

# MID-ATLANTIC DISTRICT CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

## **CHILD PROTECTION/ RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY**

### **A. Task**

It is the Mid-Atlantic District's task to create a safe environment for the children it serves. Likewise, it is our responsibility to avoid any impropriety or the appearance thereof, and thus protect adult coordinators and volunteers from false accusations or sexual attention from youth. For this reason, the following guidelines, policies and procedures are being implemented.

### **B. Volunteer Coordinators and Adult Volunteers**

Coordinators for Mid-Atlantic District age-group activities Early Childhood through Senior High need to be at least 22 years old and have been members of the Church of the Brethren for at least six months. A professional background check will be conducted for each volunteer coordinator before they are allowed to assume those duties (effective January 2013). Coordinators shall be appointed by the District.

Adult volunteers and/or Advisors for Mid-Atlantic District age-group activities must be mature, responsible adults, at least 22 years old. At no time is a known sex offender or person convicted of a sexual crime to be allowed as an Adult Volunteer and/or Advisor (hereafter referred to as volunteers). Adult volunteers and/or advisors shall be appointed by individual congregations participating in District events.

All volunteers must sign a Volunteer Covenant Agreement before being allowed to participate in any district age-group activities. It is the responsibility of the Coordinator(s) to ensure that a signed Volunteer Covenant Agreement is received from every Volunteer.

### **C. Guidelines and Rules**

Coordinators and Volunteers agree to follow these guidelines and rules:

1. A minimum of two adults are required to be present at all times for all children's and youth activities. If only one adult is present, the Coordinator will find additional help before allowing the session to begin.
2. When supervising children, Coordinators and Volunteers should monitor behavior to insure appropriate interactions, particularly if supervising children of different ages.
3. It is the Coordinator's or Volunteer's responsibility to support a child's "no" (verbal or non-verbal) regarding physical contact, whether it is directed toward another child or an adult, unless the child's safety is endangered. Ensure that "no" is respected.
4. Diapering/changing areas for Early Childhood are to be in prominent view.
5. Any one-to-one conversations or counseling with a child or youth during age-group activities should always occur in a public place in the sight of others – never alone in a car or private room with the door shut.
6. Coordinators or Volunteers may not meet privately with a child or youth outside of the age-group activity without parental or guardian permission.

7. No sexual/suggestive behavior or innuendo either verbal or non-verbal with any child or youth will be allowed.
8. Physical contact with youth should be limited to the hands, shoulders, or upper back. Prolonged hugs, stroking, massaging, or kissing are not allowed. Any display of affection (i.e. brief, farewell hugs) should be made in public in front of other group members.
9. Coordinators and Volunteers are not to share their personal information or details of their personal lives with youth, such as relationships, dating, or sexual activities.
10. Driving alone with a child or youth should be strictly avoided unless it is an emergency or for their safety. If it becomes necessary, the following precautions are to be used:
  - Do not sit close to one another or have any physical contact.
  - Do not stop the car unless it is an emergency. If you must stop, make every effort to be in a well-trafficked, public area. If it is dark outside, turn on the inside light of the car.
  - Make written note of the time when you depart along with the car's mileage and record the same when you arrive.

**D. Reporting**

1. Volunteers will report any suspicious or inappropriate conduct to the Coordinator. Together they will determine if there is reasonable cause to make a report.
2. The Coordinator will complete an Incident Report Form and submit it to the District Executive.
3. The Coordinator is mandated to report the incident to the local authorities and county Child Protection Services. The Child Protection Services will conduct an investigation of the incident.

**E. Response Plan**

When a Volunteer of a Mid-Atlantic District age-group activities program is accused of misconduct or child abuse in a district setting, the District Executive will use the following procedures:

1. The District Executive will notify the child's parent/guardian that a report has been made.
2. The District Executive will notify the Leadership Team Chair regarding the report of the incident who will then notify the Church of the Brethren's attorney and insurance carrier.
3. The Spirituality and Congregational Life Ministry Team will be informed that an incident has occurred and that a report has been made.
4. Only the District Executive and/or the Leadership Team Chair are to be the official spokespersons for any communication with the media. All other persons involved in the incident will be instructed not to speak with the media at any time.

5. The Coordinator will act to ensure the safety of the victim, provide support to the victim and family and as much as possible assure confidentiality.
6. The Coordinator will see that the accused is removed immediately from the site and will not be allowed to work again with children until the investigation of the incident has been completed, all charges unsubstantiated, and written clearance has been given by District Executive. The Coordinator and District Executive will treat the accused with dignity and provide for any needed support.

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**Mid-Atlantic District Program Volunteer Covenant**

I understand that I am a caretaker of children/youth. I understand that there is a clear power difference between myself and children/youth (money, mobility, authority, experience, knowledge, different set of rules).

I understand that inappropriate sexual contact with or physical abuse of a child or youth can have severe emotional and psychological effects on that individual that can last a lifetime. These reactions can be so severe they can require intensive professional intervention which can be disruptive to the victim's life as well as time consuming and expensive.

I have received and read a copy of the Mid-Atlantic District, *Child Protection/ Risk Management Policy*, agree to the following:

- to under no circumstances hit a child/youth;
- to refrain from using abusive or derogatory language with children/youth;
- to watch for signs of stress in myself and others as a way of maintaining a safe environment at youth events/activities;
- to help other leaders who seem at risk for hurting or abusing children or youth;
- to alert the Coordinator when more careful supervision, intervention, or support is needed;
- to seek help myself if I feel at risk for hurting, over stimulating, or abusing a child or youth.

I agree to be bound by this covenant and to refrain from unlawful conduct in the performance of my services. Furthermore I attest that I have never been convicted as a sex offender, arrested or convicted of child abuse, and I give the Mid-Atlantic District permission to check to verify this information.

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Volunteer's Signature

Date

Volunteer For:   \_\_\_ Early Childhood       \_\_\_ Grades K-2       \_\_\_ Grades 3-5  
                          \_\_\_ Junior High               \_\_\_ Senior High