

**Delavan Christian Reformed Church**  
**CHILD SAFETY & ADULT ACCOUNTABILITY POLICY**

(Policies and Procedures for Preventing Sexual Abuse and for Reporting Allegations; Sample Press Release)

**Introduction**

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

We also believe that leaders must be models of moral integrity and that sexual misconduct is morally wrong. Not only is sexual misconduct morally wrong, it is deeply unjust and injurious to both victims and perpetrators. The Bible teaches that all persons must be treated justly. Sexual misconduct is an abuse of power and trust, and therefore profoundly unjust.

Scripture asserts that religious leaders enter into a covenant relationship with God and with their fellow believers that presumes the trustworthy exercise of power on behalf of those under their care. Betraying the trust placed in one as a leader by engaging in sexual abuse is more than just a personal tragedy for the victim; it reflects a tragic breakdown in the character of the abuser. This breakdown seriously threatens both those immediately affected and the well-being of the church itself. As leaders and members of the Christian Reformed Church (Delavan CRC), we assert 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 claimant(s) and the accused.

We assume the best of all persons. However, where sexual misconduct or allegations of such misconduct occur, the following policy and procedures will guide the Delavan CRC Council and Pastor in addressing alleged misconduct.

**I. Policy Statement**

Sexual misconduct will not be tolerated by Delavan CRC. Inappropriate sexual behavior is a violation of the principles set forth in Scripture and is never permissible. It is the policy of Delavan CRC that ministers, church members, church officers, nonmember employees, and volunteers involved in church activities must exercise responsible sexual behavior and maintain personal integrity in all 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. They will be dealt with swiftly, confidentially, thoroughly and fairly with the purpose of serving the well-being of all parties concerned, esp. the claimant(s) and the accused.

**II. Definitions**

To assist church leaders in properly addressing any and all allegations that may arise with respect to inappropriate sexual behavior, we provide the following definitions and descriptions:

- 1. Sexual harassment:** any verbal statement or physical sexual advance that is known—or ought reasonably to be known—to be unwelcomed and offensive to another person. 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.

2. **Sexual misconduct or malfeasance:** arises from broken trust resulting in sexual physical contact within a ministerial or professional relationship.
3. **Child sexual abuse:** any sexual contact or inappropriate verbal or physical sexual interaction between an adult and a child under 18 years of age. *(note: allegations of this nature require that police and/or officials at Health and Human Service be notified, seek legal advice before proceeding)*
4. **Sexual abuse:** rape or sexual contact by force, threat, or intimidation. *(note: allegations of this kind may also require notifying the police, legal advice ought to be solicited before proceeding)*

### III. Compliance and Prevention

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

All ministers, nonmember employees, and volunteers at Delavan CRC who will have contact with children under the age of 18 years of age as part of church responsibilities must receive and read a copy of the **Child Safety & Adult Accountability Policy**. Then they must sign a written agreement indicating they have received this policy, read it, and promise to abide by its terms. These signed agreements will be kept on file by the chairperson of the Delavan CRC Safe Church Committee.

All church employees hired after the initial implementation date of this policy (June, 2009) who will have contact with children under 18 years of age will be subject to a criminal background check, a check of the National Sex Offender Registry, and to reference checks to determine whether they have been accused or convicted of sexual misconduct or inappropriate sexual behavior. Applicants will be informed immediately of negative comments regarding sexual misconduct or inappropriate sexual behavior. In the event that Delavan CRC receives harmful information from a reference, the applicant will be given an opportunity to respond and to provide evidence that corrects or contradicts the harmful information.

All volunteers recruited after the initial implementation of this revised safety policy (month/date) will be subject to a criminal background check, and a check of the National Sex Offender Registry. (If the Council does not want this to be part of the policy, this will be deleted)

Delavan CRC 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. Procedures for 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 pastor of Delavan CRC and/or The president of the church council. In the event the pastor or church council president is unavailable or is the subject of the complaint, the complaint shall be given to the vice-president of the council; and if that person is unavailable or the subject of the complaint; the complaint shall be given to the clerk of the council. **The council officer receiving the complaint (pastor, president, vice-president, clerk) shall immediately call a meeting of the council.** The council officer receiving the complaint shall also immediately inform the

church's insurance company and seek legal advice. The pastor and or council officers must also solicit advice and guidance from the insurance company and from legal counsel ***in the event that a crime has been alleged against a minor***. Allegations of crimes against minors must be reported to the appropriate authorities—**either** the police **or** the proper authorities at the Walworth County Department of Health and Human Services.

## **Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations and Preventing Abuse**

### **A. How to Respond to Allegations of Abuse**

1. Take all allegations seriously.
2. Handle situations forthrightly, without conflicts of interest, and with due respect for people's privacy and the confidentiality of the matter at hand.
3. Immediately contact the insurance carrier.
4. Give full cooperation to civil authorities under the guidance of your attorney.
5. Show adequate care for the well-being of claimants and accused.
6. Claimants should not be held responsible in any way.

### **B. Components of a Sound Response Plan**

1. The chairman of the Safe Church Committee must maintain adequate records of workers' applications, references, and screening forms.
2. Spokespersons shall be the council president, vice-president, or clerk (in that order) or a capable person appointed by the Officers 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 (see copy of Sample Press Release below)
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.

### **C. 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.

**D. Sample Press Release** regarding Church Policy on Abuse if matter becomes public and the church must announce how it is proceeding in dealing with the accusation.

## **Sample Press Release**

**(ALWAYS CHECK WITH LEGAL COUNSEL AND INSURANCE COMPANY BEFORE USING SUCH A STATEMENT)**

Sexual misconduct will not be tolerated by Delavan CRC. Inappropriate sexual behavior is not only immoral and illegal; it is also a violation of the principles set forth in Scripture on which our ministry is based. The Delavan Christian Reformed Church has a standing policy that requires its ministers, church members, church officers, nonmember employees, and volunteers who have contact with both children and adults through the church's ministry to exercise responsible sexual behavior and to maintain personal integrity in all 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. They will be dealt with swiftly, confidentially, thoroughly and fairly with the purpose of protecting the innocent and serving the well-being of all parties concerned.