

Vulnerable Population Abuse Policy and Procedures Mt. Zion Community Church of Arkansas City, KS

1. Introduction

The following Policy and Procedures have been developed by Mt. Zion Community Church of Arkansas City to give guidance on the subject of vulnerable population abuse to employees, volunteers, pastors, elders, and diaconate of Mt. Zion Community Church of Arkansas City and to address the needs of victims of vulnerable population abuse. The primary goal of Mt. Zion Community Church of Arkansas City in this regard is to prevent vulnerable population abuse, and the primary method of prevention is education. In addition to education, care in hiring and evaluation of employees and volunteers is an important element in prevention of vulnerable population abuse. Since the possibility of vulnerable population abuse has to be recognized, the Policy and Procedures also cover the investigation and reporting of incidents of vulnerable population abuse, and assistance to those affected by instances of vulnerable population abuse.

2. Policy

Mt. Zion Community Church of Arkansas City is committed to the prevention of vulnerable population abuse and to assisting those who are affected by incidents of vulnerable population abuse. Mt. Zion Community Church of Arkansas City is also committed to complying with legal requirements of reporting vulnerable population abuse. For purposes of this policy, vulnerable population abuse means physical injury, sexual abuse, exploitation, emotional abuse, or neglect inflicted on a vulnerable population, other than by accidental means, by those responsible for the vulnerable population's care, custody and control or from persons who are agents or employees of Mt. Zion Community Church of Arkansas City. All pastors, employees, and volunteers working in church ministries and activities, including all affiliated ministries and activities associated with Mt. Zion Community Church of Arkansas City, are expected to support this Policy and Procedures developed to implement the Policy.

Mt. Zion Community Church of Arkansas City will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one peer by another peer. In addition, our organization will not tolerate any behavior that is classified under the definition of bullying, and to the extent that such actions are disruptive, we will take steps needed to eliminate such behavior.

Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, is repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Bullying can take on various forms, including:

- a. *Physical bullying* - when one person engages in physical force against another person, such as by hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining another.
- b. *Verbal bullying* - when someone uses their words to hurt another, such as by belittling or calling another hurtful names.

Mt. Zion Community Church of Arkansas City policy for appropriate and inappropriate interactions are, but not limited to:

Appropriate Verbal Interactions	Inappropriate Verbal Interactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive reinforcement • Appropriate jokes • Encouragement • Praise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name calling • Discussing sexual encounters or in any way involving consumers in the personal problems or issues of staff and volunteers • Secrets • Cursing • Off-color or sexual jokes • Shaming • Belittling
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Derogatory remarks • Harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate consumers • Derogatory remarks about the consumer or his/her family

c. *Nonverbal or relational bullying* - when one person manipulates a relationship or desired relationship to harm another person. This includes social exclusion, friendship manipulation, or gossip. This type of bullying also includes intimidating another person by using gestures.

d. *Cyberbullying* - the intentional and overt act of aggression toward another person by way of any technological tool, such as email, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including blogs). Cyberbullying can involve:

- Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images.
- Posting sensitive, private information about another person.
- Pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad.
- Intentionally excluding someone from an online group.
- Hazing - an activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers that person regardless of that person's willingness to participate.
- Sexualized bullying - when bullying involves behaviors that are sexual in nature. Examples of sexualized bullying behaviors include sexting, bullying that involves exposures of private body parts, and verbal bullying involving sexualized language or innuendos.

Anyone who sees an act of bullying, and who then encourages it, is engaging in bullying. This policy applies to all minors, staff and volunteers.

3. Definitions

3.1. Types of abuse

3.1.1. Physical abuse is injury that is intentionally inflicted upon a vulnerable population.

3.1.2. Sexual abuse is any contact of a sexual nature that occurs between a minor and an adult or between two minors. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult or the other minor.

- 3.1.3. Emotional abuse is mental or emotional injury to a consumer that results in an observable and material impairment in the minor's growth, development, or psychological functioning.
- 3.1.4. Neglect is the failure to provide for a minor's basic needs or the failure to protect a minor from harm.

4. Procedures

4.1 Education

- 4.1.1 Employees, volunteers, pastors, elders, and diaconate who are in contact with vulnerable population in their work should be educated in the law regarding vulnerable population abuse, what signs to look for in the detection of vulnerable population abuse, both in circumstances and events which might indicate abuse and in the vulnerable population themselves. Additionally, they should be given guidance on what they should avoid so as not to bring suspicion on themselves.
- 4.1.2 The vulnerable population in the Mt. Zion Community Church of Arkansas City programs should be educated about vulnerable population abuse and the need to report any attempted or actual abuse to employees, volunteers, pastors, elders, or diaconate.
- 4.1.3 Parents should be educated on what signs of vulnerable population abuse to look for in their vulnerable population, which may alert them to a possible problem. Parents should also be told to whom they could report incidents of suspected vulnerable population abuse.
- 4.1.4 Mt. Zion Community Church of Arkansas City will develop educational programs regarding vulnerable population abuse emphasizing the creation of a safe environment for vulnerable population. These programs will be directed to pastors and ministry directors as well as all employees and volunteers who provide services to vulnerable population in vulnerable population and youth programs, and the parents of these vulnerable population.

5. Hiring and Evaluation of Employees

- 5.1 An essential element to the protection of vulnerable population within the care of Mt. Zion Community Church of Arkansas City is a hiring and pre-employment screening process that will elicit and develop information regarding each applicant for employment who will be working with vulnerable population or in proximity to vulnerable population. The following steps should be followed for the pre-employment evaluation of such applicants:
 - 5.1.1 Utilize a standard application form developed by Mt. Zion Community Church of Arkansas City, which requests information regarding any history of abuse. **(see Employment Application)**
 - 5.1.2 Check references and other information from the application form as appropriate to the question asked and the position being sought. This would include verification of information and performance from previous employers.
 - 5.1.3 The Pastor, Elders, Staff Search Team, or Church Administrator should make a record check for prior history of abuse in Kansas for each applicant. Mt. Zion

Community Church of Arkansas City , not the State of Kansas requires the check. This check is accomplished through a written request to a verification agency. This check will provide information from the National Database for all criminal behavior, sexual crimes, social security verification, driving records, etc. In addition, this process will allow a review of sex offender list maintained by each county.

If the applicant currently resides in another state, a record check should also be made for that state, if deemed appropriate, based on information received from the application process, a records check should also be made with the comparable agency for all states in which the applicant has resided.

- 5.1.4 A personal interview in which appropriate questions are asked should be conducted for each applicant.
- 5.1.5 Persons who, as a result of the application process, are determined to be at risk with vulnerable population should not be placed in a position in which there is contact, or an opportunity for contact, with vulnerable population.
- 5.1.6 If there are any questions regarding whether to accept an applicant or regarding a current employee or volunteer based on any information received during an interview process, records checks or other channels normally utilized in making employment decisions, consultation with legal council may be sought. Until such questions are resolved an applicant, current employee or volunteer who appears may be at risk with vulnerable population should not be placed in a position in which there is contact, or an opportunity for contact, with vulnerable population.
- 5.1.7 Records of persons not given positions because of concerns relating to placing them in contact with vulnerable population should be maintained for five years.
- 5.1.8 Records of persons given positions should be maintained for five years after employment has terminated unless an incident of alleged or suspected abuse has arisen, in which event advice of church legal counsel should be obtained.

6. Recruitment and Acceptance of Volunteers

6.1 As with employees, it is important to conduct an evaluation of volunteers who will be working with vulnerable population. The steps set forth below should be followed in the recruitment and acceptance of volunteers who are over the age of eighteen and who will be performing volunteer services on a regular basis for a church ministry event or activity for Mt. Zion Community Church of Arkansas City. Because many volunteers assist only occasionally or for a particular event, it is impractical to use the process outlined in this section in their recruitment. Due care should nonetheless be used in the selection of occasional volunteers.

- 6.1.1 The Pastor, Elders, Staff Search Team, or Church Administrator should make a record check for prior history of abuse in Kansas for each volunteer. Mt. Zion

Community Church of Arkansas City, not the State of Kansas requires the check. This check is accomplished through a written request to a verification agency. This check will provide information from the National Database for all criminal behavior, sexual crimes, social security verification, driving records, etc. In addition, this process will allow a review of sex offender list maintained by each county.

If the volunteer currently resides in another state, a record check should also be made for that state, if deemed appropriate, based on information received from the application process, a records check should also be made with the comparable agency for all states in which the volunteer has resided.

- 6.1.2 When deemed appropriate, a personal interview of persons recruited as volunteers should be conducted.
- 6.1.3 Records including the information form for volunteers should be maintained for five years after the volunteer has completed his/her volunteer work unless an incident of alleged or suspected abuse has arisen, in which event advice of legal counsel should be obtained.

7. Incident Investigation and Reporting

Because of the serious nature of incidents of alleged or suspected vulnerable population abuse for the victim, the family of the victim, the accused and Mt. Zion Community Church of Arkansas City and its employees, pastors, volunteers, and the community, the investigation and reporting of such incidents must be conducted in a manner which gives proper protection to all involved. The investigation must be carried out in a way which: (i) will best lead to determining the facts, (ii) will fulfill the statutory obligation to report incidents of probable vulnerable population abuse, and (iii) will assist legal counsel in the preparation for the defense of potential litigation which may arise from the incident.

In the investigation and reporting of incidents of alleged or suspected abuse, pastoral concerns should be addressed through sensitivity to all involved and through the maintenance of confidentiality of information received. Based on the foregoing, the following procedures have been developed.

7.1 Statutory legal obligation to report child abuse

KSA 21-5602, KSA 38-2223, and KSA 39-1430 contains the law regarding Abuse of a Child in Kansas and Abuse, neglect or financial exploitation of certain adults, as well as other applicable statutes.

The National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse defines child sex abuse as: *"Any sexual activity with a child whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day care situation, a foster/residential setting, or in any other setting, including on the street by a person unknown to the child. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child, provided the child is four years older than the victim."*

7.1.1 Who must report:

KSA 38-2223. Reporting of certain abuse or neglect of children; persons required to report; reports, made to whom; penalties; immunity from liability.

KSA 38-2223 contains the law regarding the reporting of abuse of a child.

In keeping with the spirit of Kansas law, it shall be the policy of Mt. Zion Community Church that every person with responsibility for the care of a vulnerable person, is required to make a report. Generally, this covers anyone dealing with the care or supervision of the vulnerable population.

7.1.2 What requires a report:

A person is required to report when he/she has reasonable cause to suspect that a vulnerable person has been or may be subjected to abuse or neglect or observes a vulnerable person being subjected to conditions or circumstances which would reasonably result in abuse or neglect.

Symptoms of Molestation

Church workers and staff should immediately confront any inappropriate conduct or relationship between an adult worker and a vulnerable person or youth should be investigated. Church workers and staff should be alert to the physical signs of abuse and molestation, as well as to behavioral and verbal signs that a victim may exhibit. Some of the more common signs are summarized below.

Physical signs may include one or more of the following:

- ▶ lacerations and bruises
- ▶ nightmares
- ▶ irritation, pain, or injury to the genital area
- ▶ difficulty with urination
- ▶ discomfort when sitting
- ▶ torn or bloody underclothing
- ▶ venereal disease

▶ Behavior signs may include:

- ▶ anxiety when approaching church or nursery area
- ▶ nervous or hostile behavior toward adults
- ▶ sexual self-consciousness
- ▶ "acting out" of sexual behavior
- ▶ withdrawal from church activities and friends.

▶ Verbal signs may include the following statements:

- ▶ I don't like [a particular church worker].
- ▶ [A church worker] does things to me when we're alone.
- ▶ I don't like to be alone with [a church worker].
- ▶ [A church worker] fooled around with me.

Definition of Sexual Abuse, "Reducing the Risk", p. 55-56

7.1.3 To whom must the report be made:

A staff member or volunteer must report to the elders and/or diaconate when such staff member or volunteer learns of abuse or neglect in his/her staff or professional position. Church leaders then become responsible for further internal reporting in accordance with these Procedures with a report ultimately being required to be made to the Kansas Department of Children and Families if indicated by the circumstances. A person who makes a report of suspected vulnerable person abuse or neglect to his or her supervisor has fulfilled his or her obligation to report. Anyone else who is a mandated reporter, is required to report must report directly to the Kansas Department of Children and Families. If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, please telephone the Kansas Protection Report Center at 1-800-922-5330. Every call is taken seriously, and every effort will be made to protect your identity. Telephone lines are staffed 24 hours a day.

7.1.4 When must report be made:

The report must be made to the Kansas Department of Children and Families by the person legally responsible for making the report immediately upon receiving a report of vulnerable person abuse, or other information regarding vulnerable person abuse or neglect which gives him/her reasonable cause to suspect that a vulnerable person has been or may be subjected to abuse. While the statute gives no time limit in its provisions, stating only that the report must be made immediately, the obligation to report does not arise until there is reasonable cause to suspect abuse or neglect. Some initial investigation may be required to determine whether such reasonable cause exists and, accordingly, there may be a time between learning of suspected abuse and making a decision whether to make a report. However, when reasonable cause to suspect abuse has been established, the report must be made immediately.

7.1.5 Failure to report:

Failure to report suspected vulnerable population abuse or neglect to the Kansas Department of Children and Families by a person required to do so, immediately upon establishing that there is reasonably cause to suspect vulnerable population abuse or neglect, is a Class B misdemeanor.

7.2 Process for investigating incidents of alleged or suspected abuse and reporting incidents of suspected abuse.

Vulnerable Population Abuse That Is Perpetrated in Connection with Programs or Events

7.2.1 In the case of abuse within Mt. Zion Community Church, abuse by an employee, volunteers, pastors, or diaconate of Mt. Zion Community Church, whether lay or ordained:

7.2.2 The person observing or learning of abuse or suspected abuse shall immediately separate them, calmly explain that such interactions are not permitted, and report the incident to his/her supervisor within Mt. Zion Community Church's programs or events with a report documented and ultimately being made to the person in charge.

7.2.2.1 The parent(s) or legal guardian(s) or a victim of alleged vulnerable population abuse

by an employee, volunteer of an event, or program should be informed promptly of the alleged incident of abuse.

7.2.2.2 The Elders shall contact the church's insurance agency and/or legal counsel unless the insurance carrier provides legal counsel. Legal counsel may request written summaries from the various persons learning of incidents of abuse, or reporting as required herein, as may be needed under the circumstances.

7.2.2.3 The Elders, in consultation with legal counsel and with the person from whom the report was received and/or others, as deemed appropriate, after having reviewed the matter, makes a decision:

- a) To report or cause a report to be made to the Kansas Department of Children and Families (DCF).
- b) To conduct further investigation either with a report having been made to DCF or without having found cause to make a report at this stage.
- c) To close the matter on the basis that there is no cause to proceed.
- d) To assist the alleged victim and his/her family in obtaining counseling or other appropriate assistance.

7.2.2.4 If further consultation or investigation was undertaken pursuant to Section 7.2.1.4 b) or c), then after consultation or investigation, the Elders, in consultation with legal counsel and (i) the person from whom the report was received and/or (ii) others, as deemed appropriate to the circumstances, will make a determination of what action will be taken in the matter which may include one or more of the following:

- a) closing the matter with no further action, maintaining documentation,
- b) making a report or causing a report to be made to the DCF,
- c) terminating, suspending or taking other action regarding the alleged abuser, and
- d) assisting the alleged victim and family of alleged victim.

7.2.2.5 All written reports documenting information and investigations related to incidents of alleged or suspected abuse or neglect which are made pursuant to this section 7.2.1 shall be prepared under the direction of legal counsel for Mt. Zion Community Church in order to prepare for the defense of any litigation that may arise from such incidents.

Vulnerable population Abuse or Neglect That Is Not Perpetrated in Connection with Church, Programs, or Activities

7.2.3 In the case of alleged or suspected incidents of abuse by a person who is not an employee, or volunteer of Mt. Zion Community Church's programs or events which did not occur on the premises of or in connection with a Mt. Zion Community Church's program or event, but which a person learned of in his/her capacity as an employee or volunteer of a Mt. Zion Community Church's program or event:

7.2.3.1 The person observing or learning of the abuse, suspected abuse shall report the abuse to the Elders of Mt. Zion Community Church.

7.2.3.2 The Elders of Mt. Zion Community Church shall review the matter and, if required,

make a report to the DCF. Consideration should be given to offering assistance to the alleged victim and his/her family in obtaining counseling or other appropriate assistance.

7.2.4 All employees and volunteers of Mt. Zion Community Church and its various agencies are required to cooperate fully in the investigation of incidents of alleged or suspected vulnerable population abuse.

7.2.5 Documentation or reports of vulnerable population abuse, the investigation of such reports and the disposition of the reports and investigations should be maintained in a secure and confidential place. Documentation should be limited to facts observed or reported and should not contain opinions or speculation.

7.2.6 All information received in conjunction with investigations of incidents of alleged or any person obtaining or receiving such information shall keep suspected vulnerable population abuse confidential.

8. Assistance to Those Affected by Vulnerable population Abuse

If, despite efforts to prevent vulnerable person abuse, an instance of vulnerable abuse occurs, the victim and his or her family should be attended to with compassion by the pastor or appropriate person. This will include being assisted in obtaining counseling and medical care as may be needed. Confidentiality regarding victims of vulnerable person abuse will be maintained consistent with legal requirements.

9. Perpetrators of Vulnerable Population Abuse

If after investigating an incident of alleged vulnerable population abuse in accordance with Section 7 of these procedures, it is established that abuse has occurred or that it is probable that abuse has occurred; steps will be taken to remove the perpetrator, or alleged perpetrator, from any position that has contact with vulnerable population. Other appropriate disciplinary steps will be considered and taken as required by the circumstances. Appropriate consideration should also be given to the care for and the rehabilitation of the perpetrator, which could include advising the person to seek counseling or therapy.

Vulnerable population Protection Policy for All Children and Youth Ministries

Statement of Purpose:

Opportunities to teach and supervise children and youth are a privilege offered by Mt. Zion Community Church of Arkansas City(FBCF). As a church, we believe that nurturing the spiritual, emotional and physical well-being of the vulnerable population is vital.

This operating policy is intended to ensure that all interactions between adults and children and youth are consistent with the example and teachings of Jesus Christ. All adults who are entrusted with the care of our children and youth must always strive to be worthy of the example of Christ. Adults must understand the importance of providing a safe and secure environment and avoid any conduct that might appear to be inappropriate, even if no such conduct takes place.

Worker to Vulnerable population Ratios

Mt. Zion Community Church has a goal of maintaining the following ratios of ministry workers to preschool, children, and youth whenever feasible. These ratios are goals. The church recognizes that in some circumstances achieving these ratios may not be feasible.

Worker to Children Ratios:

Birth to Kindergarten	1:2
Sunday School K-6th	1:6
Youth Programs 7-12th	1:10

Classroom Policy

- At all times activity inside the classroom must be accessible to parents and church members. Rooms with an interior window will not have that window covered in any way as to prevent someone from viewing activity going on inside. Classroom doors will not be locked during church activities.

Touching Policy

Mt. Zion Community Church has implemented a touching policy that will safeguard our vulnerable population while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry to them. The guidelines below are to be carefully followed by anyone working with children and youth.

- Physical affection should be appropriate to the age of the child or youth. (For example, it is generally appropriate for a four-year-old to sit in a nursery worker's lap and give a kiss on the cheek, but it is not appropriate for a teenager and adult leader to behave this way.)
- The child or youth should initiate touching. It should be a response to the child's need for comforting, encouragement, or affection. It should not be based upon the adult's emotional need.
- Touching behavior should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. As ministry workers our behavior must foster trust at all times; it should be above reproach. For this reason, the worker must be particularly careful in regard to touching.
- A vulnerable person's preference not to be touched should be respected. Do not force affection upon a reluctant vulnerable person.
- Church workers must promptly discuss perceived or reported inappropriate touching or other questionable behavior by other workers with the ministry leader or elders.

Informal Contact

Informal contact refers to phone calls, letters, social media, or face-to-face contact between an adult worker and a youth, or use of the nursery or other rooms when they are not scheduled for use (i.e. weddings, funerals, special holiday services etc.)

In the case of informal contact with children and youth, the church recognizes that informal contact between volunteers and youth frequently occurs. For example, volunteers may hire teens as babysitters for their own children, or volunteers may see kids during social events with the child's family. This interaction is usually legitimate and beneficial. However, volunteers should seek permission of parents before having informal contact with their youth. The volunteer should clearly let the parent know the nature of the contact and that it is not part of church activity.

Parents are responsible for monitoring this informal contact.

Electronic Communication

Any private electronic communication between adult ministry leaders and minors, including the use of social networking websites like - Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, instant messaging, texting, etc. – shall be transparent and appropriate.

The following are examples of inappropriate electronic communication.

Inappropriate Electronic Communication

- Harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning or humiliating comments
- Sexually oriented conversations
- Posting inappropriate comments on pictures

Six-Month Rule

- Volunteers working with the vulnerable population must have been a member of or a regular attendee of the church for at least six months. This time of interaction between ministry leaders and the volunteer allows leaders to better evaluate the suitability of a volunteer for children and youth work.
- In some situations, this rule is not feasible and may be waived (such as church employees or interns who are not church members). If the six-month rule is waived, program leaders may take additional steps to screen the volunteer at their own discretion.

Minimum Age

- All workers must be 18 years of age or older. Younger persons may assist adults, but they may not take the place of adult workers.

Auto Safety

- Persons who will drive vehicles for conducting church business or transporting children and or youth must have a valid driver's license, will be insured, and have and use appropriate number of seat belts.

Specific Guidelines for Nursery Staff and Volunteers

All nursery staff and volunteers are to follow the General Guidelines in addition to the following specific guidelines:

- The Nursery does have a closed-door policy. This means that workers and parents have a right to visit the nursery; however, children will only be released to a parent, or the person designated by the parent when presenting the child to the worker.
- On a case-by-case basis, as directed by the parent, young children requiring the restroom will be assisted by volunteers.

Guidelines to Follow While Working With Children and Youth

- Two volunteers will generally be present at all times when working with children and youth. It is preferred to have two adults in the room, but a second volunteer may be a youth (6th Grade and above) assisting an adult but said youth may not have primary leadership of a classroom or activity. Regardless of the combination of supervision in the room, an adult worker must never be left alone with one vulnerable person unless there is video recording present to document.
- All events will be open door. This means that volunteers, parents, and church members have a right to observe any activity if they are able to do so without disrupting the activity.
- Corporal punishment or the threat of corporal punishment (hitting, spanking, or any form of punishment involving pain) is strictly forbidden at Mt. Zion Community Church. This is true even if parents have suggested or authorized corporal punishment.
- Volunteers must follow the highest standards of confidentiality when working with children and youth. Parents must be confident that stories about their children are not going to be repeated inside or outside the church setting. When reporting actions of a child to a parent, the worker should not name another child by name but instead use language such as "another child", "classmate", etc.
- Volunteers must report suspected or observed vulnerable population abuse to the Elders. All reports are considered strictly confidential. Allegations will be referred to the proper civil authority and others as stated in the Vulnerable Population Abuse Policy and

Procedures of the Mt. Zion Community Church of Arkansas City .

- Questionable behavior by volunteers must be reported in the same manner and will be handled appropriately according to the Vulnerable Population Abuse Policy and Procedures of the Mt. Zion Community Church of Arkansas City .
- Volunteers must avoid even the appearance of misconduct. This is critical to maintain parent confidence, avoid mistaken allegations and to reflect Mt. Zion Community Church's commitment to safeguarding the safety of the vulnerable population of the church.
- Volunteers who disobey these guidelines may be reassigned or relieved of their duties at the discretion of the Elders. In certain instances, the Elder appointed over volunteers may be empowered to relieve volunteers of their duties.

Specific Guidelines for Children's Field Trips

All preschool and children's volunteers are to follow the General Guidelines in addition to the following specific guidelines in regard to field trips:

- A Field Trip Permission Form for each child must be completed and signed before the child is allowed to participate in a field trip. On any overnight field trip, at least one worker must be the same gender as the child on the activity.

Specific Guidelines for Youth Staff and Volunteers

All youth staff and volunteers are to follow the General Guidelines in addition to the following specific guidelines:

Team Leadership- Teams of adults (preferably male and female) should supervise activities. This policy provides for more than one adult to help ensure appropriate levels of supervision.

Overnight Activities- At least two adults will supervise overnight activities. If the participants are male and female, then male and female chaperons must be present. If these conditions cannot be met, then the event should be postponed. It is never appropriate for an adult chaperon who is not a family member to share a bed with a youth. Experienced adult workers should be included with adults who are newcomers to youth ministry.

Individual Counseling- Team counseling is preferable whenever possible. When team-counseling sessions are not feasible, notify another adult of the location and with whom you are meeting. Counseling should be done in a public place where private conversations are possible but occur in full view of others. The leader must guard carefully to avoid seclusion. If possible, have female adults counsel female youths and males counsel males. A male/female team is generally appropriate for counseling either gender.

Long-Term Counseling- Persons working with youth should not meet with youth more than two times to discuss the same issue. Persons working with youth are not prepared or supported for long-term counseling or formal therapy. Adult leaders are encouraged to refer youth who they suspect have a serious need for counseling to the Elders. Questions about referral must be discussed promptly with the Youth program leader, or Elders.

Transportation To and From Meetings- Transportation to and from meetings is not part of church or youth group activities. Parents are responsible for providing or arranging for this transportation. If a leader does transport a youth at the parent's request, this should be recognized as informal contact, and the guidelines for informal contact should be followed.

Transportation as a Part of Church Programs- The church may from time to time provide transportation as an official part of church activities. For example, the church may provide transportation to out-of-town events or field trips. When youth are transported as a part of church activities, all guidelines will apply.

Confidentiality- Volunteers of youth must report to the Elders if a minor discusses harming himself or others, committing a crime, or being abused. There are limits to confidentiality when working with youth. Questions about such cases or other issues of confidentiality must be discussed promptly with the Elders who will also protect the confidential nature of the discussion. Conferring with the Elders on sensitive issues is not considered breaking confidence. Elders may reach out to other pastors for counsel.

Youth Supervising Youth- Minors may help adults lead youth activities only under the direct leadership of adults. A minor may not be used to meet the team leadership or team counseling guidelines discussed above.

Gifts- Persons working with youth are generally discouraged from giving personal gifts or money to youth. When the giving of personal gifts is desired, the worker must first notify parents and the Elders. Gifts can be easily misinterpreted. Gifts given to groups of young people are appropriate, such as graduation presents or awards for participation.

Dating or Sexual Involvement- No adult volunteer is to date a youth or be romantically or sexually involved with a youth.

Supervision and Communication -It is the responsibility of the Elders to communicate the guidelines and make them available to all volunteers through proper education and training.

Acknowledgment of Abuse Prevention Manual

I have read and agree to comply with Mt. Zion Community Church's policies regarding the Vulnerable Population Abuse Policy of Mt. Zion Community Church.

.....
Signature of Employee or Volunteer

.....
Date