

# Romeo United Methodist Church: Policy on Reducing the Risk of Abuse with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

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Approved by Church Council – (9.19.13)

**Goal:** The Romeo United Methodist Church of Romeo, Michigan, desires to provide an environment free of behavior that constitutes child abuse or sexual harassment by establishing a policy and training program to educate our paid staff, volunteer staff, and congregation as respects the safeguards to protect children, youth, and vulnerable adults from physical, mental, and/or sexual abuse and sexual harassment. For the purpose of this policy, youth/child shall mean anyone under the age of 18; and vulnerable adult shall mean an individual, age 18 or over, who, because of age, developmental disability, mental illness, or physical handicap requires supervision or personal care or lacks the personal and social skills required to live independently.

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## Terms Defined

Michigan Act No.238, Public Acts of 1975 as amended, defines:

- ❖ "Child" or "youth" to mean a person under 18 years of age. "Adult" is to mean a person 18 years of age or older. "Vulnerable Adult" is an individual, age 18 or over, who because of age, developmental disability, mental illness, or physical handicap requires supervision or personal care or lacks the personal and social skills required to live independently.
- ❖ "Child abuse" as defined, "means harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare by a parent, legal guardian, or any other person responsible for the child's health or welfare, or by a teacher or teacher's aide which occurs through non-accidental physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or maltreatment."
- ❖ "Person responsible" for the child's health or welfare means: "legal guardian, person 18 years of age or older (staying) for any length of time in the same home in which the child resides, or an owner, operator, volunteer or employee of one or both of the following:"
- ❖ "Sexual abuse" means: "engaging in sexual contact or sexual penetration as defined in section 520a of the Michigan penal code, Act No.238 of the Public Acts of 1931, being section 750.520a of the Michigan Compiled Laws with a child."
- ❖ "Sexual exploitation," includes "allowing, permitting, or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution, or allowing, permitting, encouraging, or engaging in the photographing, filming or depicting or a child engaged in a listed sexual act as defined in section 145c of Act No. 238 of the Public Acts of 1931, being section 750.145c of the Michigan Compiled Laws."
- ❖ "Sexual harassment" is bullying or coercion of a sexual nature, or the unwelcome or inappropriate promise of rewards in exchange for sexual favors. May include unwelcome sexual advances, sexual language, and physical harassment of a sexual nature.
- ❖ "Person Certified" is an adult that has completed the Blue Water District Child Protection Policy training and has received their certification card.
- ❖ "Person Trained" is an adult that has gone through RUMC Child, Youth, and Venerable Adult training by a certified adult leader.

## Screening Process: Volunteer and Employee

- ❖ All volunteers working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults should be active attendees of Romeo United Methodist Church for a minimum of six months. All employees must follow the same screening processes, as well as have prior six months experience with another ministry program (within or outside of RUMC).
- ❖ Prior to consideration, all candidates seeking a volunteer position that involves working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults will complete and return the Volunteer Worker Information Form.
- ❖ The ministry leader, or designee, will carefully review the application and conduct a short interview, ensuring that the candidate is an appropriate match for the ministry position.
- ❖ If the individual appears to be an appropriate candidate for the ministry position, the ministry leader, or designee, will check at least two references to confirm the information that the candidate provided on the ministry application. The Pastor will conduct a criminal background check through a state law enforcement agency or other provider of such services. This background check is required for all volunteers and for employees that will be working with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults. Background checks will be renewed every 3 years for volunteers and employees.
- ❖ When indicated by our reference and/or background checks, candidates who pose a threat to others, or have a prior history of physical or sexual abuse directed against another person, will be removed immediately from consideration for ministry positions anywhere within our organization.
- ❖ An additional verification of current driver's license, insurance, and possible check of a candidate's driving record is required for individuals who will be transporting children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults to church approved off-site activities.
- ❖ All application materials – the application form, background checks, reference check, notes from interviews, etc. – will be kept in a locked file cabinet or other secure location. The background checks will only be reviewed by the Pastor.
- ❖ All adults working with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults will attend a mandatory orientation and training meeting on the RUMC Policy on Reducing the Risk of Abuse with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults.

## Training

In order to provide an effective program for providing safeguards to protect children, youth, and/or from physical and sexual abuse a training program for paid, volunteer staff, and the congregation is to be provided annually. This training is to include the church's policy regarding child sexual abuse, neglect, sexual harassment, and any additional information the Christian Education Director, Youth & Young Adults Director, Pastor, and/or Staff Parish Committee feel is pertinent.

- ❖ Training shall be offered annually.
- ❖ Paid and volunteer staff who work with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults must attend training annually.
- ❖ Attendance shall be kept on file for those in attendance.

## Responding and Reporting

Michigan Act No.238 defines those persons required to report suspected child abuse or neglect as "a physician, coroner, dentist, medical examiner, nurse, person licensed to provide emergency medical care, audiologist, psychologist, family therapist, certified social worker, social worker, social work technician, school administrator, school counselor or teacher, law enforcement officer or regulated child care provider...." As noted above, **the law does not require churches to report;** however, the individuals listed above may be required to report regardless of the lack of such requirement for churches.

### Incidents of Abuse

1. Incidents of abuse or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse of children, youth, or vulnerable adults will be reported immediately to the Pastor (or the Blue Water District Superintendent, 810-385-8840, in his/her absence). The Pastor will be held accountable to the policies of the UMC Book of Discipline and Detroit Area Conference.
2. The person reporting the incident will carefully document, in writing, all known facts and circumstances regarding the event and all steps taken in the course of handling the reported incident. (See Abuse Reporting Form)
3. Together the Pastor and person reporting the incident will call the Department of Human Services Hotline together. The Pastor is to record all processes stated by DHS and be the "recording secretary" during the phone call.
4. The Pastor or Blue Water District Superintendent will notify the Bishop's office of the account

and the direction that DHS has given the church.

5. Any media inquiries should be referred to the Bishop's office.

6. Any person accused must be treated with dignity and support. That person will be immediately relieved of further responsibilities, as circumstances dictate, until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.

7. The confidentiality of all persons involved will be safeguarded. All records relating to the matter will be maintained in confidential files.

### **Accidental Injuries**

1. In the case of a physical injury during a church activity, group leaders will provide simple first aid for minor cuts and scrapes and report to parents/guardians when the individual is picked-up.

2. Parents/guardians will be contacted immediately for any more serious injury or illness.

3. If warranted, emergency medical personnel should be called.

4. The group leader will also complete the Injury Report Form and submit it to the church office for record keeping.

### **Transportation**

- ❖ All transportation of children, youth, or vulnerable adults should begin and end at the church. Any exceptions must be included in the parent's permission form.
- ❖ All drivers must be approved ahead of activity.
- ❖ If it is not possible for the group to return on time, group leaders should call the church or a designated person, to inform them of the reason for the delay and where the group is. That designated person will notify parents of the delay and expected time of arrival.
- ❖ No volunteer driver under the age of 25 is to be authorized as a driver for children, youth, and vulnerable adult activities. If "paid staff" are used for driving to an event, then the minimum age changes to a minimum of 21.
- ❖ All drivers must have a current driver's license and car insurance. A copy of these must be provided to the church office for verification before the driving event.

## **Trips/Overnight Activities: Children's and Vulnerable Adults**

- ❖ Adult chaperones must be a minimum of 25 years of age.  
Young adult helpers (age 16-24) may assist adult chaperones.
- ❖ Adult chaperones will be approved by Christian Education Director, Youth & Young Adults Director, or Pastor.
- ❖ Chaperones should be a combination of both men & women, whenever possible.  
Guidelines for children/youth to adult ratios.

**Children age 0-3** one adult to every four children

**Children age 4-6** one adult to every six children

**Children age 7-11** one adult to every eight children

**Youth age 12-17** one adult to every ten youth

- ❖ All over-night activities will require written parent(s)/guardian(s) permission for children and youth to attend. These permission slips should be kept on file with the Youth & Young Adults Director or Education Director for a period of five years.
- ❖ All overnight activities will require the approval of the Pastor.
- ❖ If overnight activities require sleeping arrangements, there will be a separation of sleeping areas for males and females.
- ❖ All trips will require a written notification to the youth or child's parent or guardian of the:
  - Purpose of the trip.
  - Estimated departure and return times.
  - Any other pertinent information.
  - This information should also be kept on file for a period of five years.

## **Trips/Overnight Activities: Youth**

- ❖ A minimum of one 25 year of age adult chaperone must be present at each event. Adult chaperones must be a minimum of 18 years of age.
- ❖ All other Overnight Activity Regulations apply under the Overnight Activities Regulations for Children Events.

## Nursery

- ❖ The nursery is intended to be used only for church functions.
- ❖ There will be at least two persons present in the nursery at all times. One of the two must be an adult. Teens (12+ years of age) may help only if an adult is present. A floater in the education/nursery area can constitute as the second adult who will randomly check nursery area.
- ❖ Children must be signed in and out of the nursery and cannot leave unless the parent/guardian is there to pick them up.

## Methodist House

\*Awaiting Nora's reply on how we should proceed with this.

## Discipline

- ❖ While caring for and supervising children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults, we intend to provide a loving and safe environment. Providing such an environment requires planning and discipline.
- ❖ The preferred method of discipline recommended is distraction away from the problem area of activity.
- ❖ Know your group and try to anticipate problems.
  - Any form of physical punishment is not appropriate or tolerated.
  - Plan programs and activities that are age appropriate and match the make-up of your specific group.
  - Expectations and appropriate consequences should be clear to the children and youth.
  - Children/youth/vulnerable adults are not to be left outside the classroom unattended. The floater or Education Director shall assist.
  - If there are difficult discipline problems that consistently recur, talk to the Christian Education Director or Youth & Young Adults Director. For severe problems we will seek parents help in a solution workable for all concerned, which may include calling the parent/guardian to take custody of the child/youth/vulnerable adult.

## **Unacceptable Behavior**

Unacceptable behavior includes but is not limited to the following: throwing of objects, kicking, hitting, pushing, biting, leaving the area without caregiver's knowledge, name-calling, or any language that shows disrespect, puts down, or belittles another person. If this behavior takes place, ministry disciplinary actions will be followed leading up to dismissal from the program.

## **General Guidelines**

- ❖ Do not strike or push children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
- ❖ All children, youth, and/or vulnerable adult classes should have two teachers per class, preferably one male, and one female. One of the two must be an adult. Teens (12+ years of age) may help only if an adult is present. A floater in the education area can constitute as the second adult who will randomly check education rooms.
- ❖ Doors of classrooms used for children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults should have windows in them or be left open.
- ❖ As an adult, never be alone with a child, youth, and/or vulnerable adults.
- ❖ At any activity involving children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults there will be at least two adults present.
- ❖ Where an adult has a legitimate reason to be alone with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult, the paid staff or volunteer worker is to obtain the consent of the child's, youth's, and/or vulnerable adults parent(s) or guardian(s) before going out with or spending time with that child, youth, and/or vulnerable adult in any unsupervised or alone situation. This includes transporting a child, youth, and/or vulnerable adult to or from supervised activities. Consent should be in writing whenever practical. It is always best when transporting children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults to have them sit in the back seat.
- ❖ Children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults should have parental/guardian permission for involvement in church sponsored programs or activities. Whenever practical this permission should be in writing.
- ❖ Sunday School classrooms should be visited by the Christian Education Director or appointed



assistant (floater) a weekly basis. Visits to the classrooms should be random. This should include periodic visits to inspect areas of the church building that are isolated from view.

- ❖ Supervisory personnel, which may include teachers, chaperones, or others working with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults; will be present before, during, and after the activity until all children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults are in the custody of their parents/guardian. Children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults are not to be left at the church on the own nor unsupervised on church grounds.
- ❖ When children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults are walking home from activities or driving to and from church activities, secure permission from parents/guardians should be received ahead of time that this will be the acceptable procedure for their child, youth, and/or vulnerable adult.
- ❖ The matter of acceptable touching of children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults needs to be handled with a great deal of thought and caution. Clear, sensible judgment must be followed.
  - Examples:
    - A child, youth, and/or vulnerable adult should only be hugged in the presence of other adults.
    - A sideways hug is preferred over frontal hugs.
    - Hugging should never be considered appropriate if it is unwanted or attempts are made to thwart it.
    - When working with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults kissing between counselors and children/youth/vulnerable adults should **not** occur.
- ❖ Verbal comments must be delivered carefully; praise should be polite, never intentionally relating the idea of improper affection.
- ❖ Group leaders responsible for assisting children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults to the restroom will be trained on RUMC's Church Policy of Reducing the Risk of Abuse.
- ❖ When one-time events at the church take place, where volunteers are helping to chaperone, there will be at least a minimum of two trained adults at each event, with one trained adult group leader per team.
- ❖ Each room involving children, youth, and/or vulnerable adult ministry will have posted the Volunteer/Child Protection Sheet.

# Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse

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1. Name of worker (paid or volunteer) observing/receiving disclosure of child abuse:

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2. Victim's Name:

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3. Victim's age/date of birth:

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4. Date/place of initial conversation with/report from victim:

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5. Victim's statement (give summary here):

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6. Name of person accused of abuse:

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Relationship of accused to victim (paid staff, volunteer, family member, other):

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7. Reported to Pastor/District Superintendent:

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Date/Time:

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Summary:

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8. Call to Department of Human Services

Date/Time:

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Spoke With:

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Summary:

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9. Other Contact Names (if involved):

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Date/Time:

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Summary:

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Signature of Reporter

Date

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This report is to be seen by only the appropriate officials dealing with this incident. The report is to be given to the Pastor and kept in a locked space in the Church Office.

# Injury Incident Report

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Date of Incident: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of Incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Location on Campus of Incident:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Incident Witnessed By:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Injured Individual's Name:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Individual's Address:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Numbers:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian's Name (if applicable):  
\_\_\_\_\_

How and When Were Parent/Guardian(s) Notified:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

By Whom Were They Notified:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Is the Injured Individual a Member of RUMC? (circle one)      YES      NO  
If No, how long have they been attending?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Summarize the Incident Situation:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Was First Aid Administered? (circle one)      YES      NO

If Yes, By Whom:

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Was an Ambulance or Paramedic Summoned? (circle one)      YES      NO

Was the Individual Transported to a Hospital for Treatment? (circle one)      YES      NO

If Yes, Where Were They Transported To:

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Status of Injured Individual:

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Name of Individual Completing This Report:

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## **For Office Use Only**

Leadership Individual Doing Follow Up:

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Date of Follow Up:

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Status of Follow Up:

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Signature:

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Date Resolved:

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# Romeo United Methodist Church VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (cell) \_\_\_\_\_

Birthday \_\_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name (include maiden name, nicknames, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Current Address \_\_\_\_\_

Former Address \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Employer \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you attended RUMC? \_\_\_\_\_ Which service do you presently attend? \_\_\_\_\_

Please list other churches you attended regularly during the past 5 years? (Church & address)

Area of ministry/work you prefer: \_\_\_\_\_

Indicate the date you would be available to begin: \_\_\_\_\_

What is the length of commitment you can make? \_\_\_\_\_

List all previous non-church work involving children: \_\_\_\_\_

List any training, education, calling, SPIRITUAL GIFTS, or other factors that have prepared you for children's ministry work.

*Please Complete Next Page*

How did you come to know Christ as your Savior?

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PERSONAL REFERENCES (not former employers or relatives)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Is there any information we should know? (i.e. physical limitations, illnesses, etc.)

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What are your greatest concerns in your area of ministry? \_\_\_\_\_

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Have you ever been convicted or pleaded guilty to child abuse or a crime involving actual or attempted sexual molestation of a minor? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please explain. \_\_\_\_\_

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Have you ever been convicted of or pleaded guilty to a crime (other than a minor traffic offense) or are any felony charges pending against you? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please explain. \_\_\_\_\_

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***Please Complete Next Page***

**APPLICANT’S STATEMENT**

The information contained in this form is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references or churches listed to give any information that they may have regarding my character and fitness for working with children. In consideration of the receipt and evaluation of this form by Romeo United Methodist Church, I hereby release any individual, church, youth organization, charity, employer, reference, or any other person or organization, including record custodians, both collectively and individually, from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind or nature which may at any time result to me, my heirs, or family, on account of compliance or any attempts to comply, with this authorization. I waive any right that I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any person or organization identified by me in this form.

I further state that I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THE FOREGOING RELEASE AND KNOW THE CONTENTS THEREOF AND I SIGN THIS RELEASE AS MY OWN FREE ACT. This is a legally binding agreement, which I have read and understand.

APPLICANT’S SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Permission to Obtain a Background Check**

*(This form authorizes the church to obtain background information and must be completed by the applicant. The church must keep this completed form on file for at least five years after requesting a background check.)*

I, the undersigned applicant (also known as “consumer”), authorize Romeo United Methodist Church through its independent contractor, LexisNexis, to procure background information (also known as a “consumer report and/or investigative consumer report”) about me. This report may include my driving history, including any traffic citations; a social security number verification; present and former addresses; criminal and civil history/records; and the state sex offender records.

I understand that I am entitled to a complete copy of any background information report of which I am the subject upon my request to Romeo United Methodist Church, if such is made within a reasonable time from the date it was produced. I also understand that I may receive a written summary of my rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



# Volunteer / Child / Youth / Adult Protection Guidelines

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Romeo United Methodist Church intends to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of volunteers, children, youth, and adults. As a precaution and to ensure strict accountability from one adult to another, follow these rules:

## 1. Two team members in room

All children, youth, and/or vulnerable adult classes should have two teachers per class, preferably one male, and one female. One of the two must be an adult. Teens (12+ years of age) may help only if an adult is present. A floater in the education area can constitute as the second adult who will randomly check education rooms. Chaperones should be a combination of both men & women, whenever possible.

Guidelines for children/youth to adult ratios.

**Children age 0-3** one adult to every four children

**Children age 7-11** one adult to every eight children

**Children age 4-6** one adult to every six children

**Youth age 12-18** one adult to every ten youth

## 2. Restroom Policy

Volunteers should help a child use the restroom only if the child is five years or younger. If a child is five years or younger, the volunteers should leave the outer door of the restroom open. In instance of a one room restroom the adult volunteer will check the restroom for safety first, let the child proceed to the restroom, shut the door, and remain outside until the child is done using the restroom. If a child is over the age of five, the volunteer should check the restroom before the child enters it and then wait outside for the child.

## 3. Appropriate Touch

The matter of acceptable touching of children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults needs to be handled with a great deal of thought and caution. Clear, sensible judgment must be followed.

Examples:

- A child, youth, and/or vulnerable adult should only be hugged in the presence of other adults.
- A sideways hug is preferred over frontal hugs.
- Hugging should never be considered appropriate if it is unwanted or attempts are made to thwart it.
- When working with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults kissing between counselors and children/youth/vulnerable adults should **not** occur.

## 4. Open Door Policy

Doors of classrooms used for children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults should have windows in them or be left open.

## 5. Discipline

While caring for and supervising children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults, we intend to provide a loving and safe environment. Providing such an environment requires planning and discipline.

The preferred method of discipline recommended is distraction away from the problem area of activity. If there are difficult discipline problems that consistently recur, talk to the Christian Education Director or Youth & Young Adults Director. For severe problems we will seek parents help in a solution workable for all concerned, which may include calling the parent/guardian to take custody of the child/youth/vulnerable adult. **Unacceptable behavior** includes but is not limited to the following: throwing of objects, kicking, hitting, pushing, biting, leaving the area without caregiver's knowledge, name-calling, or any language that shows disrespect, puts down, or belittles another person. If this behavior takes place, ministry disciplinary actions will be followed leading up to dismissal from the program.

## 6. Reporting Abuse or Injury

Any incidents of suspected abuse or injury should be reported through proper documentation. Please follow the appropriate worksheet for next steps.