

COLCHESTER FEDERATED CHURCH
Safe Church Policy

1. General Background

Our mission statement:

The covenants between persons seeking employment or authorized volunteer positions in the church require honesty, integrity and truthfulness for the health of individuals participating and the church as a whole. Our goal is to pursue love, safety, peace and security for all who participate in our programs, wherever held, as well as for those who use our facilities. We recognize that all persons are created in God's image (Genesis 1:26). Both the Old and New Testaments instruct the faithful to do justice and to care for all persons, including the young. To that end, the Colchester Federated Church is committed to providing a safe and nurturing environment in which infants, children, youth and adults can learn about and experience God's love. We have a moral responsibility to provide the highest quality and safest care and programming possible in all areas of our ministry programs.

Definitions:

Child sexual abuse and sexual misconduct, as understood in this document, always involve a relationship in which both parties do not have equal power. Any sexual contact must, if it is to be ethical and life-giving, take place between two mutually consenting participants. Such mutual consent is not possible where there is an imbalance of power, for example, between pastor and congregant, church school teacher or youth leader and child, choir director and choir member.

For the purposes of this policy we are using the following definitions:

Minister: a person engaged by the church to carry out its ministry. Minister includes elected or appointed leaders of the church, employees, and volunteers as well as authorized ministers.

Authorized Minister: a person who holds ordained ministerial standing or has been commissioned or licensed by an association of the United Church of Christ

Ministerial Relationship: the relationship between one who carries out the ministry of the church and the one being served by that ministry

Child Sexual Abuse: Any sexual activity with a child in which a minor is used for the sexual gratification of another to include, but not be limited to: fondling, penetration, inappropriate touching, verbal comments, pornographic materials, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism or **any behavior that violates related state statutes.**

Minor: Any individual under the age of eighteen.

Sexual Misconduct includes sexual harassment (verbal and/or physical) sexual advances and or sexual contact between an ordained, licensed, commissioned minister, or any person, ordained or lay who has an assigned role with children and/or youth in the church and the employees, members, youth, children, and counselees of his/her church.

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

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:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition or circumstance of instruction, employment, or participation in any church activity;
- Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for evaluation in making personnel or church-related decisions affecting an individual; or
- 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, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, or invitations;
- Verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits or sexual orientation, sexual propositions;
- Physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, coercing sexual intercourse; and
- Visual contact, such as leering or staring at another's body, gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters, or magazines

Sexual harassment also includes continuing to express sexual interest after being informed directly that the interest is unwelcome-and using sexual behavior to control, influence, or affect the career, salary, work, learning, or worship environment of another. It is impermissible to suggest, threaten, or imply that failure to accept a request for a date or sexual intimacy will affect a person's job prospects, church leadership, or comfortable participation in the life of the church. For example, it is forbidden either to imply or actually withhold support for an appointment, promotion, or change of assignment, to suggest that a poor performance report will be given because a person has declined a personal proposition; or to hint that benefits, such as promotions, favorable performance evaluations, favorable assigned duties or shifts, recommendations or reclassifications, will be forthcoming in exchange for sexual favors.

Teacher: An adult over the age of 18 who has responsibility for a church school classroom and has attended teacher training.

Assistant: an adult or responsible youth who assists a teacher.

Unmonitored Contact: Anyone involved in overnight events with minors, transportation of minors, youth ministry events and field trips.

Inappropriate Behavior: Anyone using suggestive language, suggestive behavior or profanity to or around youth.

Confidentiality: When investigating an allegation, those involved shall maintain complete confidentiality with respect to names and events. The guiding rule of confidentiality is to tell only who needs to know and only what they need to know. This shall be followed by all involved.

II. Ministerial Conduct

All person engaged in the ministry of the Colchester Federated Church including elected or appointed leaders, employees, volunteer and authorized ministers are responsible for knowing the possible impact of their words and actions in ministering to the emotional, mental, and spiritual needs of persons who come to them for help or over whom they have any kind of authority. Sexual harassment or sexual exploitation of parishioners or other individuals by someone engaged in the ministry of the Colchester Federated Church is unethical and unprofessional behavior and will not be tolerated within this congregation. Because ministers often deal with individuals who are emotionally and psychologically fragile or otherwise personally vulnerable, it is imperative that those engaged in the ministry of this church maintain their own psychological, emotional and spiritual health and that they have adequate education for helping those individuals they serve in ministry. It is the policy of the Colchester Federated Church to encourage its leaders, authorized minister, employees and volunteers, to nurture safety within ministerial relationships by being attentive to self-care, education, and the importance of referring those in need to supportive and helpful resources.

III. Safe Church Policies

Recruiting Church Workers

Selection and Screening Process

All people in the Colchester Federated Church who work with minors shall complete a screening form. These screening forms shall be kept in a confidential file.

The Colchester Federated Church welcomes members who have been regular attendees for six months and friends who have been regular attendees for a year or more to become involved with the church school and youth ministry programs at various levels of commitment. The Christian Education Coordinator in conjunction with the Ministry of Education shall be primarily responsible for screening applicants for volunteer and staff positions with children and youth. It is expected that all employees or volunteers who work with minors will complete and submit a disclosure form (see attached appendix)

All screening forms will be reviewed by the Christian Education Coordinator in consultation with the Pastor as needed. Prior to serving, each volunteer or staff shall meet with the Christian Education Coordinator in order to review the statements on the screening forms and policy and guidelines regarding safe and nurturing church environment.

In order to ensure safety for all persons involved, the following guidelines will be followed when inviting individuals to service in ministries with minors:

- 1.** An individual with an undeclared criminal history shall not be considered.
- 2.** An individual with a felony conviction involving child abuse will not be considered.
- 3.** An individual who has any criminal history that may impair or disable their ability to effectively perform the functions of the ministry position, including those which involve the abuse or neglect of a minor shall not be considered.
- 4.** An individual with any criminal conviction for a crime of violence shall be considered on a case by case basis.
- 5.** The Christian Education Coordinator and the Pastor reserve the right to guide

someone to another area of ministry should they feel they are not suited for working with children or youth.

Supervision

1. It shall be the responsibility of the Pastor and the Christian Education Coordinator in conjunction with the Ministry of Education to supervise all staff and volunteers who have contact with minors involved in Christian Education within the Colchester Federated Church.
2. Supervisors will ensure that all staff and volunteers have received the training to perform their ministries with competence and ensure that all church policies are being administered adequately. See the Safe Church Guidelines in attached appendix.
If any minor is to participate in a chaperoned or supervised church activity away from the church, a signed parental consent form which includes a medical form disclosing all medications and dosages to be taken while on the trip must be submitted prior to such activity
3. Any adult who will supervise overnight stays of children or youth in the church must complete the primary screening procedure outlined above to participate in the overnight activity. In addition, these forms must be reviewed and a record check completed prior to participation in the overnight event.

Reporting of Incidents:

All staff, teachers, aides, and volunteers of the Colchester Federated Church shall follow the following reporting procedures in order to promote accountability among all members of the church.

1. Any and all incidents involving questionable or inappropriate behavior related to possible sexual misconduct or sexual, physical, or verbal abuse shall be immediately reported to the Christian Education Coordinator and the Pastor.
2. The incident shall be documented in writing by the staff member who receives the report. The report shall contain the date, time, persons involved and full explanation of the incident. See attached appendix
3. The Pastor and the Christian Education Coordinator shall meet to discuss and implement an appropriate response.
4. All staff, teachers, aides, and volunteers shall be informed and trained in this reporting responsibility.

Response:

The staff of the Colchester Federated Church shall treat every allegation of sexual abuse, misconduct and inappropriate behavior very seriously and shall thoroughly investigate every allegation in a prompt, professional and confidential manner.

1. When questionable or inappropriate behavior related to possible sexual abuse or inappropriate behavior is observed and reported, responses may include, but are not limited to the following:
 - Document and closely monitor the accused.
 - Discussion with the accused to ensure he/she understands and respects appropriate limits of behavior;

- Discussion with the accused and immediate removal from the position and place on leave pending completion of the investigation.
 - Overall evaluation of the incident, to include interviews with the alleged victim and accused and counseling referrals if necessary. If the nature of the incident does not require legal intervention and all parties agree that counseling will suffice, such a recommendation may be made and reviewed by counsel to church for legal sufficiency.
 - A formal report may be filed at which time professional intervention shall be requested through the Department of Children and Families and the Colchester Police Department. In addition, the accused shall be removed from his/her position pending the completion of an investigation.
2. The Pastor shall notify and discuss all allegations with counsel to the church to ensure that all legal requirements are met in the response process. In the event that the accused is the Pastor, the Senior Deacon(s) and the Diaconate shall follow this course of action on behalf of the church.
 3. The Pastor shall notify the Colchester Federated Church's insurance carrier.
 4. Every effort shall be made to comfort and protect the victim of the alleged abuse to ensure that the victim's needs are being met.
 5. If an alleged incident involves a minor, the parent or guardian shall be notified immediately.
 6. The accused shall be treated with respect and dignity during the investigation process.
 7. The ministers of the church need to be free to provide pastoral care to all parties involved. Therefore, a response team consisting of 3-5 church leaders shall be formed which may or may not include the ministers. A single spokesperson shall be designated to speak to the media on behalf of the church. The ministers of the church will decide on a case by case basis if the counsel of the Regional Minister of the United Church of Christ is need and will make the appropriate phone call.
 8. Role of the Response Team:
 - Appoint from within the group teams of two people, one male and one female, to conduct interview with victims, accused and any witnesses.
 - The complete team will gather to hear results of interviews and ask questions of clarification.
 - The team will decide if more information is needed to make a decision.
 - The team will make a decision
 - The team will inform all parties of the decision including, the Senior Deacon(s) and the Diaconate.
 9. Notification to the congregation will be handled on a case by case basis at the discretion of the Senior Deacon(s) and the Diaconate.

Training

All staff, teachers, aides, and volunteers who work with the children and youth of the congregation shall be given access to a copy of this policy and shall be oriented regarding what his/her responsibility is in preventing and reporting allegations on a yearly basis.

1. Training of staff and volunteers shall be comprised of the following:
 - Providing a basic orientation to the facts about child abuse.

- Describe what to look for in order to prevent sexual abuse.
 - Explanation of church policy and the reporting procedure.
 - A commitment from staff to follow conduct guidelines and these prevention and reporting procedures.
 - Youth Group Leaders, Resource Adults, and Mentors will receive training around issues surrounding youth.
2. The Pastor shall be responsible for reviewing the church's volunteer policies with all new members of the church during new member orientation.
 3. The Christian Education Coordinator, with the support of the Pastor and the Ministry of Education shall be responsible for educating the congregation on the need for such a policy and shall offer an annual workshop for interested members of the church community.
 4. Youth shall be informed frequently especially before overnight events who are the safe individuals to approach should they feel concerned for their safety, security or well-being. This will be the responsibility of the in-charge staff individual.

Appendix

COLCHESTER FEDERATED CHURCH SAFE CHURCH GUIDELINES FOR WORKERS WITH YOUTH

Because we desire to be faithful in responding to the biblical mandate to “let the children come unto me,” because we want to provide the safest program for youth, and because we want to protect those persons working with youth, we will follow the guidelines below:

1. We will touch youth only in appropriate ways and places:
 - On the hand, shoulder or upper back
 - Never against a child’s/youth’s will (unless in the case of clear and present danger of the child/youth or another child/youth)
 - Never causing a child’s/ youth’s discomfort
 - Never when it would have the effect of over-stimulating a child or youth
 - Never in a place on a child’s/youth’s body that could be covered by a bathing suit, unless for clear medical necessity or when changing a diaper or helping a young or handicapped child/youth use the toilet.
2. The purpose of discipline with youth is to maintain order in a manner consistent with the teaching of Christian responsibility, respect, and cooperation.
 - No youth shall be disciplined by the use of hitting, slapping, or any other form of physical punishment.
 - Verbal reprimands shall not include destructive criticism, insults, or shouting.
 - When we encounter a particularly difficult youth or situation, we will seek assistance from the person in charge (Christian Education Coordinator, Pastor, or Youth Advisor).
 - We will respect youth with both our actions and words.
 - We will not use profane, abusive or derogatory language or actions.
 - All physical contact such as wrestling, horseplay, etc. or any other high contact games are not appropriate recreational activities in a church setting. As such, no youth advisor or volunteer should encourage or initiate such contact.
 - Allowing children to roam the church building or grounds unsupervised shall also be discouraged.
3. All youth group participants shall remain with the group throughout the times of the activity. Under no circumstances shall youth be allowed to separate from the group activity and roam from adult supervision.
4. A youth advisor or volunteer shall not remain with youth alone in the building at any time.
 - If a youth has not been picked up on time by parents two adults shall remain with the youth to wait.
 - Youth should not be driven home by a volunteer or youth advisor alone in a vehicle whenever possible. Should the necessity arise, there needs to be a Transportation Consent form on file from that parent.
 - When possible, parents should be notified or two volunteers or youth

advisors shall bring the youth home with parental consent.

5. Any adults who will be providing transportation throughout the program year to youth events off the premises shall complete a Transportation of Children and Youth in a Motor Vehicle form (See appendix). Completed forms will be kept on file in a secure place and updated regularly. Training shall include telling transport people that all vehicles must have enough gas to travel to and from the event before coming to drive. Persons in charge will check with drivers. Cars will stay together while traveling as much as is safely possible. Some form of communication between cars is mandatory (i.e.: cell phones turned on or walkie talkies).
6. A complete First Aid Kit shall be brought by the leader of each event off the premises of the church.

Appendix

COLCHESTER FEDERATED CHURCH SAFE CHURCH GUIDELINES FOR WORKERS WITH CHILDREN

Because we desire to be faithful in responding to the biblical mandate to “let the children come unto me,” because we want to provide the safest program for children, and because we want to protect those persons working with children, we will follow these guidelines:

1. We will respect children with both our actions and words. We will not use profane, abusive or derogatory language or actions.
2. We will touch children only in appropriate ways and places:
 - On the hand, shoulder or upper back
 - Never against a child’s/youth’s will (unless in the case of clear and present danger of the child/youth or another child/youth)
 - Never causing a child’s/youth’s discomfort
 - Never when it would have the effect of over-stimulating a child or youth
 - Never in a place on a child’s/youth’s body that could be covered by a bathing suit, unless for clear medical necessity or when changing a diaper or helping a young or handicapped child/youth use the toilet.
3. The purpose of discipline with children is to maintain order in a manner consistent with the teaching of Christian responsibility, respect, and cooperation.
 - No child shall be disciplined by the use of spanking, hitting, slapping, or any other form of physical punishment.
 - Verbal reprimands shall not include destructive criticism, insults, or shouting.
 - When we encounter a particularly difficult child or situation, we will seek assistance from the person in charge (Christian Education Coordinator or Pastor).
4. To the fullest extent possible, a teacher shall not be in a classroom alone with children or youth, activities should be team taught.
 - We will carry out activities in open areas, not in private offices or spaces.
 - Doors without windows will be left open when sessions with children/youth are taking place.
 - All teachers, youth advisors, aides or anyone else working with children and youth shall strive to not place themselves in a compromising situation by being alone with a child or youth out of sight of other teachers, youth advisors, aides, or parents.
5. Toileting young children:
 - All teachers, advisors, or aides will wait outside the bathroom door for children while they are performing personal sanitary functions.
 - When able, a child should take care of his/her own clothes after toileting.
 - When a child needs help with his/her clothing the adult should have the child step out of the stall and into an open area.

- Any adult who is helping a child go to the bathroom should inform the other adult in the room that this is what they are doing.
 - When helping children to clean up from crafts and wash hands, the door to the bathroom should be left completely open.
6. All volunteers who work with children and youth shall participate in a yearly training event focusing on issues of child sexual abuse and the church's current policies and procedures.
 7. Any adults who will be providing transportation throughout the program year to youth events off the premises shall complete a "Transporting Children and Youth in a Motor Vehicle" form. Completed forms will be kept on file in a secure place and updated regularly. Training shall include telling transport people that all vehicles must have enough gas to travel to and from the event before coming to drive. Persons in charge will check with drivers. Cars will stay together while traveling as much as is safely possible. Some form of communication between cars is mandatory (i.e. cell phones turned on or walkie talkies).
 8. A complete First Aid Kit shall be brought by the leader of each event off the premises of the church.