



# Protecting Our Children

Children and Youth Worker Screening,  
Selection and Registration

*Community of Christ*

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1001 West Walnut Street, Independence, MO 64050 USA

# Introduction

The purpose of *Protecting Our Children*, is to educate the church on reducing the risk of child abuse in programs of ministry and to screen, select, and register all people who serve children and youth in the church. The protection of children and youth is an important part of the church's ministry. According to national averages in the United States, child abuse affects between 2 and 3 percent of young people each year.

For the purpose of this policy, child abuse is defined as "bringing harm to a young person that occurs immediately or through accumulated effects over a period of time." There are four basic categories of abuse:

***NEGLECT*** occurs when harm is caused by withholding life's necessities. The ability to provide the necessities, but failing to do so, is the factor separating neglect from the effects of poverty.

***EMOTIONAL ABUSE*** occurs when young people are consistently told they are of no worth and never will be. Name-calling and threatening harm are forms of emotional abuse.

***PHYSICAL ABUSE*** is bodily injury of a person.

***SEXUAL ABUSE*** is any sexual activity between a young person and an adult, or between young people when there is an unequal distribution of power. This includes exposing a young person to sexual activity or pornography without their direct participation.

Abuse occurs in every part of society. Church families and programs are not exempt from abusive situations. In addition, those who work with children and youth in the church are not exempt from being misunderstood, or from being falsely accused of child abuse. Therefore, the church has established a six-point strategy to reduce the risk of abuse.

# Principles and Policies

The following principles form the foundation for the church's policy for reducing the risk of abuse toward children and youth:

**Education**—to educate young people, parents, youth workers, ministers, employees, volunteers, jurisdictional officers, members, and friends about the risks of child abuse.

**Selection**—to use an established procedure (*Protecting Our Children*) in the selection of youth workers and ministers that will minimize the risk that those people will abuse children and youth.

**Training**—to provide training for youth workers that will sensitize them to the issues of abuse: preventing, detecting, responding, and reporting.

**Protection Barriers**—to establish and follow available procedures that will reduce the risk of child abuse.

**Prompt and Full Reporting**—to encourage children and youth to report improper behavior directed toward them; to cooperate with local, state, and federal authorities and church officers when reporting child abuse detected while the child is under the supervision of a Community of Christ youth worker.

**Swift Action**—to respond quickly to allegations of child abuse: to treat all allegations as serious; to remove alleged offenders from contact with children and youth; and to report the situation to proper authorities.

The policy for all programs of ministry with children and youth in the Community of Christ is as follows:

*Only registered youth workers will be used in the church's children and youth programs and ministries. Registered youth worker assistants, persons 15-20 years of age, will only be used under the supervision of a registered youth worker.*

# Strategies for Implementation

The church will take a pro-active stance toward reducing child abuse through implementation of the previously described principles in the following ways:

## ***EDUCATION***

A component of mid-level judicatory training should consist of information and programs to assist congregations and other ministries in reducing the risk, responding to, and the reporting of child abuse. Educational programs on child abuse are generally available from local social service agencies.

It is important to heighten awareness in congregations and individuals about the problems of child abuse and to register individuals for children and youth ministry. Additional resources are available from Forefront Ministries at the Community of Christ world headquarters, Independence, Missouri.

## ***SELECTION***

The selection of adults to share in ministries with young people is critically important. The church is morally and legally duty-bound to have ***all*** potential children and youth workers go through an application and screening procedure ***before*** they begin sharing ministry. This includes those who become employed by the denomination and those who serve as volunteers.

An effective selection process includes these steps: (1) written application by the prospective youth worker, (2) checking references, (3) a personal interview with the prospective youth worker and a decision by the interviewer regarding the applicant's suitability for ministry, (4) a review of the application and support documents by the mid-level judicatory officer employed by the denomination and a decision by the officer regarding the applicant's suitability for ministry, (5) a review by the program administrator (Forefront Ministries). This can be followed by additional steps necessary to clarify information on the application.

The guidelines contained in this section and the forms for the screening of youth workers are to be used at all jurisdictional levels.

## ***TRAINING***

Training for youth workers is also critical important. Congregations that find it difficult to offer training should involve their children and youth workers in mid-level judicatory training events. It is strongly recommended that youth workers also attend training through local or state social service agencies. Training assistance is available through the Forefront Ministries office at world headquarters, 1-800-825-2806, extension 1355.

## ***PROTECTION BARRIERS***

Protection barriers are a key element in the church's ministry to safeguard children and youth. The barriers that will be most helpful in reducing the risk of abuse include:

**Two-Deep Leadership**—Two registered youth workers are required on all trips and outings (overnight). The two-deep leadership concept should be applied in all children's and youth programs. Coed groups and activities must have coed leadership. No one adult should be alone with one young person behind closed doors.

**Visible One-on-One Contact**—All contact should be in view of other adults and young people.

**Respect of Privacy**—Youth workers need to respect the privacy of young people in shared housing accommodations, such as camps. They should protect their own privacy, as well (separate areas or times for changing clothes, bathing/showering).

**Appropriate Dress**—Proper clothing for activities is required. Dress codes should take into consideration the Christ-centered nature of ministry. This applies to adults, children, and youth.

**Constructive Discipline**—Discipline should be constructive and reflect Christian values. Corporal punishment is *never* permitted.

**Appropriate Physical Contact**—Physical contact between a young person and an adult is an area where great wisdom must be exercised at all times. Physical contact should always be for the benefit of the young person: to give affirmation, to provide comfort when hurting, express joy in greeting, or to offer protection.

**Youth Worker Assistants**—These young adults, ages 15 to 20, must be registered, given training, and must be under the direct supervision of a registered youth worker.

Assuring that these principles are well known and followed by all who minister with children and youth will enhance the quality of ministry overall and provide protection of those children and youth involved.

### ***PROMPT AND FULL REPORTING***

Young people should be encouraged to report any improper behavior. Adults in the church are encouraged to teach children and youth in the church's ministries and programs the following:

Young people need to **recognize** situations that place them at risk of abuse, how abusers operate, and that anyone can be a abuser.

Young people need to know that if they **resist**, most abusers will leave them alone.

Young people must be encouraged to **report** any attempted or actual abuse to their youth leader or pastor. They should be given the assurance that when they report attempted or actual molestations, they are helping protect themselves and other young people from further abuse. They should also be reassured they will not be blamed for what may have occurred.

Specific resistance methods are emphasized in the *Child's Bill of Rights*. This document, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1989, outlines that when young people are confronted with a situation that they think is dangerous, they have the right to:

Trust their own instincts or feelings  
Expect privacy  
Withhold information that could place them in danger  
Refuse gifts  
Say no to unwanted touching or affection  
Say no to inappropriate demands and requests from adults  
Be rude or unhelpful if the situation warrants  
Run, scream, make a scene  
Physically fight off unwanted advances  
Ask for help

Congregations should contact local social agencies, or Forefront Ministries for additional information on assisting young people to avoid abusive situations.

### ***SWIFT ACTION***

Swift action in dealing with suspected abuse is essential. Every administrative officer should be aware of the church policy on ministerial sexual misconduct contained in the current *Church Administrator's Handbook*.

Youth workers who suspect abuse, or who receive abuse reports, are **required** to inform their administrative supervisor (pastor, camp director, judicatory president/administrator) immediately.

Know and abide by the requirements for your area. All states of the United States and all provinces and territories of Canada have laws requiring the reporting of suspected cases of child abuse.

For those individuals who receive a report of abuse, the responsibility for reporting that information is two-fold: the incident must be reported to local and/or state/provincial authorities as specified by law; and, the incident must be reported to the church administrator (pastor, mid-level judicatory president/administrator).

Administrative supervisors of church programs and ministries are required to remove anyone suspected of abuse from any contact with young people. This person will not be eligible to participate in any program or ministry with children or youth present until completely exonerated of the accusations.

# Selection and Screening Process

At the heart of any ministry with children and youth are adults who willingly give time, talent, and self to young people. Adults who view involvement with young people as a *ministry* are the key to successfully meeting the needs of children and youth. Books, videos, games, and activities are all important, but these only have true value when used by dedicated, trained, and caring youth workers. The selection of adults to minister with young people is critically important. Serving ministry is a *privilege* and a responsibility *assigned* to an individual by the church through its administrators. Care must be given when granting that privilege and trusting that responsibility to others.

The following definitions are important in understanding and implementing the church's policies and procedures regarding youth worker registration:

Forefront Ministries—the team at the Community of Christ world headquarters responsible for supporting ministry with children and youth; also, the name extended to other jurisdictions of the denomination for the ministry of children and youth in the church, ages birth to 18 years, and the network of those adults who minister with these young people.

Children—young people birth to 11 years of age

Youth—young people 12 to 18 years of age

Young People—children and youth, birth to 18 years of age

Youth Worker—a person at least twenty-one years of age, who gives service to children or youth

Registered Youth Worker—a person, 21 years of age and older, who gives service to children and youth in the church and who has completed the registration process, been approved by the appropriate church officers, and has the appropriate paperwork on file in the Forefront Ministries office at world headquarters

Registered Youth Worker Assistant—a person, 15 to 20 years of age, who gives service to children or youth under the direction of a registered worker, who has completed the registration process, been approved by the appropriate church officers, and has the appropriate paperwork on file in the Forefront Ministries office at world church headquarters

Guest Minister—a person who brings specialized ministry to a program on a short-term basis (less than one day with no custodial responsibilities) under the direct supervision of a registered youth worker

Program—any class, organization, activity, group, or entity of ministry in the church.

Training—organized study programs that enhances the youth worker's skills. These may include home study courses, workshops, seminars, conferences, and mentoring.

On occasion, guest ministers may share in an activity. A guest minister would not have to be a registered worker. They would, however, always participate with a registered youth worker present. Guest ministers are used on a short-term basis (less than one day) such as sharing a story, leading campfire, or serving refreshments. They might be parents, pastors, or people with a special skill that adds to the program. A guest minister may not have ongoing contact with children or youth. Guest ministers must not be given custodial responsibility for children and youth in the ministry.

# Registration Process

The registration process for the Community of Christ consists of the following steps:

**1. *The purpose of the selection process is explained to the applicant.*** The process helps to determine how best to use the applicant's gifts and talents and helps assure the physical, emotional, and spiritual safety of the young people involved in the church's programs. Young people and their parents have the right to expect that registered youth workers are of the highest caliber.

**2. *The applicant completes the registration application.*** All questions on the form must be answered. Youth workers need not be baptized members. A copy of the application form is at the end of this document.

**3. *The completed application will be reviewed by the appropriate church officer or their designate.*** References are checked, using the form supplied for that purpose. The applicant's current pastor (or former pastor, if the applicant is new to the congregation) and two other personal references will be contacted. If the applicant indicates there has been a conviction or a recorded incident of child abuse, or that such charges are pending, the proper agencies must be contacted to determine if the applicant should be allowed to work with children or youth and, if so, how best to use the applicant while protecting young people. Persons may not serve as references or check references for members of their own family. They must be completed by the next higher jurisdictional officer or their designate.

**4. *Follow all applicable state/province/federal regulations regarding people who work with children or youth.*** Local church officials should contact the appropriate state/provincial/federal agencies in their area to obtain copies of pertinent information. Legal Services at Community of Christ world headquarters can be of assistance in understanding applicable local regulations.

**5. *The reviewer signs the application.*** When the application review process is completed, including all references and agency checks, the reviewer signs the Record of Contact form indicating his/her recommendations about the person applying to be a registered youth worker. The reviewer has the option of recommending or not recommending the applicant. Persons may not sign and authorize documents for members of their own family. They must be completed by the next higher jurisdictional officer or their designate.

**6. *The applicant is interviewed.*** After the application review has been completed, the applicant is given an interview by the appropriate church officer, or their designate. Before the interview, the interviewer will review the application and the references report. The interview is critical, and no applicant can become registered without being interviewed. Persons may not interview members of their own family. Interviews must be completed by the next higher jurisdictional officer or their designate. The following types of questions should be asked:

What do you feel are your strong points that will help you as a youth worker?

What do you feel are your weak points?

What experience have you had working with young people?

Summarize your experience with the church.

How do you feel about receiving training that will help you become a more effective youth worker?

Why do you want to serve in ministry with children and youth?

How were you involved in a program of ministry as a child? as a youth?  
As you were growing up did you face any problems that you feel may impact your ministry?  
How do you feel about giving your time to youth ministry? How does your family feel about it?  
Explain how you can be a good role model for young people?

**7. *The interviewer signs the Statement of Personal Interviewer.*** All papers—the application, references check sheet, and interviewers statement—are to be returned to the administrative officer most directly concerned with the activity or program where the person will be offering ministry (congregational pastor, camp director, or mission center president). Persons may not authorize documents for members of their own family. They must be completed by the next higher jurisdictional officer or their designate.

**8. *The administrative officer reviews the application, references, and interviewer's statement.*** If there is need for further inquiry, the church officer will take the necessary steps. If the administrative officer is satisfied that the applicant is of good character, and that they have the qualities needed to serve as a registered youth worker, they will sign the endorsement statement. Persons may not sign and authorize documents for members of their own family. They must be completed by the next higher jurisdictional officer or their designate.

**9. *The application is reviewed by the mission center president.*** After completion and review by the church officer, the application and all related papers are forwarded to the mission center president. Mission center presidents may not authorize documents for members of their own family. They must be completed by the next higher jurisdictional officer or their designate. Whether or not the application is approved, it is forwarded to Forefront Ministries, 1001 West Walnut Street, Independence, MO 64050 USA.

**10. *The application is processed by Forefront Ministries.*** The Forefront Ministries office receives the application and reviews it, and clears it with the First Presidency and Legal Services. People who become registered youth workers will be indentified as such on the Membership Information System. Those people whose registrations are denied are notified in consultation with the pastor or camp director, mission center president, and field apostle. All applications and supporting documents are kept confidential.

**11. *Reports are available from Forefront Ministries.*** Reports indicating who is registered for specific jurisdictions are available from Forefront Ministries by calling 1-800-825-2806, extension 1374 or through email.

**12. *Assistants must also register.*** Youth Worker Assistants, 15 to 20 years of age, must complete the same registration process as required for registered youth workers.

**13. *Registered Youth Worker status is subject to annual review.*** The church reserves the right to review and alter registered youth worker status on an annual basis.

**14. *Changes must be communicated to world church headquarters.*** It is important that when a congregation or mission center determines that someone is not suitable for serving in youth work due to legal action or information that Legal Services at the Community of Christ world headquarters be notified immediately, regardless of whether they are a registered youth worker.

## Follow-Up

It is recommended that people who have not previously served as youth workers be assigned a mentor. This might be someone in the same congregation or mid-level judicatory who has had experience in the same type of ministry.

Except for guest ministers, only registered youth workers will be used in church youth programs. To insure quality, safe programs, it is appropriate to ask people to register even if they are not currently serving in ministry with children and youth. This allows for substitutes or replacements without jeopardizing the ongoing safety of a program. This would include those who are not directly responsible for ministry with children and youth, but who serve in close relationship, such as cooks at camps and congregational priesthood.

Additional questions on this material should be addressed to Forefront Ministries, 1001 West Walnut Street, Independence, MO 64050 USA, or at [www.forefrontministries.org](http://www.forefrontministries.org).

## Forms

Current forms are on the following pages and are also available on the Forefront Ministries home page, [www.forefrontministries.org](http://www.forefrontministries.org). For additional resources about the care of children and youth and reducing the risk of child abuse in the church, contact the the Forefront Ministries team at world church headquarters, 1-800-825-2806, extension 1364.

## Youth Worker Registration Workshop

To schedule a workshop regarding youth worker registration and related issues, contact the Forefront Ministries team at world church headquarters, 1-800-825-2806, extension 1364 or 1355. They can be scheduled as a part of other youth ministry training or as a separate seminar for congregations, camps, or mission centers.

# Community of Christ

## Children and Youth Worker Confidential Application

*This application is to be completed by all people wishing to serve in any position with the Community of Christ that involves direct contact with children or youth. The intent of this application is to help the church provide a safe and secure environment for young people who participate in ministry and to assist applicants and church leaders in identifying and utilizing gifts and skills of the applicant.*

Date of Application \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name \_\_\_\_\_  
*Last First Middle Maiden/Former*

Social Security /National Identification Number (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Present Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State/Province \_\_\_\_\_

Zip/Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Home Telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
*Area Code*

Have you ever been convicted of a crime other than a minor traffic violation? No Yes. If yes, please indicate the date and nature of the offense: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you currently under investigation, or have you ever been recorded by the Department of Social Services (or any equivalent department/agency) for child abuse and/or neglect or any criminal activity involving a minor? No Yes. If yes, please indicate the date and nature of the record: \_\_\_\_\_

*I understand that the church will contact the appropriate agencies if I have answered "yes" to either of the two previous questions, and I give my permission for them to do so.*

Name of congregation/church where you regularly attend \_\_\_\_\_

Is this a Community of Christ congregation? Yes No Current pastor \_\_\_\_\_

Pastor's Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Pastor's E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

List the name, city and state/province of other congregations you have attended regularly during the past five years:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Children or youth ministry position for which you are applying \_\_\_\_\_

List previous experience working with young people \_\_\_\_\_

*Use additional page if necessary*

List any gifts, training, education, or other factors that have prepared you for children and youth ministry: \_\_\_\_\_

**PERSONAL REFERENCES**

*No former employers or relatives*

Name _____	Name _____
Address _____	Address _____
City _____	City _____
State/Province _____ Zip/Postal Code _____	State/Province _____ Zip/Postal Code _____
Telephone _____	Telephone _____

**APPLICANT'S STATEMENT**

I authorize any references or organizations listed in this application to give you any information they may have regarding my character and fitness for children and youth work. I release all such references from liability for any damage that may result from furnishing such evaluations to you, and I waive any right to inspect references provided on my behalf.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the rules and regulations and policies of the Community of Christ, and to act in accordance with those, in the performance of my services on behalf of the church.

I hereby attest and certify that I have never been convicted of nor pled guilty to: child abuse, endangering children, gross sexual imposition, sexual imposition, voyeurism, public indecency, any offense of violence, or any existing or former offense of any municipal corporation, any state, United States, or any other nation that is substantially equivalent to any of the above offenses. (If you have been convicted of or pled guilty to any of the above offenses and wish to explain the circumstances thereof, please do so on a separate sheet.) I further certify that I have never been discharged from employment or a volunteer position because of any activity covered by the foregoing.

I hereby authorize any present or former employer, person, firm, corporation, physician, or government agency to answer any and all questions and to release or provide any information within their knowledge or records, and I agree to hold any and all of them harmless and free of any liability for releasing any truthful information that is within their knowledge and records. I further authorize the Community of Christ to conduct a check of my police criminal records and agree that I will fully cooperate in providing all information and signing all documents necessary to conduct such a check.

I hereby attest and certify that the above information provided by me is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I understand that misrepresentations or omissions may disqualify my application or result in my immediate dismissal if I am already serving in a children and youth related position.

Applicant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature\* \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\*only if applicant is under 21 years of age

***Please submit this form to your Community of Christ pastor, camp director,  
or other jurisdictional officer for processing.***

***Do not send this form directly to Forefront Ministries.***

# Community of Christ

## Record of Contact

*With Children and Youth Workers Applicant's References  
Confidential Information*

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### ***First Reference***

Person contacted \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

Method of contact     telephone     letter     other \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person making contact \_\_\_\_\_

Reference's comments about applicant were     favorable     guarded     unfavorable

Summary of reference's comments \_\_\_\_\_

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### ***Second Reference***

Person contacted \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

Method of contact     telephone     letter     other \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person making contact \_\_\_\_\_

Reference's comments about applicant were     favorable     guarded     unfavorable

Summary of reference's comments \_\_\_\_\_

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### ***Pastor or Third Reference (recommended\*)***

Person contacted \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

Method of contact     telephone     letter     other \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person making contact \_\_\_\_\_

Reference's comments about applicant were     favorable     guarded     unfavorable

Summary of reference's comments \_\_\_\_\_

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*\*The pastor/third reference becomes important if the first and second references have differing comments about the applicant's suitability.*

**Signature of person filing this report** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Print Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Title** \_\_\_\_\_

# Community of Christ

## Statement of Personal Interviewer *Confidential Information*

All children and youth worker applicants must be interviewed by the appropriate church officer, or the person designated to do so by that officer. Before the interview, the interviewer will review the Application and the applicant's Record of Contact. The following questions are examples of what should be included in the interview:

What do you feel are your strong points that will help you as a children and youth worker?

What do you feel are your weak points?

What experience have you had working with young people?

Summarize your experience with the church.

How do you feel about receiving training that will help you become a more effective worker?

Why do you want to be a children and youth worker?

Describe your involvement in church children or youth programs as you were growing up?

As you were growing up did you face any problems that you feel may impact your ministry?

How do you and your family feel about giving the necessary time to children or youth work?

How do you feel about being a role model for young people?

I have interviewed \_\_\_\_\_ and reviewed his/her references.  
*Applicant's Name*

***I recommend.*** To the best of my knowledge I find the applicant to be of good character and to possess the qualities needed to serve as a children and youth worker in the Community of Christ.

***I cannot recommend*** him/her to serve as a children and youth worker in the Community of Christ.

Comments \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewer's signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Print Interviewer's Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Title** \_\_\_\_\_

**Community of Christ**  
**Statement of Church Officer**  
***Confidential Information***

I have reviewed the Application, Record of Contact, and Statement of Personal Interviewer for

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***I recommend.*** To the best of my knowledge I find the applicant to be of good character and to possess the qualities needed to serve as a children and youth worker in the Community of Christ.

***I cannot recommend*** him/her to serve as a children and youth worker in the Community of Christ.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of Church Officer*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Print Name*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Phone Number*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Title*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*E-mail*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Address of Church Officer*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*City/State or Province/Zip or Postal Code*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Nation*

**Approved by Mission Center President**  
*(signature required, even if it is the same person as above)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Mission Center*