

Delavan Christian Reformed Church CHILD SAFETY & ADULT ACCOUNTABILITY POLICY

Introduction

We believe that Scripture and our faith in Jesus Christ call us to standards of responsible conduct in all of life, including sexual behavior.

God's covenant calls for both mercy and justice, grace and accountability. To live in covenant relationship with God and with one another is to know the shalom of health and wholeness. A broken covenant brings the destructive consequences of sin. We are all sinners, but forgiveness and redemption are offered to all people through Christ. Where repentance and faith are at work, the healing power of God can transform attitudes and behavior.

We believe in justice for all persons. Because it is an abuse of power and trust, sexual misconduct is unjust. Scripture asserts that religious leadership involves a covenant relationship that presumes the trustworthy exercise of power on behalf of those in our care. A betrayal of trust is more than just a personal tragedy for the victim; it reflects a tragic breakdown in the character of the abuser that seriously threatens both those immediately affected and the well-being of the church itself. We have responsibility for one another in the church. Delavan Christian Reformed Church (Delavan CRC) proclaims that the "good of the church" can never be served by overlooking an abuse of power and trust. Sexual misconduct is wrong, and charges of misconduct must be dealt with swiftly, fairly and with compassion for both the accused and the accusers.

We assume the best of all persons. However, where sexual misconduct or allegations of such misconduct occur, the following policy will guide Delavan CRC.

I. Policy Statement

Inappropriate sexual behavior is a violation of the principles set forth in Scripture and is never permissible. Sexual misconduct will not be tolerated by Delavan CRC. It is the policy of Delavan CRC that ministers, church members, church officers, nonmember employees, and volunteers involved in church business exercise responsible sexual behavior and maintain the integrity of employment and professional relationships at all times. Further, it is the policy of this church that charges of sexual misconduct will be treated with the seriousness they deserve and dealt with swiftly and fairly for the benefit of all parties concerned.

II. Definitions

Inappropriate sexual behavior is unacceptable conduct when committed by any minister, church member, nonmember employee, or nonmember volunteer of Delavan CRC. We recognize four forms of inappropriate sexual behavior.

- A. Sexual harassment: any verbal statement of physical sexual advance that is known, or ought reasonably to be known, to be unwelcomed and offensive to another person and which has the effect of unreasonably interfering with a person's work performance by creating an intimidating, threatening, hostile

environment at work, in committees or in other areas of serving God through the work of Delavan CRC. Sexual harassment includes such things as unwelcome sexual jokes, requests of sexual favors, unwelcome touching, or display of sexual images that insult, degrade, or exploit men or women.

- B. Sexual misconduct or malfeasance: arises from broken trust resulting in sexual physical contact within a ministerial or professional relationship.
- C. Child sexual abuse: any sexual contact or inappropriate verbal or physical sexual interaction between an adult and a child under 18 years of age.
- D. Sexual abuse: rape or sexual contact by force, threat, or intimidation.

III. Compliance and Prevention

Several procedures are in place to ensure compliance and encourage prevention.

All ministers, nonmember employees, volunteers having contact with children under the age of 18 years of age as part of church business are required to sign a written agreement indicating they have received a copy of the Child Safety & Adult Accountability Policy and will abide by its terms. This acknowledgement will be kept, in the case of employees, in the person's personnel file, and, in the case of volunteers, on record in the church office.

Anyone who will have contact with children under 18 years of age as part of their job description will be subject to pre-employment screening and reference checks to determine whether there has been any reported sexual misconduct or inappropriate sexual behavior. Applicants will be informed immediately of negative comments regarding sexual misconduct or inappropriate sexual behavior and will be given an opportunity to submit additional references or to give other evidence to correct or respond to harmful information obtained from a reference.

Volunteers in positions of trust with young persons will be trained and supervised. As deemed necessary, the volunteer understands that a screening process may include, but is not limited to the following: a personal interview, a reference check, a criminal background check, and a check of the National Sex Offender Registry.

Members, employees, and volunteers will be informed of Delavan CRC's standards of conduct and procedures for reporting accusations of sexual misconduct or child sexual abuse.

IV. Reporting and Responding to Allegations of Inappropriate Sexual Behavior

A complaint or allegation of any inappropriate sexual behavior, as defined in Part II above, shall be made in writing to the Senior Pastor of Delavan CRC. In the event the Senior Pastor is unavailable or is the subject of the complaint, the complaint shall be given to the Clerk of the Council. The person receiving the complaint immediately shall so inform the Elders, who will then inform the church's insurance company legal counsel and then the appropriate authority at the Walworth County Department of Health and Human Services.

Responding to Allegations of Abuse

1. All allegations need to be taken seriously.
2. Situations must be handled forthrightly, without conflicts of interest, and with due respect for people's privacy and confidentiality.
3. Immediately contact the insurance carrier.
4. Give full cooperation to civil authorities under the guidance of your attorney.
5. Adequate care must be shown for the well-being of victims.
6. The victim should not be held responsible in any way.

Create A Response Plan

1. Maintain adequate records of workers' applications, references, and screening forms.
2. Spokesperson shall be Clerk or Membership Clerk or an Officer of the Elders.
3. Know the state's reporting obligations regarding which behaviors that should be reported which persons are mandated to report suspected abuse.
4. Use a reporting procedure.
5. Prepare a position statement for public use regarding child sexual abuse. This statement should include your policies and established safeguards. This can be released if an allegation of abuse occurs
6. Do not engage in denial, minimization, or blame.
7. Use an attorney
8. Don't be accusatory in a public interview.
9. Work closely with your insurance company.

If an Allegation Occurs

1. Document all your efforts at handling the incident
2. Report the incident immediately to your insurance company. Do not try to handle this without professional outside assistance.
3. Contact proper civil authorities following the guidance of you insurance company and attorney.
4. Notify the parents
5. Do not confront the accused until the safety of the child or your member is secured.
6. Do not prejudge the situation, but take the allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family.
7. Treat the accused with dignity and support. If that person is an employee, that person should be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is finished.