Christ the Rock Community Church

Family Ministries Child Protection Plan

(Updated August, 2023)

**Statement of Purpose:** Christ The Rock Community Church (hereafter referred to as CTR), along with the ministries that make up the Family Ministries, are dedicated to providing a safe environment for all people of the church, but especially for children younger than 18. CTR Family Ministries takes seriously its responsibility to protect against and report suspected abuse of any kind (sexual, physical, emotional, and neglect).

This plan brings a rigorous structure for a safe environment for children, youth, volunteers and leaders, and the church at large. This plan, when implemented with due diligence, will be a vehicle to assure a safe environment where the Gospel can be presented and received by both children and adults.

**Recruitment and Screening:** All organizations that provide programs to vulnerable people, whether run by staff or volunteers, have a responsibility to appropriately screen their volunteers. Christ The Rock and the Family Ministries Team fully embrace this responsibility and are committed to the following screening process prior to any volunteer having access to minors.

* Christ The Rock Church appoints screening personnel, the Volunteer Coordinator, to determine if an individual is suitable for volunteering in a ministry with access to minors.
* All potential volunteers must complete a Christ The Rock Volunteer application form. All adults must also submit to a criminal background check. Refusal to submit to a criminal background check will disqualify the potential volunteer from serving in a role that allows access to minors.
  + Applicants will be rejected if the application, completed reference forms, or background check reveal any prior child-related convictions, or any conviction related to sexual misconduct, whether with minors or adults.
  + Evidence of other activity not substantively related to children or sexual misconduct may disqualify the applicant if it is deemed to present a current or potential threat to the safety of children.
  + In the event the CTR appointed reviewer is uncertain of acceptance or rejection of the applicant, the Family Ministries Director will be responsible for making the final decision. This decision will be relayed in writing to the CTR appointed reviewer and should be kept permanently on file with the volunteer application.
* Once an applicant has passed the criminal background check and application process, the ministry leader can begin the process of orientation and scheduling for service.
* All applications, references, and criminal background checks must be kept permanently with the appointed CTR screening personnel. Screening personnel are expected to maintain confidentiality, and records should only be released if the screener determines the Family Ministries Team should make final determination of volunteer eligibility, under court order, or if an accusation of misconduct is later made against an applicant.
* All approved volunteers within the Family Ministries at CTR are expected to attend required orientation and further education training events, as determined by the Family Ministries Team. Repeated failure to attend orientation and training events without notifying ministry leaders could result in the approved volunteer being removed from their role within the Family Ministries.
* Once an application has been filed and a volunteer approved, they need not file an additional application while remaining an active participant of Christ The Rock. CTR will ask accepted applicants to update their application every 7 years as part of their responsibility to continue to maintain a safe environment for the children and youth of Christ The Rock.
* All approved volunteers for ministries involving minors must read and sign a document stating they have read this policy and agree to abide by it. This document must remain on file with the completed application and approved background check form.

**Child Protection Procedures:** The purpose of this section is to reduce the risk of misconduct against children, while also providing some commonsense guidelines that will prevent any compromising or questionable situations from arising. Additionally, this section seeks to protect against false accusations against an individual or the church at large.

* Adequate Supervision
  + Two non-related, approved volunteers are to be present at all times in ministry events that involve minors.
  + Supervision of classrooms and activities will be intentional by the ministry leader or staff and will include formal and informal visits to classrooms and programs while events are ongoing.
  + Under no circumstances should one volunteer ever be alone in a room with one or two children. If it is not possible to have two approved volunteers present in the room due to a temporary situation, the volunteer must leave the door open and supervise the activities from the doorway or move the child/children to a space where additional approved volunteers or staff are present.
  + Under no circumstances should a volunteer be alone with a child in classroom bathrooms with the door closed. These procedures should be followed at all times:
    - Only trained leaders/volunteers may change diapers, and diaper changes must take place in full view of the classroom.
    - Children in the 2-year-old through Kindergarten rooms must use the bathrooms located in the classrooms. If these bathrooms have half-doors, volunteers may go into the bathroom to assist as needed. If there is no half-door, volunteers must stay outside and wait.
    - Kindergarten-4th Grade students should be accompanied to the bathroom, but the volunteer must remain outside the bathroom and wait.
    - Should a child need assistance, the volunteer must prop open the bathroom door while they assist the child or find an additional approved volunteer to observe while they assist the child.
* Respect Privacy
  + All volunteers are to dress modestly and appropriately to ensure personal privacy. See each ministry’s dress code for more information.
  + No use of digital devices is allowed in places where privacy is expected (i.e. bathrooms, changing rooms, etc.)
* Respecting Physical Boundaries
  + Touching of a minor should be limited to placing a hand on the individual’s shoulder, hands, arm, head, or upper back. The touch should be non-demanding, and hugs should consist of side hugs only. Hugs and kisses should never be requested by volunteers and should never be forced upon a minor.
  + If possible, children should sit next to a volunteer. Avoid having children sit on laps if possible.
  + Under no circumstances is any person working with minors allowed to administer corporal punishment. If a parent chooses to do so, volunteers should attempt to contact CTR staff, who will encourage parents to administer this at home if possible, and away from other children if not possible.
  + Volunteers should never attempt to control a child by firmly grabbing or pushing the child on any part of their body. It is best to avoid any physical contact with an unruly child if at all possible. Volunteers should seek assistance from the ministry leader or church staff if behavior reaches this point. It is best practice to have parents remove their own child in this situation.
  + Under no circumstances should an adult transport a minor alone (one on one) in their vehicle. If, after all efforts have been made to ensure another adult or additional minors are able to be in the vehicle as well, the transporting adult *must* initiate a video call (facetime, etc.) with the child’s parent or other non-related adult (to the volunteer) for the duration of the transportation.

**Procedure to Report Known or Suspected Abuse:** Christ The Rock is committed to the profound responsibility of protecting children and youth in our ministries. With this responsibility in mind, the procedure to report suspected or known abuse of a minor must be observed. Failure to report known or suspected abuse will result in the volunteer being removed from future ministry opportunities.

* Responsibility to Remind
  + If a volunteer observes a violation of any of the previous policies and procedures by another volunteer or ministry leader that does not rise to the level of abuse, the volunteer should remind them of the expectations set forth in this policy. In the case of a ministry leader violating these policies, the volunteer is also encouraged to meet with the ministry leader’s supervisor within 24 hours. The supervisor is expected to take the report seriously and put corrective measures in place for the volunteer or ministry leader.
* Responsibility to Report
  + If a volunteer suspects or is informed by a child of abuse of any kind, the volunteer must find and inform the ministry leader as soon as possible, with the requirement that the suspected/confirmed abuse be passed along to the ministry leader before leaving the ministry event.
  + *It is not the responsibility of the volunteer, ministry leader, or CTR staff to actually determine if abuse has taken place. The volunteer and staff member’s responsibility is simply to report suspicions to the appropriate state or county agency.*
  + Because Wisconsin state law requires immediate notification of suspected abuse, the volunteer who suspects or is informed of abuse is expected to make a phone call to the appropriate state agency *before the end of the ministry event.* The volunteer will make this phone call with the assistance and support of the ministry leader.
    - Please note: volunteers are not considered mandatory reporters according to Wisconsin state law. Clergy are. Even though volunteers are not mandated reporters, we are asking volunteers to make the report before leaving the ministry event, with the support of CTR staff who are mandated reporters.
  + If the ministry leader is not a paid employee of CTR, the ministry leader must contact one of the Family Ministries Team members and inform them of the contact with the state agency. If the ministry leader is a paid employee of CTR, the ministry leader must submit a written summary to their supervisor, using the appropriate form provided for reporting abuse.
  + Confidentiality is expected throughout the reporting process. All individuals involved are expected to maintain the confidentiality of both the suspected victim and accused and are not to discuss the incident with anyone outside the above-mentioned personnel.
* Response and Follow Up
  + If the accused is part of CTR staff, they will *immediately* cease and desist from any and all contact with children and youth and may no longer perform any duties within any Christ The Rock ministries until the incident is resolved. Christ The Rock reserves the right to determine what discipline, if any, is reasonable for the employee suspected of abuse. This will all be done in accordance with the CTR Employee Manual.
  + If the accused is a ministry volunteer, they will *immediately* cease and desist from any and all contact with children and youth and may no longer serve within any Christ The Rock ministries until the incident is resolved. If the suspected abuse is verified by state agencies, the ministry volunteer will be permanently banned from serving in any Family Ministries capacity.
  + In the event the suspected abuse is verified by CPS or another state agency, CTR leadership will make plans to respond to any media requests. Under no circumstances should anyone except the representatives assigned by CTR leadership speak to the media on behalf of the church.
  + Church personnel and volunteers are expected to cooperate fully with any ongoing investigation.
  + Throughout the investigation, church leadership will provide as much support and care for both the victim and family as possible, as well as the reporting individual, if possible. This will be done under the direction of the Senior Leadership Team and/or Elders.

**Annual Training:** This policy is expected to be reviewed at each annual ministry training event. In addition, this policy is expected to be reviewed in the initial orientation and on boarding process of any Children or Student Ministries volunteer.