

North Church Sexual Misconduct Prevention & Response Policy (Nov. 2025)

1. Purpose

North Church is committed to providing a safe, life-giving environment for all people—especially children, students, and vulnerable adults. Sexual misconduct in any form is strictly prohibited. This policy outlines preventative measures, expectations of conduct, reporting procedures, and responses designed to protect individuals and uphold the integrity of Christ-centered ministry.

2. Definitions

Sexual Misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Sexual abuse or exploitation
- Grooming behaviors
- Inappropriate physical contact
- Sharing sexual content
- Sexualized conversations, comments, or humor
- Boundary violations or favoritism
- Any behavior that violates state law or biblical ethics

Vulnerable Persons include:

- Minors under 18
 - Adults with cognitive, emotional, or physical limitations
 - Anyone who reasonably cannot protect or advocate for themselves
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3. Screening & Background Checks

To serve in any ministry involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults, individuals must:

- Complete an application and interview
- Undergo a national criminal background check
- Renew background checks every **two years**
- Complete abuse-prevention training required by North Church
- Provide references if requested
- Agree in writing to abide by all North Church safety policies

No individual with a history of sexual misconduct, abuse, violent crime, or any disqualifying criminal record may serve in these roles.

4. Two-Adult Rule

To reduce vulnerability and increase accountability:

4.1 Always Two Adults

There must always be **at least two unrelated, approved adults** present:

- In classrooms

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- During youth activities
- During counseling or prayer sessions with minors
- During transportation
- On trips, retreats, or overnight events

4.2 Visibility

- Rooms should have **windows**, open blinds, and proper visibility.
- If a private meeting is absolutely necessary, it must occur in a **visible, public, or observable** location.

4.3 Never Alone With a Minor

No staff member or volunteer may ever be alone with a minor out of sight of others—including in vehicles, offices, or off-campus venues.

5. Appropriate Conduct & Boundaries

All staff and volunteers must maintain clear, healthy, and biblically grounded boundaries.

5.1 Physical Contact

Appropriate physical touch may include:

- Handshakes
- High fives
- Side hugs

Inappropriate physical touch includes:

- Full frontal hugs
- Lap-sitting
- Touching private areas or any area normally covered by a swimsuit
- Massages
- Tickling
- Physical displays that could be misconstrued

5.2 Communication Standards

- No private messaging, texting, or social media DM's with minors without another adult copied.
- No one-on-one digital meetings with minors.
- All digital communications must be transparent and ministry-related.
- Staff and volunteers must never share sexualized content, innuendo, jokes, or stories.

5.3 Counseling & Prayer Boundaries

- Meetings with adults should be in **visible, open, or public** spaces.
- For minors, parents/guardians should be notified and preferably present.
- Pastoral counseling with the opposite sex should remain in visible, open areas.

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6. Bathroom & Diapering Procedures

For ministries involving young children:

- Parents should handle diaper changes whenever possible.
 - Only approved female volunteers may assist with bathroom needs unless a parent is present.
 - No adult should ever be alone in a bathroom with a child; use hall-monitoring or two-adult presence.
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7. Transportation

- No staff member or volunteer may transport a minor alone.
 - All drivers must undergo driving record checks if transporting minors for church purposes.
 - Parents must give written permission for transportation.
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8. Training Requirements

All staff and volunteers working with minors or vulnerable adults must complete:

- Annual sexual abuse prevention training
 - Mandatory reporter training
 - Ministry-specific safety protocols
 - Acknowledgement of policy receipt and agreement
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9. Mandatory Reporting

North Church adheres to all federal and Indiana state reporting laws.

If sexual misconduct or abuse is **suspected, witnessed, or disclosed**:

1. **Immediately ensure the safety of the victim.**
2. **Report to Senior Leadership or the Designated Safety Officer.**
3. **File a report with law enforcement or child protective services** (mandatory reporters are legally obligated).
4. **Document all observations, statements, and steps taken.**

Failure to report suspected abuse is grounds for immediate removal and may result in legal penalties.

10. Response Procedures

Upon receiving a report of misconduct:

- The accused individual will be **immediately removed from ministry involvement** pending investigation.
- North Church will cooperate fully with law enforcement.
- Confidentiality will be maintained to the highest legal and ethical extent.
- Support, prayer, and pastoral care will be offered to victims and families.

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- Staff or volunteers found guilty of misconduct will be permanently barred from ministry service.
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11. Prohibited Actions

The following are strictly forbidden:

- Being alone one-on-one with a minor (physically or digitally)
 - Using ministry role to gain access to minors for personal benefit
 - Any form of sexual behavior, harassment, or exploitation
 - Possession or distribution of pornography
 - Retaliation against anyone who reports abuse
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12. Code of Conduct Agreement

All staff and volunteers must sign a Code of Conduct stating that they:

- Understand the policy
 - Agree to follow all procedures
 - Will report violations or concerns
 - Understand that violations result in discipline, removal, or legal action
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13. Regular Policy Review

North Church will review this policy every **two years**, or sooner if laws change or ministry needs evolve.