

## THEOLOGICAL STATEMENT/PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

*“Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of stumbling blocks! Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to the one by whom the stumbling block comes!” Matthew 18:5–7 NRSV*

*“This day of the Lord, which is eternal brightness, appears in the heart; and the dawning and breaking forth of it is to be waited for there; and as it is witnessed, it manifests evil, and brings it to light, and declares against what is contrary to its own nature.”~ Francis Howgill*

*“Children in our community need and deserve special care and protection” -Freedom Friends Church*

It is only within the past few decades that the full truth about the epidemic of child sexual abuse has come to light— first outside, and then also within the Religious Society of Friends. Within this time period, the public has come to awareness about things that were once hidden from public view.

### **The prevalence of child sexual abuse**

We now know that approximately one in five people experienced childhood sexual abuse, and that occurs with similar prevalence regardless of gender. We also know that this kind of abuse can and does take place in Christian and Quaker communities.

### **The impact of child sexual abuse**

The long-term emotional and psychological harm of childhood sexual abuse on its victims cannot be overstated. Abuse that occurs under the cover of Christian ministry is also spiritual abuse, and can forever impact a person’s ability to experience God’s love of them, and their sense of safety in communities of faith.

### **The nature of childhood sexual abuse**

Most child sexual abuse is committed by individuals known and trusted by the victim. It is perpetrated in ways that are uniquely pathological and insidious, such that it is not adequately addressed by dealing with “sin”, “abuse” or “mental health problems” as generalities. The same structures that we have designed to create networks of spiritual support and nurture can be manipulated by those who seek access to children and vulnerable people with the intent to abuse. Denial and ignorance in the community enable the perpetration of abuse, and tragically have allowed for abuse coverups within faith and secular institutions alike. Thus, child sexual abuse prevention is not simply a private problem, but one that requires a concerted, comprehensive, and informed collective response.

Awareness of these facts has led us to create policy rising from the Quaker theological framework, specifically addressing the particularities of this harm within Friends communities. Monthly Meetings are often small and intimate, which has many benefits. However, this intimacy can also impede effective abuse prevention and response efforts. Small communities can have a false sense of security. They may wrongly feel immune to abuse. Their intimacy can create conflicts of interest when issues are always handled interpersonally. Finally, small meetings often have difficulty addressing these issues due to limitations of time, money, infrastructure, and access to good training. For these reasons, Sierra-Cascades has chosen to use our collective power as a Yearly Meeting to this end. As members of this Yearly Meeting, we are choosing to share resources with one another to ease the burdens of time, money, infrastructure and training on local Meetings. We are committing to a covenant of mutual accountability within our shared body, which we believe will better protect all of us. We have made the decision that a robust plan for the protection of children is a bottom-line for us, something that must be in place in every Friends community, for the safety and health of all.

**Quaker testimonies which speak to this issue:**

**Peace:** As we believe that God is bringing about world free from violence, we understand that sexual abuse and exploitation enact psychological and spiritual trauma on victims that is as destructive as physical violence. It is upon each of us to take part in bringing about God's vision of peace and healing through our word and action. It is our intent that this policy be a testimony of that vision.

**Integrity:** The enabling of abuse involves deception, secrecy, and lack of plain speech. For adults, telling the truth about known abuse is a matter of integrity, as well as justice for the oppressed. Abuse protection policies call us to integrity of word, values, and action, and to transparent policies and processes, except when confidentiality is required to protect the victim. It is our intent that our policies and culture will be that of a people who are who we say that we are.

**Community:** Too often abuse is not only perpetrated privately but enabled through an unsafe community culture. A safe, spiritually-grounded, and loving Christian community is one that does everything in its power to stop abuse. Abuse harms not only the victim, but the whole community including, for example, adult survivors, witnesses, and the loved ones of those affected. It also harms the person offending, separating them from who they are called to be, from that of God within them. It is our intent to work cooperatively as a fully healthy and functional body that minimizes risks of abuse and responds to all abuse responsibly.

**Equality:** Our testimony of equality calls us to guard our churches from harmful abuses of power. Where abuses of power have taken place, we must do what we can to restore gospel order. Those in our churches who work with young people should have a heart for equipping

and empowering those young people, and should never abuse the power of their role in any way. Sexual abuse is an extreme example of abuse of power. The prevention of it happens best in communities that honor children and youth as equally valuable participants, and accounts for their developmental and social vulnerability.

*“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:35)*

We hopefully await a world free of violence, enacting the following policy.

**This policy provides the framework for best practices in prevention, as well as the legal and ethical responsibilities of our staff, volunteers, board and others working with children to respond appropriately to any suspected or disclosed abuse of a child or youth. The practices described in this policy are for the protection of the children and youth we serve, and for the dedicated staff and volunteers who make our programs possible.**

All forms of child abuse are prohibited and are included under this policy.

## **DEFINITION OF ABUSE**

Legal definitions of abuse are specific and vary by State. Full definitions from Washington and Oregon State Law are located in this policy’s legal appendices. Please read through your state’s legal definitions to better understand the legal responsibilities and implications of child protection under state law, and what one is required to report to authorities. For the purposes of this policy, “abuse” includes all harm done to children or vulnerable adults, and is not limited to these legal definitions.

## **OTHER LEGAL DEFINITIONS**

**Mandated reporter is someone required by state law to report suspected abuse of a child or vulnerable adult.**

**Adult is a person over the age of 18 (RCW 26.28.010 and ORS 109.510)**

**Child means a person under the age of 18. (RCW 9A.16.100, and ORS 163.665)**

**A vulnerable adult is an adult who, due to age or disability, is unable to fully protect themselves from harm or exploitation. (RCW 74.34.020, RCW 74.34.021, ORS 124.100)**

## **TERMS USED IN THIS POLICY**

**Pastor/Released Minister** – A “pastor” or “released minister” is a clergy person who is serving with financial compensation. Please note that Friends often use the term “minister” for all who are following the will of God, regardless of employment status, so . (SCYMF Bylaws)

**Pastor or Designated Person in Charge (PiC)** – The pastor of the local church is most often the person designated responsible for implementation of the Sierra-Cascades abuse policy within the local church. In many churches this is the lead/clerk pastor. In some churches this may be a youth or children’s pastor. A contracted full-time employee is recommended to be the Person in Charge because they are often the person most able to take on this responsibility.

*Other options:* If a Meeting does not have a pastor, or if their pastor cannot serve in this capacity (for example, an interim or part-time pastor who is not released for this) the Clerk of the Meeting or Clerk of Elders may fill this role. Or the designee may be another employee or volunteer appointed by the pastor to carry out these duties under their supervision. In this policy, we refer to the Person in Charge as the Pastor. Churches with an alternate Person in Charge can transfer the duties of the “pastor” to the designated Person in Charge.

Any changes to who the Person in Charge is need to be made known immediately to the Safeguarding Committee.

Duties of the Person in Charge include the responsibility of facilitating cooperation with authorities on a suspected child abuse investigation, receiving notification from an Approved Adult that a suspected abuse report has been filed, keeping records according to policy, monitor Approved Adults to ensure that policies are being followed, maintaining the list of Approved Adults and disseminating in the local church community.

**Helpers** (youth under age 18 caring for children up to age 12) may work under “line of sight” supervision of Approved Adults and may never be alone with children without such supervision.

**Approved Adult** – Anyone 18 years of age or older who has satisfied the requirements of the Safeguarding Policy. An Approved Adult can be an employee or non-employee of the congregation, and may or not be considered a mandated reporter under their State’s laws. (Please see legal appendix for your state to understand who is a mandated reporter.) Regardless, under Sierra-Cascades policy, all Approved Adults are required to report suspected abuse to State authorities.

Approved Adults include, but are not limited to:

- a. All employed staff of the Meeting who have routine, direct contact with children or supervision of those who do
- b. Adult volunteers who have routine, direct contact with children or supervision of those who do

**Other Approved Adults that your church may have:**

- a. First Day School (“Sunday School”) teachers, volunteers, and helpers
- b. Vacation Bible School teachers, volunteers and helpers
- c. Youth Group pastors, leaders, and assistants
- d. Day camp staff and volunteers
- e. Nursery workers, paid or volunteer
- f. Safeguarding Committee members
- g. Any other volunteer or staff member who has direct contact with children, except occasional guest speakers or others who must be supervised at all times by 2 approved adults.

**Safeguarding Representative** – Monthly Meeting contact for all things related to child protection, and representative serving on the Safeguarding Committee. Sierra-Cascades will appoint a representative from each member Meeting.

**Safeguarding Committee**– Appointed by the Yearly Meeting, this committee consists of the coordinators of youth and children’s programs and childcare for annual sessions, and local Meeting representatives as approved by the Yearly Meeting. Each local Meeting should have one representative on the committee. This may be a youth or children’s pastor, a member of Children’s Committee or Elders, or another suitable person. The Safeguarding Committee oversees the Safeguarding policy implementation at local and Yearly Meeting levels.

The Safeguarding Committee will:

1. Oversee the implementation Safeguarding Policy within local meetings, keeping in regular communication with the pastor (or designated person in charge).
2. Review and make recommendations to the Yearly Meeting for revising congregation policy regarding the safety of our children/youth.
3. Update the policy as needed for compliance with State laws.
4. Provide/arrange for training for all staff and approved adults working with the children/youth regarding child abuse and the Safeguarding Policy.
5. Oversee the planning of annual sessions for compliance with Safeguarding Policy.
6. Ensure all required certifications are obtained and up to date from local congregations.
7. Maintain a list of Approved Adults for each local meeting.
8. Submit committee reports to the Yearly Meeting quarterly.
9. Be kept apprised of investigations.
10. Review requests from sexual offenders and other identified people of concern desiring to worship within congregations, making determination as to whether a covenant will be offered, or the request declined.

**Pastor** (or their designated person in charge):

Each local Meeting must designate either their *pastor or other designated person in charge* of the Safeguarding policy implementation. For most Meetings, this should be a full-time Pastor, working in cooperation with the Safeguarding Coordinator.

1. Review all Approved Adult applications.

2. Ensure all background checks are up to date (within the past two years).
3. Determine whether the subject is eligible for employment or as a volunteer based on result of certifications and other factors. Certain convictions or founded CPS reports will result in automatic denial of placement in work with children. (See Appendix forms - Review of Application and Certifications and - Review of Disqualifications for Application.)
4. Maintain results of all certifications and make them available to the subject of the report upon their request.
5. Receive and maintain internal reports of suspected abuse completed by mandated reporters after the required report to state abuse hotline has been made.
6. Receive internal "incident" reports in which the inappropriate conduct of an adult or child does not rise to the level of a mandated report but may require some corrective action.
7. Inform Safeguarding Committee of incidents and forward reports.
8. Report quarterly to the Safeguarding Committee using Appendix forms

The Yearly Meeting will appoint a clerk to the Safeguarding Committee. The Clerk will:

1. Ensure that required forms and proper records are maintained at the Yearly Meeting level.
2. Call meetings as often as needed, but no less than once quarterly.
3. Convene regular monthly meetings of the committee, and called meetings as needed.

**Document Key:**

Underlined: Appendix Forms

*"We consider ourselves to be 'mandated interventionists' by God's law. We feel it is our responsibility in following the law of love to prevent abuse through education, accountable leadership and adhering to these guidelines."-- **Camas Friends Church abuse policy (2015)***

**Approved Adult Standards**

To protect the children/youth in our care, the following standards are established for Approved Adults to work or volunteer with children/youth less than 18 years of age.

1. Complete an Approved Adult application form. The application will be reviewed and approved by the Person in Charge prior to proceeding with background checks.
2. Complete the required background checks through Protect my Ministry.

3. Sign the Appendix Form: SC 2 - Receipt and Acknowledgement form of the Safeguarding Policy acknowledging you have read the policy, understand your responsibilities, and will comply with its terms.
4. Attend an initial training that includes: prevention, identification, and response to all forms of abuse and neglect, compliance with all mandated reporting laws, issues of power, and healthy boundaries. Periodic refresher trainings will be required.
5. At any time after being accepted as an Approved Adult, if an Approved Adult is arrested or convicted of a named offense, they must immediately notify the Pastor(or designated Person in Charge). Such notification is required within 72 hours.

### **Required Application Forms to Become an Approved Adult**

**The following forms are located in the appendix:**

**Forms listed below are used to apply to become an approved adult**

Approved Adult Application –

Background Check with Protect my Ministry

**Forms listed below are used after clearance results are received:**

1. Approved Adult – Review of Application and Certifications
2. Approved Adult – Review of Disqualifications for Application in your state

### **RECORDS**

Applications and related forms for employees and volunteers will be locked in a confidential file under the jurisdiction of the Pastor, (or designated Person in Charge). Certifications are confidential and will only be made available to the Pastor, and to the Safeguarding Committee of Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends.

The Pastor (Or designated Person in Charge) for maintaining these records will:

1. Maintain a master list of all employees and volunteers who require background checks. Include a notation of which employees or volunteers are also Approved Adults, and the date of their most recent training.
2. Note on the list the date of each background check, and schedule renewal date within 2 years from the oldest date of their current certification.
3. Retain copies of all certifications in confidential locked files; or if certifications are obtained electronically ensure digital records are strongly password protected with limited access.
4. Digital copies of these should be sent to the clerk of the Safeguarding Committee of Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends. Pastors of each church should report quarterly to the Safeguarding Committee.

### **Record Retention and Management**

Because any records pertaining to children and youth, and staff/volunteers who work with them may become the subject of legal proceedings at some future date, no such records should be part of any

automatic records destruction plan. This includes child and youth registration and permission forms, as well as staff and volunteer certifications. Records may be digitized and stored electronically, in an appropriately secure, password-protected manner. While state law does not specify a retention period, such records should only be destroyed with the written approval of the Safeguarding Committee.

### **Approved Adult and Safe Environment Standards**

The following standards are intended to protect children and youth from abuse and other inappropriate behavior, as well as protect the adults who care for them from false allegations. These include best practices for prevention and fostering a positive, nurturing environment in our church.

#### **Approved Adult Standards**

**Child Abuse Prohibited:** Those who accept the special responsibility of working with children/youth in Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends shall not violate that responsibility by intentionally, knowingly or recklessly causing physical injury; mental injury; sexual abuse or serious physical neglect of children/youth; or any other act described as child abuse in this policy or the laws of our state.

**Sexual Abuse Prohibited:** Those who accept the special responsibility of working with children/youth in Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends shall not violate that responsibility by having any interaction with a child/youth where the child/youth is being used for sexual stimulation of the adult or a third person regardless of whether or not the behavior involves touching, or by any other act described as sexual abuse in this policy or the laws of our state.

**Physical Discipline/Restraint:** In addition to abuse as defined under the law, any form of physical discipline, including striking, slapping, or shaking is prohibited. Any physical restraint other than to prevent imminent harm to the child or another individual, is prohibited. Any use of physical force to keep a child from such imminent harm should be a last resort, and be gentle, firm, and include speaking in a reassuring and calm voice. The child should be released as soon as the unsafe behavior ceases.

**Two Approved Adults Rule:** Two unrelated Approved Adults should be present during any church sponsored children/youth activity. This includes off-site and overnight events. In some instances where unforeseen circumstances result in two Approved Adults not being present (for example, an unexpected absence of an employee or volunteer), a designated Approved Adult will circulate outside the classroom or activity area, which must be made visually accessible. The circulating adult will periodically step into the area at random times.

**Transportation of Children/Youth:** When children/youth are transported for activities away from the church, they shall be transported in groups with at least one Approved Adult in each vehicle.

Drivers must be at least 18 years old, have a copy of their driver's license, and proof of insurance on file in the church's office. Anyone who has had their license revoked or suspended or been convicted of driving under the influence (DUI) within the past five years will be ineligible to drive for children/youth activities. If using a personal vehicle, proof of current registration and state inspection is also required. (This excludes transportation by a parent or guardian solely of their own children). Booster or carseats should be used in accordance with your state law. (See appendix form: SC 2 - Employee-Volunteer Driver Form)



**Appropriate/Inappropriate Expressions of Affection:** Compassionate listening, a kind word of encouragement to a child/youth, praise, positive reinforcement for hard work or acts of kindness; or a physical expression such as a pat on the shoulder, a “fist bump”, etc. can be small but significant acts in nurturing children and youth. If gifts or prizes are given they should be given openly (not in secret), they should be of small monetary value, and should be given without favoritism. Observation and naming of spiritual gifts is an important form of affirmation that the church community should practice with people of all ages.

Guidelines:

- a. Touch beyond the above expressions such as hugs should generally only be initiated by children, not adults. Avoid full body hugs with school age children and older.
- a. Always respect a child’s refusal of touch. This models important lessons about respect for body boundaries.
- a. Encourage older children who ask to be held on your lap to sit beside you instead.
- a. Holding a child on your shoulders, horseplay involving physical touch, or tickling is not appropriate. Even when no harm is intended, it can violate boundaries or be misconstrued by the child or an observer.
- a. A touch on a body area that would be covered by a bathing suit, a kiss on the mouth or neck, a sexually suggestive joke or comment, patting the buttocks, and showing or viewing pornography are examples of inappropriate and harmful behaviors that should be reported to pastor and safeguarding representative.

### **Safe Environment Standards**

**Access Control:** Churches should keep a record of the children and youth in our program(s) when under our supervision. Children and youth should be logged in or out when entering/leaving the facility for a program or activity. The log or sign-in sheet should include the child’s name, date, times, and activity. In cases where a predetermined group of children are dropped off by another church or other organization and names of children expected are known, the group may be logged in as a whole with absences of a particular child noted. Completed log sheets will be maintained for a period of no less than six months by the Pastor (or Designated Person in Charge).

**Staff and Volunteer Identification:** Having staff and volunteers easily identifiable by using lanyards, nametags, or other form of identification allows children, youth, and parents to know who they can talk to should an emergency or safety issue arise.

**Visibility:** All activities/meetings with children/youth must be conducted in a way that allows visibility, e.g., glass areas of doors should not be obstructed, curtains/blinds should be open, when possible, doors should be open, or a window should allow easy observation of the room. Where possible, conduct activities in a public place, with another person within sight and sound of the activities.

**Bathroom:** In general, children/youth should be encouraged to use the bathroom before and after classes or other activities. If you need to take a child to the bathroom, be aware of your visibility and the child's privacy, e.g., adult stands holding public bathroom door open while child enters the toilet stall alone. For added protection, consider installing cameras at the entrance of bathroom facilities, and having a sign-out sheet for bathroom use in classrooms.

**Child-on-Child Sexual Harm Risk Reduction:** Approximately 50% of child sexual abuse is perpetrated by another child of either gender. Do not send two or more children/youth to a non-private bathroom, shower, or a locker room unaccompanied. An Approved Adult should go with them, and stand by the public door as described above.

**Empty Room Policy:** After an activity or event, check rooms to ensure that all participants have vacated the room.

**Unused spaces:** Spaces not currently in use should be locked (large walk in closets, boiler rooms, room used for storage, etc.)

**Computers and electronic devices:** Children and youth will have adequate supervision when using electronic devices belonging to the church. Devices should have adequate password protection. Each user should have their own account and password.

**Bullying by anyone is prohibited.** Bullying is typically used by individuals or groups with greater power or social status to control or harm others, and includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose. This behavior is harmful both to the victim(s) and the aggressor(s).

**Alcohol, drugs, weapons and other dangers:** Children should not be exposed to environments where there is access to alcohol, drugs, weapons, or other dangers.

### **SEGMENT 3: KNOWN OFFENDERS**

*Brothers, if someone is caught in sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently... Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:1-2 (NIV)*

*Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves. Matthew 10:16 (NLT)*

*Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. 2 Corinthians 7:10-11 (NIV)*

*As a Christian community, we are called upon to take responsibility not only for ourselves, but*

*also for others in our midst. In Matthew 10:16, the very real dangers of others' potential behaviors is acknowledged, and we are called upon to be "shrewd" or "wise" to these dangers, while doing no harm. To be "harmless" means that under "the law of Christ", we not only refrain from committing harm ourselves, but also take responsibility for preventing harm in our community.*

*This call means we must be mindful of the unique needs and risks of adult offenders in our midst, given the specific behavioral patterns that lead to abuse. We do so while treating the person with dignity and respect.*

Note: The provisions in this section and the term "offender" refers to adult offenders. When a child or youth has sexually offended, see Policy Supplement for guidance on what to do and appropriate language to use.

Individuals who have been adjudicated by a court or child protective services findings as sexual offenders and/or have admitted to past sexual abuse or crimes and are willing to abide by the guidelines set forth in this policy are welcome to attend worship services and adult educational activities within the limits of state law, following approval of their request to participate by the Safeguarding Committee and subsequent signing of a covenant. The individuals are hereafter referred to as "known sexual offenders" or "offenders." See Appendix Form SC 3 - Sexual Offender Covenant for Participation in the Congregation

The minimum guidelines by which any known offender may participate in the life of the congregation are set forth below, and shall be incorporated into a covenant specific for the individual offender which is to be signed by the offender after approval by the Safeguarding Committee of their request to participate, and prior to attending a worship service or church function.

### **Responsibilities to disclose an offender**

**1. Self-disclosure** Any member or regular attender who has ever committed a sexual offense, (adjudicated or not) has a responsibility to inform the pastor and cooperate with full disclosure of information pertaining to this history, including their legal status and tier, even if their registration term has ended. If a sex offender is already a regular attender or member and has not previously disclosed their status, they must disclose to the pastor before the policy effective date, or immediately upon learning of the policy.

**2. Disclosure of another person** If an employee, pastor, member, or approved adult learns that a sex offender is attending worship or other church activities, they must immediately inform the pastor and provide information as to how they learned of this person's history. All attenders are strongly encouraged (but not mandated) to inform the pastor of an individual's status. The identity of any person informing the pastor of the presence of a sex offender shall be held in strict confidence by the pastor, Elders and the Safeguarding Committee.

### **Criteria for participation of a known offender**

**Step one:** Within 72 hours of learning of the status of an offender, the pastor will verify registration status with databases and inform the Safeguarding Committee and Elders, who will keep the information confidential. Before the individual attends again, the pastor and at least one member of elders will meet with the offender and inform them of the policy, providing a copy. If the offender wishes to attend, within 30 days of the first meeting, the pastor and offender will complete a request for participation to the Safeguarding Committee. Within 3 days of receipt, the pastor will submit the request to the Safeguarding Committee supporting documentation as required.

**Step two:** The Safeguarding Committee will work with the local church to consider each request for participation and make a determination of whether it is safe for the individual to attend the church. The pastor will be informed in writing of the decision within 45 days of receipt of the request.

If the Safeguarding Committee determines that it is safe to do so, they will provide a draft covenant agreement for the individual. The pastor will complete remaining parts of the covenant agreement such as naming the chaperones, and details specific to the property such as instructions on where to meet chaperones, designated seating/bathrooms, etc.

**Step three:** Within 5 days of receipt of the decision, the pastor will notify Elders, followed by the offender. When the covenant agreement is signed by both pastor and offender, the pastor will provide a copy to the Safeguarding Committee and the Elders within 72 hours. A digital copy of all covenant agreements will be confidentially stored in the secure Safeguarding Committee database.

**Step four:** Under this policy, the pastor, Safeguarding Representative, and elders will **disclose the identity** of any known sexual offender to the congregation. Information disclosed will be limited to: Name, what church activities they are permitted to attend, where their designated seating or bathroom is, who their chaperones are, and whether they are listed on a sex offender registry. The photo of the individual may be made available for identification purposes by anyone who wants to see it.

Other details are to be held in confidence by Elders, Pastor, and Safeguarding Committee. This information may be used for safety and boundary-keeping, not for any individual to harass or humiliate the offender.

*Why disclose? Often this information is publicly available. Disclosure establishes safety and trust through transparency, where non-disclosure may be experienced by members as a betrayal by their leadership. Disclosure allows members of the congregation to practice boundary-keeping beyond the provisions of this policy.*

**To make their determination, Safeguarding Committee may consider:**

- Court records, registration and tier level in Megan's law database

- A search in the national registry of sexual offenders will be utilized by the Safeguarding Committee to determine if there are convictions of record in another state.  
<https://www.nsopw.gov>
- If an offender is designated as a “sexually violent predator,” legal counsel and/or the church’s insurance company may be consulted.
- Current parole agreement (if applicable). Any individual on probation or parole must provide the pastor with a copy of the probation and parole agreement, including its terms and conditions, as well as the contact information for the parole or probation officer assigned. The pastor will contact the parole or probation officer and report to the Safeguarding Committee what is shared.
- Other information, as determined by the Safeguarding Committee

#### **Additions and variations in the covenant:**

- At the discretion of the Safeguarding Committee, additional restrictions may be incorporated into an individual covenant.
- When an offender is on probation or parole, specific provisions related to contact with children, participation in counseling, and others, will be incorporated into the covenant.
- The individual covenant may permit participation in other adult church activities, such as small group or Bible study, if it meets a spiritual need, and there is a safe way to do so.
- An individual on probation or parole for a child sexual offense may have restrictions placed on church attendance as part of their probation/parole condition. On occasion, an exception to a “no church attendance” provision of probation or parole may be made by the court, based on the church’s capacity to offer a safe alternative form of participation. For example, the creation of an adults-only small worship group.

#### **Minimum guidelines under which a known sexual offender may participate:**

- **Offenders are expected to comply fully** with all restrictions and requirements placed upon them as a result of any legal actions, and provide the Pastor with copies of any judgments, conditions of parole, or other documents in which restrictions on or requirements as a result of convictions or judgments are stated.
- **Offenders are expected to participate in a specialized professional counseling program** for treating people who have abusive behaviors. Offenders will provide the name of the agency and mental health professional to the Pastor at the time of request for participation. The offender may be asked to periodically sign a limited disclosure authorization for the therapist to verify to the Pastor and Safeguarding Committee that the individual is in treatment.

- **Offenders will not accept any leadership** or representational position within or on behalf of the church including recorded/licensed minister, greeter, elder, clerk, treasurer, recording clerk or worship leader. They may participate in music if their chaperone can also participate and maintain 10 feet. They may serve in non-leadership, non-representational roles on committees or in other service to the church if allowed by their covenant agreement. **Known sexual offenders can never become Approved Adults.**
- **The offender agrees to refrain from contact with minors and vulnerable adults** who attend the church other than a member of their own family. This includes physical, written, electronic, or verbal contact, on and off church premises.
- **The pastor will assign chaperones to any offender participating in the life of a congregation and provide appropriate training to those chaperones. Chaperones should make a two-year commitment.** They will be mature adult members in good standing, over the age of 25, with no sexual misconduct history who are not related to or friends with the offender. They will receive training by a professional agency on sexual offender dynamics, the long-term impact of sexual abuse on victims, and any specific conditions of the individual's covenant. (If the offender is on probation or parole, the training may need to be approved by the officer.)
- **The offender must be accompanied by the chaperone at all times when on church property or at a church-sponsored event, maintaining approximately 10 feet. The chaperone is required to immediately report any violations of policy or covenant to both the pastor and the Safeguarding Committee.** A chaperone should *not* be a member of Elders or in another position where they could be asked to provide spiritual care to the offender.
- Offenders must **meet the chaperone** in the church parking lot or outside designated off-site activity area, only entering with their chaperone.
- **Temporary chaperones** may be appointed in the case of an existing member who is being investigated for possible sexual offenses by an adjudicating body, or while an existing member who is a known offender is awaiting a decision after submitting a request for participation. In this case, a member of Elders who meets the above criteria except for the training who has signed a temporary chaperone agreement may serve in this capacity.
- **Most often, the offender may participate in worship in the sanctuary and attend adult Sunday school classes.** The Safeguarding Committee may designate a specific service for attendance if there is more than one. Alternatively, a small worship group may be organized by the covenant partners. Any other activities the offender is permitted to participate in will be detailed in the covenant.
- **At no time should the offender deliberately place themselves in or remain in any location in or around the church facilities which would cause undue distress to others.**
- **At least twice each calendar year and as otherwise requested,** the offender shall meet with and report to the pastor or Safeguarding Representative regarding status of adherence to these guidelines.

- **An offender may not be permitted key or card access to church property**, and will return any keys to the pastor upon signing the covenant.
- **An offender may not access church computers.**
- **If the offender should decide to relocate membership (or substantially attend) another congregation of any denomination**, the designated pastor will inform the Safeguarding Committee who will in turn make an effort to inform leadership of that congregation of the presence of the offender, and the conditions of these guidelines.

### **Chaperone training**

Should the church decide to welcome a known sexual offender into fellowship in accordance with the guidelines established in this policy, chaperones will receive at minimum 3 hours of training to include the following items prior to welcoming the offender to the congregation.

Such training will be provided by a mental health or other professional specializing in offender treatment and/or trained in behavioral dynamics of offenders, or by the (county) office of Probation and Parole.

If the offender is currently on probation or parole, permission by the supervising county office to include the offender, as well as their approval of the organization providing the training and the curriculum, may be required.

The training must include:

- 1. Dynamics of sexual offending** (blame, impulsiveness, denial, deception; role of fantasies)
  - Summary information about different types of offenders
  - General characteristics of a pedophile, lifestyle issues, access to victims, orientation
  - The grooming process
  - Sex offense therapy (brief overview) – Use of polygraph
- 2. Dynamics of victimization** (shame, secrecy, trauma symptoms)
  - Defining child sexual abuse under state law
  - Long and Short Term Consequences of child sexual abuse
- 3. Role of the chaperone**
  - Close accompaniment of offender while on church property
  - Assure no contact with children, including verbal/emotional/physical
  - Monitor offender compliance with policy & covenant guidelines
- 4. Specific information about the particular offender**, including any terms of probation or parole, and guidelines agreed to by covenant with the church.

**The church will inform membership of the inclusion of a known sexual offender and the agreed upon guidelines using various means of communication.**

### **Adults-Only Worship Groups**

Any congregation or group of members from Sierra-Cascades may develop an Adults-Only Worship Service to which all adults, including sex offenders are welcomed. Such services must publicly make known in writing that all adults, including sex offenders, are welcome and that no one under age 18 is permitted to attend or be in the facility at the same time. Those wishing to develop such a ministry should contact the Safeguarding Committee for guidance, and have the service listed on the SCYMF website as a designated Adults-Only Worship Group under this policy.

### **Ministry with Adult Survivors**

Meetings are encouraged to offer support to survivors, especially when undertaking a ministry to include a sexual offender.

Conversations about, or inclusion of, a sexual offender in the congregation can be very upsetting to adults who are survivors of abuse. It can reactivate past trauma, causing extreme physical and emotional distress. An estimated one in four women and one in six men have experienced sexual abuse as children.

We recognize that it may not be possible to prevent all distress experienced by survivors when addressing issues of sexual abuse, however, Meetings should sensitively consider how to prevent harm as much as possible. This might include support or spiritual care groups, robust pastoral care, and accessing resources on safe environments for survivors. A free downloadable PDF guide is available on the website of Safe Communities at [www.safecommunitiespa.org](http://www.safecommunitiespa.org)

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### **Segment 4: REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE**

*Speak out for those who cannot speak,  
for the rights of all the destitute.  
Speak out; judge righteously;  
defend the rights of the poor and needy.  
Proverbs 31:8-9 NRSV*

*Give justice to the weak and the orphan;  
maintain the right of the lowly and the destitute.*



*Rescue the weak and the needy;  
deliver them from the hand of the wicked.  
Psalm 82:3-4 NRSV*

*...for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline. 2 Timothy 1:7 NRSV*

## **Mandated Reporter Status**

**Anyone may report suspected child abuse.** However, state laws *require* certain people to report suspected abuse. In Oregon, clergy and those who work in children's programs are *mandated reporters*. In Washington, these positions (except for in licensed facilities) are considered *permissive reporters*, and are not required to report by law. Regardless of state law, under Sierra-Cascades policy, *all Approved Adults are required to report* any suspected abuse or neglect to State authorities, and inform the Sierra-Cascades Safeguarding Representative and the local church pastor (or designated person in charge). We encourage others in the church community to report if they suspect abuse.

## **Guidelines for Reporting for Approved Adults (and recommended for all)**

- The requirement to report applies to all suspected child abuse, not just abuse that has been perpetrated by someone within the Meeting. For example, it may be that the perpetrator is a relative or friend of someone in the Meeting.
- Under this policy, if an Approved Adult has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused; or if a person makes a specific disclosure that a child has been abused, or an individual over the age of 14 discloses they have have abused a child, the Approved Adult shall make a mandated report if they are required to under State Law, or make a permissive report if they are not considered a mandatory reporter under state law.
- The reporting adult need not make a first-hand observation of the suspected child abuse victim.
- A "reasonable cause" standard does not require you to be certain that abuse has occurred. It only requires that abuse is suspected.

- YOU ARE NOT responsible for investigating before making a report. Neither is anyone else in the church including the pastor. The standard under the law for reporting is that “a reasonable person has cause to believe the child has been abused.” It may be necessary to ask the child or person alleging the abuse for some clarification solely in order to determine if there is reasonable cause to suspect abuse may have occurred. Beyond that, further questions should not be asked. This is to protect the child, the church, and the integrity of the investigation.
- A reporting adult need not be able to determine who is responsible for the abuse, i.e., identify the alleged offender.

### **How to Report: Action Steps and Sequence**

1. ) The Approved adult must immediately (within 24 hours) **make a mandated or permissive report** to the applicable state authorities. The hotline is available 24/7.  
Washington: 1-866-END-HARM (1-866-363-4276)  
Oregon: 1-855-503-SAFE (7233)  
\*\*If the child is in immediate danger, call 911. \*\*
1. The approved adult will then immediately thereafter **inform the pastor** (or designated person in charge) that a report has been made.
1. The approved adult must complete an **internal Child Abuse Incident Report** and give it to the pastor\* as well as send it to the safeguarding representative who will inform the Safeguarding Committee.
1. The pastor and Safeguarding Committee *may* choose to **inform the child’s parent** or guardian that a report has been filed, depending on the circumstances. The decision about this will be based on the most protective response that the committee can discern. The reporting adult should *not* inform the child’s parent without first consulting the Safeguarding Committee.
1. The pastor and/or safeguarding representative may choose to make their own **follow-up report** in order to put themselves directly in contact with authorities. This may also facilitate a faster response.

1. Any notification or information about the **outcome of the report** provided to the Approved Adult by state authorities shall be communicated to the pastor, and the safeguarding representative who will inform the Safeguarding Committee and file documentation in the Monthly Meeting confidential file and the secure digital file under the care of Sierra-Cascades Safeguarding Committee.
1. If the alleged abuse was by a staff person or volunteer, or the alleged abuse occurred on church property, the pastor will **inform the meeting's insurance company**.

\*Steps 2-7 are not required for mandated reports where neither the victim nor perpetrator is connected to the church, and abuse did not occur on church property.

### Guidelines for the Church in the Event of a Report/Investigation

- All allegations of child/youth abuse or serious physical neglect will be taken seriously.
- These allegations will be treated in strict confidence by all those acting on behalf of the church.
- All reporting steps taken will be documented, including a log of phone calls, personal visits, and written reports. Copies of all documentation should be kept in a secure file by the Monthly Meeting, *and* in the secure digital files under administration of the Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting Safeguarding Committee.
- The local church will make every effort to protect the confidentiality of those involved, not disclosing (except to those parties specifically named in the policy): 1. the identity of the Approved Adult or other reporting individual, protecting that person from any retaliation, 2. the child/children/any alleged victims, protecting their privacy, dignity, and protecting them from humiliation or retaliation, 3. the suspected individual, ensuring that person's right to integrity of process, while always keeping authorities and law enforcement fully informed.
- If/when the identity of the suspected abuser has been made public through an arrest or media reports, the pastor should inform the community. Details that are not public should still be kept confidential. Only the pastor or other individual designated by the Monthly Meeting may speak for the church to the news media, government agencies, attorneys, or others.

- Neither the pastor nor anyone else from the church should enter into discussion with the alleged abuser after a report has been filed and during the course of the legal investigation about the details of the complaint.
- If the alleged abuser is on staff or a volunteer, they will be removed immediately from any position in which they have supervisory authority over or contact with children pending the completion of the investigation for the protection of children, the church, and the alleged abuser. If employed by a church, the alleged abuser may be placed on paid leave for a designated period of time during the investigation.
- All necessary parties will cooperate with the investigation.
- Any volunteer or staff member who is under investigation for alleged abuse, or criminally charged for an offense involving a child is required to notify the pastor\* and the safeguarding representative as soon as the investigation begins.
- Anyone who admits to, pleads guilty to, or is convicted in a court of law of any form of child abuse, or of a sexual offense against anyone of any age, will be immediately and permanently barred from working with minors. (See Known Offenders policy). This applies to anyone who admits such abuse to the pastor or any member of the Safeguarding Committee, regardless of whether or not that person was ever investigated by authorities or charged.
- Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting seeks to offer support for victims and their families to help them cope with the suspected abuse by offering information about local services and therapists. The pastor or safeguarding representative may be contacted to learn more about available resources. Monthly Meetings, or Sierra-Cascades People Care may have resources for financial support if needed.
- A church may need help coping with the aftermath of an abuse situation. The pastor, safeguarding representative, and Elders may discern together what is needed such as showing that steps are being taken to deal appropriately with the situation, inviting counselors or chaplains to speak to the congregation or provide pastoral care, or holding special worship about the issue.

## **Non-Abusive Violations of Policy**

Alleged violations of this policy, other than abuse, shall be immediately reported to the pastor\* and Safeguarding Committee. They will jointly investigate the alleged violations of the policy. If a person(s) is found to be in violation of the policy, the pastor\* and the Safeguarding Committee will determine what disqualification or disciplinary action, if any, is necessary.

## **Poor Judgment/Non-Abusive Behaviors of Concern**

The pastor\*, in consultation with the Safeguarding Committee, may temporarily or permanently disqualify any person(s) from working with children/youth, as they deem appropriate. This could be for inappropriate boundaries, jokes, unsafe, illegal, or age-inappropriate activities, disrespect for the spiritual and bodily integrity of a child or other member of the church. This could be any action that does not rise to the level of abuse but is of concern, and not a good model for children and teens. The adult in question will be removed from susceptible environments for a stated period of time and not function in any supervisory capacity over children and youth for a stated period of time, after which an evaluation determining fitness for to serve children and youth should be made by the pastor\* and Safeguarding Committee.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> such occurrence or demonstration of “poor judgment” may result in the individual being precluded from any future work with children or youth. Communicate this action taken with the complainant, the church, and parents/guardians as needed. Incidents of this nature should also be recorded in the confidential files.

*If at any point, abuse is suspected, it should be reported to authorities immediately.*

## **Segment 5: USE OF CHURCH FACILITIES BY OUTSIDE GROUPS**

Outside groups and organizations using our facilities on a recurring or extended basis where minors are on-site as part of the organizational activity are to be made aware of this policy and must 1. adhere to it or 2. provide evidence of their own policy and procedures. All requests are subject to review and approval.

### **Minimum Policy Components for Outside Organizations**

If any minors will ever be in the facility with the organization, and not under *constant direct parental supervision*, the group’s policy must include:

1. A “two adult rule” (including the prohibition of any adult being alone in the facility with a minor who they are not the parent/guardian of).

2. **Background check procedure** and record-keeping on all adults included in the “two adult rule”.

3. A procedure for **reporting** suspected abuse of a minor to the proper legal authorities.

4. Policy that if any regular attender of the group is a **known/registered sex offender** they must, at minimum, agree to have an unrelated adult with no history of offending behavior accompany that individual at all times while on church property.

5. If the group is not otherwise obligated by their own by-laws to protect anonymity of attenders (such as Alcoholics Anonymous, etc.), they must agree to also **disclose the presence** of any known offenders to the Safeguarding Committee.

An adult representative of any outside organization will be required to sign a SC5- Statement of Compliance for the sponsoring church before use of the facilities will be granted.

### **Procedures for Education and Training**

1. After the initial training for staff and volunteers who are Approved Adults, a refresher training of 2 hours will be required every two years to ensure an individual’s knowledge is current and accurate.
2. The Safeguarding Committee will maintain a record of who has received training and the dates.
3. The Safeguarding Committee will periodically offer education sessions for all in Sierra-Cascades on abuse prevention and response and related issues.

### **Policy Access**

1. A copy of this policy in its entirety is available for review at any time and can be obtained by contacting the Safeguarding Committee. It is also available at (include any internal or external link where the full policy may be accessed).
2. In addition to their initial receipt of this policy, each volunteer and staff will be required to review the policy on an annual basis and sign a statement affirming the review. Any changes to the policy required by law and/or agreed to by the Yearly Meeting will be made by the Safeguarding Committee in consultation with legal review.