

Care of Our Youth and Children Policies and Procedures

Rehoboth Congregational Church is committed to creating and maintaining an environment where our members, friends, staff and volunteers can worship and work together in an atmosphere free from discrimination, exploitation, harassment, intimidation, or violence of any nature, all of which are specifically prohibited by our church policy. Most important is our commitment to providing a safe and healthy haven for our youth and children. The following policies and procedures are intended to support these commitments.

Administration

This policy will be overseen by the Christian Education Committee for all groups for which it is responsible. The Church Clerk will oversee the policy for all other groups.

The Two Adult Rule

All children and youth under the supervision of Rehoboth Congregational Church will be under the care and supervision of two adults, one of whom may be a high school aide. Please note that this second adult may not be an immediate relative or spouse.

1. No teacher, aide, advisor or any other adult working with our children or youth (other than being alone with his or her own child), will place himself or herself in a compromising situation by being alone with any child or children out of sight of other adult(s). In situations where this is not practical, as when a mentor works with a confirmand, the adult must receive written permission from the child's parent or guardian. (See 'Parental Consent, Medical Consent and Mentor Form')

Bathroom Policy for Church School Children

At no time should any adult working with a child (other than his or her own) in need of bathroom assistance be alone with said child. Under normal circumstances teachers, advisors, or aids who accompany a child to the bathroom should remain outside while the child is inside. If for any reason the adult party needs to enter the bathroom while a child is inside, the door must be left open and another adult or aide must be present. This includes situations where a child needs assistance zipping, buttoning, wiping, cleanup etc.

If anything unusual occurred during this assistance, a note (later to be filed) describing the help given and the persons present must be written and handed to the Church School Director or Pastor at the close of church school that day. The child's parent or guardian is also to be notified at that time.

In the event that an infant or toddler requires diapering, the child's parent/guardian will be called to the nursery to do the changing.

Miscellaneous Church School Policies

Every effort will be made to adhere to the 'Two Adult Rule'. However in situations where this is not possible, adjoining classroom doors will be left open, and the Church School Director will be notified.

Every classroom will be well lighted, and will be visible from outside.

Teachers will not remove children from Church property without prior knowledge of the Church School Director, and only after obtaining written parental consent.

In those cases where the class is relocated, or moved outside (on Church Property, including Carpenter Museum grounds), the teacher will post a notice indicating this on the classroom door. Parents must be made aware of their obligation to be available when Church School is dismissed at 11:15 AM. This will be covered when children are initially registered for Church School, and children whose parents regularly abuse this policy may be prevented from attending Church School, pending approval of the Church School Director.

Parental Consent, Medical Consent and Mentor Forms

Any adult working with children and youth should have written consent of a parent or guardian before being alone with said child. This is also required for all chaperoned activities or programs away from the Church and/or any unsupervised (i.e. - one-on-one activities such as when a mentor works with a confirmand) situation. Additionally, where appropriate, the parent or guardian will be required to provide 'medical consent' in the event such aid should become necessary for the child placed under the adult's supervision.

Overnight Rule

All adult chaperons supervising overnight stays involving children or youth must have been cleared to do so by the pastor or head deacon. At all times there must be at least two adult males present who will dorm with boys and two adult females who will dorm with girls. Except in those situations where boys and girls will share common sleeping arrangements, in which case at least four adult chaperons (with at least one adult of each gender) must be present. Further, parents or guardians will be notified in advance with the names of the adult chaperons, and must also provide signed parental and if appropriate, medical consent forms.

In those cases where our Senior High Youth attend overnight events, where due to the type of dormitory arrangements (eg. motel/hotel rooms, dormitory rooms, etc...) youth of the same sex may be required to share rooms with each other without the adult coverage required by the "Two Adult Rule." For trips of this nature, there must be a minimum of four adults with a minimum of one of each gender.

Discipline

When the disciplining of children to maintain order is required, corporal punishment or threatening harm of any nature is not acceptable. Neither should verbal reprimands be insulting, demeaning or inclusive of destructive criticism.

Teachers, aides and advisors are encouraged to listen to the child and communicate the expectations of appropriate behavior. If a child fails to respond to these expectations, the Church School Director should be notified immediately. Either immediately if necessary, or following Church School dismissal, the particular situation will be discussed with the child's parent or guardian. Children who present continual disciplinary problems or continually exhibit disruptive behavior may be prevented from attending Church School pending approval of the Church School Director.

Youth Members of Boards and Committees

No youth member of any Church Board, Committee or Task Force should be in attendance at any meeting with less than two adult members present, unless the youth's parent is also in attendance.

Alcoholic Products and Controlled Substances

The use of any controlled substance, tobacco or alcoholic products on or in church facilities or at church sponsored events is not permitted.

Children and Youth Workers Disclosure Form

All persons engaged in the care, supervision and/or custody of minors on behalf of Rehoboth Congregational Church will be required to complete a 'Children and Youth Workers Disclosure Form'. This applies to both paid staff and regular volunteer workers. Parents who sign up to assist with Church School, will be also be requested to complete this form when signing up their children for Church School.

Anyone known to have committed previous acts of sexual abuse and/or violence against children or youth will be strictly prohibited from serving our children and youth.

Transportation

When transportation for Church sponsored events is required, appropriate parental consent must be obtained. The adult (age 21 or older) providing this transportation must be in possession of a valid drivers license and appropriate automobile insurance, and this information must be provided in advance to the Church office. This driver may not have had his or her driver's license revoked within the last five years due to reckless driving, or driving while under the influence of alcohol or any controlled substance.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual or physical misconduct is any form of sexual contact or exploitation in which a minor is being used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator. All teachers, aides, advisors or others responsible for regularly working with our children or youth will be provided access to the 'Signs of Sexual/Physical Abuse' document. If at any time they feel these signs to be visible in any child under our care, they will provide this information to the Church School Director, Head Deacon or Pastor.

Any time an actual allegation of sexual or physical misconduct with children or youth is made, an 'Incident Report' must be filed within 24 hours and covered with the Church School Director, Pastor and Senior Deacon. Also, if the person filing the report is a 'Mandated Reporter', he or she must also report it the Department of Social Services.

Parents or guardians of the alleged victim will be promptly notified by the Pastor, or other appropriate Church leader.

Upon securing the child's safety, the accused will be made aware of the allegation by the Pastor or other appropriate Church leader. One party present at this meeting will make a record of the proceedings, including the accused's direct response to the allegation. All present will sign the minutes of the meeting as true and reliable.

Any individual accused of sexual misconduct with children or youth will be temporarily relieved of any involvement with our children or youth. This action is meant to imply no determination of guilt, but this 'leave of absence' will stand until such time as the allegation is removed or disproved in a Court of Law.