

CHILD  
PROTECTION  
POLICY

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BALDWIN  
CHRISTIAN REFORMED  
CHURCH

# BALDWIN CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

### I. INTRODUCTION

The church recognizes that there is a growing problem of child abuse in our society and has designed this policy to address the issue. It is the church's goal to provide a safe, caring, and trusting atmosphere, where children can learn and grow. Through the implementation of our policy, we hope to heighten awareness and reduce the risk of child abuse, whether it be physical or sexual. It is also our intent to protect youth workers against false accusations.

The church feels that it is essential to educate all members of the congregation and any others who may be hired to work with our children. Our policy includes the following:

- sequential steps to be followed for hiring individuals and acquiring volunteers to work with children
- steps for reporting suspected child abuse
- steps for protecting the rights of all parties involved
- timeline for implementation and periodic review procedures

Any incident that compromises a child's well-being will be taken seriously and dealt with appropriately. Consistent with Wisconsin Public Law, the Baldwin Christian Reformed church will utilize resources within the congregation, those of the appropriate government agencies, and other concerned organizations for educational purposes and for ensuring the protection of all parties involved in an allegation.

### II. DEFINITIONS:

**ABUSE** - The physical injury of a child by any parent or other person who has permanent or temporary care or custody or responsibility for supervision of a child, or by any household or family member, under circumstances that indicate that the child's health or welfare is significantly harmed or at risk of being significantly harmed; or sexual abuse of a child, whether physical injuries are sustained or not. Any sexual contact with or exploitation between an adult or caretaker and a child even if the victim gives consent.

**ACCUSED** - A person whom an allegation of abuse has been made against.

**CHILD** - Anyone under the age of 18 years.

NEGLIGENT SUPERVISOR - A failure to exercise reasonable care in the supervision of either paid employees or volunteer workers.

PERPETRATOR - A person who commits an act of child sexual abuse.

POLICY- A rule which describes or structures the proper working behavior of a church staff member or volunteer.

REPORTER - One who reports the suspected incident.

VULNERABLE ADULT - Any adult over the age of 18 years who is physically and/or mentally disabled and participates in a situation where he/she could be taken advantage of physically or sexually.

VOLUNTEER - A non-paid person whose activities include, but are not limited to, teaching, supervising, or assisting children in programs and activities

### III. PREVENTIVE MEASURES

#### 1. Building Modifications Required

- a. Install windows in all classroom doors and nursery.
- b. Provide an appropriate changing table in the nursery.

#### 2 Program Supervision Guidelines

- a. Assign at least 2 adults or 1 adult and 1 youth for each event.
- b. Release children under 6 only to a parent, older sibling, or designated adult.
- c. Obtain list of names of person (s) with written parental permission for child transportation by someone other than parents.

#### 3. Bathroom Procedures During Activities

- a. Ask parents to take children to the bathroom prior to leaving them under the church's supervision.
- b. When escorting a child to the bathroom alone, prop or hold the main door open.
- c. Have older children use the buddy system when using the bathroom.

#### IV. EMPLOYEE SCREENING PROCEDURES

1. A resume will be submitted and reviewed. If the applicant qualifies they will receive a copy of the Child Protection Policy, an Employee Application ( available in office) and an Employee Abuse Awareness Agreement ( available in office ).
2. The church council will schedule the interview with applicant.
3. The church council shall interview applicant and obtain signed forms with witnessed signatures.
4. The interview will include a discussion of the Child Protection Policy to ensure that the applicant has an understanding of the information.
5. The CPPC shall contact references using the Employee Reference Questionnaire (available in office ).
6. The CPPC shall file all forms.
7. The CPPC shall begin background check on applicant of choice.

#### V. EMPLOYEE HIRING PROCEDURE

1. When all references have been checked and background check pending, the applicant of choice will be notified.
2. All newly hired employees will be informed that any and all accusations of abuse will be taken seriously and investigated by the proper authorities, both within and outside the church.
3. Program Supervision Guidelines contained in this policy will be review with employee.

#### VI VOLUNTEER SELECTION GUIDELINES

1. Prior to consideration for volunteering, the applicant should be an active worshipping participant of the Baldwin Christian Reformed congregation or upon approval by council.
2. A copy of the Child Protection Policy will be shared with all prospective volunteers.
3. The Volunteer Abuse Awareness Agreement ( see attached) will be read, signed, and dated.

4. Community volunteers will be asked to follow the Christian Reformed Church's Child Protection Policy and sign the Community Volunteer Abuse awareness Agreement (see attached).

## VII. EMPLOYEE AND VOLUNTEER SAFEGUARDS

1. All information gathered on applications, interviews and through references will remain confidential. Information will be stored in a locked file cabinet located in the church office.
2. Any suspected charges of abuse will be shared only with the proper authorities and designated church members.
3. The reporter's identity will be kept in strict confidence.

## VIII. EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

1. The Baldwin Christian Reformed Church is dedicated to the educational process concerning child abuse and will provide the following:
  - a. A copy of the Child Protection Policy Committee will made available to each new and perspective member.
  - b. Presentations of the Child Protection Policy will be made in the Fall as each program begins. At this time all new teachers and volunteers will be asked to sign the volunteer abuse awareness agreement.
  - c. Periodically, the Imprint will contain information on child abuse prevention.

## IX. REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

1. Resolve all doubts in favor of reporting. What is my responsibility if I suspect child abuse has occurred? Everyone has a moral responsibility to contact law enforcement, (715)-381-4320, or Social Services, (715)-246-6991, personnel if they have reason to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse. We ask that an oral report(s) to the authorities be made as soon as possible and that a written report be made to the local department within forty-eight hours.
2. Who do I tell, within the church, that I suspect abuse has occurred? Unless you suspect that child abuse has occurred on church property or during a church sponsored activity, you do not need to report your concerns to anyone within the church congregation. You do, however, need to report your suspicions to Social Services or the St. Croix County Sheriffs Department. If you suspect abuse has occurred on church property or during a church sponsored activity, it is important that you also contact the Pastor in addition to notifying the proper authorities. If, for any reason, you are not comfortable discussing your concerns with the Pastor, you may talk to the president of the Church Council or a member of the Child Protection Policy Committee.

Because of the highly sensitive nature of the allegations of abuse, we ask that you cooperate fully with the investigation by the authorities. Please do not discuss your suspicions with others within the church except as provided for in this policy.

3. What if I need advice or counseling for my own behavior? We strongly encourage anyone who has a concern about whether their own actions may be inappropriate to seek professional assistance. The state laws says that a Pastor is not required to report abuse if such a report would disclose any confidential communication under church doctrine or practice. Communication made in confidence to a clergyman may be kept confidential.
4. If I report suspected child abuse, can I be sued? Any person who, in good faith, makes or participates in making a report of abuse or neglect or participates in an investigation or a resulting judicial proceeding is given immunity from civil liability or criminal penalty under Wisconsin law.

## X. RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE

The congregation of the Baldwin Christian Reformed Church recognizes that all allegations of child abuse must be taken seriously. At the same time, we are aware that situations must be handled forthrightly with due respect for people's privacy and confidentiality.

When the church is notified by Social Services or local law enforcement officials that they have received a report of child abuse within the congregation, the following steps will be taken:

- a. Contact the insurance carrier immediately. Request that the carrier make a determination whether it will provide legal representation. If no legal representation is provided, a determination must be made by the Church Council whether to obtain the services of an attorney for the congregation.
- b. Full cooperation must be given to the state and local authorities. In-depth investigation should be left to professionals who are familiar with such cases. The Police Department and the Social Services Agency will be provided with a copy of this policy.
- c. If appropriate, contact denomination officials and seek their assistance. During the course of the investigation and after the allegations have been resolved, consider asking the church leaders to bring in professional assistance to help the congregation address any lingering affects of the incident.
- d. Follow the advice and recommendations of the investigating authorities about whether any other persons within the church, such as parents of the children, should be notified of the allegations of abuse
- e. Offer pastoral support and counseling if the parents desire that assistance
- f. The accused person must be treated with dignity and support. if the accused is a church worker, he/she will be relived temporarily of all duties until the authorities have completed the investigation. If the person is a paid employee, he/she will be placed on administrative leave until the allegations are resolved.

- g. Contacts with the media will only be made by one person designated as the spokesperson for the church. If appropriate, a spokesperson will be selected by the Church Council and will handle all contacts with the media and the congregation concerning the matter in a discrete, informed and diplomatic way. The designated spokesperson will also be responsible for preparing and releasing a statement which includes the information that Baldwin Christian Reformed Church has a Child Protection Prevention Policy in place and takes every reasonable precaution to prevent any abuse from occurring. In light of the sensitive and serious nature of any allegations of abuse, refer all media contacts to the designated spokesperson.
  - h. The CPPC will document all the steps which are taken in response to the incident. A written record should be prepared promptly recording the date, times, participants and content of any meetings, discussions and telephone contacts concerning the investigation.
2. In the event that an individual has checked yes to either section on the employee or volunteer application referring to being the subject of an investigation or being convicted of physical or sexual abuse, the CPPC will require the individual to supply a copy of the letter from Social Services stating the findings of their investigation. Upon receipt of the letter, the CPPC, with assistance from the Council , will make a decision upon the appropriateness of that individual working with the youth in the church
3. An individual currently working with the youth in the church is obligated to inform the CPPC as soon as any allegation is made against them. When the issue is resolved, the individual must supply a copy of the letter from Social Services stating the findings of their investigation. Upon receipt of the letter the CPPC, with assistance from the church council will make a decision upon the appropriateness of that individual working with the youth in the church.
4. Anyone currently under investigation for child abuse will refrain from directly working with the youth until the issue is resolved.

## XI. IMPLEMENTATION

The draft Child Protection Policy will be presented to the Church Council in February for approval. Following Council approval, the plan will be given to each congregational member. The council will review the policy periodically and make changes as needed.

## XII. CLOSING

We hope and pray that child abuse never occurs at the Baldwin Christian Reformed Church. We also hope and pray that child abuse may be completely eradicated. If the Baldwin Christian Reformed Church is confronted with any incidents of child abuse, legal action will be taken and attention given towards providing the proper healing measures to those affected. This will require a deep faith, and will provide a challenge to our Christian commitment to love and forgive one another. May our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, give us courage and strength to deal with the issue of child abuse.

BALDWIN CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH  
VOLUNTEER ABUSE AWARENESS AGREEMENT

I have read and understand Baldwin Christian Reformed Child Protection Policy and support the efforts of the congregation to make this church a safe place for children. To this end, I agree with and pledge to abide by the following statements:

1. If I've been involved in an allegation of child abuse within the past year, I will refrain from youth activities until the allegation is resolved.
2. If I have been convicted of either sexual or physical abuse I will not volunteer my services in any church sponsored activity or program for the children, or the youth. If I have been so convicted, I will volunteer for other areas of service in the church. I agree to disclose all previous criminal convictions involving physical or sexual child abuse.
3. If I am a survivor of childhood sexual or physical abuse I will need the love and acceptance of this church family, therefore I will discuss my desire to work with children or youth with one of the pastoral staff prior to engaging in any volunteer work.
4. I am aware of situations in which I am putting myself at risk of being accused of inappropriate actions or putting a child at risk of being abused. In addition, I will take measures to avoid such situations, such as having more than one adult present whenever feasible or providing visual access to the room. I will participate in abuse awareness education opportunities the church provides.
5. I will keep cognizant of the activities of children and adults in the church, follow established reporting procedures and cooperate in resolving any alleged incident of abuse that may arise.
6. I will provide two character references and previous church membership information before being approved for working with children. References will be kept on file. I will not regard this as an insult, but welcome it in order to help keep Baldwin Christian Reformed Church a safe place for children.

My signature on this form indicates my agreement with the Child Protection Policy and the above statements, and my pledge to abide by them. If this is my first year to volunteer at Baldwin Christian Reformed Church, the names and addresses of those references and previous church information are listed on the back of this sheet.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Witness \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_