

Zion Reformed Church Child Protection Policy

Original Document Written November 2005
Revised March 2007, August 2010, August 2011, August 2012, August 2013

Jesus said, "Let the little children come unto me." Luke 18:16

As Christian adults, we are called to teach and help bring up children of the church. Part of the responsibility of teaching our children is to provide a safe environment for them to learn and grow in the knowledge of Christ.

The consistory of Zion Reformed Church of Grandville, Michigan recognizes the need for a written policy regarding child protection and the prevention of child abuse. Accordingly, it has adopted the following policy, which establishes procedures for addressing allegations of abuse and establishes guidelines which help prevent such abuse from occurring at church/church functions.

Statement of Purpose

This policy is adopted for the following three purposes:

- To protect the children and youth served by the ministries of Zion Reformed Church by establishing a safe environment.
- To protect the workers at Zion Reformed Church from unfounded allegations of abuse.
- To provide a code of conduct for all workers.

Definition of Terms

Adult	Any person eighteen (18) years or older
Child(ren)	Minor under the age of twelve (12)
Infant	Minor age zero (0) to eighteen (18) months
KKSC	Keeping Kids Safe Committee A standing committee comprised of a chairperson, the vice president of consistory, and the chairperson of the education committee
Minor	Any person under the age of eighteen (18)
Related Workers	Immediate family members: parents, spouses, siblings, children
Staff	The pastors and any employees hired by Zion Reformed Church
Toddler	Minor age eighteen (18) months to five (5) years
Volunteer	A person providing services to Zion Reformed Church but is not employed by Zion Reformed Church
Worker	Volunteers regularly working with minors at Zion Reformed Church and all staff members
Youth	Minor age twelve (12) to seventeen (17) or still enrolled in high school

Definition of Abuse and Neglect

Michigan law (“Child Protection Law” P.A. 1975, No. 238 MCLA 722.622) defines child abuse and neglect as:

Child abuse means harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare that occurs through non-accidental physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or maltreatment, by a parent, a legal guardian, or any other person responsible for the child's health or welfare or by a teacher, a teacher's aide, or a member of the clergy.

Child neglect means harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare by a parent, legal guardian, or any other person responsible for the child's health or welfare that occurs through either of the following:

- Negligent treatment, including the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care.
- Placing a child at an unreasonable risk to the child's health or welfare by failure of the parent, legal guardian, or other person responsible for the child's health or welfare to intervene to eliminate that risk when that person is able to do so and has, or should have, knowledge of the risk.

Identifying Abuse, Sexual Abuse, and Neglect

KKSC members and all other adult workers are strongly urged to attend training on the signs and symptoms of child abuse, awareness of abuse, dynamics of abuse and reporting suspected abuse. Training classes will be offered by Zion Reformed Church.

Workers should be alert to signs and symptoms of abuse.

The following may be indicators of child abuse:

Physical signs

- Cuts and bruises
- Nightmares
- Irritation, pain, or injury to the genital area
- Difficulty with urination
- Discomfort, when sitting
- Torn or bloody underclothing
- Venereal disease/Pregnancy

Behavioral signs

- Anxiety when approaching church/class/nursery area
- Nervous or hostile behavior toward adult
- Sexual self consciousness
- Acting out of sexual behavior (inappropriate play with dolls or other children)
- Withdrawal from activities or friends

Verbal signs

- I don't like [name]
- I don't like to be alone with [name]
- [Name] does things to me when we are alone
- [Name] fooled around with me.

The following may be indicators of child neglect:

- Poor hygiene including lice, body odor, scaly skin
- Untreated illness or injury
- Poor attendance at school and extracurricular activities
- Begging,, hoarding, and stealing
- Role reversal – assumes adult responsibilities

One indicator alone could be a sign but does not necessarily indicate abuse. These indicators taken together give reasonable cause that abuse may be taking place.

Forms of abuse that would require reporting

Touching offenses

- Corporal punishment and any other form of physical pain
- Fondling
- Touching sexual organs
- Making a child touch an adult sexually
- Attempted or actual sexual intercourse

Non-Touching offenses

- Verbal abuse
- Indecent exposure
- Showing pornographic materials to a child
- Deliberately letting a child see or hear an act of sexual intercourse
- Exposing a child to graphic sexual language or innuendo

Effect of Abuse on the Child

Abuse has a devastating effect on the child, and this effect can last throughout the victim's life. It can alter the whole trajectory of one's life as it affects the entire person – the physical, mental, emotional, relational, and spiritual health of the victim.

Reporting Abuse

Church workers should understand that reporting suspicions of child abuse reflects caring and not an act of disloyalty. Zion Reformed Church's reporting procedures are in place for the specific purpose of protecting children and church workers.

Workers should only get as much information from the minor as is necessary to determine the nature of the alleged abuse. Workers should not use leading questions or questions which suggest an answer. Questions like, "Tell me what happened" are appropriate.

If you discover, or have reason to believe a case of abuse has occurred or is occurring - act immediately. Seek professional advice and contact Child Protective Services.

Kent County - Human Services (616) 248-9600

KKSC members are available for further consultation. Names of committee will be posted on the bulletin board outside the nursery.

Upon receiving a report of suspected abuse, the KKSC member, will complete the Suspected Abuse Reporting Form (Appendix B). All efforts will be made to keep this document confidential.

After a report has been made to appropriate law enforcement officials and the Suspected Abuse Reporting Form (appendix B) has been completed, the KKSC member can make senior pastor and the board of elders aware that an accusation and report has been made.

If necessary, the board of elders will obtain legal counsel for Zion Reformed Church.

No one, including the senior pastor, should speak to any outside agency, including the media, without prior approval from legal counsel.

Keeping Kids Safe Committee (KKSC)

The KKS committee is a standing committee comprised of one chairperson, the vice president of consistory and the chairperson of the education committee. The KKSC works in conjunction with the education committee to assure that all aspects of this child protection policy are followed throughout all of our ministries involving children and youth.

Responsibilities of the Keeping Kids Safe Committee include:

- Organize the annual Child Protection Policy review.
- Organize annual training on abuse recognition for all workers.
- Collection of Volunteer Applicant Screening Forms each ministry year.
- Submission of criminal background checks on all workers each ministry year.
- Maintaining the KKSC bulletin board with current information.
 - Child Protection Policy and forms posted in the following areas:
 - Bulletin board by nursery (policy only)
 - Nursery (wall near bathroom)
 - Youth Room/Chapel (end of counter)
 - Caraway/Children and Worship Room 207 (on wall by closets)
 - Basement Kitchen (on wall behind first aid kit)
- Determining appropriate response if an allegation of abuse is made.

Education Committee

Responsibilities of the Education Committee include:

- Assist in the collection of Volunteer Applicant Screening Forms each ministry year by ministry leaders.
- Assist in the annual Child Protection Policy review for all workers.
- Assist in the annual training on abuse recognition for all workers.
- Collection of Parent Contact & Child Information forms each ministry year by ministry leaders.

Risk Management

Screening Procedure of Workers

- Workers, who are adults, must be members of Zion Reformed Church or must be approved by the Elders of Zion Reformed Church.
- Workers, who are adults, must annually complete the **Volunteer Applicant Screening Form** (Appendix D).
 - Volunteers who will be turning eighteen (18) during the education year will also complete the **Volunteer Applicant Screening Form**.
 - Review of the Volunteer Applicant Screening Form will be completed by the Zion Reformed Church KKSC.
- Submission of a criminal background check
 - In the event that a worker has been convicted of or pleads guilty to a charge alleging abuse, or has a criminal history evidencing behavior of assault, that person shall be ineligible to participate in activities involving minors at Zion Reformed Church.

Volunteers who are Minors

- Minors who are 11 years of age or older may volunteer in the children's ministries.
- Minors under age 11 must be accompanying their parent (who has been through the risk screening procedures) in order to be present as a volunteer in children's ministries.

Guest Speakers/Visitors

- One time guest speakers and visitors are to be used only in conjunction with adults who have been through the risk management screening procedures.
- If a guest/visitor becomes a frequent or regular worker, he/she will be required to comply with the screening procedure for workers.

Open Door Policy

- All events have an open door policy, which means that parents or guardians, pastors, and other appropriate adults are free to attend, drop in, or observe at any time during the activity.
- It is recommended that those wishing to preview a program before volunteering schedule a time with the leader(s) to observe.
- The aforementioned individuals may observe only, but may not teach or regularly participate until he/she has been through the risk management screening procedures.
 - May not be alone with any children not their own
 - May not assist in toileting/diapering any children not their own

Code of Conduct

Protect the Child

Protecting the child is an important responsibility of all leaders within the church. The following actions are strongly recommended:

- Pray regularly for each child with whom you work
- Maintain open communication with each child
- Watch for signs of abuse
- Report incidents of abuse

Protect the Workers

- **Adequate Supervision**

- At least two (2) non-related workers, one of whom must be an adult, are to be in attendance when Zion Reformed Church children and youth groups are gathered together.
- At least two (2) workers, one of whom must be an adult, must be present before the activity is scheduled to begin. Parents or guardians are not to leave children for activities until there are two workers present.
- At least two (2) workers, one of whom must be an adult, must be present at the conclusion of the activity until all minors are picked up by their parents or guardians or have otherwise left the activity.

- **Minimum Leadership**

- All ministries involving minors should be held in areas that are open to observation.
- In the event that two non-related workers are unavailable for a small group situation, a second, adult worker will be circulating and observing each small group through a window or open door.

- **Accident/Injury Reporting**

- In the event a minor is injured during an activity at or sponsored by Zion Reformed Church:
 - Workers will render first aid and call emergency services if necessary.
 - Workers will notify parents of the incident (immediately if emergency services are called).
 - The adult witnessing the incident must fill out an **Accident/Injury Report Form** (appendix C). Copies of this form will be available near each first aid kit, with each posted Child Protection Policy, and are available through leaders/coordinators.

Situation Specific Guidelines

Adult/Minor One-on-One Counseling

- No worker, who is an adult, should be alone in a room with a minor unless the door is left open or has a transparent window.
- We recommend that private conversations between adults and minors happen in a public setting.
- We further recommend that the worker involved with one-on-one counseling with a minor let another adult know that a counseling session is in progress.

Overnight Trips

- An adult may not share a room alone with any minor not his/her own child.
- An adult may not share a bed with any minor not his/her own child.
- Male and female participants will not share the same sleeping quarters.

Nursery

- Parents or guardians must sign their child in and out of nursery.
- Workers should leave the top of the bathroom door open when diapering or toileting a child.

Children and Worship (Age 3 to Kindergarten)

- Parents or guardians must check their child in and out using the name tag system.
- A designated worker will escort all children from Children and Worship.
- Children not staying for Sunday school must be signed out by a parent or guardian.

Sunday School (Age 3 to Kindergarten)

- Parents or guardians must check their child out using the name tag system.
- Children not staying for Sunday school must still be signed out.

Li'l JAMers (Age 3 to kindergarten)

- Parents or guardians must check their child in and out using the name tag system.
- Parents should not leave child until two workers are present.

Bathroom Policy

- If possible, a same sex worker should accompany or assist a toddler or child with special needs/handicap in the restroom only if needed by the child.
- If assistance is needed, a worker will prop open the main bathroom door.
- We recommend that the entire class/group (3 years old to kindergarten) visit the bathroom at the same time, boys in one bathroom, girls in the other, with a worker posted outside of each open door.
- If a toddler needs a diaper changed or needs specific toileting help, please bring that child to the nursery. The nursery workers will see to those needs.
- Adults who have not completed these risk management screening procedures may not assist in toileting/diapering.

Transportation Policy

- Parents or guardians are responsible to provide/arrange transportation of minors to and from regularly scheduled events.
- Workers must be at least twenty-one (21) years of age to provide transportation to and from any church sponsored activities.
- Workers must be at least twenty-five (25) years of age to provide transportation using a church-owned vehicle.
- If a worker does lend transportation to a minor not his/her own child, the minor must ride in the back seat of the vehicle.
 - Workers should not offer to provide transportation, but should be asked.
 - In the event of a pick-up truck, workers should try to separate themselves from the minor (use a bag, purse, books, etc.).
 - All workers and minors must wear a seatbelt when being transported to and from a Zion sponsored activity.
 - All minors from birth to age eight (8) must be properly restrained in a child safety seat or booster seat in the vehicle, unless 4'9" tall.
 - Parents should provide a safety seat or booster seat or the church has a couple booster seats in storage.
 - Check with the parents, if a child uses a booster seat in their car, he/she should also use one in a vehicle use for transportation to or from a church activity.
- The signed written consent of a parent or guardian must be obtained before permitting any minor to be transported by any worker for any Zion event. Permission slip guidelines are included (Appendix A).

Permission Slips

- The signed written consent of a parent or guardian must be obtained before permitting any minor to participate in any off campus Zion sponsored event or overnight function. Permission slip guidelines are included (Appendix A).
- Signed permission slips must accompany the group.
- Ensure all visiting children and youth turn in a completed permission slip.

Touching Policy

- Physical contact between adults, children, and youth should be engaged in with care, so as to avoid the appearance of impropriety.
- Touching is less likely to be misconstrued when it is open to observation. This rule is especially important when diapering an infant or toileting a toddler.
- Touching should be initiated by the minor
 - A minor's preference not to be touched should be respected.
 - Do not force affection upon a reluctant minor.
- Corporal punishment (hitting and spanking) and other forms of punishment involving physical pain are forbidden.
- Parents or guardians of misbehaving minors will be immediately notified and involved.

Electronic Communication Policy

- All communications (phone, email, text, social media, etc.) should be kept appropriate at all times.

Behavior Guidelines and Discipline Policy

- Children and youth should be regularly informed of the rules of the group.
- Parents should also be made aware of the behavior expectations for their child or youth. Regular communication with parents may lessen the need for discipline.
- The use of corporal punishment (hitting and spanking) is not permitted.
- The use of threatening, harsh, or hurtful language as a form of punishment is not permitted.
- The use of discipline that is intended to humiliate is not permitted.
- Refusing to speak to a child as a form of discipline is not permitted.
- Appropriate forms of discipline include the following:
 - Distracting the minor with another activity.
 - Helping the minor focus on more acceptable behavior.
 - Isolating the minor from others when another worker is available to supervise the rest of the group.
 - Using a “time-out” strategy. The minor may be placed in a time out area or chair. (This is an age appropriate strategy for younger children and the length of the time out should not exceed their chronological age).
 - Asking the child’s parent to attend the next meeting and participate in the activities.
 - Sending someone to get/call the parents.
- Parents will be informed of repeated negative behavior and/or when a child/youth misbehaves in a way beyond what minor correction can control.
- Behavior expectations must be age appropriate. Likewise, discipline for wrong behavior must include age appropriate actions.

Remember the root of discipline is “disciple”.

Appendix A

Guidelines for Permission Slips

Zion Reformed Church (name of program) Registration Form

(year) Ministry Year

Student's Name _____

Male / Female Age _____ DOB _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

School _____ Grade _____

Member of Zion? Yes No

Mother's Name _____ Phone _____

Father's Name _____ Phone _____

Emergency Contact Person _____ Relationship _____

Home Phone _____ Cell/Work Phone _____

Insurance Co. _____ Policy # _____ Group # _____

Is your child in general good health and able to participate in all activities? Yes No

If no, please explain _____

Does your child need to take any medications? Yes No

If yes, please list medication and purpose _____

Are there any special conditions (food allergies) that we should be aware of? Yes No

If yes, please explain _____

I give permission for pictures of my child to be used on the Zion Church web site and for in-house publicity. Yes No

By signing this form I hereby certify that the above information is correct and grant permission for the release of medical records in the case of emergency accident or illness during a church sponsored activity.

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

Appendix B

Suspected Abuse Reporting Form

Date _____

Name of Child _____

Name of worker reporting _____

Name of person taking report _____

Class or program child attends _____

Signs or symptoms noticed

Date of incident _____

Exact circumstances

Child's response as observed

Action taken

Child Protective Services Contacted? Yes No

Date _____

Signature of reporter _____

Printed Name _____

Signature of KKS Committee member _____

Printed Name _____

Appendix C

Zion Reformed Church Accident Report Form

Instructions: A report should be completed on the day of the occurrence. In case of serious injury, signed statements by witnesses should accompany the report. A copy of the form should be given to the church office.

Person Injured

Name _____ Birth Date _____ Age _____ Sex _____

Address _____

Nature of Injury _____

Date _____ Time _____ Location _____

Description of Accident _____

Witnesses

Name of worker(s) in charge/witness(es)	Age	Phone
---	-----	-------

First Aid Rendered

Describe what was done and by whom _____

Additional Information

Signatures

Name of person completing form and witnesses and signatures

Appendix D

Zion Reformed Church

Volunteer Applicant Screening Form

As one who ministers with children and youth, your endorsement below helps to continue the trustworthiness that exists between the adults, children & youth of Zion Reformed Church.

We ask that all adults working with our children and youth be members of Zion Reformed Church.

Full Legal Name _____ Maiden Name _____

Address _____ Date of birth _____

Phone # _____

Ministries for which you want to volunteer _____

Are you a member of Zion Reformed Church? _____

How long have you been a member at Zion? _____

Because of our concern for safety, everyone involved with minors at Zion may have a background check conducted. Are you willing to submit to a background check?

YES NO

Have you ever been charged with, arrested for or convicted of a crime involving physical or sexual harm to another individual?

YES NO

If yes, please explain _____

Please list your driver's license _____ State _____ Expiration _____

(Information will be kept confidential)

Acknowledge of Receipt and Pledge of Acceptance

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Zion Reformed Church Child Protection Policy.

I have read, understand, and agree to the Zion Reformed Church Child Protection Policy and have no conflicts with it.

I promise to abide by the guidelines set forth in this policy and will conduct myself in an appropriate manner when dealing with minors and adults at Zion Reformed Church.

Signature _____ Date _____

Keeping Kids Safe Training Open Booklet Quiz

Please answer the following items.

1. What is the correct number of workers needed to be considered as having “adequate supervision”?
 - a. Two workers of any ages
 - b. Two workers, at least one must be an adult
 - c. Three workers, at least two must be adults
 - d. Two workers, three if they are related

2. How are children signed in and out of programs if they are in Children and Worship?
 - a. There is a sign in/out sheet by the entry to the program
 - b. They only need to be signed out.
 - c. There is a name tag system, parents take one part and child wear the other part.
 - d. Signing in and out is not necessary.

3. Which is the correct way to take a child to the bathroom?
 - a. Take kids in groups if possible
 - b. Stay in the hallway with the door propped open
 - c. Take kids needing help to the nursery
 - d. All of the above

4. Why is it necessary to have a Child Protection Policy in place at Zion?
 - a. To protect the children and youth served by the ministries of Zion Reformed Church by establishing a safe environment
 - b. To protect the workers at Zion Reformed Church from unfounded allegations of abuse.
 - c. To provide a code of conduct for all workers.
 - d. All of the above

5. How does Zion screen volunteers to work in children and youth ministries?
 - a. Anyone interested in volunteering can volunteer
 - b. Workers must go through a training session and criminal background check
 - c. There is no screening process
 - d. Volunteers just need to talk to Pastor Greg

6. What do you do if you suspect a child is being abused?
 - a. Seek professional advice by contacting Child Protective Services and talk to a KKS committee member for further consultation
 - b. A Suspected Abuse Reporting Form will be completed
 - c. Keep the information as confidential as possible
 - d. All of the above

7. What is one thing you can do to protect a child?
 - a. Pray regularly for each child with whom you work
 - b. Maintain open communication with each child
 - c. Watch for and report incidents of abuse
 - d. All of the above

8. Should two related workers be the only workers scheduled for a given ministry time?
 - a. No, family members never works well together
 - b. Yes, family members always work well together
 - c. Yes, there are no limitations to related workers
 - d. No, two non-related workers should be scheduled together

9. Which is the correct order of events if there is an accident or injury at a Zion sponsored activity?
 - a. Fill out an accident form, notify parents, render first aid
 - b. Render first aid, fill out an accident form, notify parents
 - c. Notify parents, render first aid, fill out an accident form
 - d. Render first aid, notify parents, fill out an accident form

10. Which situation is the best for one-on-one counseling with a minor?
 - a. This discussion should happen in as public a place as possible
 - b. An adult may never, under any circumstance, be alone with a minor
 - c. Two adults should counsel a minor
 - d. This discussion should happen in as private a place as possible