

II. Abuse Prevention

A. Guidelines for Working with Minors

1. **Consent will be practiced.** Physical contact will be a choice for recipients, allowing children and adults to have the opportunity to not participate. A verbal or nonverbal “no” will always be respected. Physical touch will not include excessive body contact or contact for extended periods of time.
2. **No physical discipline** (hitting, slapping, spanking) will be used. Yelling and other forms of verbal abuse are also prohibited. A child’s behavior is a way for them to communicate something to the adults around them. When we look at their behavior as a way to communicate something, we take responsibility to figure out what a child needs rather than blaming them for their behavior. We will practice redirection for the child and respectful verbal communication as a way to guide the child’s behavior. The parent or guardian will be contacted if more support is needed.
3. **Two unrelated Approved Adults** (immediate family group) will be present during any church activity involving minors, except in the case of the mentor program (the one-to-one nature of the mentor program constitutes a unique exception to this guideline).
4. **One-to-one mentoring** activities will be publicly visible to others. Mentors and legal guardian(s) will set communication expectations at the beginning of the relationship. Before private one-to-one contact between an Approved Adult and minor occurs (e.g. transportation, Mojo’s meeting, frisbee golf, etc.), a legal guardian(s) is to be informed (e.g. phone call, text, or email). Because one-to-one relationships can open avenues for grooming behavior to take place, we will work towards regular education and communication with volunteers, families, and minors about healthy relationships and boundaries.
5. **Interruptible locations.** There will be a window in the door of all offices and classrooms. Any conversations that need to happen one-to-one between an adult and minor will take place in an “interruptible location” (e.g. nursery where there are windows for others to observe, a private corner of the sanctuary, the front yard of the church).
6. **Bathroom protocol.** Minors will be encouraged to use bathroom facilities before and after classes or other programs. Any Approved Adult other than the child’s caregiver assisting a minor in the bathroom will stand outside the door. If a minor needs assistance, a second Approved Adult will be present. It is recommended, when possible, that two Approved Adults (if no legal guardian(s) is present) will be present when changing diapers or checking for injuries under minor’s clothing or diapers. The Approved Adults present will notify the legal guardian(s) that the contact or bathroom visit occurred.
7. **Off-property activities or overnight** functions involving minors will be scheduled with knowledge of the Faith Formation Commission and written approval of a legal guardian(s). At least two unrelated Approved Adults will be present.
8. **Medical Release and Liability Waivers.** Legal guardian(s) of minors who regularly participate in church activities will complete a Medical Release and

Liability Waiver form annually, to be filed in the church office. A legal guardian of minors with irregular participation will complete forms on a per event basis.

9. **First Aid kits** can be found under the sink in the 3rd floor kitchenette, in The Gathering Place, in the church office, and basement storage cabinet near the south entrance of the fellowship hall. A list of church members who are medical personnel or have CPR and/or First Aid training will be kept with all First Aid kits and at the back of the sanctuary. The Deacons Commission, in collaboration with the Office and Facilities Manager, will be responsible for updating this list and regularly checking the supplies in each first aid kit. Arrangements will be made to offer CPR and AED training for church employees and others who are interested, especially those appointed by the church to work with minors.

B. Approved Adult Volunteers

1. Volunteer Training and Accountability

- a. Approved Adult Volunteers must have an active and positive involvement at BCMC for at least six months prior to submitting a Volunteer Registration Form. Exceptions must be approved by the APRC. (examples: Interns, IVEPers, MVS, college students)
- b. All volunteers interested in working with children or youth must complete the following annually:
 - i. Read this policy in full
 - ii. Participate in a Safe Sanctuary Training at BCMC
 - iii. A Volunteer Registration Form
 - iv. Sign the Abuse Prevention Covenant
- c. All mentors and youth sponsors are required to authorize and undergo an APRC approved background check before working with minors. In addition, all staff and volunteer names will be checked against the Mennonite Abuse Prevention List.
- d. Congregants who work with minors will be at least five years older than those they are helping. Minors may volunteer to help with children's programs under the supervision of two Approved Adults.

C. Pastoral and Congregational Care

1. Usual settings for one-to-one pastoral care visits by designated employees and Deacons include the following: a public place, a church office with a window for observation, or a person's home under certain circumstances. The pastor or Deacon will keep a log of all pastoral care visits. If the recipient is a minor, the Pastors are authorized to provide caregiving one-to-one with prior written or verbal consent of legal guardian(s).

2. Employees shall not engage in long-term counseling (no more than 3-4 visits), but rather refer persons to a counseling agency. Employees and Deacons may remain in supportive contact with persons requiring specialized psychological, medical, or legal counsel, but will not attempt to provide such counsel themselves.

3. Anyone who is appointed to provide pastoral and congregational care is required to give adequate attention to their own spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being to maintain a healthy attitude towards ministry. The Staff Congregation Relations Committee (SCRC) will be responsible for monitoring this.