**Response to Sexual Abuse Policy**

* All children and youth workers shall respond promptly to report any accusation of sexual abuse.
* All accusations of sexual abuse shall be taken seriously.
* It is important to be appropriately respectful to the needs and feelings of those who allege sexual abuse and those who have been accused of sexual abuse.
* When an allegation is made involving sexual abuse, the person reporting the complaint must be informed of the guidelines and the procedures to be followed.
* The Safety Director shall immediately begin investigating the allegations and may use the assistance of legal counsel or other consultants.
* If the Safety Director is the individual accused of sexual abuse, then the Safety Committee shall appoint a person to conduct the investigation.

The investigation should be conducted as follows:

1. If abuse is suspected, a verbal report shall be given to the appointed Safety Director of the local Church of the Nazarene who shall begin to conduct a confidential and thorough investigation of the alleged incident.

* Mandatory reporters include those who have frequent contact with children/youth in one of the following general disciplines: health, mental health, education, law enforcement, child care, and social work.
* The safety of each child/youth while in the care of church employee/volunteers is of utmost importance. Even though church volunteers are not considered mandatory reporters by law, evidence of any situation that will cause harm or neglect to a child should be investigated/reported. If you are a paid or volunteer worker with children and/or youth in your church, consider yourself a mandatory reporter.

2. The Safety Director or pastor shall suspend the alleged offender while a confidential investigation is being conducted.

3. During the initial investigation, the Safety Director and/or pastor may gather legal counsel or other consultants and gather information from any others with knowledge of relevant facts.

4. During the initial investigation, the Safety Director and/or pastor shall maintain contact with the alleged victim and his/her parents or legal guardian, and the alleged perpetrator to answer any questions and assist them in their process of healing.

5. The Safety Director shall meet with the pastor, Safety Committee, and Church Board following the initial investigation, and present a report, which will include findings and recommendation of action.

6. If possible abuse is evident, the Safety Director shall contact the Department of Human Services by phone, within 24 hours, at 800-362-2178. A written report must be filed within 48 hours after making an oral report.

* An oral report to law enforcement should be made only if there is reason to believe that immediate protection of the child/youth is necessary.
* Oral and written reporting to DHS should include the following information if known:
	+ The name and address of the child and parents or adult responsible for the child’s care
	+ The child’s present whereabouts
	+ The child’s age
	+ Date, time, and where the suspected abuse occurred
	+ The nature and extent of the child’s injuries/abuse, including any evidence of previous injuries/abuse
	+ The name, age, and condition of other children in the same household
	+ Any other information that you believe may be helpful in establishing the cause of abuse or neglect to the child
	+ The identity of the person or persons responsible for the abuse or neglect
	+ Your name and contact information and the name and contact information of the person who witnessed the possible abuse.
* For more information and to download form 470-0665 *Report of Suspected Child Abuse* go to the DHS website [www.dhs.state.ia.us](http://www.dhs.state.ia.us) under “Can we help?” and Child Protection options.

7. A written report shall be submitted to the Iowa District Church of the Nazarene, the General Secretary of the Church of the Nazarene, the Board of General Superintendents, and the Dean of Mid America Nazarene University, detailing the reported child abuse incident.

8. The incident shall be reported to the local Church of the Nazarene Insurance carrier.

9. The Safety Director and/or pastor shall meet with the alleged victim, along with his/her parent(s) or legal guardians, and notify them of the results of the investigation and recommendation for action.

10. The Safety Director and/or pastor shall meet with the alleged perpetrator and notify him/her of the results of the investigation and recommendation for action.

11. The Safety Director and/or pastor shall arrange opportunities for all those affected by the alleged incident to provide healing and counsel.

12. The Safety Director and/or pastor shall communicate with criminal and civil legal counsel of the local Church of the Nazarene, if deemed necessary.

13. The Safety Director and/or pastor shall assign a spokesperson or hire a consultant to prepare a statement for the media and/or respond to media if the need shall arise, subject to the approval of the local Church of the Nazarene attorney.