also include others with extenuating circumstances as approved by the Church Council (e.g. professional childcare arranged by the church administration, which might include a short notice agreement between the Church Administrator and Pastor to designate a childcare provider who agrees to these expectations).

3. When Children’s or Student Ministries have an overnight stay, two or more adult leaders must be present and must include at least one male and one female leader if the group is mixed gender.

4. Maintain a safe church facility--this entails monitoring the environment, building, classrooms, and meeting spaces for any potential risks.
5. Hold Sunday School classes and other activities in common rooms where doors will remain open. Parents and guardians are always welcome.
6. Observe the “3-person practice” while interacting with children outside of the church schedule. Parents and guardians are always welcome.
7. Have an adult available for youth under eighteen who are providing childcare or supervision.
8. Require parents to give consent for their children to be transported away from the church by anyone who is not a family member.
9. Do not punish children for misbehavior. Adults will offer guidance and redirect negative behavior and will take the child to the parents if further action is deemed necessary.

RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

If alleged abuse is **NOT** physical or sexual the allegation will be appropriately and thoroughly investigated by the Spiritual Leadership Team (SLT) in which case the SLT shall investigate, and biblically principled steps (e.g. Matthew 18:15-20) taken to correctly heal the situation and prevent any future occurrences.

If the alleged abuse **IS** physical or sexual then the following nine steps will be followed.

1. The person who observes, suspects or has received a direct allegation that abuse has taken place must *immediately* report what has been observed, suspected or alleged to the Pastor or Church Administrator (Chair of the Church Council) **and** to Services to Children and Families. (Vermont Child Abuse Reporting 1-800-295-8840). The Pastor/Leader is to instruct the reporting person not to discuss what has been observed or suspected with anyone else.
2. If the allegations of abuse are directed *against* a Pastor or a Credentialed Leader, then MCUSA’s Denominational Minister for Church Safety (DMCS) and the Conference Safety Liaison (CSL) by a leader from TCMF who is *not* the accused Pastor/Leader.
3. The Pastor/Leader to whom the allegation was reported will *immediately* notify the alleged offender and remove the alleged offender from all unsupervised

contact with all individuals under the age of 18 until the individual has been cleared of allegations and/or charges.

4. The Pastor/Leader to whom the allegation was reported will *immediately* report to

Services to Children and Families (Vermont Child Abuse Reporting 800-649-5285).

5. The Pastor/Leader to whom the allegation was reported will notify the rest of the Church Council.

6. The Pastor/Leader to whom the allegation was reported will notify the parents of the alleged victim(s).

7. No member of the pastoral staff or the Church Council will attempt to investigate the situation through direct or indirect contact with the alleged victim. However, Pastor(s) and/or Spiritual Leadership Team members are free to offer Biblical counsel to all parties.

8. The Pastor/Leader to whom the allegation was reported will report the incident to the church's insurance company and attorney according to procedural standards of those entities and the church will keep a permanent copy.

9. The Church Council will *carefully* inform the church body in appropriate ways and at appropriate times.

10. Biblical church discipline and/or restoration procedures shall be followed at the time considered appropriate by the Church Council.

By signing below, I attest that I have read and understand the above Child & Student Safety Guidelines. I understand the policies for both prevention and response and agree to adhere to the guidelines identified above.

PRINTED NAME

SIGNATURE _____ DATE
