

PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSIVE ACTS

Staff members and volunteers should immediately report an incident to one of the following, as appropriate: to a Church Minister, to a staff member's supervisor or to the leadership responsible for a volunteer's area of work if the situation took place there. The reporter should immediately complete the Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse form and submit this to a Church Minister. Allegations of abusive acts made regarding a Church Minister should be reported according to procedures outlined in the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) "Personnel Policies and Procedures".

The Senior Minister must be notified of the situation, if he or she has not already been informed.

The Senior Minister will then investigate the allegations contained in the report and respond accordingly. Follow up must be done promptly and discreetly. The Senior Minister must report his/her decision on the situation to the person making the initial report. When dealing with allegations that, upon investigation, appear to be true, it is strongly recommended that the Senior Minister notify the Department of Social Services (DSS). If the Senior Minister decides not to report the incident to DSS, the Senior Minister should make the initial reporter aware that the initial reporter may report the alleged incident to DSS if the initial reporter feels it is necessary to do so.

If the Senior Minister decides that the DSS should be contacted, the Senior Minister should call the DSS and give a full statement based on the information he or she has collected. When making this report, the initial reporter should be present with the Senior Minister. The Senior Minister should identify himself/herself to the DSS so that the Senior Minister may gain information about the progress of any DSS investigation. If a person makes an anonymous report, he or she loses all rights to further information.

Regardless of whether the DSS is notified, the Senior Minister should contact the chair of the Pastor Relations Committee and seek legal advice regarding the matter.

If the incident occurred on church property, during a church-sponsored activity, or involved a staff member, the church's insurance carrier should be notified.

A media spokesperson should be appointed. This spokesperson shall be the only person to give statements to the media, as may be required. The church staff should be notified of whom the spokesperson is. If staff members receive inquiries from the media, they should direct all questions to the media spokesperson. Staff members should NOT respond by saying "No Comment", or making any other statement about the situation other than, "You will need to talk to (name of media spokesperson)."

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Any person named as an alleged offender in a Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse form shall immediately be required to cease any contact with children or youth at First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) sponsored activities. The alleged offender may resume activities with children and youth at such time as the Senior Minister and other relevant church leaders deem appropriate.

Our goal, after abuse or alleged abuse, must be aimed at assuring justice for all and healing for those who are suffering.

The Senior Minister and anyone else involved in the report of abuse should keep a written record of the steps they have taken in the matter, including dates and times these steps were taken.