

ORANGE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH SAFE CHURCH POLICY

2014

I. INTRODUCTION

As a community of Christian faith, Orange Congregational Church is committed to creating and maintaining programs, facilities and a community in which members, friends, staff and volunteers can worship, learn and work together in an atmosphere free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation or intimidation. The congregation of the Orange Congregational Church is strongly opposed to child abuse, bullying, sexual exploitation and sexual harassment and that such behavior is prohibited by church policy. It is the intention and responsibility of the church to take whatever action may be needed to prevent and correct behavior that is contrary to this policy, and if necessary to discipline those persons who violate this policy. The policy also establishes reporting requirements and a response plan in the event that an allegation of child abuse is made. By taking steps to formalize strategies of prevention and response, we not only create a safer environment for our children and youth, we also protect our caregivers and volunteers from unfounded accusations and ensures that our church has taken reasonable steps to recognize and prevent abuse.

II. DEFINITIONS

Child Abuse: is the inappropriate and harmful verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual behavior towards a child. Child Abuse includes any action that endangers or harms a child's normal development and well-being. It also includes neglect or the failure to provide for the child's physical or emotional needs. Child abuse is sexual abuse when it involves children engaged in sexual activities that are not appropriate for the child's age.

Mandated Reporter: Those persons required by Connecticut Gen. Stat. § 17a-101(b) to report suspected abuse to the Department of Children and Families, such as: physicians, nurses, school employees, social workers, police officers, members of the clergy, mental health professionals and day care providers.

Suspected Abuse: actual abuse consists of physical, sexual or mental abuse inflicted by a person responsible for a child's health, welfare or care, who may be a parent, guardian or other person having access to a child. Abuse may include neglect of a person's health as a result of failure to properly feed, clothe or attend to apparent illness or mental well-being. One need not directly witness actual abuse. It is sufficient to suspect abuse based upon observations of general health, physical condition, patterns of irregular behavior and environmental factors. Examples of observations might include: bruising on multiple occasions, weight loss, chronic physical illness,

and anti-social or excessively withdrawn behavior. Environmental factors may include highly contentious divorce and custody proceedings, or parental drug abuse.

III. VOLUNTEER CHILDREN AND YOUTH WORKERS

- A. All persons wishing to work with minors will be required to complete a Safe Church Application and Disclosure Form.
- B. A Safe Church Application and Disclosure Form is to include; prior employment, volunteer service, and personal references.

IV. WORKER TRAINING

Training in child abuse prevention and detection shall be provided as necessary so that at least one staff person or volunteer working with a group of children or youth have received such training. Training should include definitions of child abuse and what constitutes inappropriate conduct, common symptoms of sexual and physical abuse, prevention strategies, and reporting procedures.

V. SUPERVISION

Whenever possible, two unrelated adults should be present during an activity involving youth or children. One such adult should have participated in training in child abuse prevention and detection as noted above. In addition, a system of floating supervision is always in effect.

VI. CHILD ABUSE REPORTING

If a child or youth worker suspects a case of child abuse, those suspicions must be reported immediately to the Minister who must then immediately commence an investigation by gathering basic information through open-ended questions in order to determine if there is reasonable suspicion to report the matter to the Department of Children and Families 24 Hour Careline. (800) 842-2288

Orange Congregational Church “Safe Church” Training acknowledgement

Please initial below:

_____ I have watched the *Reducing the Risk* training DVD.

_____ I have read and understood the Orange Congregational Church “Safe Church” policy and I am committed to supporting it.

Name

Date

Signature

TRAINER:

Name

Date

Signature