

**SAFE CHURCH POLICY**  
**For Volunteers**  
**Groveland Congregational Church, UCC**  
**Groveland, MA**

**Definitions**

**Child abuse** and **neglect** as defined by the State of Massachusetts DCF are as follows:

**Child abuse:** any child or youth who has a non-accidental physical injury or injuries which are at variance with the history given of such injuries, or in a condition which is the result of maltreatment such as, but not limited to malnutrition, sexual molestation, deprivation of necessities, emotional maltreatment or cruel punishment.

**Child neglect:** any child or youth who has been abandoned or is being denied proper care and attention, physically, educationally, or morally or is being permitted to live under conditions, circumstances or associations injurious to his well-being.

**Church, GCC:** Groveland Congregational Church

**Volunteers:** any church member/friend who volunteers to supervise/work with children of the congregation.

**Child:** as defined by MA law, any person under the age of sixteen, and youth is any person age sixteen or seventeen. In this policy, the terms child(ren) and youth are used interchangeably.

**CORI:** Criminal Offender Record Information through Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

**Introduction**

The following policies reflect our commitment to provide protective care of all children, youth, and volunteers who participate in Groveland Congregational Church sponsored activities.

It shall be the policy of the Groveland Congregational Church that all volunteers are informed that GCC is a mandated reporting agency and that they, as individuals, are required to verbally report suspicions or allegations of abuse or neglect to the GCC staff member responsible for reporting to DCF (typically the Sunday School coordinator or Youth Group Coordinator but could be Pastor). The GCC paid staff member must then file a report with the Massachusetts DCF.

The volunteer and/or staff will cooperate with any investigation. A volunteer against whom allegations are made will be immediately relieved of his/her commitments during the investigation.

Staff and volunteers shall treat all children with respect and consideration regardless of age, gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, or culture. Child physical abuse and sexual abuse are criminal actions that will not be tolerated. Adults who have been convicted of either child

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sexual or physical abuse cannot volunteer service in any church sponsored activity or program for children or youth.

### **Selection of Volunteer Workers**

To provide as secure an environment as possible, the church will select volunteer workers implementing the following practices. All new volunteers will be allowed to work with children and youth under the following conditions:

- a) The volunteer has been a member or friend of GCC for at least six months and/or
- b) The volunteer is a member/friend of GCC and has experience teaching/working with children at other church(es) before joining GCC. Satisfactory references must be provided to and approved by the Board of Christian Education.

All volunteers working with/supervising children must complete a Groveland Congregational Church **Volunteer Form**, and submit the completed form to the Board of Christian Education or its designee. The criteria for volunteer selection are listed on the form. All volunteer forms will be maintained permanently by the Office Administrator in a locked file cabinet. Church leadership may deny voluntary service with children if the applicant does not pass satisfactory CORI checks.

### **Supervision of Volunteer Workers**

To provide as secure an environment as possible, the church will implement the following practices:

Training regarding child abuse identification and reporting will be provided for all volunteers working with children. At the beginning of each Sunday school term, all volunteers working with youth will be given a copy of the GCC Youth Protection Policy. All volunteers will be required to review the policy and will be responsible for implementation of the policy. They will sign a statement indicating their commitment.

All children and youth in the Church School under the age of 15, shall be in the care and supervision of at least two adults, one of whom may be a high school aide. Further, no employee or volunteer should place him/herself in a compromising situation by being alone with a child/youth or with children/youth out of the sight of other teachers, advisors, aides or parents. In the event that an employee or volunteer must be alone with more than one child or youth [under the age of 15] it must be in an environment visible to other teachers, advisors, aides or parents. A visible environment shall include:

- A. A classroom with an open door [or windowed door] to a hallway or other populated classroom.
- B. A classroom in a substantially public place such as Fellowship or Memorial Hall.

No employee or volunteer shall be alone with a child in the bathroom for purposes of toileting, clean up from craft or art projects, or care of illness or injury.

Older children, grade 3 and up, will be discharged from church school according to parent's

documented response on the **Sunday School Student Registration Form**. Children who attend 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and under must have parent or designated dismiss the child from the classroom each week.

**Discipline:** When a child's behavior is deemed disruptive, the supervising individuals will use the least intrusive form of discipline possible. This might include verbal redirection, quiet time, classroom timeout and notifying the parents about the problems and/or taking a disruptive child to staff or parents. Should a child need to be separated from the class and placed in a 1:1 situation with a staff member or volunteer, this 1:1 time will be done in an open area. At all times the child being disciplined will be treated with respect and shall not be disciplined in manner that deprives him/her of a safe environment. Parent/guardian will be summoned as necessary.

**Toileting for Children under Six Years:** Volunteer staff members will walk the child under six years to the bathroom and will remain outside in the hallway until the child has completed toileting. If the child needs assistance, the child's parent/guardian will be summoned. It is recommended that children six years and older will use the buddy system for toileting. All children will be instructed to wash hands after toileting.

**Nursery Room:** The nursery group should not exceed eight children. Two adult staff members will supervise the children and any volunteers. Children in the nursery must be at least six months old. The nursery staff will maintain the nursery room and will disinfect any toys used at the end of their shift. Toys in the nursery will be age appropriate.

**Diaper Changing:** In the event that a diaper needs changing, the parents will be located.

**Mentors:** Children who meet with adult mentors on a 1:1 basis are to meet in public places with doors open or in the child's home with parent/adult present. Parent/guardian of the mentored child must assume responsibility for any other arrangement.

**Emergency:** In case of illness of child/youth, the parent or guardian will be summoned. In an emergency situation, the volunteer staff will call 911 for assistance. An Accident/Incident Report will be filled out for any incident or injury occurring during church sponsored activities. The completed form will be submitted to the church office for permanent record keeping.

**Youth Group Drivers:** Drivers for church youth activities must be at least twenty-one years of age and must complete the **Transportation Form**. Drivers must review and abide by GCC **Driver Guidelines**. Written parental/guardian permission is required for a child to be driven to the activity (**Trip & Off-Site Permission Slip**).

**Trip/Events for Youth Group:** All planned off-site youth activities require the completion of the **Trip & Off-Site Request Form**. This form is to be completed and submitted to the Christian Education Board for approval prior to the off-site trip.

**Youth Supervision During Church Sponsored Activities.** GCC encourages intergenerational activities, family activities, and parental/member assistance with the youth. In order to provide a safe environment for youth and volunteers, the following guidelines will be implemented.

1. Parents of youth must be responsible for youth participating in church sponsored intergenerational activities. Parent/guardian must assess the safety/conditions of the activity and decide whether to allow their child to participate.
2. All activities designated specifically for youth, must be supervised by GCC member/friends who have submitted a **Volunteer Form** which has been reviewed and approved.

### **REPORTING PROTOCOL**

Report any incident or suspicion or observation of child abuse/neglect verbally within 12 hours to the Pastor(s) and Board of Christian Education and the Board of Trustees.

The reporter in collaboration with one of the above people must immediately provide a verbal report of the incident or suspicion of child abuse/neglect to Children and Families (DCF), to be followed in writing within 48 hours, per DCF requirements. (DCF form will be completed.)

The Office Administrator shall maintain a copy of the written report in the confidential records of Groveland Congregational Church (GCC).

The Response Team (see below) will be verbally notified by the collaborating staff member and/or reporter. This shall occur within 24 hours of the verbal report to DCF.

The insurance carrier of GCC and/or counsel to GCC shall be immediately notified. A member of the Board of Trustees shall make this notification verbally.

### **RESPONSE TO REPORTED INCIDENTS**

1. The Response Team shall meet within 48 hours of notification. The Response Team shall consist of, but is not limited to, a member of the Board of Christian Education, one or more members of Church and Ministry committee and any other GCC member deemed appropriate.

\* The Pastor(s) should not be members of the Response Team; he/she/they may be consulted, but need to remain in a neutral position to be able to minister to the victim and family, the accused and family, and the church members in general.

3. Once an incident or suspicion has been reported and a written report has been made, all communication to the GCC church community and to the public from the church in reference to the incident shall be conducted by, and through, the Church Spokesperson. The Response Team will be responsible for written notification to the congregation concerning any incident, if said Team deems notification necessary. The privacy and confidentiality of all persons involved shall be protected and maintained.

- The alleged victim and his/her family need to be treated with love, support and care.
  - The accused person shall not be confronted or prejudged in any manner.
  - The reporter shall remain anonymous.
4. The Response Team will develop a position paper from GCC in respect to child abuse prevention and reporting. This position paper, retained by the Office Administrator in the permanent file, will be used in the event of any alleged incident of child abuse/neglect that becomes public.