

**SAFE CHURCH
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

**Memorial Congregational Church of
Sudbury, Inc.
(United Church of Christ)
Sudbury, Massachusetts**

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A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 PURPOSE

As is stated in our Covenant and reflected in our Constitution and our By-Laws, we, the members, and friends of Memorial Congregational Church (“MCC”) “unite for the worship of God and the service of humanity.” Every effort will be made to ensure that all who participate in our church life will be able to pursue this Purpose in an environment that is safe, secure, and nurturing.

However, we recognize that we cannot eliminate all risks, but we can strive to reach that goal by taking intentional and direct actions. It is in this spirit that the MCC Safe Church Policies and Procedures were created. We consider this to be a living document which will be amended from time to time as new situations arise. We hope that although there are sure to be omissions, this document will provide guidelines to create a safer environment at MCC for all.

What is Safety?

Safety means that a person’s spiritual, emotional, and physical self is protected from injury. For example:

Spiritual Safety

1. People have the freedom to express their faith appropriately, and
2. people’s beliefs are treated respectfully.

Emotional Safety

1. Kindness and civility are the norm,
2. people refrain from personal attacks and gossip, and
3. confidentiality is honored.

Physical Safety

1. Door code and key holders agree to abide by safe church policies,
2. facilities are clean and well lit,
3. exits are clearly marked and free of debris,
4. fire alarms are kept in working order, and
5. food preparation areas are clean and in compliance with health department regulations, and guidelines.

Weapons

Unless otherwise allowed by MCC, weapons, of any kind, are NOT permitted on MCC property, either within the buildings or on the grounds. Weapons discovered on MCC property will be reported to the Sudbury Police Department, and/or confiscated and disposed as is deemed appropriate by MCC. A weapon includes any type of gun, knife, bow/arrow, sword, stun device, spray or any other instrument or device capable of inflicting harm. This weapons policy does not apply to current law enforcement personnel legally permitted to possess firearms or other types of weapons in Sudbury, Massachusetts.

A.2 SCOPE OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The policies and procedures included in this document apply to all activities which take place within the building and on MCC properties, as well as to programs, activities, or events which are part of the MCC ministry that take place elsewhere. The policies and procedures apply to all MCC members, friends, visitors, employees, volunteers, and guests, and to those renting or using the church building and/or property.

A.3 LOCATION OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Copies of the Safe Church Policies and Procedures Manual will be kept in binders in three locations, as well as posted on the church website:

1. the Church Office;
2. the Christian Education resource area; and
3. the Church Library located in the Church meeting room.

Copies of all forms referenced in this document are located in Section N and are available from the church office.

A.4 SAFE CHURCH TASK TEAM

The Safe Church Task Team's function is to oversee the implementation of the Safe Church Policies and Procedures.

1. Team composition: The Safe Church Task Team will be comprised of one member from each of the following Ministries. The Personnel Ministry will be responsible for the general administration of the Policy and act as a resource for the other Task Team members.
 - a. Diaconate
 - b. Faith Exploration Ministry
 - c. Music Ministry
 - d. Personnel Ministry
 - e. Properties Ministry
 - f. Welcoming Ministry
 - g. Connections Ministry
2. The Team will:
 - a. Annually review and update Safe Church Policies and Procedures.
 - b. Confirm staff and volunteers working with youth are trained in Safe Church Policies, including keeping an attendance sheet of who has received training and copies of the and Acknowledgement of Safe Church Policies and Procedures forms,
 - c. Oversee the completion of CORI Acknowledgement Forms,
 - d. Receive Criminal Background reports referred to them by the CORI Requestor,
 - e. Verify that Criminal Background Reports, Incident Reports, and other documents are stored in a safe and secure location,
 - f. Receive and manage Incident Report Forms,
 - g. When necessary, report incidents to the State of Massachusetts Department of Children and Families or other agency as appropriate, in conjunction with the clergy, and
 - h. Manage the review formal complaints of adult misconduct.

B. BUILDING SAFETY

It is the responsibility of MCC to maintain physical safety of the church building.

B.1 GENERAL

MCC will:

1. Maintain the building upkeep to preserve physical safety.
2. Maintain the fire alarm system, fire extinguishers and first aid kits.
3. Create and post floor plans indicating emergency exits, fire extinguishers, first aid kits and emergency phone numbers.
4. Provide users of the building a process by which to report any safety issues to the Properties Ministry.
5. Follow health department guidelines for food preparation and comply with local board of health inspection requirements.

B.2 OPEN DOOR POLICY

MCC has an open-door philosophy, meaning that all rooms, with the exception of rest rooms, are to be open and visible from outside of the room at all times.

B.3 ACCESS CODE AND KEY POLICY

If a person wishes to be given an access code or a key to the MCC building, they may request the same of the Properties Ministry. A Code/Key Registry will be maintained by the Properties Ministry with the help of the church's Office Administrator. The access code or key will be issued if the following conditions are met.

1. The person requesting of an access code or a key must have a clearly stated reason for the request. The request will be considered and approved by the Properties Ministry before a code or a key will be issued.
2. The person requesting the code or the key must sign the Code/Key Registry and a Statement of Compliance prior to receiving the code or key.
3. Keys shall be returned when they are no longer needed to the Properties Ministry or the Church Administrator and the return documented accordingly.
4. Codes are not to be shared with any unauthorized persons. Keys are not to be loaned or given to any unauthorized persons. Keys are not to be duplicated, or kept beyond the time that they are needed. Authorized code/key holders may only share or loan their code or key to/with a spouse if the spouse has signed the Code/Key Registry and a Statement of Compliance.

B.4 OUTSIDE GROUPS

All outside groups who rent or use the church facilities will receive a copy of the Safe Church Policies and Procedures Summary document. Prior to being given access to the church, the group must agree to comply with its provisions as pertain to their use of the building, and to sign the Statement of Compliance form.

B.5 CHURCH EVENT MONITORS/DE-ESCALATORS

Church event monitor(s)/de-escalator(s) will be in attendance at church worship services and church sponsored events taking place in the church sanctuary, Ames Hall and/or the church school wing, to greet, become aware of and observe people attending the service or the event, focusing in particular on people who are not known to the monitor/de-escalator.

The event monitor(s)/de-escalator(s) will watch for potential situations that could result in conflict, disruption or danger and take whatever actions that they deem appropriate to defuse the situation.

The Deacons are responsible for the creation and administration of monitoring/de-escalation procedures related to church worship services.

The organizers of other church sponsored events are responsible for the creation and administration of monitoring/de-escalation procedures related to these events.

The sponsors and/or organizers of events not sponsored by the church, whether or not the church is a participant in these events, are responsible for the creation and administration of monitoring and de-escalation procedures related to these events.

C. SCREENING AND HIRING

C.1 DEFINITIONS

MCC, the Church: Memorial Congregational Church of Sudbury, Inc.

Authorized Volunteer: Any person who offers or is recruited, has completed the appropriate application and has been accepted by the appropriate supervisor, or Ministry to provide unpaid services. This may include people to whom access codes or keys have been assigned, Sunday School teachers, youth leaders, and/or drivers for church-sponsored youth events.

External candidate: an applicant for a position, paid or volunteer, who is not a member of MCC, has not been actively and regularly participating as a member or friend of MCC for at least six months, or has never held a position at MCC previously.

Staff or paid employee or contractor: Any individual hired and compensated by MCC on a part-time, full-time, temporary, or permanent basis or on a contracted basis.

Youth: Anyone less than the age of 18.

Direct contact: someone who has the immediate responsibility for the care of children and/or youth or

who has regular face to face interactions with children and/or youth, such as Sunday School teachers, youth group leaders, youth choir directors, or nursery supervisors and helpers.

Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI): Criminal information as defined in M.G.L c. 6, § 167 and 803 CMR 2.02 Criminal Offender Record Information, regulated by the Massachusetts Department of Criminal Justice Information Services (DCJIS).

iCORI: The internet-based system used in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to access CORI.

CORI Requestor(s): The person(s) authorized by MCC to submit a request for CORI or other criminal history information. The CORI Requestor shall comply with the requirements of 803 CMR 2.04 iCORI Registration and other applicable provisions of 803 CMR 2.00.

C.2 VOLUNTEER SCREENING

MCC welcomes volunteers to become involved in the programs offered as part of our ministries. For those volunteers who work with youth on a regular basis, volunteers should generally be at least five years older than the youth or children they work with and have been part of the church community for six months, subject to the discretion of the clergy or the Safe Church Task Team.

C.3 APPLICATION PROCEDURES

1. All candidates, whether external or internal, seeking paid employment at MCC; all paid staff; and all ordained staff, whether paid or not, will complete the following, contractors will complete item b and c only:
 - a. an Application for Employment or provide a detailed resume that includes an employment history and a list of contacts for each employer;
 - b. a signed Authorization for a CORI check and other background check authorizations if requested; and
 - c. a signed Statement of Compliance.
2. All Authorized Volunteers working with youth, or who will accompany youth on field trips outside MCC or supervise youth overnight as a regular part of their responsibilities, whether on or off MCC property will complete the following:
 - a. a signed Authorization for a CORI check and other background check authorizations if requested; and
 - b. a signed Statement of Compliance.
3. All Authorized Volunteers serving as Sunday School teachers, substitute teachers, or any position that requires regular direct contact with youth will complete the following:
 - a. a signed Authorization for a CORI check and other background check authorizations if requested; and

- b. a signed Statement of Compliance.
4. Chaperones for overnight events or extended off-site will complete the following:
 - a. a signed Authorization for a CORI check and other background check authorizations if requested; and
 - b. a signed Statement of Compliance.
 5. All other chaperones and drivers for field trips will complete the following:
 - a. a signed Statement of Compliance.
 6. All applications for paid employment or authorized volunteer positions or proposals for engagement as a contractor will be reviewed by an appropriate supervisor, or ministry. Before assuming the paid or volunteer position or engagement as a contractor, the applicant will be interviewed.
 - a. Gaps in time, irregular employment patterns, or unexplained absences noted on Application for Employment must be discussed with both former employers and potential employees.
 - b. Candidates for paid positions: references will be contacted for information that may be helpful in determining the applicant's suitability for the position being sought.
 - c. Candidates for volunteer positions: references may be contacted at the discretion of the supervisor or supervisory board or ministry.
 - d. Interviews will be conducted with those applicants who are deemed suitable following the review of the application and contact with previous employers and references.
 - e. If the applicant is deemed suitable for the position being sought, a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check will be conducted if required per sub-section C.4. Other forms of background checking may be also done, as MCC may deem to be appropriate or is required.

C.4 CORI CHECK POLICY

The CORI Requestor in conjunction with the Safe Church Task Team shall verify that the requirements of 803 CMR 2.11 Requirements for Requestors to Request CORI have been complied with. Information collected will be held in confidence. Upon receipt of the CORI Acknowledgement Form, the CORI Requestor will submit a request to DCJIS. If the CORI response returns Criminal History Information concerning the prospective employee or volunteer, the Safe Church Task Team will review the information in accordance with the criteria set forth in this policy, and will consult with the Senior Minister if necessary. After such review, the Safe Church Task Team will make a decision regarding the personnel situation at issue.

CORI checks will be repeated at least every three years, and may be done more often at the discretion of MCC.

C.5 POLICY FOR REVIEW OF CRIMINAL RECORDS

The following criteria should be used by the Safe Church Task Team in conducting a review:

1. Anyone convicted of, or who admits to, committing child abuse, whether physical, emotional, or sexual, will not be considered, under any circumstances, for a position involving contact with children.
2. There will be a presumption that the applicant is ineligible for any position involving direct contact with children if the background check indicates a felony conviction for a crime which involves the use of force or violence, rape, indecent assault, battery, or the crime of attempting any of the aforementioned offenses; or illegally manufacturing, distributing, or dispensing any controlled substances or the crime of possession with intent to manufacture, distribute or dispense a controlled substance, or has been charged with any felony listed above and is either awaiting trial or has been defaulted by the court.
3. The Safe Church Task Team may consider other factors as it deems appropriate that bear on a candidate's suitability for a paid or volunteer position.

D. YOUTH PROTECTION AND SUPERVISION

D.1 YOUTH PROTECTION AND SUPERVISION

MCC is committed to creating a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love. Therefore, we will provide supervision for all activities and programs involving youth, and employ practices that provide for the safety of all youth participants, as well as teachers, leaders and helpers who serve in the youth ministry.

Generally, all volunteers who work with the youth ministry must be a member of MCC or have been part of the church community for at least six months, subject to the discretion of the ministerial staff or the Safe Church Task Team.

D.2 DEFINITIONS

Adult: A person 18 years of age or older.

Chaperone: a volunteer who helps supervise youth for a special activity, such as a party or field trip. To be an approved chaperone, an individual must be at least 21 years old and a minimum of five years older than the oldest youth participating in the activity.

Helper, assistant: a volunteer who assists with regular youth activities, such as Sunday school, nursery care, and related activities or special youth activities, and who functions in a non-supervisory role, under the supervision of a leader or a teacher. Helpers shall be at least 14 years of age.

Nursery/Toddler Caregiver: an employee or volunteer who supervises activities in the nursery/toddler rooms. Nursery/toddler caregivers shall be at least 18 years of age.

Supervisor: a paid or volunteer worker who has direct responsibility for the care of youth, such as a

teacher, a leader, chaperone, or youth choir director. Supervisors shall be at least 18 years of age.

Teacher: a volunteer who leads Sunday school and Sunday school activities. Teachers shall be at least 18 years of age.

Field trip: a youth event that is scheduled off MCC property, whether for in-town or out-of-town, one hour, one day, or overnight.

Youth: Anyone less than the age of 18.

D.3 YOUTH PROTECTION PROCEDURES

1. **Two Adult Policy:** The two adult policy is intended to protect youth and prevent adults from encountering a situation where they could be wrongfully accused. Therefore, no adult will be alone in the church, or at a church approved activity, with a youth that is not his or her own or a relative, without permission of the youth's parent(s). If a second adult cannot be located, the class or activity will be canceled, and the youth will be returned to their parent(s) or guardian(s).

At least two chaperones should wait with youth being picked up after a on-site or offsite event. In the event that an adult is alone with a youth waiting to be picked up, they should wait in a public space.

It is permissible to have one adult per car with each car carrying a group of young people on a field trip, but at no time should an adult be alone with a child other than his/her own. Two children and one adult in a vehicle is considered appropriate

2. **Five Year Older Rule:** All teachers, volunteers, helpers, chaperones and/or drivers for youth activities whether held at the church or off-site must be at least five years older than the oldest participant in the class, group, or activity.
3. **Permission and Medical Release Forms:**
 - a. All youth participating in a youth program or going on a field trip, must have a Medical Release Form (Section N) on file before their participation.
 - b. All youth going on a field trip or overnight trip or participating in an overnight event, must have an MCC Permission Form (Section N) on file before their participation.
 - c. Forms must be given to youth or parents/guardians to be completed and returned to the Minister (or Pastor) of Youth and Families, or the Youth Ministry leader for youth group participation.
 - d. Completed forms will be kept on file in the Minister (or Pastor) of Youth and Families' office.
 - e. Each time a field trip or overnight event occurs, the original forms must be taken with an adult leader while a copy remains in the Minister (or Pastor) of Youth and Families' office.

4. Field trip/youth event guidelines

- a. Faith Exploration Ministry approval: All field trips and/or events shall receive the approval of the Faith Exploration Ministry before the activity can take place and before fundraising for the activity begins.
- b. Approval of Chaperones: All chaperones for youth activities will be approved by Faith Exploration Ministry.
- c. Parental Consent: Parents or guardians shall be fully informed about programs, activities, leaders, chaperones, dates and times, cost, method of transportation, and purpose of the scheduled trip or activity. The appropriate signed Field Trip Consent Form (Section N) should be completed and returned before any child or youth can participate in the event.
- d. Vehicle rules:
 - i. Drivers for field trips must be 25 years or older and have a copy of their driver's license and registration on file.
 - ii. Anyone who has had their license revoked or suspended within the past five years will be ineligible to drive for youth activities. At MCC's option, MCC may request that a potential driver provide or give permission for MCC to obtain a copy of the driver's driving record from the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles.
 - iii. If the license was revoked or suspended more than five years ago, the Faith Exploration Ministry will make a decision as to the driver's suitability.
 - iv. All occupants of a vehicle will use an individual seat belt (no multiple belting) at all times during the operation of the vehicle.
 - v. No cell phone use is permitted while driving. If there is a true emergency, the driver will pull off the roadway at a safe location before placing a call.
- e. Appropriate supervision: The two adult rule applies for all church-related events. If the minimum level of supervision cannot be achieved, the activity must be cancelled; this may result in the loss of deposit fees for which the church cannot be responsible.
 - i. Non-overnight activities on church property: 2 adults for each group.
 - ii. Day trips off church property: a minimum of 2 adults (more, if the size of the group requires)
 - iii. For overnight activities, at least 2 adults (more, if the size of the group requires), and if the youth participants are both male and female, there must be at least one male and one female chaperone.

5. Discipline

The purpose of discipline is to maintain order in a manner consistent with the teaching of

Christian responsibility, mutual respect, and cooperation.

- a. Teachers, leaders, supervisors, and/or chaperones, as appropriate, are encouraged to communicate expectations clearly and respectfully for appropriate behavior at the beginning of each Sunday school year and then periodically as needed and at the beginning of all other church sponsored activities whether on or off-site.
 - b. If a youth's behavior is disruptive, the teacher, leader, chaperone, or supervisor in charge will address the issue with the youth directly. Should the behavior be repeated, the teacher, leader, chaperone, or supervisor in charge will contact the Minister (or Pastor) of Youth and Families, who will follow up with parents/guardians as necessary. If this behavior occurs on a trip or at a meeting, the teacher, leader, chaperone, or supervisor in charge reserves the right to contact the parent/guardian and send the youth home at the parents/guardian's expense.
 - c. No child will be disciplined by the use of any form of physical punishment or verbal abuse.
 - d. Adult volunteers must report all infractions of youth rules to the Minister (or Pastor) of Youth and Families or an adult leader of the group.
6. Health and Safety
- a. A first aid kit is available in the Christian Education Office.
 - b. Fire safety information, emergency evacuation routes and meeting place will be clearly posted in every classroom, along with emergency numbers for the church, police, and fire departments.
 - c. Emergency procedures, including evacuation plans, will be reviewed at each teacher orientation.
 - d. Incident Reports Forms (Form A-1) are found in the Sunday school rooms and the youth room and should be filled out when necessary. Forms are to be filed with the Safe Church Ministry and given to the parents as warranted.
 - e. If there is a medical emergency, the parents and Minister (or Pastor) of Youth and Families should be contacted and 911 called as warranted.
 - f. The importance of hand washing before handling food and after any clean-up should be emphasized.
7. Concern for a Youth's Safety Outside of Church

If in the context of a Sunday school class or other event, a youth discloses information that raises concern about his or her safety, the incident should be discussed promptly with a member of the Safe Church Task Team and/or a member of the ministerial staff to clarify and determine an appropriate level of response.

E. INTERNET SAFETY

Digital media are an integral part of daily life offering many exciting and ever changing opportunities for communication. The use and abuse of digital media can also disproportionately shape the lives of young people. Behavior in the digital world is never private. Posted content may be used out of context and out of the control of the originating individuals and organizations creating the potential for harm and abuse in adult/adult, adult/child, adult/youth and youth/youth relationships. In an effort to mitigate this potential for harm and abuse the MCC policy regarding the use of digital media follows.

1. MCC Safe Church Policies and Procedures apply to all actions that transpire in digital communications, just as they apply to actions that transpire in the physical world.
2. All digital communications (email, social networking sites or platforms, notes, texts, or posts, etc.) are considered NOT to be confidential and will be treated accordingly.
3. All private digital communication between adults and unrelated children or youths, including the use of social networking websites like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, instant messaging, texting, and the like, is prohibited.
4. All digital interactions are to be transparent: done in such a way that it is easy for others to see what has transpired in the interaction.
5. All laws regarding the reporting of suspected abuse, neglect, or the exploitation of children or youth apply to digital interactions in the same way that as they do to physical interactions.

E.1 DEFINITIONS

Church Sponsored Sites — any group, page or list-serve that is created by a designated member of MCC for the purpose of establishing, maintaining or growing ministries to and with youth and/or adults.

Inappropriate Content — refers both to content that is improper or offensive, but also content that might be suited to the medium but not to the relationship.

E.2 MINOR TO ADULT RELATIONSHIPS

1. Adults should not submit “friend” requests to minors or youth. Youth may request friendships with adults, and adults should discern the level of contact they want to maintain with youth prior to responding to these requests.
2. When and where available, adults may choose to create separate private and professional profiles on networking sites to create a line of privacy.
3. If an adult chooses to accept friend requests from minors or youth that are associated with the youth group, we recommend that other adults (within the youth group) have full access to the correspondent’s profile and correspondence.
4. Adults who choose to accept friend requests from youth should use all privacy settings applicable to shield youth from any inappropriate content that may exist within the adult’s profile.

5. All youth and adults should be informed that any communication that is sent via digital means (email, social networking site notes or posts, texts, etc.) is not confidential and may be reported or shared with others.
6. Adults should archive or save all email correspondence with youth.
7. We strongly recommend “closed” but not “hidden” groups be used for the youth group. These groups should have both youth and adult administrators.
8. Clergy who work directly with youth are encouraged to use church sponsored digital communications groups to maintain contact with youth members.
9. Members of the youth group should decide within their covenant whether or not their social networking site groups are open to parents of current members.
10. Covenants should be created to govern what is appropriate and inappropriate content to be placed and displayed in the online group for the youth group.
11. Any inappropriate material that is not covered by “Mandatory Reporting” laws should be deleted from the site. Any material that is covered by “Mandatory Reporting” laws should be reported to the Safe Church Ministry, documented for church records, and then deleted from the site.
12. Any content that details inappropriate behavior (outside of the bounds of the established covenant) during a church sponsored event or activity should be addressed by adults.
13. Adult leaders are not responsible for internet youth pages that are not sponsored by MCC.

E.3 ADULT TO ADULT RELATIONSHIPS

1. Adult members who seek religious or spiritual advice from clergy via digital means (email, social networking site posts, etc.) should be informed that their communication is NOT confidential. Use of digital means to communicate nullifies confidentiality.
2. When and where available, clergy are encouraged to consider creating a personal and a professional account to maintain appropriate boundaries with MCC members or other members of communities of faith.
3. Clergy should consider the impact of declining a “friend” request from church members. These encounters may create tension in “real world” relationships.
4. Clergy are encouraged to use privacy settings to shield both adult and youth members from viewing content that may be inappropriate.

E.4 COMMUNICATION AND CONTACT

1. Transitions
 - a. Clergy who are leaving MCC should refrain from offering pastoral care through digital communication after the end date of their contract with MCC.

- b. Former youth members and adult leaders of the youth group, due to departure, removal, or loss of eligibility (aged out of a program) should be removed from digital communication youth groups (Facebook groups, list serves, etc.).
- 2. Video chats, blogs, video blogs
 - a. Adults should refrain from initiating video chats with youth.
 - b. Participants in a video chat or blog should consider what will be shown in the video such as their surroundings, their clothing/state of dress, etc.
 - c. All transcripts of on-line text chats, video chats, blogs or video blogs should be saved when possible.
 - d. All clergy and youth leaders should consider the content and nature of any post that will be read by or visible to youth because it might be perceived as the voice of the church, and may be misconstrued as church policies and procedures.
- 3. Publishing or posting content on-line
 - a. Secure signed Media Release forms from parents/guardians of minors who may participate in activities that may be photographed or videoed for distribution.
 - b. When video is distributed of services or activities on the web or via other broadcast media, signs should be posted that indicate the service will be broadcast.
 - c. Photos that are published on church sponsored sites should not include name or contact information for individuals unless otherwise requested.

F. SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

F.1 REPORTING AND RESPONSE POLICY

Allegations of child abuse should be promptly reported to a member of the Safe Church Task Team or the Senior Minister. If there is a reasonable cause to believe that child abuse has occurred the allegation will be reported to the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF) and investigated in the manner described in section F.3.

All member of the church community, including members, friends, staff, and volunteers, are morally obligated to report reasonable suspicions of child abuse.

All allegations will be investigated with due respect for the dignity and privacy of everyone involved. Activities related to the handling of complaints or incidents will be documented, and documents will be maintained in a secure location as determined by the Safe Church Task Team. When necessary, full cooperation will be given to civil authorities.

F.2 DEFINITIONS

Child: a person under the age of eighteen, as defined by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Mandated Reporter: a person who, by virtue of their profession or position, is required by law to report all reasonable suspicions of child abuse. Mandated child abuse reporters include:

1. clergy members, including ordained or licensed church leaders;
2. persons performing official duties on behalf of the church (including deacons who serve communion, lay ministers, etc.); and
3. church employees and volunteers, who supervise, educate, coach, train, or counsel children on a regular basis.

Incident Report: a written report submitted to the Safe Church Task Force that contains all the information necessary to complete and file a mandated report with DCF.

Mandated report: a written report that must be submitted to DCF within 48 hours of making an oral report of abuse.

F.3 REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

1. Standard for Reporting

MCC observes the Massachusetts standard for reporting abuse. Anyone with “a reasonable cause to believe” that a child is suffering or has suffered from abuse or neglect will follow the response and reporting policies and procedures outlined below.

2. Preventing Imminent Harm

- a. Any circumstance of abuse that poses imminent risk of serious harm will be reported by calling 911 and the Sudbury Police Department at 978-443-2121. Because of the vulnerability of these individuals their right to our protection supersedes a right to confidentiality of the parties involved.
- b. Call an ambulance if the injury is severe.

3. Initial report

If a child discloses information or any individual otherwise has a reasonable cause to believe that a child is not safe, the incident should be discussed promptly with the ministerial staff and/or a Safe Church Task Team member to clarify and determine an appropriate level of response. A Safe Church Task Team member will inform the parent(s) or guardian(s). If a member of the Safe Church Task Team is not available, contact the Senior Minister who will inform the appropriate parties.

4. Incident Report

An incident report must be submitted to the Safe Church Task Team by the person initially

reporting the incident, or by their designee, such as the Senior Minister or another Church employee within 24 hours of having made the initial report.

- a. If needed, a member of the Safe Church Task Team will assist in the completion of the incident report.
- b. An incident report must be submitted even if it is determined that an oral or a mandated report to DCF had not been necessary.
- c. Incident Reports are required for all unusual occurrences.

5. Oral reports

A Safe Church Task Team member will make an oral report to DCF by means of a telephone call, if it has been determined that there is a reasonable cause to believe that child abuse has occurred. Following the oral report, a mandated report will be filed with DCF.

Oral reports can be made to DCF by calling:

- a. the Child-At-Risk-Hotline at 1-800-792-5200,
- b. or the Area Office of the Department of Children and Families at 508-424-0100.

6. Mandated Report

Following the oral report, a member of the Safe Church Task Team or the Senior Minister will submit a mandated report to DCF within 48 hours of making the oral report.

7. Individual Reporting

No one is prohibited from making a report of abuse directly to DCF. Reporters can file an oral report by calling one of the telephone numbers indicated above. However, in order to avoid duplicate reports and ensure that proper procedures are followed, it is recommended that an MCC designated reporter, such as a member of the Safe Church Task Team or the Senior Minister be responsible notifying DCF and for filing the report the mandated report(s).

8. Follow-up

- a. The accused will immediately be removed from all contact with children. The further disposition of accused paid employees or contractors will be determined in consultation with the supervising ministry, the Safe Church Task Team, the Senior Minister, and the Chair of the Church Council. The accused will be given the recommendation to obtain their own lawyer.
- b. The Senior Minister or Safe Church Task Team member will inform the parent(s) or guardian(s) (if they were not the ones accused) of the concern, and whether or not a report has been filed with DCF.

F.4 RESPONSE FOLLOWING A MANDATED REPORT

The response following a report of alleged child abuse, including contact with the church's attorney, will be coordinated by the Safe Church Task Team.

If there is an allegation against pastoral staff, a church deacon, designated by the Chair of the Diaconate, will contact the Area Minister.

1. Investigation

- a. The extent to which information will be shared with the congregation will be determined by the Safe Church Task Team and others as appropriate. The input of the Area Minister will be sought and, if pastoral staff is involved, the Church Council may be consulted in making this decision.
- b. All necessary parties will cooperate with the investigations made by DCF and the police.
- c. If necessary, the Church Council will appoint a liaison to be the designated contact with the media.

2. Continuing the Ministry of the Church

- a. Pastoral support will be offered to all parties involved, including those who have made the complaint, the accused, the families of both, and the congregation. Decisions about how this support will be given will be made by pastoral staff and the Diaconate.
- b. If the allegations involve pastoral staff, the ministry of the church will need to be maintained while the issue is being addressed. Decisions regarding how this will be accomplished will be made by the Diaconate with assistance from the Area Minister and approved by the Church Council.

3. Documentation

All information obtained during the investigation, all activities related to the issue being addressed, and all findings are to be carefully documented and signed, including dates, times, and locations of all activities and meetings; the names of the parties present; any decisions or conclusions made; and any further action to be taken. This documentation is to be retained in a secure location as determined by the Safe Church Task Team.

G. ADULT CONDUCT

MCC wishes to create and maintain a community in which members, friends, staff, contractors, and volunteers can worship and work together in an atmosphere free of all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation.

G.1 DEFINITIONS

Sexual exploitation: activity or conduct of a sexual nature in which a minister or anyone in a position of

power (e.g., an influential Church member) 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 person in power.

Harassment: repeated misconduct, whether verbal or physical, that creates an environment that is uncomfortable, unwelcoming, discriminating, or intimidating, or leads to an atmosphere in which a person's ability to participate in worship and activities at the church is compromised.

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, subjecting the person to public discrimination, or unsolicited and unwelcome contact that has sexual overtones. Sexual harassment also includes continuing to express sexual interest after being informed directly that the interest is unwelcome and using sexualized behavior to control, influence, or affect the career, salary, work, learning, or worship environment of another.

Elderly Person: an individual who is sixty years of age or over.

Vulnerable adult: Any person aged 18 or over who is or may be in need of assistance by reason of physical, mental disability, age, emotional illness, and who is unable to take care of or to protect him or herself against significant harm or serious exploitation which may be occasioned by the actions or inactions of other people.

G.2 POLICY ON ADULT CONDUCT

The Church is strongly opposed to sexual exploitation and harassment of any kind, and such behavior is prohibited. It is the intention of the church to respond to allegations of behavior that are contrary to this policy and, if necessary, to discipline those persons who violate it and/or report it to the appropriate authorities. However, every individual always has the right to report allegations directly to local authorities if they choose.

All persons engaged in the ministry of MCC 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 exploitation or harassment of parishioner(s) or other individual(s) by anyone engaged in the ministry of MCC is unethical and unprofessional behavior and will not be tolerated.

Should someone observe that a vulnerable adult or an elderly person or any other person is being abused, harassed, or exploited, a concerned member may initiate proceedings on their behalf by contacting a member of the Safe Church Task Team and/or the Senior Minister.

Activities that involve inappropriate physical or intimate contact are not suitable recreational activities.

Unhealthy activities such as smoking, irresponsible drinking of alcohol, use of illegal drugs, and improper language is unacceptable behavior. No drinking of alcohol is permitted by adults at church sponsored events where youth are involved.

H. COMPLAINTS CONCERNING SUSPECTED ADULT MISCONDUCT

Any person may bring forward a concern or complaint concerning suspected adult misconduct. Such concerns or complaints will be investigated and action(s) taken as deemed appropriate by the church. The utmost respect shall be given to the confidentiality and privacy of all parties. Any person who makes a report or assists in investigation of such a report, will not be adversely affected either as to the terms and conditions of their employment, or engagement by the church, or their membership or involvement with the church, or otherwise discriminated against.

H.1 INFORMAL MEASURES

The complainant(s) has the option to resolve complaints using informal measures.

1. The complainant can attempt to resolve the matter directly with the individual(s) accused of sexual exploitation or harassment or other inappropriate behavior.
2. The complainant can attempt to resolve the matter with the assistance of his/her supervisor, a Safe Church Task Team member, or a member of the MCC clergy.

H.2 FORMAL MEASURES

If an informal resolution of the complaint(s) does not seem appropriate, or possible, or does not succeed, the person with the concern should complete an Incident Report form and submit it to a Safe Church Task Force member and/or the Senior Minister. If the allegation involves the Senior Minister, the person with a concern should contact the Personnel Ministry Chair, the Chair of the Diaconate, or Safe Church Task Team member. The Safe Church Task Force will initiate a formal investigation of all complaints, using the following procedure:

1. A task force will be convened.
 - a. If the allegation involves the Senior Minister, the task force will be comprised of a Safe Church Task Force member, Personnel Ministry Chair, and the Chair of the Diaconate. The Chair of the Diaconate will inform the Metro-Boston Area Minister. MCC will cooperate fully in any conference procedures related to the person's ministerial authorization.
 - b. If the allegation involves another authorized UCC minister, the task force will be comprised of the Senior Minister, a Safe Church Task Team member, the Personnel Ministry Chair, and the Chair of the Diaconate. The Chair of the Diaconate will inform the Metro-Boston Association Area Minister. MCC will cooperate fully in any conference procedures related to the person's ministerial authorization.
 - c. If the allegation involves another MCC staff member, or a contractor, the task force will be comprised of the Senior Minister, a Safe Church Task Team member, and Personnel Ministry Chair.
 - d. If the allegation involves a lay person the task force will be comprised of the Senior Minister, and a Safe Church Task Team member.

2. The person accused will be notified that an incident report form has been filed.
3. The Safe Church Task Team will gather statements from the individuals involved and anyone else with pertinent information. The information gathering may include personal interviews as the task force deems necessary.
4. The Safe Church Task Team will consider the information gathered and make a determination of findings.
5. If the Safe Church Task Team finds that the complaint is verified and that harassment or sexual exploitation or other inappropriate behavior has occurred, the task force will inform the individuals involved and take the appropriate actions, which may include:
 - a. Formal reprimand with defined expectations for changed behavior, including possible public notification;
 - b. Recommending or requiring a program of growth that may include education and/or counseling;
 - c. Probation, with the terms of the probation clearly identified;
 - d. Dismissal from employment or volunteer leadership position, and, in extreme cases, affiliation with, or membership in, the Church; or
 - e. In the case of a contractor, possible termination of the contract.
6. If the Safe Church Task Team finds that no sexual exploitation or harassment or other inappropriate behavior has occurred, the employee or volunteer or contractor, as applicable, and the complainant will be informed. A report of these findings will be given to the employee's or the volunteer's or the contractor's supervisor or supervisory ministry or committee.
7. If the Safe Church Task Team finds that the incident is, by law, reportable, as may be required in the case of elder abuse, or for certain vulnerable adults, the Safe Church Task Team or the Senior Minister will initiate the reporting process as required by applicable State regulations.
 - a. Reports of abuse of disabled persons can be made to the Disabled Persons Protection Commission Hotline at 800-426-9009. Telephone reports are required to be followed up by a written report within 48 hours.
 - b. Reports of elder abuse can be made to the Elder Abuse Hotline at 800-922-2275.

H.3 APPEAL

If the complainant(s) or accused person(s) is not satisfied with the disposition of the matter, he or she has the right to appeal to the Church Council who will appoint a task force to review the complaint.

H.4 DOCUMENTATION

All information obtained during the investigation, all activities related to the issue being addressed, and

all findings are to be carefully documented and signed, including dates, times, and locations of all activities and meetings; the names of the parties present; any decisions or conclusions made; and any further action to be taken. This documentation is to be retained in a secure location determined by the Safe Church Task Team.

I. TRAINING AND EDUCATION

I.1 POLICY ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Every effort will be made to train all employees, mandated reporters, and volunteers, as deemed appropriate, regarding the Safe Church Policies and Procedures. Mandated reporters, as well as staff and volunteers who have regular direct contact with youth will also receive education about child abuse awareness. Anyone who has regular contact with children and anyone who will be given access to the Church by way of a key or an access code will be asked to read and sign a Statement of Compliance.

I.2 PROCEDURES FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

1. Training will be offered at the beginning of each church school year, and at the start of employment for paid staff.
2. If substantial changes or additions are made to the Safe Church Policy training will be provided relative to the changes.
3. The church's Administrative Assistant will maintain a record of who has received training.
4. Training will include the use of SNEUCC recommended and, where required, State provided training materials, a review of policies and procedures that are specific to MCC pertinent to the work in which the employee or volunteer will be involved, and instruction in the use and completion of the various forms.

J. SAFE CHURCH POLICIES AND PROCEDURES REVIEW

The initial MCC Safe Church Policies and Procedures Manual, cover dated March 2009, footer dated January 1, 2015 and Executive Summary, dated February 2009, were updated and revised during 2022/2023 by the Safe Church Task Team and approved by the Church Council June 11,, 2024. The issue dates and revision history follows.

DATES OF ISSUE

Initial issue:

Safe Church Policies and Procedures	Cover date March 2009 Footer date January 1, 2015
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Safe Church Policies and Procedures Executive Summary	February 2009
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General updates and revisions for alignment with changes in State regulations and MCC practice:

Safe Church Policies and Procedures	June 11, 2024
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Safe Church Policies and Procedures Executive Summary	June 11. 2024
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K. APPENDIX – CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT REPORTING

Child Abuse & Neglect Reporting

A Mandated Reporter's Guide
Massachusetts Department of Children and Families
June 4, 2018, * February 28, 2016

INTRODUCTION*

Under Massachusetts law, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) is the state agency that receives all reports of suspected abuse and/or neglect of children under the age of 18. State law requires professionals whose work brings them in contact with children to notify DCF if they suspect that a child is being abused and/or neglected. DCF depends on reports from professionals and other concerned individuals to learn about children who may need protection, more than 75,000 reports are received on behalf of children each year. The Department is responsible for protecting children from abuse and/or neglect. DCF seeks to ensure that each child has a safe, nurturing, permanent home. The Department also provides a range of services to support and strengthen families with children at risk of abuse and/or neglect.

Who is a mandated reporter?*

Massachusetts law defines the following professionals as mandated reporters:

- Physicians, medical interns, hospital personnel engaged in the examination, care or treatment of persons, medical examiners;
- Emergency medical technicians, dentists, nurses, chiropractors, podiatrists, optometrists, osteopaths;
- Public or private school teachers, educational administrators, guidance or family counselors;
- Early education, preschool, child care or after school program staff, including any person paid to care for, or work with, a child in any public or private facility, home or program funded or licensed by the Commonwealth, which provides child care or residential services. This includes child care resource and referral agencies, as well as voucher management agencies, family child care providers and child care food programs;
- Child care licensors, such as staff from the Department of Early Education and Care;
- Social workers, foster parents, probation officers, clerks magistrate of the district courts parole officers;
- Firefighters and police officers;
- School attendance officers, allied mental health and licensed human services professionals;
- Psychiatrists, psychologists, clinical social workers, drug and alcoholism counselors;
- Persons in charge of a medical or other public or private institution, school or facility or their agents;
- Clergy members, including ordained or licensed leaders of any church or religious body, persons performing official duties on behalf of a church or religious body, or persons employed by a religious body to supervise, educate, coach, train, or counsel a child on a regular basis; and
- The Child Advocate.

As a mandated reporter, what are my responsibilities?

Massachusetts law requires mandated reporters to immediately make an oral report to DCF when, in their professional capacity, they have reasonable cause to believe that a child under the age of 18 years is suffering from abuse and/or neglect. A written report is to be submitted within 48 hours.

In addition to filing with the Department, a mandated reporter may notify local law enforcement or the Office of the Child Advocate of any suspected abuse and/or neglect. You are required to report any physical or emotional injury resulting from abuse; any indication of neglect, including malnutrition; any instance in which a child is determined to be physically dependent upon an addictive drug at birth; any suspicion of child sexual exploitation or human trafficking; or death as a result of abuse and/or neglect. In addition, you must report a death as a result of abuse and/or neglect to the local District Attorney and to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.

Mandated Reporters who are staff members of medical or other public or private institutions, schools, or facilities, must either notify the Department directly or notify the person in charge of the institution, school or facility, or his/her designee, who then becomes responsible for filing the report. Should the person in charge/designee advise against filing, the staff member retains the right to contact DCF directly and to notify the local police or the Office of the Child Advocate. (Ch. 119, § 51A) Under the law, mandated reporters are protected from liability in any civil or criminal action and from any discriminatory or retaliatory actions by an employer. The written report must be submitted to DCF within 48 hours after the oral report has been made.

Any person defined by law as a mandated reporter is required to assist DCF in its response under Ch. 119, § 51B, even if they are not the filer of the 51A report. Mandated reporters who are licensed by the Commonwealth are required to complete training to recognize and report suspected child abuse and/or neglect.

What if I fail to report?

Any mandated reporter who fails to make required oral and written reports can be punished by a fine of up to \$1,000. Any mandated reporter who willfully fails to report child abuse and/or neglect that resulted in serious bodily injury or death can be punished by a fine of up to \$5,000 and up to 2½ years in jail, and be reported to the person's professional licensing authority.

All mandated reporters who knowingly and willfully file a frivolous report of child abuse and/or neglect can be punished by a fine of up to \$2,000 for the first offense, up to 6 months in jail for a second offense, and up to 2½ years in jail for a third offense.

How do I make a report of suspected child abuse and/or neglect? When must I file?

When you suspect that a child is being abused and/or neglected, you should immediately telephone the DCF Area Office and ask for the screening unit. You will find a directory of the DCF Area Offices at the end of this guide and on the DCF web site. Offices are staffed between 9 am and 5 pm

weekdays. To make a report at any other time, including after 5 pm and on weekends and holidays, please call the **Child-At-Risk Hotline at 800-792-5200**.

As a mandated reporter you are also required by law to submit a written report to the Department within 48 hours after making the oral report. Mandated reporters are encouraged to utilize the **online abuse/neglect report** option available at mass.gov/dcf to submit the written report; however, written reports may be mailed or faxed to the Department within 48 hours of the oral report. The form for faxing/mailing this report can also be obtained from the DCF website: mass.gov/dcf.

Your report should include:

- Your name, address, telephone number and relationship (if any) to the child(ren);
- All identifying information you have about the child and parent or other caregiver, if known, including emergency contacts and language(s) spoken;
- The nature and extent of the suspected abuse and/or neglect, including any evidence or knowledge of prior injury, abuse, maltreatment, or neglect;
- The identity of the person you believe is responsible for the abuse and/or neglect;
- The circumstances under which you first became aware of the child's injuries, abuse, maltreatment, or neglect, including dates and/or timeframes;
- What action, if any, has been taken thus far to treat, shelter, or otherwise assist the child;
- Any other information you believe might be helpful in establishing the cause of the injury and/or person responsible;
- Any concerns about alcohol/drug use/misuse by the parent/caregiver;
- Any information that could be helpful to DCF staff in making safe contact with an adult victim in situations of domestic violence (e.g., work schedules, place of employment, daily routines);
- Any concerns you have for social worker safety; and
- Any other information about the family's strengths and capacities you believe would be helpful in ensuring the child's safety and/or supporting the family to address the abuse and/or neglect concerns.

Hospital personnel should take photographs of any trauma that is visible on the child. When submitting the written report online, the photographs can be uploaded along with the written report. Otherwise, please mail or deliver the photographs to DCF with the written report.

If you work in a hospital and collect physical evidence of abuse and/or neglect of a child, you must immediately notify the local District Attorney, local law enforcement authorities and the

Department. We recommend that you inform the family that you have referred them to DCF for help, but do not do so if you think it would increase the risk to the child.

How does DCF define abuse and neglect?

Under the Department of Children and Families regulations (110 CMR, section 2.00):

Abuse means: The non-accidental commission of any act by a caregiver which causes, or creates a substantial risk of, physical or emotional injury or sexual abuse to a child; or the victimization of a child through sexual abuse or human trafficking, regardless if the person responsible is a caregiver. This definition is not dependent upon location (i.e., abuse can occur while the child is in an out-of-home or in-home setting). DCF defines "sexual abuse" as any non-accidental act by a caregiver upon a child that constitutes a sexual offense under the laws of the Commonwealth or any sexual contact between a caregiver and a child for whom the caregiver is responsible.

Neglect means: Failure by a caregiver, either deliberately or through negligence or inability, to take those actions necessary to provide a child with minimally adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, supervision, emotional stability and growth, or other essential care, including malnutrition or failure to thrive; provided, however, that such inability is not due solely to inadequate economic resources or solely to the existence of a handicapping condition.

Physical Injury means: Death; or fracture of a bone, a subdural hematoma, burns, impairment of any organ, and any other such nontrivial injury; or soft tissue swelling or skin bruising, depending upon such factors as the child's age, circumstances under which the injury occurred and the number and location of bruises.

Emotional Injury means: An impairment to or disorder of the intellectual or psychological capacity of a child as evidenced by observable and substantial reduction in the child's ability to function within a normal range of performance and behavior.

Who is a caregiver?

A "caregiver" can be a child's parent, step-parent, guardian, or any household member entrusted with the responsibility for a child's health or welfare. In addition, any other person entrusted with the responsibility for a child's health or welfare, both in and out of the child's home, regardless of age, is considered a caregiver. Examples may include: relatives from outside the home, teachers or staff in a school setting, workers at an early education, child care or afterschool program, a babysitter, foster parents, staff at a group care facility, or persons charged with caring for children in any other comparable setting.

When should a report involving domestic violence be filed?

Domestic violence is defined as a pattern of coercive controlling behaviors that one person exercises over another in an intimate relationship. Not every situation involving domestic violence merits intervention by DCF. Mandated reporters are encouraged to carefully review each family's situation and to identify any specific impact on the child(ren) when considering whether or not to file a 51A report with DCF. In some situations a report may actually create additional risks for the

victim and the children. If possible, discuss the filing of a report with the caregiver who is a victim first and address the potential need for safety planning. A report is more likely necessary if the following higher risk circumstances are current concerns:

- The alleged perpetrator threatened to kill the caregiver, children or self and the caregiver fears for their safety;
- The alleged perpetrator physically injured the child in an incident where the caregiver was the target;
- The alleged perpetrator coerced the child to participate in or witness the abuse of a caregiver;
- The alleged perpetrator used or threatened to use a weapon, and the caregiver believes that the perpetrator intended or has the ability to cause harm.

For more information on this topic, please refer to the DCF Brochure, [**Promising Approaches: Working with Families, Child Welfare and Domestic Violence.**](#)

What happens when DCF receives a report of child abuse and/or neglect?

When CF receives a report of abuse and/or neglect, called a "51A report," from either a mandated reporter or another concerned citizen, DCF is required to evaluate the allegations and determine the safety of the children. During DCF's response process, all mandated reporters are required to answer the Department's questions and provide information to assist in determining whether a child is being abused and/or neglected and in assessing the child's safety in the household.

Here are the steps in the Child Protective Services (CPS) process:

- 1. The report is screened.** The purpose of the screening process is to gather sufficient information to determine whether the allegation meets the Department's criteria for suspected abuse and/or neglect, whether there is immediate danger to the safety of a child, whether DCF involvement is warranted and how best to target the Department's initial response. The Department begins its screening process immediately upon receipt of a report. During the screening process DCF obtains information from the person filing the report and also contacts professionals involved with the family, such as doctors or teachers who may be able to provide information about the child's condition. DCF may also contact the family if appropriate.
- 2. If the report is "Screened-In", it is assigned for a Child Protective Services (CPS) Response** to determine whether there is reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused and/or neglected. "Reasonable cause to believe" means a collection of facts, knowledge or observations which tend to support or are consistent with the allegations and when viewed in light of the surrounding circumstances and the credibility of the persons providing the information, would lead a reasonable person to conclude that a child has been abused or neglected. The response includes an investigation of the validity of the allegation(s) received, a determination of current danger and future risk to the child and an assessment of the capacity of the parent(s)/caregiver(s) to provide for the safety, permanency and well-being of their child.

3. A determination is made as to whether the report is:

- **"Unsupported"** – There is not reasonable cause to believe that the child was abused and/or neglected, or that the child's safety or well-being was compromised; or
- **"Supported"** – There is reasonable cause to believe the child was abused and/or neglected; the actions or inactions by the parent(s)/caregiver(s) place the child in danger or pose substantial risk to the child's safety or well-being, or the person was responsible for the child being a victim of sexual exploitation or human trafficking; or
- **"Substantiated Concern"** – There is reasonable cause to believe that the child was neglected and the actions or inactions by the parent(s)/caregiver(s) create the potential for abuse and/or neglect, but there is not immediate danger to the child's safety or well-being.
- DCF also determines whether Department intervention is needed to safeguard the safety and well-being of the children in the home. If DCF involvement continues, a Family Assessment and Action Plan are developed with the family.

Some families come to the attention of the Department outside the 51A process: Children Requiring Assistance (CRA) cases referred by the Juvenile Court, cases referred by the Probate and Family Court, babies surrendered under the Safe Haven Act, and voluntary requests for services by a parent/family. These cases are generally referred directly for family assessment.

What are the timeframes for completing a Screening and/or Response?

- **Screening:** Begins immediately for all reports. For an emergency response it is completed within two hours. For a non-emergency response, screening is completed in one business day and may be extended for one additional business day in limited circumstances.
- **Emergency Response:** Must begin within two hours and be completed within five business days of the report.
- **Non-Emergency Response:** Must begin within two business days and be completed within 15 business days of the report.
- **Family Assessment:** May take up to 60 business days.

Will I be informed about the DCF determination?

If you are the mandated reporter who filed the report, you will receive a copy of the decision letter that is sent to the parents or caregiver. In that letter you will be informed of the Department's response, the determination and whether DCF is opening a case for continued DCF involvement.

If you submitted your written report online, you will also be able to see the screening decision online.

Does DCF tell the family who made the 51A report?

DCF regulations do not allow the Department to disclose the name of a reporter unless ordered by a court or required by statute such as when the Department is required to provide the 51A report to the District Attorney or other law enforcement (CMR 12.00 etseq).

Referrals to the District Attorney

If the Department determines that a child has been sexually abused or sexually exploited, has been a victim of human trafficking, has suffered serious physical abuse and/or injury, or has died as a result of abuse and/or neglect, DCF must notify local law enforcement as well as the District Attorney, who have the authority to file criminal charges.

DCF Area Office Directory

Western Region

- **Greenfield** 413-775-5000
- **Holyoke** 413-493-2600
- **Pittsfield** 413-236-1800
- **Robert Van Wart Center/
East Springfield** 413-205-0500
- **Springfield** 413-452-3200

Central Region

- **Worcester East** 508-793-8000
- **Worcester West** 508-929-2000
- **Whitinsville** 508-929-1000
- **Leominster** 978-353-3600

Boston Region

- **Dimock Street, Roxbury** 617-989-2800
- **Hyde Park** 617-363-5000
- **Harbor, Chelsea** 617-660-3400
- **Park Street, Dorchester** 617-822-4700

Northern Region

- **Cambridge/Somerville** 617-520-8700
- **Cape Ann, Salem** 978-825-3800
- **Framingham** 508-424-0100
- **Haverhill** 978-469-8800
- **Lawrence** 978-557-2500
- **Lowell** 978-275-6800
- **Lynn** 781-477-1600
- **Malden** 781-388-7100

Southern Region

- **Arlington** 781-641-8500
- **Brockton** 508-894-3700
- **Cape Cod & Islands** 508-760-0200
- **Fall River** 508-235-9800
- **New Bedford** 508-910-1000
- **Plymouth** 508-732-6200
- **Braintree** 781-794-4400
- **Taunton/Attleboro** 508-821-7000

Other Resources

- **Child Protection Information:** For more information about reporting child abuse and/or neglect: www.mass.gov/dcf for general information or to find a DCF Area Office.
- **Child-At-Risk-Hotline: 800-792-5200**
- **DCF Ombudsman: 617-748-2444** (9 am – 5 pm, weekdays) for inquiries about DCF programs, policies or service delivery.

M. SOURCES

General Laws of Massachusetts, Part I, Title II, Chapter 6, Section 172: Maintenance of criminal record information in electronic format; accessibility via world wide web; eligibility for access to data base; use and dissemination of criminal record information, and Section 178: Regulations for obtaining criminal offender record information or self-audit under false pretenses; unlawful communication of record information; falsification of record information; unlawful request or requirement that a person provide his or her record information; punishment.

www.malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleII/Chapter6/Section172 or Section 178.

General Laws of Massachusetts, Part I, Title XV, Chapter 94C: “Controlled Substances Act,” Section 31: Classes of controlled substances; establishment of criminal penalties for violations of this chapter.

www.malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXV/Chapter94C/Section31A

General Laws of Massachusetts, Part I, Title XVII, Chapter 119: “Protection and Care of Children, and Proceedings Against Them,” Section 51A: Reporting suspected child abuse or neglect; mandated reporters; collection of physical evidence; penalties; content of reports; liabilities; privileged communication. malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXVII/Chapter119/Section51A.

Massachusetts Department of Children & Families, Child Abuse & Neglect Reporting, A Mandated Reporter’s Guide, June 4, 2018.

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MEMORIAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
United Church of Christ
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Sudbury, MA 01776
Phone 978-443-3885

INCIDENT REPORT FORM

This form is to be used to register **all** reasonable suspicions of abuse, mistreatment, or neglect, of any kind, whether occurring as part of a church program or not. Any unusual incident must be reported to a member of the Safe Church Task Team or a clergy member immediately. That person (or his/her designee) will assist you in completing this form, which must be submitted within 24 hours of the verbally reporting the incident. The names of the Safe Church Task Team members can be found in the church office or by asking a church staff member.

Reporter: _____ Date of Incident: _____ Time: _____

Identification of person(s) involved:

1. Name: _____ Age: ____ Gender: _____

Address: _____

Relationship to MCC (Employee, Volunteer, Member, Visitor, etc.): _____

2. Name: _____ Age: ____ Gender: _____

Address: _____

Relationship to MCC (Employee, Volunteer, Member, Visitor, etc.): _____

3. Name: _____ Age: ____ Gender: _____

Address: _____

Specific Location of Incident: _____

Witness(es), if present: _____

Briefly describe the nature and extent of the injury, accident, or suspected abuse. Include specifics such as date, time, and location. _____

Describe the circumstances under which you became aware of the incident. Include the names of witnesses.

Indicate action taken by staff and/or volunteers immediately upon becoming aware of the incident.

Please give any other information that you think might be helpful in establishing the cause of the incident(s) and/or the person(s) responsible for it. If known, please provide the name(s) of the alleged perpetrator(s).

To whom was this incident reported? _____

Signature of reporter _____ Date _____

Role/function/position or reporter _____

For Office Use Only

Report received by _____ Date received _____

Copy submitted to parents/guardians (if individual is under eighteen years of age).

Submitted by _____ Date submitted _____

Copy submitted to original reporter.

Submitted by _____ Date submitted _____

Action taken: _____

Was a report made to DCF? Yes No If yes, then;

Date and time of oral report _____

Date and time written report sent _____

Comments _____

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STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

I acknowledge that I have read and understand the *Safe Church Policies and Procedures* and agree to comply with all conditions set forth in that document in my activities at Memorial Congregational Church. I have been approved to serve as a:

Paid staff member Youth Group Leader Sunday School Teacher
 Nursery Supervisor Chaperone Key recipient Other

To indicate your understanding and compliance with these conditions, please initial each of the following paragraphs, sign this document, and return it to your supervisor or supervisory Ministry or Task Team.

I understand that the church has a policy that requires me to report to the Safe Church Task Team (or Senior Minister) immediately, and file an Incident Report within 24 hours, if I believe that a child or any other person has been abused and/or neglected on MCC properties or at a church-related event or activity.

I understand that I am not to be alone in any room or secluded area on MCC property, or at any church related event, at any time, with a child or youth that is not my own or a relative, without permission of the child's parent/guardian.

I agree to abide by all policies and procedures regarding the use of the building and properties of MCC with the knowledge that failure to do so will result in the loss of my approval to serve as a volunteer or termination of my employment or contract at MCC.

_____ I understand that copies of the *Safe Church Policies and Procedures* can be found in:

- 1) The Church Office;
- 2) The Christian Education resource area; and
- 3) The Church Library in the Meeting Room.

Signature

Date

Print Name

A copy of this document will be kept on file with the Safe Church Task Team.

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STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE
FOR OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS

I acknowledge that I have read and understand the *Safe Church Policies Summary*, and agree to comply with all conditions set forth in that document in my activities at Memorial Congregational Church.

The organization I represent is _____

To indicate your understanding of your responsibilities as a guest in our church, please initial each of the following paragraphs, sign this document, and return it to the church office along with your “Application for Use of Facilities.”

_____ I understand that I am required to report to the Safe Church Task Team (or Pastor) immediately and file an Incident Report within 24 hours, if I believe, or have been told, that there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child or any other person has been abused and/or neglected at Memorial Congregational Church.

_____ I understand that I am not to be alone in any room or secluded area on Memorial Congregational Church property at any time with a child or youth that is not my own or a relative without parental permission.

_____ When the activity that I am supervising has ended, and I am the last person in the church, I will make sure that the lights are out and the doors are locked before I leave.

_____ I agree to abide by all policies and procedures regarding the use of the building and properties of Memorial Congregational Church with the knowledge that failure to do so will result in the termination of my right to use church facilities for the organization that I represent.

Signature

Date

Print Name

A copy of this document will be kept on file by the Safe Church Task Team and the Properties Ministry.

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IN-TOWN FIELD TRIP CONSENT FORM

Your son/daughter _____ would like to participate in the following activity:

Activity _____

Purpose of activity _____

Date and start/finish time of activity _____

Leaders/Chaperones _____

Method of transportation _____

Cost _____ Other money needed _____

Additional information _____

Parent/guardian's name _____ Home phone _____

Address _____

Work Phone _____ Mobile phone _____

Emergency contact _____ Phone _____

Do we have a **Medical Release Form** on file for your child? _____ Yes _____ No

If “no,” please submit one. If “yes,” does the **Medical Release Form** need updating?

_____ Yes _____ No If “yes,” please provide updated information _____

Special Instructions

I give my son/daughter _____ permission to participate in the activity listed above.

Parent/guardian's signature

Date

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OVERNIGHT/OUT-OF-TOWN/SPECIAL ACTIVITY CONSENT FORM

Your son/daughter _____ would like to participate in the following activity:

Activity _____

Purpose of activity _____

Date(s) and start/finish time of activity _____

Drop-off area for departure Pick-up area for return _____

Leaders/Chaperones _____

Method of transportation _____

Cost _____ Other money needed _____

Additional information _____

Parent/guardian's name _____ Home phone _____

Address _____

Work phone _____ Other phone/pager: _____

Emergency contact _____ Phone _____

Do we have a **Medical Release Form** on file for your son/daughter? _____ Yes _____ No

If "no" please submit one.

If "yes", does the **Medical Release Form** need updating? _____ Yes _____ No

Special Instructions _____

If this is an overnight event, the girls and the boys will sleep in separate areas, and there will be sufficient adult supervision based upon the number and gender of participants. Only adult drivers will be used.

I give my son/daughter _____ permission to participate in the activity described on the front of this consent form.

Parent/guardian's signature

Date

I agree to abide by the rules that have been established for this activity by the group leaders and by Memorial Congregational Church of Sudbury. In particular, I agree to cooperate with my group leaders and chaperones, and behave in a way that reflects well on my family and my church. I will not engage in any prohibited activities such as smoking, drinking of alcohol; or improper language, physical, or sexual activity. I understand that only adults may drive during youth activities, and I agree not to leave the activity and/or activity site without express permission of the group leader.

Youth's signature

Date

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MEDICAL RELEASE FORM

Name of Youth _____ Birthdate _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Name of parent/guardian _____

Youth's physician _____ Phone _____

Emergency contact _____ Phone _____

Health history (please check all that apply):

Frequent colds	Seizure disorder	Physical impairment
Appliances (retainer, contact lenses, etc.)	Stomach aches	Diabetes
Vision/hearing impairment	Mental impairment	Asthma
Sleep disturbances	Motion sickness	Emotional disability
Behavioral problems		

Other (describe) _____

Allergies (describe) _____

Give important details of items that are checked: _____

Date of last tetanus shot _____

Is your son/daughter taking a prescription or non-prescription medication? ____ Yes ____ No

If yes, complete the following:

Medication _____

Dosage and frequency _____

Medication _____

Dosage and frequency _____

Medication _____

Dosage and frequency _____

Can your son/daughter be expected to take the right amount of medication at the proper time?

___ Yes ___ No (If the answer is no, then arrangements must be made with the adult in charge.)

___ I give my child permission to administer his/her own medications.

All medications, both prescription and non-prescription, MUST be in the original container and properly labeled. This applies even if your son/daughter has permission to self-administer his/her medications.

Signature of parent/guardian

Date

Youth's insurance carrier _____

Policy number or ID number _____

Subscriber's name _____

Subscriber Number _____

Insurance company customer service number _____

Other pertinent information _____

Statement of Consent

I, the undersigned, parent/legal guardian of _____ do hereby consent to any X-ray exam, anesthetic, medical diagnosis, or treatment and hospital services that may be rendered to my son/daughter, under the general or specific instructions of the on-call physician at a hospital or clinic. It is understood that this consent is given in advance of any specific diagnosis or treatment, and it is given to encourage those persons who have temporary custody of my child in my absence, and said physician, to exercise their best judgment as to the requirements of such diagnosis or said medical treatment.

I understand that any and all medical expenses incurred are my responsibility and that there is no medical insurance coverage provided by Memorial Congregational Church of Sudbury, Inc.

This consent will remain in effect for one year from signing unless otherwise specified.

Signature of parent/guardian

Date

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APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

Name _____

Last

First

Middle

Address _____

Street

City

State

Zip Code

Daytime Phone _____ Evening Phone _____

My previous experience in the past five years (paid or volunteer) related to the position I am seeking to fill includes: (Attach additional page(s) as necessary)

Agency Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip Code _____

Contact Person/Phone _____

Agency Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip Code _____

Contact Person/Phone _____

Agency Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip Code _____

Contact Person/Phone _____

I have never been found guilty of, or pled guilty or no contest to, nor am I awaiting trial for a criminal charge.

True Not True

If not true, give a short explanation of the charge. (Include the date, nature, and place of the incident leading to the charge; where the charge was filed; and the precise disposition of the charge.)

No civil lawsuit alleging actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; Child / Elder Abuse; or financial misconduct has ever resulted in a judgment being entered against me, been settled out of court, or been dismissed because the statute of limitations has expired.

True Not True

If not true, give a short explanation of the lawsuit. (Include the date, nature, and place of the incident leading to the lawsuit; where the lawsuit was filed; and the precise disposition of the lawsuit.)

I have never terminated my employment, professional credentials, or service in a volunteer position or had my employment, professional credentials, or authorization to hold a volunteer position terminated for reasons relating to allegations of actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; Child / Elder Abuse; or financial misconduct.

True Not True

If not true, give a short explanation. (Include the date of termination, name, address, and telephone number of employer or volunteer supervisor; and the nature of the incident(s) leading to your termination.)

I attest that the information given in this application is true and complete. I understand that any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of consideration for, or termination of, the position I am seeking to fill. I understand that it is my responsibility to amend the information given in this application if I discover that the information is incorrect when given or, though accurate when given, the information is no longer accurate.

I authorize Memorial Congregational Church of Sudbury and/or its agents to make inquiries regarding all statements I have given above. I also authorize all entities, persons, former employers, supervisors, courts, law enforcement, and other public agencies to respond to inquiries concerning me, to supply verification of the statements I have made, and to comment on and state opinions regarding my background and character. To encourage such persons and entities to speak openly and responsibly, I hereby release them from all liability arising from their responses, comments, and statements made in good faith and without malice.

Memorial Congregational Church of Sudbury's hiring process involves the distribution of information regarding applicants to those persons in a position to recruit, secure, and supervise the position I am seeking to fill. To that end, I authorize Memorial Congregational Church of Sudbury and its agents to circulate, distribute, and otherwise share information gathered in connection with this application to such persons for these stated purposes only. I understand that Memorial Congregational Church of Sudbury will share with me information it has gathered about me, if I request it to do so.

Signature

Date

CRIMINAL OFFENDER RECORD INFORMATION (CORI)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM/OTHER BACKGROUND CHECK FORMS

Pursuant to MG, Part I, Title II, Chapter 6, Section 172H and to MCC policy any person being considered as an employee, volunteer, vendor or contractor who will have contact with children 18 years of age or less are subject to a CORI check. To facilitate the CORI check a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) Acknowledgement Form should be completed and signed by the person for whom the CORI check is being requested. The Form is available from and should be returned to the Church Administrator or a member of the Safe Church Task Team.

It may be also determined, by MCC that additional background checking is required for a person or persons being considered as employees, volunteers, vendors or contractors who will have contact with children 18 years of age or less. In addition, sponsoring agencies for youth mission trips or other youth programs may also request background checking of adults traveling with children under the age of 18. Persons subject to additional background checking, will be provided with the forms required for the checking.

MEMORIAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

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ACCESS CODE/KEY POLICY

MEMORIAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

1. Any person who needs access to MCC before or after normal office hours and therefore seeks possession of a code or key to MCC will have a clearly stated reason for needing a code or key and must sign the Code/Key registry.
2. A Code/Key Registry will be maintained by the Properties Ministry with the help of the church's Office Administrator.
3. Permission to receive a code or key will be given by staff or the Properties Ministry. When permission is given, the church's Office Administrator will be notified for recording purposes.
4. Anyone who unlocks a door to enter the building will make sure the facility is completely locked and secure when they leave the building.
5. To maintain as much safety as possible, physical keys will only be issued to a very limited number of individuals who must be members or staff of MCC. Physical keys will be returned when they are no longer needed by the holder, and the return will be documented on the Physical Key registry by the church's Office Administrator. Lost keys should be immediately reported to the Office Administrator.
6. On an annual basis, the Properties Ministry will notify code holders that the main entry codes for the front door and Ames Hall will be deleted, and new codes issued. The Properties Ministry will physically delete the old codes from the lock device, set up the new codes on the lock device, and with the help of the church's Office Administrator issue new codes to individuals on an as needed basis, which will be recorded on the Code/Key Registry. Codes will be retired for a minimum of two years.
7. The Properties Ministry is responsible for setting up, issuing, deleting, and tracking codes used by tenants and renters. If a tenant or renter ceases to rent MCC's facilities, the Properties Ministry will physically delete the code from the lock device and retire the code they were issued for a minimum of two years.
8. At the request of the Properties Ministry, for any reason, a person in possession of a code or key will immediately return the key or cease to use the code.

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PHYSICAL KEY REGISTRY – MEMBERS AND STAFF ONLY
MEMORIAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

By signing below, I am agreeing to the following conditions:

1. When accessing the church, I will be mindful of safety and security issues and comply with Memorial Congregational Church’s Code and Key Policy.
2. If I unlock a door when entering the building, I will make sure the facility is completely locked and secure when I leave the building.
3. I will not duplicate keys or loan them to anyone.
4. I will return the key I received today when I no longer need it.
5. I will return the key I received today if asked to do so by the Properties Ministry – and for any reason.
6. I agree to pay for re-keying Memorial Congregational Church’s door locks should my actions or negligence cause that need. I understand that cost may not exceed \$1,000.00.

Signature	
Printed Name	
Telephone Number	
Email Address	
Date	
Reason Needed?	
Key Opens What?	
Number of Keys Issued	

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**CODE REGISTRY
MEMORIAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**

By signing below, I am agreeing to the following conditions:

1. When accessing the church, I will be mindful of safety and security issues and comply with Memorial Congregational Church’s Code and Key Policy.
2. If I unlock a door when entering the building, I will make sure the facility is completely locked and secure when I leave the building.
3. I will not disclose the code to anyone.

Signature	
Printed Name	
Telephone Number	
Email Address	
Date	
Reason Needed?	
Code Opens What?	