

Easton Worship Center
5400 Strawberry Farms Blvd.
Columbus, OH 43230



SAFE CARE POLICY

December 2007

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to prevent abuse. This policy governs the conduct of the people Easton Worship Center (“the church”) as they are involved with official church functions and activities. “Official” functions and activities are those which are sponsored by the church pastors, department leaders, teachers, assistants, and/or workers in direct relation to one or more of the church ministries which are recognized by the pastors and official board. The church recognizes the importance of providing an environment which is safe, healthy, and conducive to both learning and forming positive relationships. Protecting minors (those under 18 years old) is of utmost importance in all of our ministries.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

All workers, paid and volunteer, shall be responsible for implementing this policy. The fullness of this policy update shall be implemented by January 31, 2008. Presently approved workers who, by virtue of this policy update, now require a Safe Care Training Refresher shall have until June 30, 2008 to receive their Safe Care Training Refresher.

HISTORY OF COMMITTING CHILD MOLESTATION

In no case shall any applicant who has any history of committing child sexual molestation be allowed to work with minors in any capacity.

TYPES OF ABUSE

Abuse can be classified into two major categories: “touch” and “non-touch”. Touch abuse includes, but is not limited to, striking, slapping, shaking, pinching, yanking, smothering, inappropriate contact with body parts, fondling, kissing in inappropriate ways, and intercourse. Non-touch abuse includes, but is not limited to, severe shaming, sexual remarks, showing pornography, showing sexual body parts, and watching any sexual activity.

ADULT WORKER SELECTION AND SCREENING

A process for selecting and screening adult workers, as described below, shall be followed. This process shall include written application, reference checks, criminal background screening, formal interviewing, application processing, a “three-month rule”, and Safe Care Training.

Written Application Process. All adults desiring to work with, supervise, or teach minors must complete a “Safe Care Application for Ministry.” Anyone refusing to complete the application shall not be considered to work with minors in the church. Applicants shall be at least 18 years old on the date they sign their application. Applications shall be submitted to the pastor which oversees the department in which the applicant desires to work (hereafter called “the processing pastor”). Upon receipt of an application, the processing pastor shall review the application to ensure its completeness. Incomplete applications shall be returned to the applicant for completion.

Interview. After the application has been completed, the processing pastor shall conduct a face-to-face interview of the candidate to review the application and discuss information pertaining to the suitability of the candidate to work with minors. Such information may include—but not be limited to—biographical data, education, training, spiritual calling, spiritual gifts, personal desires, experience, and spiritual maturity. At or before this interview, the applicant shall provide official positive photographic identification (driver’s license, military ID card, other government-issued ID) which verifies

the applicant's identity. The processing pastor shall make a photocopy of the photo ID and attach the photocopy to the application. After completion of the interview, the processing pastor shall make a recommendation whether to proceed with the application process. If the recommendation is to not proceed, a decision shall be made in consultation with the Senior Pastor and the application shall be archived and protected in a manner appropriate for confidential and sensitive documents. The processing pastor shall inform the applicant of the decision.

Reference Checks. The completed application must include at least three character references. These references shall not be family members, relatives, pastors of this church, or the department head under which the applicant could potentially work. The church may contact these references, other references as provided by the initial references, churches, organizations, and prior employees to assess the applicant's suitability to work with minors. All information received from all reference contacts shall be kept in strict confidence.

Criminal Background Checks. Criminal background checks shall be conducted on all applicants. These checks shall include both nationwide and state checks in the states where the applicant is known to have lived. The results of background checks shall be printed and maintained in the applicant's file.

Application Processing Procedures. The church shall establish and maintain files for all workers. This file shall be held in strict confidence from anyone except the pastoral staff, other officials as authorized by the Senior Pastor, and selected office employees which have an established need for access. All completed worker files shall be maintained under lock and key. At least three character-reference request packages shall be distributed for each applicant. Upon receipt of the completed questionnaires from the reference contacts, a pastor shall compile the letters into the file and forward the applicant's folder to the pastoral staff for final review and consultation. The ministry staff shall make recommendations to the Senior Pastor to approve or disapprove the application. Final approval and disapproval of an applicant's Safe Care Application for Ministry shall be decided by the Senior Pastor. Names of workers who are approved shall be placed on the "Safe Care Approved" list ("the List"). Only those people who are currently on the List shall be allowed to work with minors in any capacity.

The Three-Month Rule. Applicants shall not be approved to work with minors until they have attended the church regularly for at least three months. "Regular attendance" is defined as attendance in at least three services / classes per month. Applications may be submitted and processing may begin before the Three Month Rule has been met, but approval shall not be made before this rule has been satisfied. The only exception to this rule may be permitted with the Senior Pastor's approval when adding a new church staff member, and when that new church staff member has received a complete FBI background check, including a fingerprint check.

Safe Care Training (SCT). Workers shall receive orientation and training concerning the definition and prevention of abuse. Such training shall include a review of this policy. Copies of this policy shall be made available to applicants and workers. New workers shall also be trained concerning other policies and procedures which are applicable to their position. SCT shall be completed before each worker is approved to work with minors. Workers shall receive abuse prevention training bi-annually. Those who have not received updated training within 30 months from the date of their previous training shall be removed from the List until such training is completed. Workers who have attended at least two SCT sessions may take a refresher test in place of an SCT session. Workers who fail the test shall be required to attend an SCT session.

Re-Instatement of Workers Removed From the List. A person whose name has been removed from the List due to lack of SCT may have their name reinstated if: their name has not been off the List for more than six months and they complete SCT. Persons whose names have been removed from the List for six months or more may have their name reinstated upon completion of SCT and recommendation & approval by the ministry staff. Prior to re-instating a name that has been off the List for six months or more, the ministry staff shall determine if additional requirements need to be met based on factors such as, but not limited to, length of absence from the church's ministry, reason(s) for removal from the List, or relevant events or circumstances which have changed in the life of the person.

MINORS IN MINISTRY SELECTION AND SCREENING

Minors in ministry shall not be considered workers as pertaining to the two adult worker policy. A process for selecting and screening minors in ministry, as described below, shall be followed.

Minors Ages 11 and Younger. Minors ages 11 and younger may be exposed to and involved in ministry and ministry leadership at levels appropriate for their development. Those who desire to serve in ministry shall not be required to complete any Safe Care Application, meet the three-month rule, or attend Safe Care Training. Their involvement shall be subject to the discretion of the Church's ministry staff in consultation with the Senior Pastor. Each church ministry staff leader may require minors ages 11 and younger to complete a departmental application and have an interview with the child and the child's parents. Minors ages 11 and younger shall not be permitted to serve in our Nursery ministry and shall not be considered workers as pertaining to the Two Adult Workers Rule discussed later in this policy.

Written Application Process. All minors ages 12-17, inclusively, desiring to lead or be involved in ministry must complete a "Safe Care Application (for Minors Only)". Any minor refusing to complete the application shall not be considered to work in the church. Applicants shall be under 18 years old on the date they sign their application. Applications shall be submitted to the processing pastor. Upon receipt of an application, the processing pastor shall review the application to ensure its completeness. Incomplete applications shall be returned to the applicant for completion. All minors' applications must also be signed by their parent or legal guardian.

Interview. After the application has been completed, the processing pastor shall conduct a face-to-face interview with the candidate to review the application and discuss information pertaining to the suitability of the candidate to work in the church. Such information may include—but not be limited to—biographical data, education, training, spiritual calling, spiritual gifts, personal desires, experience, and spiritual maturity.

Application Processing Procedures. The church shall establish and maintain files for all minors in ministry. This file shall be held in strict confidence from anyone except the pastoral staff, other officials as authorized by the Senior Pastor, and selected office employees which have an established need for access. All completed minors in ministry files shall be maintained under lock and key. The pastoral staff shall review the application for approval or disapproval. Unanimous approval of the ministry staff shall be required before a minor may be approved to work in the church. Names of minors who are approved shall be placed on the "Safe Care Approved Minors in Ministry" list ("the Minors List"). Only those who are currently on the List shall be allowed to work in the church.

The Three-Month Rule. Minor applicants shall not be approved to work until they have attended the church regularly for at least three months. "Regular attendance" is defined as attendance in at least three services per month. Minor applications may be submitted and processing may begin before the Three Month Rule has been met, but approval shall not be made before this rule has been satisfied.

Safe Care Training (SCT). Minors in ministry that are 12 years old and older shall receive orientation and training concerning the definition and prevention of abuse. New minors in ministry shall be trained concerning other policies and procedures which are applicable to their position. SCT shall be completed before each minor worker is approved to work. Minors in ministry shall receive SCT bi-annually. Those who have not received updated training within 30-months from the date of their previous training shall be removed from the Minor List until such training is completed.

Re-Instatement of Minors in Ministry Removed From the List. A minor whose name has been removed from the Minor List due to lack of SCT may have their name reinstated if: their name has not been off the Minor List for more than six months and they complete SCT. Minors whose names have been removed from the Minor List for six months or more may have their name re-instated upon completion of SCT and recommendation & approval by the ministry staff.

Transition from Minor Worker to Adult Worker. When the minor turns 18, he/she will have 30 days to submit his/her adult Safe Care Application. The adult Safe Care Application shall be processed as specified under the Adult Worker Selection and Screening section of this policy. Transitional workers shall be permitted to continue to serve while their adult Safe Care Application is being processed.

WORKER SUPERVISION

Two-Adult Workers Rule. At least two Safe Care Approved adult workers shall be present with minors at all times. This rule protects minors by reducing the risk of abuse, and protects adult workers by reducing the risk of false accusations. The two-adult worker rule applies to all official church functions, including—but not limited to—services, classes, field trips, and parties. The only exception to this rule applies in designated situations where a member of the Pastoral Staff must meet privately with a minor to offer spiritual guidance. Parental presence shall be required for all such meetings. Two approved adults shall be required in each vehicle transporting minors in relation to official church functions.

Adequate Staffing. Two approved adult workers may not be enough for some activities such as large classes, campouts, lock-ins, and so on. All official church functions which involve minors shall be staffed adequately enough to ensure safe activities and compliance with this policy. In the event of emergencies when adequate numbers of workers are not present for a function, department leaders may request other fully-qualified and approved workers to substitute for those who are absent. In the event of extreme conditions when staffing levels drop below what is required, the function shall be canceled or postponed.

Visibility Into Classrooms. It is important that visibility into classrooms be maximized, while potential classroom disruptions be minimized. The windows on classroom doors shall remain clear and unobstructed at all times. Barriers shall not be erected which delete visibility into classrooms.

Diapering and Restroom Policies. All workers shall follow the diapering policy specified in the Nursery Handbook. Except in Nursery restrooms, a worker shall not enter a restroom alone with a child. Workers shall not enter a restroom stall with a child. Children who are capable of pottyting by themselves should be allowed to do so, but workers shall adequately monitor children's travel to and from the restroom. Workers may provide assistance in unfastening and fastening young children's clothing, but such assistance shall not take place inside a restroom stall. Doorstops shall be used to assist in supervising children in restrooms.

Administration of Medicine Prohibited. Workers shall not administer any medication of any kind to any child. Medication may be administered only by a child's parent/guardian. The only exception to this policy is that diaper ointment or powder may be administered to children with mild diaper rashes only if explicitly directed by the parent/guardian, and only with ointment or powder provided by that child's parent/guardian. If a child's unreported rash is discovered by Nursery workers, then the parents/guardians shall be contacted to determine the rash's severity and next course of action. The Nursery shall not stock or supply any diaper ointment or powders.

Immediate Feedback For Inappropriate Behavior. Every worker who observes lack of compliance with this policy shall be responsible for providing immediate feedback to those who exhibit the inappropriate behavior. All inappropriate behavior shall constitute an incident, and shall be reported by the observer as specified later in this policy.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Responsibilities. Everyone shall be responsible for reporting child abuse. All workers who observe abuse or have reasonable suspicion that abuse has occurred shall immediately report such concerns to any pastor of the church. In the interest of quick reaction to a potentially harmful situation, these concerns may initially be expressed verbally. The allegations shall then immediately be documented in writing on an Incident Report Form and shall be submitted to a pastor. Incident Report Forms shall be readily available in the church. In the event that a pastor is not available, such allegations shall be documented in writing and submitted to a deacon or deaconess.

(According to Section 2151.421 of the Ohio Revised Code, reports of possible child abuse or neglect in Franklin County, Ohio may be made by calling the Child Abuse Hotline (a 24-hour telephone #) **614.229.7000** or by visiting the offices of Intake & Investigations at 525 E. Mound Street, Columbus, OH 43215. See the appendix to this policy for requirements.)

Protection For Good Faith Reporting. Protection shall be provided for good faith reporting of suspected child abuse. Such protection includes maintaining anonymity of the accuser, alleged victim, and alleged abuser, except to those with a compelling need to know in order to conduct an initial low-level investigation.

RESPONSE PLAN

All Allegations Considered Seriously. All allegations received by the church shall be considered seriously by the church leadership and shall be dealt with expeditiously. Under no circumstances shall allegations of abuse be taken lightly or ignored. For the purpose of investigating the alleged abuse and resolving the issue, sensitive care and support shall be provided for the victim, victim's family, and alleged abuser.

Low-Level Investigation. Upon written receipt of an allegation of abuse, the church shall conduct a prompt, low-level investigation. This investigation shall focus on gathering the facts of the allegation. It shall include separate discussions

with the victim in the presence of the victim's family, all witnesses, and the alleged abuser. The pastoral staff and official board may call upon church officials, denominational leaders, clinical experts, the church insurance company, legal counsel, and others as necessary to assist in conducting a low-level investigation.

Documentation of Investigation. The church shall carefully document the details of the investigation. Such documentation shall be held with strict regard to confidentiality.

Compliance With Child Abuse Reporting Laws. The church shall comply with the state's child abuse reporting laws. If the low-level investigation reveals that reasonable cause to believe abuse of a minor has occurred, then such incidents of potential or actual abuse shall be reported to the proper civil authorities.

Documentation of Corrective Actions. Once the issue is resolved, the church shall carefully document the corrective actions taken to reduce the risk of abuse in the future. For the purposes of education and risk reduction, these corrective actions shall be clearly communicated to all involved in the abuse incident.

Response to Media. The church shall prepare a press release statement which appropriately responds to the alleged abuse situation and actions being taken by the church to address the alleged incident. One person from the church shall be appointed by the Senior Pastor to be the spokesperson to the media. The church leadership shall decide if and when to release the statement to the media.

NON-APPROVED CHURCH ATTENDERS WITH A HISTORY OF COMMITTING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Introduction. As stated earlier in this policy, in no case shall any applicant who has any history of committing child sexual molestation be allowed to work with minors in any capacity. We realize, however, that it is possible for a child sexual abuser ("CSA") – a person who has been convicted of or pled guilty to an act of child sexual abuse – to attend our church without our knowledge of the CSA's history.

In the light of legal counsel we have received, with the awareness of the high likelihood of repeat behavior exhibited by CSAs, with the knowledge of the risks such persons could potentially pose to the most vulnerable persons in our congregation, and with full awareness of our calling and purpose to provide a house of worship for our church and our community, the following process shall be followed when we become aware that a person's personal history includes committing child sexual abuse.

Verification. The Senior Pastor shall ensure that contact is made with the CSA to assess the accuracy of the information we received. Further review of the CSA's background shall be made expeditiously to the greatest extent possible. The attempt shall be made to contact the CSA's parole officer to assess the details of the risks and restrictions upon the CSA. The church leadership shall give serious consideration to the professional recommendations of the CSA's parole officer. The church shall comply with and support all restrictions placed upon the CSA by the law and the courts system.

Notification. The board of elders (ministry staff, deacons, and deaconesses) shall be notified of the potential risk being assessed. Updates shall be provided to the board of elders as the information becomes available. The CSA shall be provided with a copy of this policy and notified of the process described here. The CSA shall be required to sign a written acknowledgement of, and agreement to fully comply with, this policy. If it is determined that the CSA may continue to attend our church, such permission shall be in accordance with this policy. The congregation shall be notified, according to the information that is public knowledge via our courts system, that we have become aware of a CSA attending our services. If it is determined that the CSA may not continue to attend our church, then the CSA shall be informed that the CSA shall no longer be permitted onto our premises.

Restrictions. If permission to attend is granted, the CSA shall be permitted on our campus only on Sunday mornings between 10:00 AM until the dismissal of our worship services, usually near 12:00 noon. Upon entering our property the CSA shall proceed directly through the main west entrance of our sanctuary building, and into the sanctuary. The CSA shall not loiter in our parking lot or anywhere around our facility. The CSA shall be permitted only in our sanctuary where the CSA's presence and conduct is readily observed by the public. The CSA shall not be permitted to go to the restroom or be in any other portion of our buildings or property at any time without the express consent of the Senior Pastor, and then only when escorted at all times. At the conclusion of our worship services, the CSA shall proceed directly out of the main west entrance of our sanctuary building, and off our campus. The CSA shall not loiter in our

parking lot or anywhere around our facility. The CSA shall not be permitted to attend any other on- or off-campus ministries or activities sponsored by the church.

Violations. If the CSA appears to fail to comply with this policy, the CSA shall be required to depart the premises immediately and shall not be permitted to return until the matter is reviewed and resolved by the church leadership. If it is determined that the CSA violated this policy, then the CSA shall be informed that the CSA shall no longer be permitted onto our premises. If it is determined that the CSA did not violate this policy, then the CSA shall be permitted to continue to attend our Sunday morning worship services in accordance with this policy. The Senior Pastor shall ensure that the CSA is informed of the decisions of the church leadership.

A P P E N D I X

Ohio Revised Code, Section 2151.421

The specific requirements of R.C. 2151.421 states in part: (this excerpt is incomplete – see the complete text for complete information and guidance!)

(A)(1) **No** attorney, physician, including a hospital intern or resident, dentist, podiatrist, practitioner of a limited branch of medicine or surgery as defined in section 4731.15 of the Revised Code, registered nurse, licensed practical nurse, visiting nurse, other health care professional, licensed psychologist, licensed school psychologist, speech pathologist or audiologist, coroner, administrator or employee of a child day-care center, administrator or employee of a certified child care agency or other public or private children services agency, school teacher, school employee, school authority, person engaged in social work or the practice of professional counseling, or **person rendering spiritual treatment through prayer in accordance with the tenets of a well-recognized religion, who is acting in an official or professional capacity and knows or suspects** that a child under eighteen years of age or a mentally retarded, developmentally disabled, or physically impaired child under twenty-one years of age has suffered or faces a threat of suffering any physical or mental wound, injury, disability, or condition of a nature that reasonably indicates abuse or neglect of the child, **shall fail to immediately report of [sic] that knowledge or suspicion to the children services board, the county department of human services exercising the children services function, or a municipal or county peace officer in the county in which the child resides or in which the abuse or neglect is occurring or has occurred.**²

...

(B) Anyone, who knows or suspects that a child under eighteen years of age or a mentally retarded, developmentally disabled, or physically impaired person under twenty-one years of age has suffered or faces a threat of suffering any physical or mental wound, injury, disability, or other condition of a nature that reasonably indicates abuse or neglect of the child, *may* report or cause reports to be made of that knowledge or suspicion to the children services board, the county department of human services exercising the children services function, or to a municipal or county peace officer.

...

(G)(1) Except as provided in division (H)(3) of this section,³ anyone or any hospital, institution, school, health department, or agency participating in the making of reports under division (A) of this section, anyone or any hospital, institution, school, health department, or agency participating in good faith in the making of reports under division (B) of this section, and anyone participating in good faith in a judicial proceeding resulting from the reports, shall be immune from any civil or criminal liability for injury, death, or loss to person or property that otherwise might be incurred or imposed as a result of the making of the reports or the participation in the judicial proceeding. (Emphasis and footnotes added.)

INCIDENT REPORT

*Easton Worship Center.
5400 Strawberry Farms Blvd.
Columbus, OH 43230*



To: Pastoral Staff

Name(s) of person(s) involved: _____

Date of Incident: _____ **Time of Incident:** _____

Location of Incident: _____

Nature of Incident: ___Accident ___Dispute ___Other _____

1. **Describe what happened.** (if necessary, use other side)

2. **What action was taken to help the individual(s)?** (if necessary, use other side)

3. **If a minor, were parents informed?** ___Yes ___No
If yes, what was their reaction? (if necessary, use other side)

4. **Recommendation to prevent recurrence.** (if necessary, use other side)

5. **Other worker(s) or witness(es) who were present:** _____

Signature of submitter

Printed name of submitter

Date submitted

Parent Signature

Parent Signature

OVERVIEW OF THE SAFE CARE SCREENING PROCESS

