CALVARY ON 8TH STREET

LOVING GOD. BECOMING DISCIPLES. CHOOSING COMMUNITY.

ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY

CALVARY REFORMED CHURCH
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"Jesus called the children to him and said, *"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."* Luke 18:16

INTRODUCTION

The Consistory of Calvary Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan recognizes the need for a safe and nurturing environment for all its members. To help insure this environment, a written policy regarding child protection and the prevention of abuse has been developed. The **Consistory** is responsible for assuring that this policy is followed. **A Care Team** has been organized to implement and review this Policy. The Care Team is composed of representatives from Ministries and Programs of Calvary. The Care Team is a subcommittee of the Education Ministry.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The intent of this Policy is to prevent abuse and ensure intervention and treatment if it occurs within the church setting and/or among church members. This Policy is adopted for the following purposes:

1. The protection of infants, toddlers, children and youth served by the ministries of Calvary. The Policy is designed to protect them by
   a. using Calvary's best effort to screen out potential Workers having inappropriate backgrounds or qualifications;
   b. avoiding situations where abuse could possibly take place; and
   c. establishing procedures for reporting claims of abuse.

2. The protection of employees and volunteers from unfounded allegations of abuse or neglect.

3. Calvary, its employees, and volunteers are witnesses to God's grace and the ministry of Jesus Christ on earth. The Policy is designed to provide a commonly embraced code of conduct for all employees and volunteers, while retaining the flexibility to be supplemented as necessary to meet the unique concerns of each ministry, thus furnishing a greater sense of security that Calvary's ministry remains pure in a world where both sinful actions and unfounded allegations occur.

STATEMENT OF GENERAL POLICY

1. Calvary considers abuse to be abhorrent and completely contrary to the teachings of the Bible and the mission of the Church.

2. Calvary forbids its employees, volunteers, and members from engaging in abuse or in any conduct which could be considered abuse.

3. All allegations of abuse shall be reported to appropriate authorities.

4. Calvary shall not obstruct the investigation or prosecution of the accused.

5. Calvary shall, regardless of the outcome of any such investigation or prosecution, continue to act in a manner that Christ would approve towards the accused and the accuser.

SCREENING PROCEDURES

1. Each employee and volunteer shall submit a fully completed, signed and dated Application for Children and Youth Service to the Program Director before they can serve with children. (see Appendix A – Parts 1 and 2). A new application must be completed as requested.

2. Each employee and volunteer shall be screened by local and/or state authorities for previous criminal offenses affecting children's safety. An updated Criminal Background Check Authorization (Appendix B) and Liability Release Form (Appendix C) is part of the application process. In agreeing to the terms as stated in the application, future background checks will be made every 3 years for each employee and volunteer.

3. Criminal Background Checks shall be reviewed by a member of the pastoral staff and a designated Care Team member.

4. Completed Volunteer Applications and Criminal Background Checks shall be filed in a locked cabinet for a period of not less than three years.

5. Prior to serving in a Program, an employee or volunteer shall attend Calvary, be a Calvary member or be approved by the Care Team.

6. A person who has confessed to or been convicted of sexual abuse of a minor, incest, rape, assault involving minors, murder, kidnapping, child pornography, sodomy or physical abuse of a minor shall not be placed in a position involving any contact with infants, toddlers, children or youth no matter how long ago the incident occurred.

7. Calvary Church reserves the right to reject an applicant.

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

1. All employees and volunteers shall be made aware of Calvary's Abuse Prevention Policy and the dynamics of abusive relationships, the signs of abuse, and types of inappropriate behavior.

2. A brochure will be provided containing information about Calvary's Abuse Prevention Policy and whom to ask for help. Also, information about abuse prevention will be presented at the beginning of each school year to those who participate in children and youth programs.

3. Employees and workers shall follow Calvary's Discipline Policy located on page 8.

4. No employee or volunteer shall be alone in a room with one child or youth. (See #5 for exceptions).

5. Employees who deal with youth may, where appropriate, engage in One-on-One counseling with the youth. By its very nature, One-on-One counseling is a sensitive matter, often conducted in private. Before engaging in One-on-One counseling, Workers should be aware of the potential for problems and should take all steps possible to avoid the appearance of impropriety. Employees should, if possible and appropriate, advise the youth's parents that such counseling may take place. If, at the employee's discretion, the youth's parents should not be advised that One-on-One Counseling will take place, the employee shall advise a member of the pastoral before the counseling session.

6. Calvary's facilities shall be maintained to insure the safety of children and adults.

7. Conversation of all employees and volunteers shall be wholesome and edifying, without obscenity, inappropriate sexual talk, off-color jokes, coarse language or sexual innuendo. Such conversation shall not be condoned in children, youth or adults.

8. No controlled substance, other than that prescribed for use by a physician and used only by that person in the manner prescribed, or alcoholic beverage shall be permitted at any Calvary activity.

9. No pornographic or obscene literature, videos or other material of any nature whatsoever shall be permitted at any Calvary activity. (NOTE: Educational materials which discuss such topics may be used in education programs or classes. Teachers or leaders of such activities should exercise sound judgment in the use of such materials.)

10. At least two employees or volunteers shall be present before the time that any Program is scheduled to begin. At least two Workers shall remain present at the conclusion of the Program until all Children and Youth have been picked up by their parent or otherwise leave the Program.

11. Bathroom procedures for young children include:
    a. Always use the designated bathroom (the one closest to the program).
    b. Children should let an employee or volunteer know when they have to go to the bathroom.
    c. Employees and volunteers who take young children to the bathroom shall remain outside with the door slightly ajar. If the child asks for assistance, before going in, prop open the door to the room if there is no window on the door.
    d. When possible, an employee or volunteer of the same gender as the child should assist in taking the child to the bathroom.
    e. Children in Pre-K-2nd grades should use the buddy system when going to the bathroom.

12. The signed written consent of at least one parent shall be obtained before permitting a person under 18 years of age to participate in any Off-Campus Program and before permitting any child or youth to participate in any overnight Program.

13. During a session of any child or youth Program, at least two employees, volunteers or combination of both, shall be present, when possible.

14. When a Program is in session, the door should allow for an unobstructed view of the room.

15. When transporting children or youth in a vehicle for a church-sponsored activity, written permission from a parent shall be on file and an employee or volunteer, in addition to the driver, shall be present in the vehicle.

16. Bus drivers or transporters shall log every pick-up and drop-off of minors. Logs shall be turned in to the Program Director and kept on file for three years.

17. Regardless of the relative ages, it is never appropriate for a youth leader to date a youth group member.

18. While the appropriate display of affection is often support and encouragement to one another, such displays may be misinterpreted. Therefore, displays of affection between an employee or volunteer and an infant, toddler, child or youth should be limited to an appropriate touch. Such displays of affection should be limited to public places. The right of anyone to refuse such displays of affection shall be respected.

19. *Proper Display of Affection* (PDA). Touch is an essential aspect in nurturing lives. The following guidelines are to be followed in order to promote pure, genuine, and positive displays of God's love:
    a. Hugs: One arm or hand to arm hugs are positive contact. Avoid and prevent unnecessary full contact or body-to-body hugs. Hugs should be brief.
    b. Lap-sitting: Children should be encouraged to sit next to workers on the floor rather than on their laps.
    c. Casual Touch: Gentle contact during activities may be on children's heads, shoulders, arms and hands.

20. Any inappropriate behavior or problems should be reported to a Care Team Member or Program Director.

21. To assure compliance of the Policy, the following steps shall be utilized:
    a. Program Director shall counsel an employee or volunteer who is not complying.
    b. If noncompliance continues, the Program Director shall consult with the Care Team to determine what steps should be taken.
    c. If the matter is not resolved after the above steps have been taken, the Care Team Coordinator shall refer the matter to the Board of Elders for final action.

REPORTING PROCEDURES

1. Anyone who experiences abuse should report the incident to one of the Pastors, a current elder at Calvary or a Care Team member. All allegations shall be reported to appropriate authorities.

2. Any employee or volunteer who suspects that abuse has occurred during or surrounding a Calvary sponsored activity shall report such suspicions to one of the Pastors, a current elder at Calvary or a Care Team member as soon as possible, not to exceed twenty-four hours. All allegations shall be reported to appropriate authorities.

3. A report shall include as many details as can be remembered of the abuse incident.

4. Suspicions shall be kept confidential.

5. Appropriate action shall be taken to assure the safety and support of those involved.

6. Confidential and secure records of reported allegations shall be kept by the Pastoral staff.

7. Suspension or removal of alleged offenders from service within the church shall be handled by the Board of Elders.

8. When the accused is a member of the pastoral staff of the church, the church shall follow the RCA's Disciplinary and Judicial Procedures as stated in the *Book of Church Order* (most recent edition).

NURSERY GUIDELINES

1. A Nursery Supervisor shall be present during each nursery session. Nursery Supervisors shall complete all Screening Procedures and are responsible for the implementation of the Care Policy.

2. Nursery volunteers (people aged 12 through Adult under the supervision of a Nursery Supervisor) shall submit a fully completed, signed and dated Volunteer Application and submit it to the Children's Ministry Director or Nursery Supervisor.

3. Three Nursery volunteers (two aged 18 or older and one aged 12 or older) shall be assigned to the nursery at all times. Children older than nursery age but younger than assigned volunteers are permitted in the nursery only when their parent is a scheduled Nursery volunteer.

4. Only assigned Nursery volunteers or approved substitutes are permitted in the nursery. Only an adult may substitute for an adult.

5. Every child must be signed in using the Breeze check-in system currently in place. Nametags should be placed on a child's back and are used to mark diaper bags.

6. The Children's Ministry Director or Nursery Coordinator shall maintain a system in the nursery which includes the name of the infant or toddler, parents, and others designated to retrieve the child from nursery, address, phone number, and special needs.

7. If an infant or toddler needs a diaper change, the parents shall be paged unless written permission has been given.

8. Only an adult shall take a toddler to the bathroom.

9. An infant or toddler may not be taken from the nursery alone with an employee or volunteer to another part of the facility without the prior written or verbal consent of the parent.

10. The Children's Ministry Director or Nursery Coordinator shall collect sign-in sheets and maintain a file for one year.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

While working with children and youth, it's likely that at some time you will encounter unacceptable behavior. When this happens an adult may interrupt the behavior, teach what is expected, and encourage better choices. Done properly, this is usually enough to change the behavior.

Discipline differs from punishment in that it does not try to make the child pay for what he or she has done. Instead it corrects and redeems. Discipline should be administered in humility, recognizing that we are accountable to the members of Christ's body, the Church, and we are to submit to their guidance and discipline as well. Discipline may become abuse if it is used excessively or if it results in pain, injury or humiliation.

1. The following guidelines have been established *to protect Workers and Assistants from accusations of child abuse:*
   A. **ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE**
      Focus on the behavior, not the child/youth. Always speak directly to the child/youth, preferably without other children/youth overhearing. Set a good example. Use a quiet, firm voice. Be encouraging and respectful.
   B. Whenever possible employees and volunteers should use one of the following options:
      *distract the child/youth with another activity;
      *help the child/youth focus on more acceptable behavior
      *isolate the child/youth from others if another volunteer is present (the child/youth should not be alone with a Worker, however, when possible)
   C. The following procedure should be utilized by all employees and volunteers when Program rules are broken or behavior problems arise:
      1. First time: verbal warning shall be given by the volunteer. Tell them the behavior that needs to change and encourage them to do something more positive. Make sure they also work towards fixing whatever was broken, hurt, changed because of what they did.
      2. Second time: child or youth shall be taken from the group to make a plan to improve behavior. An employee or volunteer should give the child or youth time to consider what they can do positively to make their time better. When they have a good plan and have fixed what they broke, hurt, or changed, they can join the group again.
      3. Third time: Meeting shall be held with the Director. The parents of the child or youth will be contacted about the behavior. The student will need to be picked up or brought home.
      4. Program Director will be responsible for documenting each incident.
2. The Discipline Policy shall be reviewed with employees and volunteers before the beginning of each year of church-sponsored Programs.
3. Children and youth shall be reminded of the kind of behavior that is acceptable for the setting. Older children and youth may benefit from having these expectations in written form and posted in the classroom.
4. Expectations of child/youth behavior should reflect age and level of comprehension. Similarly, discipline shall reflect age and level of comprehension. (Time-outs should not last longer in minutes than the child's age.)
5. Parent(s) are to be informed whenever a child/youth misbehaves beyond minor correction, or if there is a pattern of escalating misbehavior.

6. Concerns about specific behavior or appropriate response should be directed to the Program Director.
7. An additional employee or volunteer should be present in classrooms where misbehavior is an on-going problem.
8. Verbally abusive discipline or corporal punishment is not permitted.
9. When these methods are not working, Employees and volunteers should request assistance before *"losing their cool"*

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DEFINITIONS

Abuse	An intentional human act which results in pain or injury to another person. Abuse usually occurs in relationships of unequal power; the abuser has more power (obtained through socio-economic status, gender or role) than the person being abused. This imbalance of power keeps the person being abused silent and onlookers reluctant to admit the problem or to intervene.
Accused	The person alleged to have engaged in abuse
Accuser	The person alleged to have been abused, the parent or representative of such person
Adult	Anyone eighteen years or older
Applicant	Anyone seeking to be an employee or volunteer
Assistant	A person who assists with youth, children, toddlers or infants under supervision of a volunteer or Nursery Supervisor
Calvary	Calvary Reformed Church and its related ministries; also, the sanctuary and contiguous improvements and grounds located at 995 E. 8th Street, Holland, Michigan
Child(ren)	Anyone eleven years or younger
Emotional Abuse	Controlling a person through berating, fear, and/or threats. Attempting to control another person through berating, fear, and threats. • Weakens a person's mental and physical ability to resist and erodes self-esteem; • Isolates a person from family and friends and reinforces a sense of helplessness and dependence; • The most subtle form of abuse because it often occurs in private, leaves no visible injury, and involves one person's word against another; • Is often combined with physical and/or sexual abuse. Examples include: name calling, excessive teasing, cursing, constant criticism, public embarrassment, lack of consideration for a person's feelings and needs, false accusations and jealousy, destroying or taking personal property, withholding sleep, friendships, or other life necessities, threatening harm to a person of importance to him/her, abusing or destroying (or threatening to) a pet.
Employee	Worker who is compensated for his/her activities at Calvary

Infant	Children under the age of sixteen months
Neglect	Failing to provide for basic needs such as food, shelter, or medical care
Off Campus	Outside of the buildings and off of the contiguous grounds of Calvary
Nursery Supervisor	An Adult who oversees the Nursery and implements the Policy
One on One Counseling	Counseling of a child or youth by an employee which may take place in private
Parent	Includes legal guardian and, upon written permission, the parent's surrogate
Physical Abuse	An intentional act which results in physical pain or injury such as hitting, kicking, etc. Examples include: pushing, shoving, kicking, biting, shaking, severe spanking, hair pulling, confinement, hitting with an object, burning, breaking limbs, stabbing, forcing a person to injure him/herself through the taking of unnecessary risks (i.e., by drug or alcohol use, prostitution)
Physical Neglect	Failing to provide for the physical needs of someone entrusted to another person's care. Handicapped adults, the elderly, and children are at risk for neglect. Examples include withholding food, clothing, shelter, or medical care.
Program	An activity or meeting involving Adults, Children and Youth
Program Director	The person in charge of a particular program
Sexual Abuse	Any sexual intimacy forced on one person by another which may include but is not limited to fondling, obscene remarks or gestures, exposing oneself, requests to undress or engage in sexual activity, exposing to pornography, and intercourse – sexual abuse does not need to involve physical contact Any sexual intimacy forced on one person by another. • Does not need to involve physical contact; • People of all ages, races, and genders are victims; • Can occur within a marriage relationship. Examples include: Non-contact: obscene phone calls, exposing self to others, peeping Toms, requests to engage in sexual activity (without physical contact) Contact: fondling, grabbing, intercourse, anal/oral sex Adult: unwilling partner, forcing practices which are uncomfortable or degrading on partner, rape, sexual relations which are obtained by threat of injury, sexual relations with someone unable to fully understand and consent (i.e., mentally impaired), marital rape/forced intercourse

Child: talking “dirty” to child, exposing to pornography or sexual activity, exploiting child to produce pornography, taking advantage of the child’s inability to understand sexual acts or resist authority, coercion, threats, gifts, etc.

Toddler	Children between sixteen months and three years
Volunteer	A person who is not compensated for his/her activities at Calvary and has been trained to serve in a specific role for a particular ministry
Worker	Any adult (employee or volunteer) who works closely with youth, children, toddlers or infants in any Program at Calvary without direct supervision
Youth	Any person between the ages of twelve and seventeen, inclusive