

III. Abuse Response

Guiding questions: How do we honor the disclosure of abuse? How do we honor this survivor and not retraumatize them while keeping the community safe? The needs of the survivor will be kept as the central focus at all times. This is particularly important in whether and how abuse is disclosed to others.

A. When abuse is reported and/or credibly suspected and the victim is under the age of 18:

1. If the minor has serious injuries or is in immediate danger the reporter will call 911 or the appropriate local law enforcement. If a reporter would like assistance with this step or any of the following steps, they can contact a representative from APRC for assistance. Call the church office (316-283-2667) for help locating the contact information of current APRC members.
2. The person disclosed to or who has suspicions (reporter) will immediately make a report to the 24-hour hotline of the Kansas Protection Report Center (1-800-922-5330). The reporter can also call 911 or notify the police for a more immediate response to the situation as KPRC may not be able to address the report quickly. It is important that KPRC has an official report on file.
3. The reporter (or a representative from APRC) will notify a non-offending member of the minor's family (if it is safe to do so) and an APRC representative that the report has been made.
4. The APRC will inform church board leadership about the report that was made.
5. The APRC will appoint a Care Team within 48 hours who will respond to the survivor's wellbeing as well as their non-accused family members. The survivor and their Care Team will be consulted with throughout the whole process.
6. The APRC will follow up with the person who made the report within 48 hours to acquire and clarify information as well as provide necessary pastoral care.
7. The APRC will document all information received about the reported or suspected abuse and actions taken. At least 2 people will work together whenever possible.
8. In addition, and in consultation with the respective legal guardian(s) and appointed Care Team member(s), the APRC will notify the offender of the report and assign an Accountability Partner(s). The APRC will communicate with the Accountability Partner(s).
9. If the offender is active in the church community, the APRC will act to immediately suspend their church voluntary assignment/duties, and in-person attendance.
10. If anyone is closely related to the survivor or the offender, they will be relieved of their defined role in the response or during any proceedings regarding this report and will not be appointed to a caring or accountability role.
11. Unless there is concern about interfering with the KPRC investigations/process, the APRC will inform congregants of the report and make an open call for other survivors to come forward. Verbal and written notification will take place and will include outside resources for reporting and/or counseling.

Any known survivors in the congregation will be notified before informing the whole congregation. A trigger warning will be issued in case individuals would like the option to not be present during a verbal announcement.

12. The pastors will work with the APRC to coordinate with other congregational and community resources as needed to assure that ongoing care is provided for others affected, triggered, or retraumatized by the report.

13. The APRC will inform outside institutions whom the offender is involved (e.g. Their church, Camp Mennoscah, Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp).

14. When information has been substantiated, the APRC will make sure the survivor and Care Team know before reporting to other bodies.

15. If reports of abuse are substantiated, and the offender desires to remain part of the church, the APRC will ask the offender to sign a Limited Access Agreement.

16. The APRC and pastors will attend to the emotional and spiritual needs that arise throughout and after the process, always mindful of how the congregational process could impact and retraumatize survivors in our congregation.

If the victim or offender is not connected to BCMC, we encourage people who received a report of abuse or suspect abuse to follow steps 1 and 2 and any other steps that make sense to the specific case.

B. When abuse is reported and/or credibly suspected where the survivor is an adult:

1. The reporter will seek consent of the adult survivor before reporting to local authorities, the APRC, or a pastor.

2. If you are the survivor, you are encouraged to pursue any or all of the following:

a. The survivor or the person who received the disclosure of abuse (Reporter) will, with survivor's permission, disclose concern with a representative from the APRC and/or a pastor. All efforts will be made to assure immediate safety and make sure any medical needs are addressed. The APRC and/or reporter will support the survivor in connecting with a safety plan and community services (e.g. advocacy, sexual violence crisis center, trauma-informed counseling) to help meet identified needs.

b. The survivor will choose whether or not to involve law enforcement. In the case that the abuse involves a vulnerable adult, it will be reported to the KPRC (1-800-922-5330) and/or local Police, or respective state authorities.

c. If it is safe to do so and with the permission of the survivor, the offender will be notified of the report and assigned an Accountability Partner(s) within the congregation. If the offender is active in the church community, the APRC will act to immediately suspend their church voluntary assignment/duties, and in-person attendance.

d. Any and/or all of the above procedure steps listed in the abuse of a minor will be taken with direction and/or consent of the adult survivor.

3. If the survivor is not ready to go public with this information, the APRC will honor their story by assisting the survivor in seeking survivor-centered community resources.
 - a. Refer the survivor to outside organizations for additional assistance. (e.g. provide resources for trauma-informed counseling, refer them to Into Account or other survivor advocacy agencies, ask them what they need).
 - b. Documentation will be kept indefinitely in a secure location in case others come forward or when this survivor is ready to go public.
 - c. The APRC will continue to consider other steps to keep the wider community safe on a case-by-case basis.

C. When the report of abuse involves a BCMC employee or credentialed person.

1. The APRC will immediately inform the Staff Congregation Relations Committee (SCRC) in the case of a BCMC employee. The SCRC, with consultation from APRC and WDC (and third-party counsel if applicable), will immediately suspend the employee from all church duties. The SCRC will determine how and when to make an appropriate announcement to the congregation regarding the allegation and immediate suspension.
2. SCRC, with consultation from the APRC and WDC (and third-party counsel if applicable) will take the lead in ensuring that steps in this policy are followed. This includes assigning an appointed designee to be in direct communication with the employee during the process.
3. In the event a report of abuse of a credentialed individual in the congregation not currently employed by BCMC is made, the APRC will immediately inform WDC and church board leadership.
4. The procedure steps listed in the above sections for reporting will be followed accordingly.

D. When BCMC receives a concern regarding a person who may pose a safety risk for any reason and wishes to participate at BCMC:

1. The APRC will verify the information out of an abundance of caution. This will be done by checking the criminal and court records and other organizations that may have information about an offender and by other appropriate means.
2. The APRC will make a call to any victims to direct/assist them to community resources (e.g. trauma-informed counseling, survivor advocacy organizations).
3. The congregation will be informed of the reported safety concerns of this offender.
4. Survivors and parents/guardians will be consulted before asking the offender to sign a limited access agreement in order to participate in the life of the congregation.
 - a. The offender(s) will be required to sign a Limited Access Agreement in order to participate in congregational life and worship. The Limited Access Agreement is considered the baseline for such a document. Further restrictions may be added. See appendix for example.

b. If the offender does not agree to sign a Limited Access Agreement and/or if it is known that the offender will attend or is attending another congregation, a designated APRC member will contact and inform that congregation of the situation and nature of the abuse.

E. Maintaining Records

1. The APRC is responsible for maintaining records required for this policy. Records will be organized and kept in a secure location.
2. Any records related to reports of incidents of abuse will be kept in a locked file cabinet and will be kept indefinitely in case future reports are related to people involved in past reports.
3. Individuals with access to the key for the records may include APRC Chair, Pastors, Deacon Commission Chair, Church Moderator, and SCRC Chair.
4. Volunteer Registration Form and background check records will be kept as long as the registrant is participating in the life of the church and for five years thereafter.
5. Employee records are kept separately in a secure location.