

## **Endangered Adult, Child and Youth Protection Policy**

Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship

Draft November 4, 2016

We, Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship, are committed to providing a church environment that is safe and healthy for our members, attenders, children and youth to learn about and experience God's love. In addition, we are committed to protecting the adults, children and youth of our community from abuse and fulfilling our obligation to legally report abuse (see reverse for definitions) when there is a reasonable suspicion of such abuse.

Berkey will report all incidents of suspected child abuse to appropriate authorities including, but not limited to the Indiana State Department of Children and Family Services. The Indiana Child Abuse Hotline currently is: 1-800-800-5556. If any pastor, employee or volunteer of Berkey is aware of any facts or circumstances that create a reasonable suspicion that child abuse has occurred or there exists a substantial risk that child abuse may occur, they shall immediately report this matter to the Safe Church Caring Team who in turn shall be responsible for meeting all legal reporting obligations on behalf of Berkey. The Safe Church Caring Team shall inform the chairperson of SLT of all incidents reported to the Team.

Individuals and staff are discouraged from conducting an investigation to determine the merits of any allegations of abuse. Such investigations may impair or impede any future investigation by government authorities.

Under Indiana law, pastors and ministers are not exempt from the mandatory reporting requirements. Accordingly, a pastor who becomes aware of child abuse or a risk of child abuse is obligated to report it even if that information is made known through pastoral counseling or confession with a specific individual.

As part of our goals and objectives of establishing a safe and healthy environment for children and youth, we establish the following guidelines:

1. All who volunteer to work with minors on behalf of Berkey will have regularly and frequently associated with or attended Berkey for at least one year.
2. All volunteers who regularly work with children and youth will complete and submit a disclosure document on a form acceptable to Berkey.
3. Berkey will provide adequate supervision and safeguards for activities involving children and youth, both on and off the premises. In situations where participants are not readily visible to each other, the "Triangle Rule" will be followed in which no child or youth is alone with an adult. In the case of infants in the nursery, there will be no fewer than two adults present with the children.
4. All volunteers and employees who readily work with children and youth will receive orientation regarding church policies and procedures.
5. Berkey will require written consent of a parent or guardian of a minor for all overnight activities held off church property.

6. All prospective employees working with children and youth will undergo a background check before beginning their duties, including but not limited to inquiries or references, and a criminal history verification by third-party vendor

For the purposes of these guidelines, child abuse is defined as follows:

1. Physical abuse involves the intentional harming of a child and can involve the use of excessive force or otherwise engaging in behavior that recklessly endangers the safety and well-being of a child.
2. Sexual abuse involves the engaging in any activity for an adult's own sexual gratification. Sexual abuse can also involve exposing children to pornography and/or exposing children to sexual activity between adults.
3. Emotional abuse involves the systemic diminishment of a child that is designed to reduce the child's self-concept to the point where the child feels unworthy of respect, unworthy of friendship, and/or unworthy of love and protection.

Neglect involves the failure of a person responsible for the child's welfare and well-being to provide necessary food, care, clothing, shelter and/or medical attention. Neglect involves the failure to act by a responsible person when such failure interferes with the child's health and safety.

It is our goal and objective to report to appropriate legal authorities incidents in which elderly abuse is reasonably suspected or threatened. In addition, we desire to take reasonable steps to protect elderly persons or endangered adults in the event of suspected abuse even in the absence of any mandatory reporting obligations. If any pastor, employee or volunteer of Berkey is aware of any facts or circumstances that create a reasonable suspicion that elderly abuse has occurred or there exists a substantial risk that elderly abuse may occur, they shall immediately report this matter to the Safe Church Caring Team who in turn shall be responsible for meeting all legal reporting obligations on behalf of Berkey. This Policy also applies all individuals who are "endangered adults" as defined below. In Indiana, elderly abuse is reportable to the Family and Social Services Administration, hotline: 1-800-992-6978

#### Definitions

- a. "endangered adult" means an individual who is:
  - (1) at least eighteen (18) years of age;
  - 2) incapable by reason of mental illness, intellectual disability, dementia, habitual , excessive drunkenness, use of drugs, or other physical or mental incapacity of managing or directing the management of the individual's property or providing or directing the provision of self-care; and
  - (3) is harmed or threatened with harm as a result of:
    - (A) neglect;
    - (B) battery; or
    - (C) exploitation of the individual's personal services or property.
- b. "Exploitation" means the intentional misuse of a person's property, person or services for financial gain.