



North Madison Congregational Church  
United Church of Christ

**SafeConduct Policy**

*Revised based upon Insurance Board SafeConduct Policy - adopted by Church Council,  
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## **Table of Contents**

Definitions.....	3
I. Statement of Policy.....	4
II. Code of Conduct with Youth and Vulnerable Adults.....	5
III. Policies for Working with Youth.....	9
Background Checks.....	11
A. Physical Contact.....	13
B. Verbal Interactions.....	14
C. One-on-One Interactions.....	15
D. Off-Site Contact.....	15
E. Electronic Communication.....	17
F. Gift Giving.....	18
IV. Training.....	19
V. Monitoring and Supervision.....	21
A. Facility Monitoring.....	21
B. General Supervision.....	21
C. Monitoring Youth in Church Building.....	22
D. Monitoring High Risk Activities.....	23
E. Monitoring On-Site and Off-Site Programs.....	28
VI. Responding.....	30
A. Responding to Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors of Policy Violations.....	30
B. Responding to Suspected Abuse by an Adult.....	33
C. Responding to Youth-to-Youth Sex Abuse and Sexualized Behaviors.....	35
D. Responding to Youth who do not follow/honor our Code of Conduct or children who exhibit challenging behavior in Children’s Church, etc.....	37
E. Responding to Victims.....	38
F. Notification of Parents.....	38
G. Responding to Media.....	39
VII. Congregational Awareness.....	40
VIII. Registered Sex Offender Policy.....	41
IX. Appendices.....	
A. Acknowledgement of SafeConduct Policy and Procedures.....	44
B. Registration Form for Church School, Youth Group, and other clubs.....	45
C. NMCC Youth Group Policy.....	46
D. Youth Group Code of Conduct.....	47
E. Permission Slip for Offsite & Out of State Activities/Programs.....	48
F. Medical Form.....	49
G. Report of Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect Form.....	50
H. Application to Volunteer.....	51
Covenant Agreement.....	54

**For the purposes of this policy we use the following definitions:**

**Authorized clergy:** Any person who serves the congregation in any capacity whether called as pastor or serving in a retired, emeritus, administrative or volunteer capacity.

**Authorized minister:** Person holding authorized minister standing as dictated by the appropriate judicatory body of the United Church of Christ. (Currently the Church and Ministry Committee of the New Haven East Consociation of the Southern New England Conference)

**Child Sexual Abuse:** Any physical activity involving a child in which the minor is touched or encouraged to touch another in an intimate or sexual way, spoken with about or shown sexualized or pornographic materials.

**Children's Church Volunteer:** Anyone who has responsibility for a church school classroom and/or vacation Bible school.

**Confidentiality:** Only those who need to know are given information when that information enables them to make informed decisions that they are duly authorized to make. Sharing information with those who need to know is not viewed as compromising the integrity or confidentiality of the SafeConduct process.

**Emotional abuse:** is mental or emotional injury to a youth that results in material impairment in the youth's growth, development, or psychological functioning.

**Mandatory Reporters:** are those persons required by CT law to report suspected abuse to police or child welfare agencies. At NMCC mandated reporters are the Senior Minister and/or the Authorized Minister.

**Mentor:** Any member of the church who serves as a Confirmation Mentor to any of the youth

**Minor:** Any individual under the age of eighteen. (also referred to as youth in this policy)

**Neglect:** is the failure to provide for a youth's basic needs or the failure to protect a youth from harm.

**Physical abuse:** is injury that is intentionally inflicted upon a youth or vulnerable adult.

**Senior Minister:** The primary ordained individual engaged by the church to carry out its ministry.

**Sexual abuse:** is any contact of a sexual nature that occurs between a youth and an adult or between two youths. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult or the other youth.

**Sexual exploitation:** Sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which an adult engaged in the work of the church takes advantage of the vulnerability of a participant by causing or allowing or soliciting the participant to engage in sexual behavior.

**Sexual harassment:** Repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to his or her wishes. It includes behavior directed at another person's sexuality or sexual orientation with the intent of intimidating, humiliating, or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the person to public discrimination. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance or participation in church activities or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or church environment.
- Prohibited sexual harassment includes unsolicited and unwelcome contact that has sexual overtones, particularly: written contact, verbal contact, physical contact and visual contact.
- Sexual harassment also includes continuing to express sexual interest after being informed directly that the interest is unwelcome.

**Vulnerable Adult:** is anyone aged 18 or over who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age, or illness, and who is or may be unable to take care of himself, or unable to protect himself against significant harm or exploitation.

**Youth Ministry Team:** Adult unpaid youth group facilitators.

## **I Statement of Policy**

As a community of Christian faith, North Madison Congregational Church (NMCC), is committed to creating and maintaining programs, facilities and a community in which members, friends, the Senior Minister, employees, and volunteers can worship, learn and work together in an atmosphere free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation or intimidation. The congregation of NMCC supports principles of SafeConduct, which include individual responsibility to fulfill the highest standards of personal conduct toward others and to lead and guide the congregation in fulfillment of the standards set by our Christian faith. NMCC strongly opposes and prohibits “sexual exploitation,” “sexual harassment,” or any form of exploitation or abuse of others regardless of age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identification, or mental capacity. It is the intention of our congregation to affirmatively nurture good behavior, and to prevent and correct behavior that is contrary to this policy and, as necessary, discipline those persons who violate this policy.

Every member of the Congregation, whether authorized ministers, lay leader, lay staff, volunteer or parent, has a role to lead those who look to them individually for guidance, to monitor their behavior and redirect them as they cross boundaries of SafeConduct. Our congregation shall nurture good conduct as demonstrated by personal behaviors that are consistent with our Open and Affirming, progressive Christian values.

This policy will be reviewed every three years to ensure we are keeping up to date with changes in state law. Reviewing of this document will be overseen by the NMCC Human Resources Team/chair and the Board of CE in collaboration with staff and the Insurance Board website. The Council will be informed of major revisions to the policy.

## **II Code of Conduct with Youth and Vulnerable Adults**

The following Code of Conduct is intended to assist the Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers in making decisions about interactions with youth and vulnerable adults. For clarification of any guideline, or to inquire about behaviors not addressed here, contact your supervisor.

NMCC is committed to creating an environment for youth and vulnerable adults that is safe, nurturing, empowering, and that promotes growth and success.

No form of abuse will be tolerated. All reports of suspicious behavior with young and vulnerable adults or allegations of abuse will be taken seriously. NMCC will fully cooperate with authorities if allegations of abuse are made that require investigation. Confirmed abuse will result in immediate dismissal of a staff member from NMCC and removal from all volunteer positions and other sanctions as are deemed appropriate for the assurance of safety of other vulnerable youth and adults.

The Code of Conduct with Youth and Vulnerable Adults outlines specific expectations of the Senior Minister, authorized ministers, employees, and volunteers as we strive to accomplish our mission together.

1. Youth and vulnerable adults will be treated with respect at all times.
2. Youth and vulnerable adults will be treated fairly regardless of race, gender identity, sexual/affectional orientation, physical ability, age, or religion.
3. The Senior Minister, authorized ministers, employees, and volunteers will adhere to uniform standards of displaying affection as outlined by NMCC.
4. The Senior Minister, authorized ministers, employees, and volunteers will avoid inappropriate physical, verbal, or written expressions of affection with youth and vulnerable adults that cannot be observed by others (including notes, emails, etc).
5. The Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers will adhere to uniform standards of appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions as outlined by NMCC.
6. The Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers will not stare at or comment on youth and vulnerable adults' bodies.
7. The Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers will not date or become romantically involved with youth and vulnerable adults.
8. The Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers will not use or be under the influence of alcohol, cannabis products, or illegal drugs in the presence of youth and vulnerable adults.
9. The Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers will not have sexually inappropriate materials, including printed or virtual pornography, on NMCC's property or while engaging in ministry on behalf of NMCC anywhere.

10. The Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers will not have secrets with youth and vulnerable adults and will only give gifts with prior permissions. In instances of content being shared by minors or vulnerable adults with clergy under the covenant of clergy confidentiality, the utmost professional judgment will be engaged. When suicide, self-harm, abuse, or harm to another is divulged, clergy, authorized minister/christian educator, and all other NMCC youth leaders will abide by mandated reporter guidelines.
11. The Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers will comply with NMCC's policies regarding interactions with youth and vulnerable adults whether interacting with youth and vulnerable adults as part of a church-sponsored event or in any other context that youth and vulnerable adults are present.
12. The Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers will not engage in inappropriate or private electronic communication with youth and vulnerable adults.
13. The Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers are prohibited from working one-on-one with youth and vulnerable adults in a private setting. Clergy, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers will use common areas or open and/or windowed doors, when working with individual youth and vulnerable adults.
14. The Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers will not abuse young and vulnerable adults in any way including (but not limited to) the following:
  - a. Physical abuse: hitting, spanking, shaking, slapping, unnecessary restraints
  - b. Verbal abuse: degrading, threatening, cursing
  - c. Sexual abuse: inappropriate touching, exposing oneself, sexually oriented conversations or materials
  - d. Mental abuse: shaming, humiliation, cruelty, diminishment, undue pressure
  - e. Neglect: withholding food, water, shelter
15. NMCC will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one youth or vulnerable adult by another youth or vulnerable adult. In addition, NMCC will not tolerate any behavior that is classified under the definition of bullying, and to the extent that such actions are disruptive, we will take steps needed to eliminate such behavior once observed and/or made aware of.

Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, is repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Bullying can take on various forms, including:

- Physical bullying: when one person engages in physical force against another person, such as by hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining another.
- Verbal bullying: when someone uses their words to hurt another, such as by belittling or calling another hurtful names.
- Nonverbal or relational bullying: when one person manipulates a relationship or desired relationship to harm another person. This includes social exclusion, friendship manipulation, or gossip. This type of bullying also includes intimidating another person by using gestures.
- Cyberbullying: the intentional and overt act of aggression toward another person by way of any technological tool, such as email, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including blogs). Cyberbullying can involve:
  - Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images.
  - Posting sensitive, private information about another person.
  - Pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad.
  - Intentionally excluding someone from an online group.
  - Hazing: an activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers that person regardless of that person's willingness to participate.
  - Sexualized bullying: when bullying involves behaviors that are sexual in nature. Examples of sexualized bullying behaviors include sexting, bullying that involves exposures of private body parts, and verbal bullying involving sexualized language or innuendos.

Anyone who sees an act of bullying, and who then encourages it, is engaging in bullying. This policy applies to all youth and vulnerable adults, the Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers.

16. The Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers must follow state specific mandatory reporting requirements. They should be trained, as indicated in this document, to be aware of and understand their legal and ethical obligation to recognize and report suspicions of mistreatment and abuse. They will:

- Be familiar with the symptoms of child abuse and neglect, including physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional abuse.
- Know and follow organizational policies and procedures that protect youth and vulnerable adults against abuse.
- Report suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities as required by state mandated reporter laws.

- Report suspected abuse or neglect to the Senior Minister and/or the authorized minister/christian educator, as they are NMCC's mandated reporters. Except in cases of extreme danger to the minor (when 911 should also be considered), the Senior Minister should be informed that reporting is about to be engaged and an internal incident report should be filed. If a volunteer has a profession that requires them to be a mandated reporter, at NMCC, they are still to report to either or both of our mandated reports.
- If the alleged abuse involves an employee or volunteer, notify the employee's supervisor, Human Resources Chair, and the chair of the team/board for the specified program area.
- Follow up to ensure that appropriate action has been taken.

17. NMCC cooperates fully with the authorities to investigate all cases of alleged abuse. The Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employee, or volunteer shall cooperate to the fullest extent possible in any external investigation by outside authorities or internal investigation conducted by the organization or person given investigative authority by the organization. Failure to cooperate fully may be grounds for termination.

18. The Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers may not have engaged in or been accused or convicted of youth and vulnerable adult abuse, indecency with a youth and vulnerable adults, or injury to a youth and vulnerable adult. NMCC reserves the right to refuse or terminate employment of the Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers found to have engaged in or been convicted of youth and vulnerable adult abuse.



### **III. Policies for Working with Youth and Children**

Policies define the bandwidth of acceptable behavior in an organization. Because offenders often violate policies to gain access to youth, when staff know and understand policies, they can identify, interrupt, and report policy violations. Simply interrupting a policy violation can prevent a false allegation of abuse or put an offender on notice that no one works in private, the rules apply to everyone, and violations will be detected.

We will not have a volunteer working with our youth that is less than five years older than the oldest member of the youth group. Should a volunteer not be within this span, then an adult over 21 must be present at all times, as the volunteer would not be serving in a supervising capacity or be left in charge of youth group members. In addition, this volunteer is NOT considered the second adult in any activity.

Any trip or program that requires chaperones/advisors will have at least two adults including the program leader or their designee. The general guideline is to have diverse gender representation. More adults may be required if the nature of the activity or the total number of participants indicates. All attending advisors/chaperones must be at least 21 years of age and shall be selected at the discretion of the Board of Christian Education and/or the Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator.

Generally, we seek to avoid situations where one adult and one youth or child are left at the church door waiting to be picked up by parents at the end of an evening activity. Parents are encouraged to respect concluding times for activities.

In order to ensure the safety of our children and youth and in order to comply with our SafeConduct Policy, the recommendations of our insurance carrier and the United Church of Christ, all volunteers will be asked to complete an application form (found in Appendix I) before working with our children or youth. These forms will be confidential and kept on file as articulated in the maintenance records section of the policy.

## **Official Activities**

Youth Ministry programs, activities and events are those officially sponsored by the Board of Christian Education of NMCC and staff .

Official activities are generally planned in advance and are printed, with beginning and ending time, in the weekly Church Bulletin and/or the Church Newsletter, on the church website, and/or a separate mailing/email communication. Changes may be made by announcement in worship, an email, on the church website, a phone call, or a supplemental mailing.

From time to time, groups may make a significant deviation from their planned activity. In that event, each child or youth will attempt to call a parent/guardian for notification purposes. These are still official activities, as they will occur during the originally scheduled time and the advisors/ chaperones will be present.

## **Church School**

Each Church School classroom shall strive to have at least two teachers, one of whom is an adult, or one teacher and two classroom helpers, one of whom is an adult.

No adult leader, staff or volunteer should initiate or encourage intimate contact with a child or youth. Setting boundaries is the responsibility of the adults. Our staff is responsible for implementing and enforcing appropriate boundaries through education and training for children, youth, parents and adult leadership. Any inappropriate conduct or relationship between an adult worker and a child or a youth shall be promptly reported as indicated in this policy under the Response section.

## **Nursery**

Nursery providers care for young children and babies during Worship services and congregational meetings and events (when needed and available). Care providers under 18 do not change diapers or help little ones in the bathroom. Nursery care workers will obtain a parent designated adult or parent to change a diaper or toilet a child. Care providers under 18 work in a team and babysit within earshot of church school teachers, as does our adult provider. If our care provider(s) is absent, we will look to fill the role for the day with a volunteer who is cleared to work with our children. If necessary, we will bring young children into church school to be cared for if we have the bandwidth to do so that day. Last resort is to close the nursery for the day. We aim to provide a safe, cheerful and supportive atmosphere in our nursery where little ones may play while their family enjoys worship.

## Background Checks

Background Checks Criminal history and sexual offender registry checks should be conducted for all volunteers and staff. Generally, the information should be obtained prior to employment of the applicant; however, if the length of time needed to receive the results of these checks is unduly long, NMCC could have the applicant start the position and remain in the position until the criminal background results are obtained and reviewed. New employees and volunteers should not be left unsupervised with children/youth until the background checks results are returned.

<b>Background check</b> <i>Staff refers to those paid employees outside of our Clergy and/or Authorized Minister</i>		<b>Oxford Management Systems Checks:</b>
Clergy Authorized Ministers	All clergy and authorized ministers will be background checked in accordance with New Haven East Consociation and Southern New England UCC Conference best practices for authorized ministers.  Annual if/when driving youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Motor Vehicle Report if/when driving youth</li> </ul>
Staff who work with children and youth	Every 3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● County Criminal History</li> <li>● SSN Trace</li> <li>● Enhanced Nationwide Criminal Search</li> <li>● DOJ Sex Offender Search</li> <li>● Motor Vehicle Report</li> </ul>
Children’s Church volunteers	Every 3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● County Criminal History</li> <li>● SSN Trace</li> <li>● Enhanced Nationwide Criminal Search</li> <li>● DOJ Sex Offender Search</li> </ul>
Youth Group volunteers	Every 3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● SSN Trace</li> <li>● DOJ Sex Offender Search</li> <li>● Enhanced Nationwide Criminal Search</li> </ul>
Volunteer drivers, staff Confirmation mentors of our	Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● County Criminal History</li> <li>● SSN Trace</li> </ul>

children and/or youth		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Enhanced Nationwide Criminal Search</li> <li>● DOJ Sex Offender Search</li> <li>● Motor Vehicle Report</li> </ul>
Volunteer Driver, ONLY	Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Motor Vehicle Report</li> </ul>
Cash Handling (Treasurer and regular counters)	Annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● County Criminal History</li> <li>● Credit Report</li> </ul>

## A. Physical Contact

NMCC’s physical contact policy promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting youth, the Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers. NMCC prohibits adult initiated inappropriate displays of physical contact. When violations occur with regard to physical contact, verbal interactions, one-on- one interactions, off-site contact, electronic communication and/or gift giving they are to be addressed as noted in the Response section of this document.

NMCC’s policies for appropriate and inappropriate physical interaction are:

Appropriate Physical Interactions	Inappropriate Physical Interactions (including but not limited to)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Side hugs</li> <li>● Shoulder to shoulder</li> <li>● Pats on the shoulder or back</li> <li>● Handshakes</li> <li>● High fives and hand slapping</li> <li>● Verbal praise</li> <li>● Touching hands, shoulders, and arms</li> <li>● Arms around shoulders</li> <li>● Holding hands (with young children in escorting situations)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Full frontal hugs</li> <li>● Kisses</li> <li>● Showing affection in isolated area</li> <li>● Lap sitting</li> <li>● Wrestling</li> <li>● Piggyback rides</li> <li>● Tickling</li> <li>● Pats on the head</li> <li>● Allowing a youth to cling to an employee’s or volunteer’s leg</li> <li>● Any type of massage given by or to a youth</li> <li>● Any form of affection that is unwanted by the youth or the staff or volunteer</li> <li>● Compliments relating to physique or body development</li> <li>● Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas</li> </ul>

## B. Verbal Interactions

The Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers are prohibited from speaking to youth in a way that is, or could be construed by any observer, as harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demanding, or humiliating.

NMCC's policies for appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions are:

<b>Appropriate Verbal Interactions</b>	<b>Inappropriate Verbal Interactions (including but not limited to)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Positive reinforcement</li><li>● Appropriate jokes</li><li>● Encouragement</li><li>● Praise</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Name-calling</li><li>● Discussing sexual encounters or in any way involving youth in the personal problems or issues of clergy, authorized ministers, employees, and volunteers</li><li>● Secrets</li><li>● Cursing</li><li>● Off-color or sexual jokes</li><li>● Shaming</li><li>● Belittling</li><li>● Derogatory remarks</li><li>● Harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate youths</li><li>● Derogatory remarks about the youth or his/her/their family</li></ul>

### C. One-on-One Interactions

Most abuse occurs when an adult is alone with a youth. NMCC aims to eliminate or reduce these situations and prohibits private one-on-one interactions unless approved in advance by the organization administration and parent/guardian.

In those situations where one-on-one interactions are approved, the Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers should observe the following additional guidelines to manage the risk abuse or false allegations of abuse:

#### **Additional Guidelines for One-on-One interactions**

- When meeting one-on-one with a youth, always do so in a public place where you are in full view of others.
- Avoid physical affection that can be misinterpreted. Limit affection to pats on the shoulder, high-fives and handshakes.
- If meeting in a room or office, leave the door open or move to an area that can be easily observed by others passing by.
- Inform the Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers that you are alone with a youth and ask them to randomly drop in.
- Document and immediately report any unusual incidents, including disclosures of abuse or maltreatment, behavior problems and how they were handled, injuries, or any interactions that might be misinterpreted.

### D. Off-site Contact

Many cases of organizational abuse occur off-site and outside of regularly scheduled activities. This 1:1 contact outside of regularly scheduled activities may put staff, volunteers, and NMCC at increased risk.

#### 1. (Preferred) Option One:

NMCC prohibits interactions outside of regularly scheduled program activities unless approved by the organization's administration.

#### 2. Option Two:

NMCC strongly recommends that staff do not have outside contact with youths from the organization. However, if off-site contacts are unavoidable (such as during mentoring programs), NMCC has determined that the following forms of outside contact are appropriate and inappropriate.

<b>Appropriate Offsite Contact</b>	<b>Inappropriate Offsite Contact (including but not limited to)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Taking groups of youths on an outing</li> <li>● Attending sporting activities with groups of youths</li> <li>● Attending functions at a youth's home, with parents present</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Taking one youth on an outing without the parents' written permission</li> <li>● Visiting one youth in the youth's home, without a parent consent</li> <li>● Entertaining one youth in the home of staff or volunteers</li> <li>● A single youth spending the night with staff or volunteers</li> <li>● A single youth in an adult's car</li> </ul>

In addition, when outside contact is unavoidable, ensure that the following steps are followed:

1. Supervisors should identify for the Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers what types of outside contact are appropriate and inappropriate.
2. Ensure that staff or volunteers have the parents' permission to engage in outside contact with the youth. Consider requiring the parents to sign a release-of-liability statement.



**E. Electronic Communication**

Any private electronic communication between staff and youths, including the use of social networking websites like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, instant messaging, texting, etc, is prohibited. All communication between staff and youths must be transparent.

The following are examples of appropriate and inappropriate electronic communication:

Appropriate Electronic Communication	Inappropriate Electronic Communication (including but not limited to)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sending and replying to emails and text messages from youths ONLY when copying in a supervisor or the youth’s parent</li> <li>● Communicating through “organization group pages” on Facebook or other approved public forums</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demanding or humiliating comments</li> <li>● Sexually oriented conversations</li> <li>● Private messages between the Senior Minister, authorized ministers, employees, and volunteers with youths</li> <li>● Posting pictures of organization participants on social media sites without parent permission</li> <li>● “Friendships” participants on social networking sites</li> </ul>

In addition, provide this information to your participant’s parents so that they know what is appropriate and inappropriate from your staff.

**Cell Phone Use:**

While assigned to work with youths, staff are not permitted to use electronic communications devices except during times that would enhance the program (using Spotify for music, or showing a video, etc), communicating with parents, supervisors, breaks and emergency situations. Internet use, text messaging and/or emailing pictures while assigned to work with youths is strictly prohibited regardless of the type of device used and whether for business or personal reasons. Employees need to ensure that friends and family members are aware of this policy. Use of personal electronic communication devices to contact (via voice, text, or pictures/video) organization members and/or program participants for personal and/or inappropriate reasons shall be grounds for discipline up to and including termination of employment.

There are occasions in which staff will need to use personal electronic communication devices. In these cases, staff and volunteers will have planned for explicit use of these devices (see above). Situations which may require use of personal electronic communication devices include:

- A. Field trips      B. Off-site programs and      C. Emergencies

## **F. Gift Giving**

Molesters routinely groom youths by giving gifts, thereby endearing themselves to the youth. They might instruct the youth to keep the gifts a secret, which then starts teaching the youth to keep secrets from parents. For this reason, the Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers should only give gifts to groups of youths, and only under the following circumstances:

- A. Supervisors must be made aware of and approve the gift.
- B. Parents must be notified.

Inappropriate relationships and impressions or expectations of favoritism can also be formed by the Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, and other leaders receiving personal gifts directly from families or youths. For this reason, the Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers should defer to accept such gifts. Group offerings or gifts conveyed from a church body are acceptable.

#### **IV. Training**

The mission of NMCC is first to prevent abuse of children and other vulnerable adults. We wish to identify and nurture SafeConduct, to lead and to guide through adequate training. It is difficult to comprehend that those among us, our friends and family, would commit such acts willingly. Nevertheless, persons who have been presented no behavior standards and do not understand boundaries may unwittingly engage in behaviors that may be perceived as predatory. Their personal reputations and that of NMCC are then at risk.

To fulfill our leadership obligation, each new employee and new volunteer shall complete a specific program of training within 30 days of assuming duties. Fulfillment of training requirements shall be documented by the Human Resources Chair.

Training shall be repeated annually. Records shall be maintained by the same as mentioned above. Training records shall be audited annually by the Human Resources Chair.

Abuse prevention curriculum shall include:

- Organization level
  - Review of expected conduct and boundaries defined in this policy
  - Review of standards applicable to ministry
  - Explanation of procedures for reporting violations of standards of conduct and suspected child abuse
  - Explanation of individual statutory reporting obligations.
  - Identifying and managing high-risk situations such as bathroom use, transition times, and free times
  - Physical security procedures
  
- Abuse prevention education
  - Sexual Harassment training video for staff only:  
[https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=-nyLEd2juUiwJjH\\_abtzi1ho4uKVVftOpzDtEVu7P7IUMk5JTjTY2WlZSWDFOTEIXMk9OUjYwRFFNOS4u](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=-nyLEd2juUiwJjH_abtzi1ho4uKVVftOpzDtEVu7P7IUMk5JTjTY2WlZSWDFOTEIXMk9OUjYwRFFNOS4u)
  - Effects of sexual abuse
  - Types of child molesters
  - Characteristics of abusers
  - How child molesters operate: access, privacy and control
  - Protecting oneself from false allegations
  - Examples of child-on-child sexual abuse, even among youth children
  - Characteristics of children more likely to act out sexually
  - Characteristics of children more likely to be abused

- High-risk activities and circumstances
  - Specific monitoring and supervision activities to prevent child-on-child sexual activity
  - How to respond to incidents of sexual activity between children
- Insurance Board Praesidium Academy. Annually, our staff and volunteers working with children and youth will complete one or more online video training as requested. . The chair of HR will oversee the implementation and will maintain records of completion.

## **V. Monitoring and Supervision**

When the Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers are adequately supervised, potential offenders are less likely to act on their impulses because they face detection. When youth are adequately supervised, they too are less likely to engage in inappropriate interactions with others. Similarly, the facility must be monitored, particularly out-of-the-way locations or locations that might permit an offender undue access to or privacy with a youth. Effective supervision and monitoring require that a variety of methods be used frequently, at both scheduled and random times.

All youth ministry programming must be accomplished in relationship with appropriate youth ministry staff. No volunteers will be permitted to plan or run youth ministry programming independently without prior agreement of the appropriate staff person, the Senior Minister, or authorized minister/christian educator, or Board of Christian Education in the authorized minister or staff person's absence.

### **A. Facility Monitoring**

Building architecture can increase or mitigate the risk of an incident or accident. Because most incidents of sexual behavior occur in private, the extent to which privacy is managed, risk is managed.

### **B. General Supervision**

General supervision procedures:

1. Supervisory Visits to Youth Programs - Youth supervisors and administrators will regularly visit all youth programs to ensure that all activities are well managed and that youth policies are observed by all in attendance.
2. Mixed Age Groups - In most incidents involving one youth abusing another youth, the youths are from different age groups. Each program is responsible for establishing specific guidelines for additional monitoring and supervision of activities that involve youths from different age groups. The Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers must be aware that close line of sight supervision is required when monitoring programs that mix age groups. It is our practice to specify the

age for the youth group(s) or teen programs. Siblings or friends that fall outside of the age parameters will not be permitted to attend.

### **C. Monitoring Youth in church building**

Because NMCC is responsible for all youths in the facility, we recommend implementing the following practices:

1. Require a parent or legal guardian to complete a registration form ( see Appendix B) AND a medical form (see Appendix G), which includes identifying information, any special medical or behavioral circumstances, any legal indemnifications, the youth's date of birth, and emergency contact information and insurance information.
2. Require youths to sign a Code of Conduct (See Appendix E) that outlines the program's behavioral expectations and policies regarding appropriate and inappropriate interactions. Parents are expected to sign this Code of Conduct as well, so that they are aware of the program's policies.
3. While a parent orientation may not be feasible in all circumstances, we recommend encouraging parents to attend an information session with a program representative. This meeting will provide an opportunity to review expectations and requirements, and the chance to establish a relationship with the parents. This can be helpful if any problems arise in the future.
4. While in the facility, youths can be supervised directly, indirectly, or with a combination of the two techniques.
  - a. For direct supervision, the program may offer structured, scheduled activities like basketball tournaments, swimming activities, arts and crafts, etc. These activities should have one or more staff assigned to lead and supervise.
  - b. For indirect supervision, the program must designate certain building areas as authorized areas. Authorized areas could include a community room, a playground or a specific classroom. Authorized areas must be easily visible and routinely and systematically checked by staff/volunteers. Youths should know that they will be supervised by staff at all times, and all staff should know which areas are authorized and which are not.
5. Develop supervision standards for the authorized areas. For example:

- a. Determine how frequently authorized areas should be monitored by staff.
  - b. Assign staff specific supervision responsibilities over authorized areas.
6. Train all staff/volunteers:
- a. To greet youths that enter the facility; to direct youths to the structured activities or authorized areas; and, to redirect youths who are not in an authorized area or who are not participating in a structured activity.
  - b. To be aware of the risks involved with mixing age groups and how to monitor activities involving mixed age groups.
  - c. To routinely monitor high risk areas (such as bathrooms, locker rooms, and unused rooms). Youth leaders will take care to monitor youth in their care to ensure that none go missing unsupervised

Ultimately, all youth must be supervised at all times, regardless of age. The key to remember is that they can be supervised directly in structured activities and indirectly when they are in authorized areas.

#### **D. Monitoring High Risk Activities: Onsite at NMCC or Offsite**

##### **1. Bathroom Activities**

Most incidents of youth-to-youth abuse occur in the bathrooms. Therefore, the following supervision guidelines are recommended:

When supervising restroom use, adult staff/volunteers should first quickly scan the bathroom before allowing youths to enter.

- A. For “group bathroom breaks”:
  - a. Require staff to take groups of two or more youths to the bathroom - following the “rule of three” or more.
  - b. If the bathroom only has one stall, only one youth should enter the restroom while the others wait outside with the staff
  - c. If there are multiple stalls, only send in as many youths as there are stalls.
  - d. Minimize youths of different ages using the bathroom at the same time.
  - e. Require staff to stand outside the bathroom door but remain within earshot.
- B. For single use restrooms:

- a. Require youths to ask permission to use the bathroom
- b. Require all staff to frequently check bathrooms.
- C. Prohibit staff from using the bathroom at the same time as youths.
- D. If assisting young youths in the stalls, the staff/volunteers should keep the door to the stall open.

## **2. Locker Room Activities**

The locker room procedures include:

- A. Requiring staff to stand within earshot of the locker room when in use by youths.
- B. Requiring staff to intermittently and briefly check inside the locker room so users know the locker room is monitored.
- C. Discouraging the use of locker rooms by youths of different ages at the same time.
- D. Prohibiting the use of locker room horseplay such as towel snapping.
- E. When possible, arrange lockers to minimize unnecessary privacy.

## **3. Shower Activities**

Staff and youths must shower at different times when possible. Create shower schedules that will permit supervision of the youths while staff shower. Staff/volunteers will get dressed in private and away from youth.

While the youths shower, at least one staff member should stand in the bathroom doorway and within earshot of the youths. When possible, teens will be supervised, but there may also be times when that is not possible. Ensure that only one youth is in each shower.

## **4. Transition Times and Free Times**

Transition times and free-choice times (or free times) pose a high risk for incidents because during these times, the Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers may not be assigned a particular group of youths to supervise. To decrease the risk of incidents, implement the following procedures:



- A. Staff and volunteers should do their utmost to keep youths in their line-of-sight at all times
- B. Specify the staff-to-youth ratio.
- C. Specify narrow geographic boundaries in the program areas.
- D. Ensure that all staff are assigned specific areas to supervise (zone monitoring).
- E. Include bathroom procedures.
- F. Require periodic roll calls for each age group
- G. Require supervisors to conduct periodic check-ins and sweeps of the entire activity area.

## **5. Playground Activities**

The playground procedures require:

- A. Youths to remain in line-of-site of staff at all times.
- B. Definition of specific and narrow geographic boundaries around the playground area.
- C. Specific instructions on how to monitor barriers of supervision (such as storage sheds, playhouses, tunnels, and shrubs).
- D. That all staff are assigned specific areas to supervise
- E. Staff to conduct periodic roll calls for each age group.
- F. Ministry team and youth leaders to conduct periodic check-ins and assessments of the activity period and of the entire activity area.

## **6. Transportation Activities**

Transporting youths may increase the risk of abuse or false allegations of because the Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers may be alone with a youth or may make unauthorized stops with youths. In addition, transportation activities may provide a time for unsupervised youths to engage in youth-to-youth sexual activity.

The transportation guidelines:

- A. Require written parent permission from all youths on the trip for that specific trip. Leaders take these permission forms and medical releases with them on the trip.
- B. Require leaders to have a list of the youths on the trip. The leaders take roll when boarding the bus/cars, when leaving the bus/cars, periodically throughout the trip, and then again when boarding the bus/cars.

- C. Specify staff-to-youth ratios. When possible, do not count the driver in the supervision ratio.
- D. Require staff to sit in seats that permit maximum supervision.
- E. Discourage mixed age groups from sitting together.
- F. Prohibit drivers from making unauthorized stops.
- G. Require documentation of any unusual occurrences.
- H. Adult drivers, driving our youth, need to be at least 21 years of age.
- I. Regarding teens driving to events: all CT state laws must be followed. Parents can make the decision for themselves and their family regarding the teen driving themselves, siblings, or others to an in-state event. For mission trips or any out of state activity/gathering, our screened drivers are the only ones allowed to drive and two adults should be present in each car or the rule of three should be followed.

When public transportation is used:

- A. In addition to the transportation procedures listed above, youths should remain in one area of the bus/train, if possible.
- B. the Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers that are assigned to a group should remain with that group on the bus.
- C. Take a head count or call roll immediately after entering and leaving the bus.

In situations where staff transport youths in non-church vehicles:

- A. Youth Ministry staff/leaders must be notified of all transportation activities.
- B. Use the “rule of three” when transporting youths; at least two non-related adults must transport a single youth, or at least two youths must be present if transported by a single adult.
- C. Youths must never be transported without written permission from a parent except in case of medical or safety-related emergency.
- D. Youth must be transported directly to their destination. No unauthorized stops may be made.
- E. A youth leader must document beginning and ending times, the names of youths and other clergy (including when appropriate the Senior Minister), authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers who are involved in transportation, purpose of the transportation, and destination.
- F. Youth leaders must avoid unnecessary physical contact with youths while in vehicles.
- G. Staff and/or volunteers will not transport children or youth between church and home, unless there are two non-related adults in the car or two or

more youth in the car. At no time, should one staff/volunteer be in a car with one youth.

- H. All persons in the vehicles shall wear seat belts. The vehicles shall not be loaded beyond safe seating capacity. Appropriate behavior is expected by all passengers, including the CT laws regarding cell phone use while driving.

See appendix G for Volunteer Driver Qualification Form and Agreement

## **7. Overnight Activities**

Overnight stays present unique risks to youth and staff. They often involve changing clothes, groups of both genders and different ages in a more intimate atmosphere than usual, more unstructured activities, and increased supervision demands for staff.

Supervision Guidelines:

- A. All overnight activities must be documented and approved in writing by the authorized minister/christian educator, or volunteer in charge.
- B. The organizing youth leader or authorized minister/christian educator should appoint specific adults to supervise the overnight. A meeting with all adult leaders is conducted to discuss the unique risks of overnight trips, unique elements of the specific overnight trip and to review the specific policies and procedures.
- C. Provide parents with written information about the overnight activity. All parents must sign a permission slip for their youths to attend the overnight.
- D. Determine the appropriate staff-to-youth ratios before the event and schedule adults accordingly.
- E. Meetings with the group should be hosted in open and observable areas (picnic area or community room); meetings should not be hosted in staff or youth rooms (bedrooms for example).

Overnights at the property of NMCC:

- A. Physical boundaries within the organization must be clearly defined and explained to the youths.
- B. Assign an adult to high risk areas in NMCC's building/property, such as the bathrooms, entrances and exits, hallways, etc. If it is not possible to assign specific adults to these areas, assign periodic facility "walk-throughs."

- C. With regards to sleeping arrangements, youth should sleep according to their gender orientation and assign adult leaders/chaperones to these rooms or with as much space as possible.
- D. When performing room checks, adult leaders should always go in pairs.

#### Overnights Away from the NMCC building/property

- A. Overnight stays at private homes are prohibited unless approved by the Board of Christian Education and staff member, with the knowledge of the Senior Minister.
- B. Physical boundaries at the off-site location must be clearly defined and explained to the youths.
- C. Assign each adult leader to a specific group of youths to supervise. Each adult leader member should then maintain a role sheet that lists all the youths in their group. Head counts and roll checks should be conducted routinely throughout the event.
- D. If in a cabin type of setting, the adult leader should be placed in sleeping locations to maximize supervision around the cabin and in a way that decreases the chances of youths sneaking out or in (such as by the door).

#### **E. Monitoring On-Site and Off-Site Programs**

- **Keep a record.** The organizing church leader of the event should Document their supervision visits and activities. Include information like your arrival and departure times, which youths and parents were present, and a summary of the information collected. Provide youth leaders with feedback about visits.
- **Vary your observation times.** Do not develop a predictable pattern of observation. Drop in at different times each day. Occasionally leave and come back immediately.
- **Arrive before other leaders.** Check punctuality and the routine that other leaders follow to prepare for the youths to arrive.
- **Survey the physical environment.** Is this a suitable location for the activity (e.g., size of area for number of youths, ability to supervise all areas used by youths, landscaping that may inhibit supervision)?
- **Watch activities.** Are they planned and organized? Are the leaders actively involved? Ensure the schedule of activities is actually being appropriately followed at a given time.

- **Observe bathroom and locker room activities.** Observe bathroom and locker room activities to ensure that leaders are complying with established policies and procedures.
- **Observe Interactions.**

## VII Responding

How an organization responds to suspicious or inappropriate interactions, policy violations, and incidents or allegations of abuse can dramatically affect the harm to the individuals involved and the damage to the organization. Once the Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employee, volunteer, youth, or parent has expressed a concern or made an allegation about the treatment of a youth, swift and determined action must be taken to reduce any subsequent risk to the youth, to the accused staff member or volunteer, and to the organization. Organizations must establish precise, unequivocal requirements for reporting to the authorities and for adhering to a serious incident response plan.

As required by mandated reporting laws, clergy, employees, and volunteers must report any suspected abuse or neglect of a youth - whether on or off NMCC property or whether perpetrated by employees, volunteers, or others - to state authorities. Reports may be made confidentially or anonymously. A person who mistakenly reports suspected abuse is immune from civil or criminal liability as long as the report was made in good faith and without malice. At NMCC, our Senior Minister and authorized minister are the mandated reporters. Staff or volunteers that are reporting suspected abuse and/or neglect are doing just that, reporting to the appropriate staff. If a volunteer has a profession that requires them to be a mandated reporter, at NMCC, they are still to report to either or both of our mandated reports. Those reporting are not obligated or required to call state authorities or child protective services.

### A. Responding to Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors or Policy Violations

Because NMCC is dedicated to maintaining zero tolerance for abuse, it is imperative that everyone actively participates in the protection of youth. In the event that the Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employee, or volunteer observes any suspicious or inappropriate behaviors and/or policy violations on the part of others, it is their personal responsibility to immediately report their observations as outlined in this policy.

Remember at NMCC the policies apply to everyone.

<b>Examples of Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors Between Employee/Volunteers and Youth</b>
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- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Violation of the abuse prevention policies described above</li><li>● Seeking private time or one-to-one time with youths</li><li>● Buying gifts for individual youths</li><li>● Making suggestive comments to youth</li><li>● Picking favorites</li></ul> |
|---|

All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with youths will be taken seriously. Our procedures will be carefully followed to ensure that the rights of all those involved are protected.

**Employee and Volunteer Response:**

If an employee or volunteer witnesses suspicious or inappropriate behaviors or policy violations from another employee or volunteer, they are instructed to do the following:

**Guidelines for Employees/Volunteers Response to Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors and/or Policy Violations**

- Interrupt the behavior
- Report the behavior to the Senior Minister and the authorized minister/christian educator
- If the report is about a supervisor, contact the chair of the Human Resources Team and the chair of the Board/Team that oversees this program area.
- Document the report on the form located in Appendix G, but do not conduct an investigation.
- Keep reporting until the appropriate action is taken.

**Supervisor Response:**

In the event that a supervisor or an administrator receives a report of suspicious or inappropriate behaviors or policy violations from a staff member or volunteer, the supervisor is instructed to do the following:

**Guidelines for Supervisors and Administrators Response to Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors and/or Policy Violations**

- Advise the person who reported the behavior that the report is being taken seriously.
- Document the report on the appropriate form located in Appendix G.
- Determine the appropriate response based on the report
- Speak with the employee or volunteer who has been reported.
- Review the file of the employee or volunteer to determine if similar complaints were reported
- If at any point in gathering information about a report of suspicious or inappropriate behavior, a concern arises about possible abuse, contact the state authorities and file a report
  - Police: 911
  - Department of Child and Family Hotline: 1.800.842.2288
- If appropriate, notify parents and/or guardians

Based on the information gathered, the following may be required:

- Increase monitoring or supervision of the employee, volunteer, or program.
- If policy violations with youths are confirmed, the employee or volunteer must be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination and prosecution.
- If more information is needed, interview and/or survey the Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers or youths.

**NMCC Response:**

<b>Guidelines for NMCC Response</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Review the need for increased supervision</li><li>● Review the need for revised policies or procedures</li><li>● Review the need for additional training</li></ul>



## **B. Responding to Suspected Abuse of a Youth by an Adult**

### **Employee or Volunteer Response to Abuse:**

In addition to reporting to state authorities, the Senior Minister, authorized minister/christian educator, employees, and volunteers are required to report any suspected or known abuse of youth perpetrated by employees or volunteers directly to leadership so that immediate and proper steps may be taken to ensure the safety of alleged victims and others who may be at risk. Reports of suspected or known abuse may be made confidentially to the following:

1. Immediate Supervisor
2. Chair of Human Resources Team
3. Moderator of the Council

### **Additional Guidelines for Employee/Volunteer Response to Incidents or Allegations of Abuse**

- If you witness abuse, interrupt the behavior immediately.
- If abuse is disclosed to you, assure the individuals disclosing that he/she/they were correct to tell to you
- Protect the alleged victim from intimidation, retribution, or further abuse.
- Immediately report the allegation or incident to the proper organization authorities as specified in Section A.
- Be sure to document the incident, disclosure or any circumstances causing your suspicion of abuse using the appropriate form. State only the facts.
- It is not your job to investigate the incident but it IS your job to report the incident in a timely manner.
- Check back to make sure appropriate steps were taken. If not, report again.

### **Supervisors and Administrators Response to Abuse:**

In addition to the above response procedure, supervisors, and administrations should ensure the following:

### **Guidelines for Supervisor and Administrators Responding to Allegations or Incidents of Abuse**

- First, determine if the youth is still in danger and if so, take immediate steps to prevent any further harm.
- Gather as much information about the allegation as you can. For example, who made the report, who was allegedly abused, who was the alleged abuser, what was the nature

of the alleged abuse, where and when did the alleged abuse occur, etc.

- Accurately record everything you learn in as much detail as you can. Remember your notes may be read by others. Stick to the facts. Use the form located in Appendix G.
- Contact the appropriate local authorities as indicated by your mandatory reporting procedures. Our Senior Minister and authorized minister/christian educator are NMCC's mandated reporters. Make sure you get a case number and the name and contact information of the person with whom you speak at the reporting agency.
- If the alleged abuse involves an employee or volunteer, notify the employee's supervisor, Human Resources Chair, and the chair of the team/board for the specified program area.
- Suspend the accused employee or volunteer until the investigation is completed.

### **C. Responding to Youth-to-Youth Sexual Abuse and Sexualized Behaviors**

The thought that one youth may sexually abuse another youth does not occur to many people. Unfortunately, abuse between peers has increased 300% in the past few years. Youth-to-Youth sexual activity and sexualized behaviors often remain unreported in organizations because clergy, employees, and volunteers are not comfortable documenting these situations, or may not know how.

Most serious incidents of youth-to-youth abuse are preceded by more subtle incidents such as name-calling, taunting, or roughhousing. Interrupting these interactions early and establishing and communicating standards of conduct can keep the program environment safe. NMCC recognizes that the following interactions are high risk and should be prohibited:

<b>Prohibited Youth-to-Youth Interactions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Hazing</li><li>● Bullying</li><li>● Derogatory name-calling</li><li>● Games of truth or dare</li><li>● Singling out one child for different treatment</li><li>● Ridicule or humiliation</li></ul>

In order to adequately respond to and track incidents within NMCC, prohibited youth-to-youth interactions, including sexualized behaviors, must be consistently documented.

#### **Employee and Volunteer Response:**

Youth-to-youth sexual behaviors can include inappropriate touching, exposing body parts using sexualized language, making threats of sexual activity, engaging in sexual activity, and similar types of interactions.

If employees or volunteers witness youth-to-youth sexual behaviors, they are instructed to follow these guidelines:

<b>Guidelines for clergy, employees, and volunteers Responding to Youth-to-Youth Sexual Activity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● If you observe sexual activity between youths, you should immediately separate them.</li><li>● Calmly explain that such interactions are not permitted and separate the youths.</li><li>● Notify the Senior Minister and the authorized minister/christian educator.</li></ul>

- Complete the appropriate form located in Appendix G, including what you observed and how you responded.
- Parents/guardians and appropriate authorities will be notified by the Senior Minister and the authorized minister/christian educator.

**Supervisors and Administrators Response:**

In the event that a supervisor or administrator receives a report of a youth’s sexualized behavior or youth-to-youth sexual activity, the supervisor should do the following:

**Guidelines for Supervisors and Administrators Responding to Youth-to-Youth Sexual Activity**

- Meet with the staff who reported the sexual activity to gather information.
- Confirm that the youths involved have been separated or placed under increased supervision.
- Review the steps taken by the staff on duty.
- Review the incident report to confirm it is accurately and thoroughly completed
- Meet with parents of the youths involved.
- Determine what actions should be taken to make sure there is no recurrence, including assessing the suitability of the program for the children involved.
- Notify the proper authorities.
- Develop a written corrective action or follow up plan in response to the incident.

Based on the information gathered, the following may be required:

- Review the need for additional supervision.
- Review the need for revised policies or procedures.
- Review the need for additional training.
- Alert others at NMCC.

**NMCC Response:**

After the internal review of the sexualized behavior or youth-to-youth sexual activity, the organization will determine what can be done to prevent a recurrence, such as:

**Guidelines for NMCC Response**

- Review the need for additional supervision
- Review the need for revised policies or procedures
- Review the need for additional training
- Alert others at NMCC

**D. Responding to Youth who do not follow/honor our Code of Conduct or children who exhibit challenging behavior in Children’s Church, etc.**

**Guidelines for Staff and Volunteers Responding to Youth Not Following our Code of Conduct**

- No child or youth shall be disciplined by the use of spanking, hitting, slapping, or any form of physical punishment. Verbal reprimands shall not include destructive criticism, insults or shouting. Adults are encouraged to listen to the child or youth, communicate expectations of appropriate behavior, or give alternative choices.
- Children whose behavior in Children’s Church cannot be managed without disruption to the learning environment will be returned to their parents/guardians.
- Any child or youth attending any program who is found to be behaving inappropriately will have his/her parent(s)/guardian notified and will be sent home immediately. The authorized minister/christian educator and Senior Minister will be notified at this time. Examples of inappropriate behavior include purchasing, carrying or using alcohol, drugs, smoking/vaping, fireworks, involvement in sexual activity; involvement in abusive activity, including fighting, and leaving the building or grounds without permission.

## **E. Responding to Victims**

In the event of cases of reportable abuse, the policy of NMCC is to be responsive to the needs of victims within the constraints or obligations imposed under insurance contracts. In general, we will attend to the immediate needs of victims by providing support and pastoral care.

Because NMCC is a client of the Insurance Board any incident of alleged abuse that requires medical or psychological care for a victim or family shall be reported to the Insurance Board by the (Moderator, Financial Committee), The latter shall discuss with the Insurance Board Claims Department whether the circumstances warrant initiation of Crisis Management services which may include psychological counseling. Upon approval, counseling services may be offered to a perceived victim(s), which may include family members.

## **F. Notification of Parents**

A minor child may be party to an incident either as an initiator or as the victim. Whether a child is initiator or victim may not be clear in all circumstances, such as a child-on-child incident. And violation of policy does not necessarily create a victim. While notification of parents of such circumstances may be warranted, utmost care in communication is required.

While communicating with a parent, and being mindful of the importance of timely communication, care shall be given to assessing;

- The specific facts;
- Whether a disciplinary or termination process is required;
- Whether a child should be dismissed from a program (requiring notification of other parents/guardians);
- Whether “mandatory reporting” is a factor;
- Who shall and in what manner communicate with the parents/guardian;
- Whether the senior minister should be involved in the communication;
- Tentative remedial steps to prevent a further incident.

Notification of parents shall not be delayed when immediate medical care is required.

## **G. Responding to Media**

Media publicity following an incident of abuse or exploitation may be detrimental to the reputations of individuals, the congregation and NMCC. Without intending ever to evade the media, contacts with media must be managed and conducted only by a person specifically designated to represent the church. No other person(s) may speak on behalf of the church. Unless designated differently, the exclusive spokesperson for the church shall be the Senior Minister or the Moderator.

Prior to speaking to the media, the designated media communicator shall contact and consult with Conference Legal Counsel, to obtain an understanding of appropriate statements or admissions and issues of privacy that may apply to the situation.

The Moderator shall give immediate consideration to securing Insurance Board media relations and crisis management resources. Considering the speed of news cycles, a prompt determination is required, erring on the side of seeking help.

## VIII Congregational Awareness

We are dedicated to a policy of open communication and education for the benefit of the children, parents, vulnerable adults and guardians we serve. They are entitled to know what to expect of our ministries and the ministers who serve them, and to know the related policies and procedures created to protect the respective ministry constituencies. Constituencies include the children, the parents, the vulnerable adults, the guardians, and the authorized ministers/christian educator.

This entire policy shall be posted on the NMCC website: <https://www.northmadisoncc.org/>

At the time children or vulnerable adults are enrolled in NMCC programs, parents or legal guardians shall be provided;

- A copy of the NMCC's SafeConduct Policy
- A summary of the content of the orientation to be provided to children and vulnerable adults regarding boundaries and reporting.
- Information regarding the means to report violations of policy or suspicions of abuse.
- Information regarding their personal obligation to report suspected abuse as it may exist under the laws of the State of CT.
- An invitation to visit programs in progress at any time at their convenience.

Children and vulnerable adults shall be provided an orientation covering the following subjects;

- Age-appropriate information about boundaries (with reference to the Code of Conduct)
- How to protect themselves from abuse; and
- How to report boundary violations or incidents of abuse.

The orientation shall be provided;

- Individually at the time a child or "vulnerable adult" begins participation in a ministry of the church or;
- As a group at the opening of a school term, event or league; and
- Annually when a program, event or league is perpetual.

Parents and guardians shall be invited to receive the same "abuse prevention" training as provided to staff and volunteers to be taken at their option.

Parents/guardians shall be encouraged to report violations of policy, boundaries or suspected abuse to the Chair of the Human Resources Team and the chair of the specified team/Board for that program area at which an incident has occurred. Anonymous reporting is permitted in the same manner and with the same precautions as reporting by Pastors/Ministers or other observers.



## **IX Registered Sex Offender Policy**

As a community of faith, serving by the example of Jesus Christ, we also seek to attend to the needs of all who seek healing, redemption and fellowship among us. We shall be prepared to accept in our midst those who have violated the most sacred mores of our society at large, in order to provide them refuge, peace, example and support in their recovery and penitence. We commit to doing so with utmost care for the welfare of our congregation, collectively and individually, and the community we serve.

We accept that there are risks to be born in our deliberate association with and ministry to sex offenders who are considered a pariah among the community-at-large as evidenced by the many constraints placed upon their interaction with the community. We agree to honor the needs of the congregation and our community to have reasonable assurance that a sex offender in our care will not have an opportunity to reoffend as a result of lapses in our management of the offender.

We shall consider limited participation or membership of a sex offender in our congregation with utmost care which shall include the following elements:

Document understanding of the statutory limitations applying in the State of Connecticut to the movement and activities of a sex offender, taking into account the programs of the church or the operations of tenants. (Examples: Sunday school, day care, pre-school, sports leagues, seasonal camps and associations which serve children and “vulnerable adults”.)

Consider and understand the character of the crimes which have resulted in requiring an individual to register as a sex offender, the passage of time without repeated conduct or behavior and the risk and opportunity of re-offending that is presented by the particular programs of our congregation.

Document understanding of limitations and prohibitions placed upon the offender by courts and probation authorities. The opinion of a mental health professional regarding the suitability of the person to participate in the life of the church shall be obtained. In all cases where probation is in force, we shall obtain the explicit approval of and conditions of participation specified by the probation officer. A recommendation by law enforcement or mental health professionals to deny participation to an offender shall be honored in all cases.

With respect to a person who is an employee, volunteer or in a position of church leadership, who has previously been conviction for acts of sexual misconduct as defined by insurance contracts, knowledge by church leaders and managers of such prior conviction will have the effect of voiding coverage for the individual employee, volunteer or church leader and for the church for future acts of sexual misconduct by that person.

Given that criminal convictions are a matter of public record, there shall be no expectation of secrecy on the part of the offender. As a condition of participation in our faith community, the offender must agree that the leadership of the church shall make it known to the members, constituencies and customers of the church that we have accepted among us a registered sex offender. The conditions and limitations that apply to participation in the life of the church shall be known to all.

With the advice of legal counsel, and in all cases, the conditions of participation by a registered offender shall be defined by a “limited access agreement” executed by the offender and church. Such agreement shall be approved by probation authorities as may be necessary according to para. 3., above. The agreement shall be reviewed annually to validate ongoing eligibility. Violation of the agreement by the offender shall be considered as grounds for immediate cancellation of the agreement.

The following additional considerations shall apply:

**Victims in the congregation:** If the victim of a RSO (registered sex offender) is a member of the congregation, employee or is a client of other services provided by the congregation, the RSO shall not be permitted to attend the church or church activities.

**Clergy-penitent privilege:** “clergy-penitent privilege” is a “Rule of Evidence” defining or limiting information which clergy may reveal in a court of law only. “clergy penitent privilege” does not prevent the Senior Minister from informing the congregation of matters which may be relevant to their safety; it does not require clergy to hold information in secrecy.

The Senior Minister shall assume responsibility and take extraordinary care to understand the scope and limitations of clergy-penitent privilege in the State of Connecticut and the parameters of confidence and privilege as defined by our denomination. The Senior Minister shall inform the leadership of the church of the general principles of confidence and privilege under which they perform their clerical duties.

**Escorts** (Parish Associate): Conditions of limited access for a RSO will commonly require that the offender have an escort while on the church premises or at church events elsewhere. A person serving as an escort shall not be a spouse, partner or relative of the offender.

**Approval & Supervision:** With the advice and prior approval of the Church Board, a Limited Access Agreement with a Petitioner (known RSO) may be signed only by the Senior Minister.

The Senior Minister, in association with other “authorized clergy” and parish associates (escorts), who shall be named in the Limited Access Agreement, shall be responsible for the general supervision of the Petitioner in all of the latter’s activity in relation to the church. Elements of supervision shall include the following:

- Knowledge of the terms of the Limited Access Agreement, including activity limitations placed upon the Petitioner.
- Knowledge of the Petitioner’s offense history sufficient to understand the risks of association with the church and its ministries.
- Willingness to assert activity limitations and to report any violation of restrictions placed upon the Petitioner.
- Willingness to intervene in any onset of a risky or problem behavior.
- Willingness to report all cases of non-compliance to the Senior Pastor.

The Senior Minister shall assess, prior to selection, whether a proposed parish associate is willing to fulfill the above elements of supervision.

**Professional privacy:** Members who are employed in certain occupations may have a statutory obligation to maintain privacy around the criminal history of their clients who may also be parishioners. Such members shall decline to accept leadership roles which may put them in a position of decision-making regarding individuals who may be their professional clients.

Appendix A

**NMCC's Acknowledgment of SafeConduct Policy and Procedure**

My signature below indicates that I have received, read, understood and had the opportunity to ask questions about North Madison Congregational's SafeConduct Policy, whether I have received the SafeConduct Policy Training in person, via zoom, or watched the recording. I affirm that should I have further questions I can contact my immediate supervisor, the christian education staff, or the Human Resources Chair. I understand that on an annual basis I will receive a copy of the SafeConduct Policy. My signature acknowledges that I have read and agree to comply with its contents.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Volunteer/ Employee Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Appendix B

**NMCC's Registration Form for Church School, Youth Group, and Other Clubs**

To be completed (along with the medical form in Appendix F) when a child or youth attends at least three CE events and/or meetings.

**School Year:**

**Family name:**

**Parent/guardian names/email/cell:**

**Children's names/grades/email/cell:**

**Names of children who will attend church school:**

**Names of children who will participate in**

**Junior Junior Youth Group (3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grades):**

**JYG (7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades):**

**SYG (9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grades):**

I have completed the Medical Form, one for each child from Appendix F      YES    NO

I give permission for these individuals to drive my child(ren) to Christian Education events:

I give permission for my children/youth to participate in youth programming at NMCC. Separate permission slips will be distributed for off-site events. YES. NO.

I give permission for pictures and videos of my children/youth/family to be used by NMCC in social media, newsletters, and other print media. YES. NO.

I am interested in learning more about teaching church school. YES. NO. I need to know more!

I am interested in helping with a youth group. YES. NO. I need to know more!

I am interested in driving/chaperoning youth group events. YES. NO. I need to know more!

Thank you! We look forward to sharing God's love with your family and our world this year!

## Appendix C

### NMCC's Youth Group Policy

To be considered an active member of SYG or JYG, we encourage youth to attend as many gatherings as possible. We feel strongly that it is important for our youth to participate in community service and mission experiences, and will sign off on hours for high school requirements. Please make room in your schedule to attend one event monthly

In order to be considered an “active” member of NMCC Sr. High Youth Group, each member must:

- Attend at least one meeting/activity per month. A parent should contact the YGL if they are unable to meet this requirement.
- Participate in 12 hours of community service per year. The NMCC Youth Group offers several opportunities for members to accomplish these service hours. A member may do those community service hours **outside** of the opportunities offered at NMCC. They should notify the YGL of their involvement.

Our youth agree to:

- All members are required to remain on the Church property once they have arrived for a meeting or activity. They may not leave until picked up by adult stated on the permission form. For those driving themselves, they agree to remain at the meeting/activity until it is concluded.
- Statement of cell phone use while attending church events here
- It is recommended that no one under the age of 21 is to drive youth group members for any church sponsored in state activity. Should parents desire their youth to drive themselves to an in state activity OR to drive a friend, it should be noted that NMCC's responsibility for the youth begin when the teen arrives at the event and ends when they leave the event. All CT state law must be followed when teens are driving.
- No teens will drive to out of state mission trips or activities.

All members are required to sign and abide by the attached Code of Conduct.

Appendix D

**NMCC's Youth Group Code of Conduct**

As a member of the NMCC Youth Group I agree to:

1. Follow the Youth Group Policies stated in Appendix C.
2. Bring a spirit of cheerful giving to the meetings, fundraisers and church sponsored activities.
3. Treat each other with kindness and respect, encouraging one another as we grow in faith.
4. Respect the adult leadership and volunteers.
5. When our youth attend activities or mission trips led by other churches/agencies, our youth will abide by that organization's dress policy.
6. Remain with the group at all times and notify an adult leader if it becomes necessary to leave the group.
7. Report injuries or safety concerns to adult leader immediately.
8. Refrain from derogatory or vulgar language, sarcasm, inappropriate jokes or other forms of abusive behavior.
9. Refrain from inappropriate touching.
10. Refrain from verbal or online (social media) bullying.
11. Never bring alcohol or illegal substances (including vaping paraphernalia) to youth group activities or attend under their influence.
12. No weapons of any kind, including pocket knives, are permitted at any CE programs/activities.
13. All members are required to remain on the Church property or the program area once they have arrived for a meeting or activity. They may not leave until picked up by a parent. For those driving themselves, they agree to remain at the meeting/activity until it is concluded.
14. No cell phone/electronics should be used without the permission of the staff or adult volunteer.
15. It is recommended that no one under the age of 21 is to drive youth group members for any church sponsored in state activity. Should parents desire their youth to drive themselves to an in state activity OR to drive a friend, it should be noted that NMCC's responsibility for the youth begin when the teen arrives at the event and ends when they leave the event. All CT state law must be followed when teens are driving.
16. No teens will drive to out of state mission trips or activities.
17. I have read the SafeConduct Policy and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

This code of conduct is in place to help ensure everyone's safety and enjoyment while participating in NMCC's Youth Group activities. If there is ever a reason for the adult leadership of the youth group, adult volunteers for a Church sponsored Youth Group event or the Church leadership itself to be concerned about the conduct of a participant, the situation will be handled as indicated in the Response section of this policy.

Parent(s) Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Youth Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix E

**NMCC's Permission Slip for Offsite and Out-of-State Activities/ Programs**

I give \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (Staff and/or YG Leaders) permission to transport and oversee my child(ren): \_\_\_\_\_

for \_\_\_\_\_ (list activity) on \_\_\_\_\_ (date).

Parent/guardian name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Contact number cell: \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Guardian signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

Note: For overnight activities, our adult leaders will be sleeping during sleeping hours. Adults and youth present will be expected to follow behavioral covenant boundaries at all times, whether supervised or unsupervised as outlined in our SafeConduct Policy.



Appendix F

**NMCC's Medical Form**

Front and back of insurance card have been photocopied and are stored  
in the locked files in the church office.  
These copies will be duplicated for those youth who attend mission trips.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of my child: \_\_\_\_\_ Preferred Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Child's current age: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Gender at birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Preferred Pronouns: \_\_\_\_\_

Health Insurance Co: \_\_\_\_\_  
Group Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

In case of emergency please contact

1. Name, phone number, relation to you: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Name, phone number, relation to you: \_\_\_\_\_

Please list allergies (including seasonal, food and medicine)

Please list medications:

Please share with us medical diagnosis that we need to know to better support your child. For example, asthma, juvenile arthritis, etc.

Please describe specific behavioral concerns that would help us to assist your child. For example, if your child has a 504 plan at school are there pieces that we need to know to better support your child during their time with us.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Please initial here to indicate this understanding) In the event that a parent/guardian cannot be reached in a medical emergency, NMCC can authorize emergency medical treatment.

## Appendix G

### **Report of Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect Form**

NMCC uses the form from DCF (Department of Child and Families). Please use this link to access and print form. For privacy this form should NOT be downloaded and completed. This form must be printed and completed and then given to either of our NMCC mandated reporters, the Senior Minister or the authorized minister/christian educator. It is very important to complete this form immediately as our mandated reporters have 12 hours to make a formal report.

[DCF Report of Suspected Abuse or Neglect Form](#)

Appendix H

**Application To Serve As Volunteer with our Children/youth**

We are delighted that you have an interest in working with members of our church. We ask all volunteers to fill out this application; it is our hope that this will help ensure the best for our members and provide protection for all of us in vulnerable positions.

Volunteers shall be active members of the church, or otherwise affiliated with the church, for no less than six months before being permitted to work in child oriented programs. There shall be **no exceptions** to this policy, even when volunteer candidates come from another church with similar programs.

The authorized minister/christian educator and/or Chair of the Board of Christian Education, shall each interview separately and in person every volunteer candidate. Each shall employ behavioral interviewing techniques to assess suitability for working with children, and specifically discuss the church's commitment to protecting children and other vulnerable persons from abuse.

**Personal Information**

**Full Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Present Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Cell Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Driver's License Number:** \_\_\_\_\_ **State:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. **With what age group or situation do you prefer to volunteer with? Please circle all that apply. Children's Church Confirmation/Journey Junior Youth Group Clubs (Kindness, etc) Senior Youth Group**

2. **What date would you be available to begin volunteering?** \_\_\_\_\_

3. **Minimum length of commitment:** \_\_\_\_\_
4. **List other names you use (maiden, former, nicknames):**\_\_\_\_\_
5. **List your last two previous home addresses and length of residency at each:**

<u>Previous Address #1 and length</u>	<u>Previous Address #2 and length</u>

6. **Length of involvement with this church, including the date you joined the church:**
  
7. **Names and addresses of other churches you have attended regularly during the past 5 years:**
  
8. **List all previous church or community work in which you have volunteered (identify the name of the group, location, dates and type of work):**
  
9. **List any gifts, callings, training, education or other factors that have prepared you for this volunteer work:**
  
10. **Name, address, and telephone number of two personal references (excluding relatives), including relationship and length of time you have known these persons:**

**11. Is there any fact or circumstance about you or your background that would call into question the advisability of entrusting you with the guidance and care of our people?**

Yes  No If yes, please provide additional explanation.

**12. If you're volunteering to drive our youth to church sponsored activities, please indicate whether you have ever been convicted of a driving violation.**

YES  NO If yes, please provide additional information.

**13. Have you had a criminal charge that has resulted in a criminal conviction?**

Yes  No If yes, please provide additional explanation.

**14. I have never terminated my employment or service in a volunteer position, or had my employment or authorization to hold a volunteer position terminated, for reasons relating to allegations of actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct, physical abuse, or child abuse.**

True \_\_\_\_\_

Not True \_\_\_\_\_

**If your services have ever been terminated for the above reasons, please give a short explanation. (Please indicate the date of termination, name, address and telephone number of employer or volunteer supervisor, and nature and place of incident(s) leading to your termination.**

## **Covenant Agreement**

I affirm that the information given above is true, complete and correct. I understand that this information may be verified by contacting persons and organizations with whom I have had contact or which may have information concerning me.

I hereby release and agree to hold harmless from liability any person or organization that provides such information. I also agree to release and hold harmless the congregation of North Madison Congregational Church, its officers, employees, agents or volunteers who provide/obtain such information.

I affirm that before I can begin my volunteer work with children/youth, I will participate in SafeConduct Policy training AND participate in NMCC's background check that coincides with the volunteer work I have committed to.

Applicant's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_