

SAFE CHURCH POLICY

Preventing Misconduct/Abuse



Manitowoc Cooperative Ministry

*Praise the Lord!
How good it is to sing praises to our God;
for he is gracious, and a song of praise is fitting.
The Lord builds up Jerusalem;
he gathers the outcasts of Israel.
He heals the broken-hearted,
and binds up their wounds.*

Psalm 147:1-3

...and Jesus said to them, 'Whoever welcomes this child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me; for the least among all of you is the greatest.'

Luke 9:48

Manitowoc Cooperative Ministry

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PURPOSE OF POLICY

Manitowoc Cooperative Ministry believes it is called by God to provide and maintain a safe, nurturing environment for all children, youth, and vulnerable adults. As God's children, it is our aim to protect the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being of all children, youth, vulnerable adults, as well as, adult leaders, who participate in church-sponsored/sanctioned activities.

Our understanding of this call includes seeking to prevent the following types of inappropriate conduct:

Physical Abuse, including any unwanted touch, and physical contact intended to coerce or do harm, any hitting or touching in anger.

Emotional/Verbal Abuse, including insults, name calling, belittling remarks, unfavorable comparisons with other children or youth, shaming, deliberately causing fear, or using speech to hurt.

Leadership Abuse, including using scripture, church authority or one's position of power to coerce, control, harm or shame.

Sexual Abuse, which is defined as any sexual contact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults in a leader's charge, including:

- fondling private parts
- oral, genital, or anal penetration
- sexual intercourse
- forcible rape
- suggestive sexual comments
- showing pornography (sexually explicit materials)
- exposing sex organs
- allowing children to witness sexual activity

Therefore, Manitowoc Cooperative Ministry has adopted and implemented policies, procedures, screening tools and training to protect all our church activity participants. All persons working directly with children, youth and vulnerable adults, whether paid or volunteer, are subject to the provisions of this policy.

UNIVERSAL PRACTICES FOR HIRING STAFF AND SECURING VOLUNTEERS

1. Manitowoc Cooperative Ministry shall not hire, engage or otherwise permit any person to participate as a leader or staff (professional or voluntary) in the programs or ministry of the church that places them in direct, immediate and physical contact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults unless and until a basic background check (including the Wisconsin Department of Corrections "Sex Offender Registry") has been performed, and the results received, by the church. A written record of the results of each such background check shall be kept by the church in a confidential, secure location.
2. No person known by Manitowoc Cooperative Ministry to have been (i) convicted of a sexual offense in civil, criminal or church court, or (ii) is identified in any sex offender registry, shall be permitted to provide leadership and oversight in any program or ministry that offers the possibility that the person will come into direct, immediate, and physical contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.
3. Any member of the church or other person active in the life of this church that is known to have been (i) convicted of a sexual offense in civil, criminal or church court, or (ii) is identified in any sex offender registry, shall not, under any circumstance be left in the physical presence of another person, on behalf of the church, except with the continuous, direct and immediate physical presence of another person (which person is not subject to this policy and constraints herein) expressly authorized by the Session/Council.
4. Manitowoc Cooperative Ministry will recruit, hire, call, train, and promote all persons in all job classifications without regard to the following: race; creed; color; national origin; gender; age; marital status; sexual orientation; religious affiliation (except when after careful study religious affiliation is determined to be a bona fide occupational qualification); physical, mental, or medical disability (including non-sighted) unrelated to the ability to engage in job-related activities.

SCREENING PROCEDURES

Clergy

Background checks for all clergy staff will be done in compliance with the policies of the Presbytery of Winnebago and/or the Wisconsin Conference, UCC. Verification of a national criminal background check may be obtained from the Presbytery of Winnebago and/or the Wisconsin Conference, UCC and placed in the personnel files along with the **STAFF/VOLUNTEER SCREENING FORM**.

Non-Clergy Staff

The following steps shall be taken to screen non clergy applicants before employment:

1. The Applicant will complete the **STAFF/VOLUNTEER SCREENING FORM**.
2. Manitowoc Cooperative Ministry in Manitowoc, Wisconsin will procure a background screening report on you from *LexisNexis Screening Solutions* as part of the process of employment.
3. An interview will be conducted.

Volunteers¹

1. The Applicant will complete and sign the **STAFF/VOLUNTEER SCREENING FORM**.
2. Manitowoc Cooperative Ministry in Manitowoc, Wisconsin will procure a background screening report on you from *LexisNexis Screening Solutions* as part of the process of employment.
3. An interview will be conducted.
4. Volunteers, member or non-member, must have participated actively in the church for a period of at least six (6) months prior to being assigned to work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

TRAINING OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

All staff, Session/Council members, Board of Deacon's members, and volunteers having regular, on-going contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults will receive training that reviews this policy and associated procedures.

In some instances, the reading of this policy shall constitute training. No person who refuses to participate in planned training events will be allowed to be responsible for children, youth or vulnerable adults at a Manitowoc Cooperative Ministry sponsored or cosponsored event or activity.

¹ Volunteers requiring screening are those that that have regular, on-going contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults in relationship to the ministry of Manitowoc Cooperative Ministry.

RECORD MAINTENANCE

Completed background check materials will be stored in a secure area with access restricted to the Pastor and/or legal counsel. Individual files will be kept updated on a yearly basis or as needed, for changes in address, phone, and other pertinent information. New background checks will be required every three years.

INCIDENT REPORT AND RESPONSE

All allegations of incidents involving neglect, physical and/or verbal abuse, improper touching, or sexual abuse of a child, youth, or vulnerable adult must be brought to the attention of the Pastor, Clerk of Session, or Council President. The following response and reporting procedure will be implemented:

1. Upon receiving an allegation, the person(s) receiving the report should consider the following:
 - a. make all reasonable efforts to maintain confidentiality;
 - b. take the allegation seriously;
 - c. secure the safety and well-being of the victim;
 - d. DO NOT minimize the incident or lay blame;
 - e. Treat all parties with dignity and support;
2. Conduct the minimum investigation necessary to determine the existence of a suspicion of child abuse before notification of the Department of Human Services. Care should be taken to avoid repeated questioning as it may traumatize the victim further and interfere with the investigation and intervention by the Department of Human Services.
3. When family members and/or adult offenders are involved, notification of the alleged perpetrator should be done by legal authorities. If the victim is a minor and the allegation does not involve a family member, notify a parent/guardian that a complaint has been made and the nature of the complaint.
4. If the alleged perpetrator of the abuse is a minor, a parent/guardian of that minor should be notified that the complaint has been made and the nature of the complaint. The minor should be questioned about the incident only after written consent from the minor's parent or guardian. Parents and the alleged perpetrator are not entitled to a copy of the report until an in-house investigation is completed upon advice from the congregational attorney.
5. Reporting to authorities should be done by a designated staff member. Neither this policy nor any action of staff or church volunteers, should be construed as interfering with any person's right to make a report to government authorities based upon a good faith suspicion that abuse has occurred.
6. If the allegation involves a member of the clergy staff, Winnebago Presbytery and the Wisconsin Conference, UCC will be contacted immediately.

7. The person witnessing or first discovering the incident shall be asked to prepare a written incident report as soon as possible and give it to the Pastor, Clerk of Session, or Council President..
8. The Pastor, Clerk of Session, or Council President. who receives the incident report will be responsible for filing it and seeing that proper notification is made to the following: a parent/guardian of the victim (and alleged offender if the alleged offender is a minor), Manitowoc County Human Services Department or appropriate law enforcement agency, and the agent for the insurance company with which the church has liability coverage.
9. Maintain confidentiality.

DISCIPLINE

1. Alleged sexual misconduct offenses against staff and volunteers will result in immediate suspension, without pay for staff, until an investigation is completed (not to exceed 30 days). Unfounded allegations will result in reinstatement with full pay and benefits restored from the date of suspension.
2. Alleged sexual misconduct offenses against clergy staff shall be immediately reported to the Presbytery of Winnebago and Wisconsin Conference, UCC and will be disciplined according to the rules set forth by those judicatories

ACTIVITY RULES

In addition to careful screening procedures and training for staff and volunteers working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults Manitowoc Cooperative Ministry will be guided by the following rules:

Two-Adult Rule– There should be at least two adults working with each group of children, youth, or vulnerable adults. In those cases when older youth are part of the care-giving team for children, an adult must always be present with the group. Insofar as possible, no one should be left alone, one on one, with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult. The only exception to this two-adult policy would be in a situation in which the contact occurs in a public place.

Open Door Rule – Children, youth, and vulnerable adults in classrooms or offices of the church shall be visually accessible from hallway. Doors will be kept open at all times unless the doors have unobstructed windows.

Parental Permission – The parent/guardian will be asked, yearly, to complete a Parental Permission Form, which shall grant permission for all general activities within the normal scope of congregational life. The Parental Permission Form shall include medical, insurance, and emergency contact information. Special Permission Forms must be completed for all activities conducted off church grounds. Special Permission Forms will indicate the specific nature of the event or program, the type of adult leadership which will be provided, sleeping arrangements, and any release from liability which may be requested.

Driving – All persons who drive minor children, other than their own children, for church related events will meet volunteer requirements, must be 18 years of age and have a valid driver's license. (This policy does not cover situations in which parents of participants independently arrange to share rides.)

No Physical Punishment – No person in Manitowoc Cooperative Ministry is permitted to touch another in anger. Not only is this method not permitted.

Behavioral Policies – Prohibited behaviors for all staff and volunteers working with children, youth and vulnerable adults include:

- being alone with a child, youth or vulnerable adult, without proper permission of that child's parent/guardian;
- intentional neglect;
- using verbally or emotionally abusive language;
- physically striking, hitting, pushing, or spanking;
- touching, fondling, kissing in an inappropriate or sexual manner;
- other sexual behavior including verbal comments; photography; obscene language; exhibitionism or allowing children to witness sexual activity.

NON-CHURCH GROUPS USING FACILITIES

Groups/organizations using the facilities of Manitowoc Cooperative Ministry on a regular basis (defined as 4 or more times within a twelve (12) month period for the same purpose) shall be governed by the **SAFE CHURCH POLICY**.

Groups/organizations that have completed background checks on leaders are requested to provide a formal letter stating that the leaders have had a background check and that they are been approved to be a leader (the content of this screening does not need to be shared with Manitowoc Cooperative Ministry).

Discipline for user groups will be handled by user group policies and civil authorities.

REVIEW

This policy shall be reviewed and revised as needed on an annual basis.

SAMPLE DO NOT USE THIS FORM

EMPLOYMENT/VOLUNTEER SCREENING FORM

A background screening report is needed in connection with your employment or volunteer work with Manitowoc Cooperative Ministry or any of MCM congregations. In the event that information from the report is utilized to make a determination preventing your employment or volunteering, we will provide you with a copy of the report.

By your signature below, you hereby authorize us to obtain a background screening report about you, in order to consider you for employment or volunteer work

Legal Name: _____
Last First Middle

List all other names that have been used by you: _____

Social Security Number (needed for Background Check): _____

Date of Birth: _____ Place of Birth: _____

Present Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Telephone Number(s): _____

Driver's license #: _____ State issuing license: _____

Signature of Applicant

Date