

# **SAFE CHURCH POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

**The Church of the Pilgrimage  
Plymouth, Massachusetts**

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# **SAFE CHURCH POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

## **The Church of the Pilgrimage Plymouth, Massachusetts**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

#### **A.1 MISSION**

The Church of the Pilgrimage (COTP) of Plymouth, Massachusetts is committed to being a community of Christian fellowship. The church's goal is to ensure that all who participate in its church life, including children, adults, and church workers, whether paid or volunteer, will have a safe, secure, and nurturing environment in which to work and explore their relationship with God and each other.

#### **A.2 AUTHORIZING BODY AND SCOPE OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

To fulfill the mission of The Church of the Pilgrimage, as previously stated in A.1 Mission, the Church Council of The Church of the Pilgrimage has created this *Safe Church Policies and Procedures* and required that it be followed by all who are involved with the COTP. The Church Council shall, in consultation with the Safe Church Committee, review this *Safe Church Policies and Procedures* document annually and amend it as the Church Council deems necessary for the well-being of the COTP and its mission.

The policies and procedures included in this document apply to all activities which take place within the building and properties of the COTP, as well as to programs, activities, and events scheduled as part of the ministry of the church which take place elsewhere. The policies and procedures apply to all members, associate members, friends, volunteers, and employees of the church, and to all outside groups which rent COTP facilities or use them without charge.

Nothing in this *Safe Church Policies and Procedures* supercedes the responsibilities of the employees, volunteers, and administration of the COTP under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 119, Section 51A (mandated reporting of suspected child abuse/neglect).

#### **A.3 LOCATION OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

Copies of the *Safe Church Policies and Procedures* which members of the COTP and those renting or using its facility without charge can consult will be kept in binders in three locations in the COTP:

1. Church Office
2. The Rev. John Robinson Center
3. Allerton Hall

All forms referred to in this *Safe Church Policies and Procedures* are available from the Safe Church Committee of the COTP.

## A. **FOB/KEY AND RENTAL/USE POLICY**

### B.1 **FOB/KEY POLICY**

All persons who have a fob and/or key to the COTP must have a clear reason for needing them and must be approved to have them by the COTP Board of Trustees or the Trustees' designated representative(s).

1. People who hold certain positions in the church are regularly authorized by the Board of Trustees to hold fobs and/or keys to the COTP. Those positions include paid employees, church officers, committee chairpersons, youth supervisors, and others. Others desiring a fob and/or key must request them through the church's Office Manager and/or Board of Trustees.
2. Fob and/or key holders must submit to the Office Manager a COTP Fob/Key Agreement Form which contains their signed statement that they have read the church's *Summary of Youth Protection Policies* and will comply with them. The Office Manager will maintain these signed forms in a secure location approved by the COTP Board of Trustees
3. Fobs and keys must be returned when they are no longer needed or the Board of Trustees requires their return. The return of fobs and keys will be documented by the Office Manager.

### B.2 **RENTAL/USE POLICY**

All outside groups which use COTP facilities either by rental or without charge must be approved by the COTP Board of Trustees or the Trustees' designated representative(s). Such groups must submit to the Office Manager a COTP Application for Use of Facility Form and a COTP Hold Harmless Agreement Form. They must also submit a COTP Statement of Compliance Form which contains their designated representative's signed statement that he/she has read the church's *Summary of Youth Protection Policies* and that his/her group will comply with them. The Office Manager will maintain these signed forms in a secure location approved by the COTP Board of Trustees.

Activities sponsored by the COTP, its committees, boards, fellowship groups, and staff which use COTP facilities (including funeral and wedding services and their accompanying receptions) will not usually be required to submit a COTP Application for Use of Facility Form unless there is a special circumstance, such as when a COTP committee sponsors an outside group's use of the COTP facility.

## C. SCREENING AND HIRING

### C.1 APPLICATIONS POLICY

The Church of the Pilgrimage welcomes volunteers who have been actively participating members or friends of the Church and church staff to become involved with the various programs offered as part of the church's youth ministries. All adults involved with supervising those programs, as indicated in section C.5 of this document, must agree to a CORI check.

### C.2 DEFINITIONS

**Adult:** Persons age 18 and older, as defined by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

**Agreement of Non-Disclosure (AOND):** A signed form, submitted by an individual who seeks to have access to CORI reports, in which the individual agrees to abide by certain terms of confidentiality.

**Application for Use of Facility Form:** A form signed by the designated representative of an outside group which has been authorized to rent COTP facilities or use them without charge.

**Authorization for a CORI Check:** A form signed by an individual which gives the COTP Safe Church Committee permission to obtain that individual's CORI report from the Criminal History Systems Board (CHSB) of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**Authorized Adult Guest (AAG):** An adult who has been authorized by the Board of Christian Education, the BCE Chairperson, or the Director of Christian Education to attend an authorized COTP Day Field trip or COTP Overnight Event as a guest, but who does not serve in any authorized supervisory capacity on such trips. If possible, every AAG will have passed a CORI check prior to the COTP Day Field Trip they attend. However, only AAGs who have already passed a CORI check will be able to participate in COTP Overnight Events.

**Authorized Driver (AD):** An adult 25 years old or older who has been authorized by the Board of Christian Education, the BCE Chairperson, or the Director of Christian Education to transport individuals on an authorized COTP Day Field Trip or COTP Overnight Event, but who does not serve in any authorized supervisory capacity on those trips, unless the driver has also been authorized to serve as a Chaperone on them. All Authorized Drivers must fill out an Authorized Driver Application Form and provide the COTP with copies of their driver's license, the registration of the car they will drive COTP youth in, and the summary page of their car insurance policy, all of which must be on file with the COTP. Authorized Drivers must have at least the minimum amount of car insurance required of them by the COTP Board of Trustees. That required amount is posted by the SCC in the COTP Church Office.

**COTP Day Field Trips and Overnight Events:** If possible, Authorized Drivers will have passed a CORI check prior to driving for an COTP Day Field Trip or Overnight Event. However, if a CORI report has not been requested or received from the CHSB by that time, a CORI check must be completed soon afterwards. Any AD who fails to pass a CORI check will automatically lose their Authorized Driver status and no longer be eligible to drive for COTP Day Field trips or Overnight Events. Persons who have not had a CORI check and passed it may serve as Authorized Drivers for COTP Overnight Events, but they may not stay overnight with COTP youth at such events.

**Authorized Teaching Assistant:** An adult or youth volunteer who has passed a CORI check and functions in an authorized, non-supervisory role in the church's youth activities, such as in the church school or youth group.

**Authorized Volunteer:** Any person who offers or is recruited to serve as a COTP church volunteer, has completed the appropriate COTP forms noted in section C.4 of this document and has been accepted by an COTP committee, board, or supervisor to provide unpaid services to the COTP. This may include church school teachers, Confirmation class teachers and mentors, youth group leaders, drivers for church-sponsored youth events.

**BCE:** Board of Christian Education

**Certification:** A process by which the Commonwealth of Massachusetts grants an organization -legal access to CORI records after a review of the application submitted by that organization to the Commonwealth's Criminal History Systems Board

**Chaperone:** A volunteer who assists Supervisors in supervising youth in a special COTP activity, such as a youth fellowship event, day field trip, or overnight event. To be an authorized Chaperone, an individual must have attended the COTP regularly, passed a CORI check, and be at least 21 years old and a minimum of five years older than the oldest youth participating in the activity.

**Children or Youth:** Persons under the age of 18, as defined by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

**CHSB:** Criminal History Systems Board (Commonwealth of Massachusetts)

**Church Staff or Paid Employee:** Any individual hired or called and compensated by the COTP to hold a position in the COTP on a part-time, full-time, temporary, or permanent basis.

**CORI Administrator:** A member of the COTP Safe Church Committee who serves as the designated coordinator of CORI requests and the information received from those requests..

**COTP or the Church:** the Church of the Pilgrimage of Plymouth, Massachusetts.

**COTP Day Field Trip:** A youth event which is authorized by the Board of Christian

Education, which is scheduled to take place off COTP property, and which requires COTP Authorized Drivers. The only adults allowed to participate in COTP Day Field Trips are those authorized to do so as Supervisors, Chaperones, Drivers, or Authorized Adult Guests.

**COTP Overnight Event:** A youth event which is authorized by the Board of Christian Education and scheduled to take place overnight either in the COTP or off COTP property. The only adults allowed to participate in COTP Overnight Events are those who have already passed a CORI check and who have been authorized to participate in those events as Supervisors, Chaperones, Drivers, or Authorized Adult Guests.

**Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI):** Information regulated by the Criminal History Systems Board (CHSB) and maintained by the Board of Probation regarding criminal convictions of persons within the Massachusetts Court System.

**Day Field Trip Consent Form:** A form signed by the parent or guardian of a child which gives permission for that child to participate in an COTP Day Field Trip.

**DCE:** The Director of Christian Education or the Church School Superintendent when the DCE is not available.

**DSS:** The Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS), whose Child-At-Risk-Hotline is at 800-792-5200.

**Fob/Key Agreement Form:** A form signed by a person who has been assigned and has accepted a fob and/or key to the COTP. This form contains the individual's signed statement that he/she has read the church's *Summary of Youth Protection Policies* and will comply with them.

**Incident Report:** A form which should be filled out and submitted to the Office Manager whenever someone is injured at the COTP or during a COTP activity off the premises of the COTP. In situations which involve allegations of child abuse, the COTP Safe Child Incident Report should be made out instead of an Incident Report.

**Medical Release Form:** A form signed by the parent or guardian of a child which gives permission for the medical treatment of that child under the instructions of an on-call physician at a hospital or clinic.

**Overnight Event Consent Form:** A form signed by the parent or guardian of a child which gives permission for that child to participate in an Authorized COTP overnight event.

**Pass a CORI Check:** After reviewing an individual's CORI report received from the CHSB, the COTP's Safe Church Committee determines that that individual passes a CORI check and thus is eligible to serve in an COTP position, paid or volunteer, which involves contact with children. The Committee's determination is made in accordance with the provisions in section C.6 Policy for Review of CORI Records of this *Safe Church Policies and Procedures*.



**Safe Church Committee (SCC):** An elected ad hoc committee of the COTP Church Council, which administers and coordinates implementation of the policies and procedures contained in the COTP's *Safe Church Policies and Procedures*.

**Statement of Compliance:** A form signed by an individual or by the representative of a group which indicates that the signer has read and agrees that he/she and/or his/her group will comply with the COTP *Summary of Youth Protection Policies* in all their activities at the COTP and/or in COTP sponsored programs.

**Supervisor:** A volunteer or paid COTP worker, including Church Staff members, who have passed a CORI check and have direct supervisory responsibility for the care of youth, in an COTP position such as a church school teacher, Confirmation class teacher, youth group leader, or youth choir director. Chaperones assist Supervisors in supervising youth in a special COTP activity, such as a youth fellowship event, day field trip, or overnight event.

### C.3 SAFE CHURCH COMMITTEE

1. The Safe Church Committee is an appointed ad hoc committee of the COTP Church Council which administers and coordinates implementation of the policies and procedures contained in the COTP's *Safe Church Policies and Procedures*.
2. The SCC is made up of four members of the COTP, three of whom shall be Active Members of the COTP appointed by the Church Council and the fourth shall be the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees who shall serve as a member without vote. The three appointed positions shall be for two year terms, renewable. All members of the SCC must pass CORI checks and receive authorization from the CHSB to request CORI reports and review them on behalf of the COTP. All members of the SCC must abide by the terms of confidentiality which the Commonwealth of Massachusetts requires of those given access to CORI reports.
3. The SCC will designate one of its members as the CORI Administrator. The SCC will review CORI reports and determine if individuals pass a CORI check and thus are eligible to serve in an COTP position, paid or volunteer, which involves contact with children. In making that determination, the SCC may, if it deems necessary, seek legal counsel from the COTP's insurance provider and/or a local lawyer approved by the COTP Board of Trustees.
4. The SCC will ensure that all the forms required by these *Safe Church Policies and Procedures* are created or obtained, updated as needed, and made available for COTP use.
  - A. The SCC will obtain appropriate forms for the COTP from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Criminal History Systems Board (CHSB), such as the Agreement of Non-Disclosure (AOND) and Authorization for a CORI Check.
  - B. The SCC will obtain appropriate forms for the COTP from the Massachusetts

Department of Social Services (DSS), such as the DSS Mandated Reporter Form.

- C. The SCC will consult with the COTP Board of Trustees in the development of their forms, which include: Fob/Key Agreement Form, Application for Use of Church Facility Form, and Hold Harmless Agreement, and Application for Employment Form.
  - D. The SCC will consult with the COTP Board of Christian Education in the development of their forms, which include: Medical Release Form, Day Field Trip Consent Form, Overnight Event Consent Form.
  - E. The SCC will develop additional forms required by these *Safe Church Policies and Procedures*, such as the COTP Safe Child Incident Report and the Statement of Compliance Form.
- 5. The SCC will renew, as needed, its Certification on behalf of the COTP, with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Criminal History Systems Board (CHSB).
  - 6. The SCC will obtain all the signed forms and any accompanying documentation required by sections C.4, C.5, and C.6 of these *Safe Church Policies and Procedures* and maintain them in secure locations in the COTP as determined by the Safe Church Committee and approved by the COTP Board of Trustees.
  - 7. The SCC will oversee the reporting of suspected child abuse to the Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS) and responses to such reporting, as indicated in Section E Suspected Child Abuse of these *Safe Church Policies and Procedures*. The SCC will obtain all available reports and documentation on such reporting and responses and maintain them in secure locations in the COTP as determined by the Safe Church Committee and approved by the COTP Board of Trustees.
  - 8. The SCC will post in a prominent place in the COTP John Robinson Center and Allerton Hall, and keep updated, important information relevant to COTP's *Safe Church Policies and Procedures*, including: the church's *Summary of Youth Protection Policies*, the names and phone numbers of the members of the Safe Church Committee, the phone number and address for making reports to the Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS), and the minimum amount of car insurance which is required of COTP Authorized Drivers by the COTP Board of Trustees.
  - 9. In performing its duties the SCC may, as it deems necessary, seek legal counsel from the COTP's insurance provider and/or a local lawyer approved by the COTP Board of Trustees.

#### **C.4 APPLICATION AND POSITION SELECTION PROCEDURES**

##### **1. APPLICATION PROCEDURES**

- A. All candidates seeking paid employment at the COTP, including ordained

ministers, will complete and submit to the COTP the following:

1. Application for Employment
  2. Signed and dated Authorization for a CORI Check
  3. Signed and dated Statement of Compliance for an Individual
- B. All individuals under consideration for the following Authorized Volunteer positions in the COTP, namely, church school teachers, nursery supervisors, Confirmation class teachers and mentors, youth group supervisors, chaperones, drivers, authorized adult guests, or any other COTP volunteer position which involves contact with youth, will complete and submit to the COTP the following:
1. Signed and dated Authorization for a CORI Check
  2. Signed and dated Statement of Compliance for an Individual

Additionally, those under consideration to be drivers must also submit to the COTP the following:

3. Authorized Driver Application
4. Copy of their driver's license
5. Copy of the registration of the car they will be driving COTP youth in
6. Copy of the summary page of their car insurance policy

Authorized Drivers must have at least the minimum amount of car insurance which is required of them by the COTP Board of Trustees. That amount is posted by the SCC in the COTP John Robinson Center and Allerton Hall.

## **2. POSITION SELECTION PROCEDURES**

- A. All paid employees on the staff of the COTP, including ordained clergy, are hired or called to their COTP position, on the condition that they pass a CORI check as determined by the COTP Safe Church Committee.

Prior to selecting a candidate to be hired or called for such employment an appropriate COTP committee or board must:

1. Review the candidate's application for the paid position available.
2. Contact references for the candidate to obtain information that may be helpful in determining the candidate's suitability for the position being sought.
3. Pursue with both the candidate and the candidate's former employers any gaps in time, irregular employment patterns, or unexplained absences which appear on the candidate's application for employment.

- B. Paid employees on the staff of the COTP who do not pass a CORI check, as determined by the COTP's Safe Church Committee, shall be considered ineligible to continue their COTP job position and shall be removed from that

position. Appropriate steps shall be taken to terminate their COTP employment.

- C. All persons are chosen to serve in the COTP volunteer positions noted in section C. 4, subsection 1, B. of this policy on the condition that they pass a CORI check, as determined by the Safe Church Committee.

Prior to authorizing a candidate to serve in such an COTP position, an appropriate COTP committee, board, or supervisor must:

- 1. Review the candidate's application for the volunteer position available
- 2. Interview the candidate

The appropriate COTP committee, board, or supervisor may also, at its discretion, make reference checks on such candidates.

### **C.5 CORI CHECK POLICY**

- 1. In order to ensure that employees and volunteers are appropriate for their positions, the COTP Safe Church Committee will conduct a CORI check on all individuals serving, or being seriously considered to serve, in the following positions:
  - A. Paid employees, including all paid ordained ministers
  - B. Youth group and Junior Deacon supervisors
  - C. Church school teachers, nursery supervisors, Board of Christian Education members, Confirmation class teachers and mentors, authorized teaching assistants, and chaperones
- 2. The Safe Church Committee will conduct a CORI check as soon as reasonably possible on persons serving in the following non-supervisory positions
  - A. Authorized Adult Guests
  - B. Authorized Drivers
- 3. The Safe Church Committee will review the information received in CORI reports, and may, if it deems necessary, seek legal counsel from the COTP's insurance provider and/or a local lawyer approved by the COTP Board of Trustees. Through such reviews, the SCC will determine if individuals pass a CORI check and are thus eligible to hold particular paid or volunteer positions in the COTP. The SCC shall make such eligibility determinations in accordance with the provisions in section C.5 of this *Safe Church Policies and Procedures*.
- 4. In its work, the Safe Church Committee will ensure that:
  - A. One of its members serves as the CORI Administrator who is the coordinator of CORI requests and the information received from those requests.
  - B. An AOND is sent in to the CHSB for persons the Safe Committee determines

should be able to request CORI information for the COTP;

- C. The name of anyone who no longer needs to receive CORI information is removed from the church's CHSB Certification to receive such information;
- D. All individuals under serious consideration for paid COTP position and, for COTP volunteer positions noted in section C.4, subsection 1, B will have consented to a CORI check by signing an Authorization for a CORI Check form.
- E. In accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, all information contained within CORI reports it receives, will be held in confidence by the Safe Church Committee. However, the SCC will report its determinations of the eligibility of individuals to hold particular paid or volunteer positions in the COTP, to the COTP committee, board, or supervisor which directly supervises those positions.
- F. All signed forms and documentation required by these *Safe Church Policies and Procedures* are obtained and maintained for the COTP, in accordance with the requirements in section C.7 Screening and Hiring Documentation.

#### **C.6 POLICY FOR REVIEW OF CORI RECORDS**

- 1. The Safe Church Committee will use the following criteria in its review of CORI records and determination if individuals are eligible or not, to serve in particular paid or volunteer positions in the COTP:
  - A. Individuals whose CORI reports show that they have been convicted of committing child abuse (whether physical, emotional, or sexual) and individuals who admit to having committed such abuse though it is not shown in their CORI report, will not be considered, under any circumstances, for paid or volunteer positions in the COTP which involve contact with children.
  - B. Individuals are ineligible to serve in any paid or volunteer COTP positions which involve contact with children, if their CORI reports show that they are awaiting trial for or have been convicted of a felony crime which, in the judgment of the Safe Church Committee, might compromise their ability to fulfill the church's mission of providing "a safe, secure, and nurturing environment" for children.
  - C. In making their determination of an individual's eligibility to hold a particular position in the COTP, the Safe Church Committee may also consider other factors which relate to that individual's ability to contribute to the COTP's mission of maintaining "a safe, secure, and nurturing environment" in which children, adults and church workers can "work and explore their relationship with God and each other."
- 2. The Safe Church Committee will determine that individuals are not eligible to drive for COTP youth activities if their CORI reports and/or other public records available to the SCC show that the individuals' driving

licences have been revoked or suspended at any time in the previous five years. However, individuals whose driver's licenses were revoked or suspended more than five years ago may be eligible to drive for COTP youth activities, but only if the Safe Church Committee determines that such eligibility is appropriate. The Safe Church Committee will report their determinations, but not the details of CORI reports, to the appropriate COTP leaders of youth activities which use such drivers.

## **C.7 SCREENING AND HIRING DOCUMENTATION**

The Safe Church Committee will obtain the following signed forms and any accompanying documentation required by sections C.4, C.5, and C.6 of this *Safe Church Policies and Procedures* and maintain them in a secure location in the COTP as determined by the Safe Church Committee and approved by the COTP Board of Trustees. Such forms and documentation include, but are not limited to.

- Agreement of Non-Disclosure forms
- Massachusetts Criminal History Systems Board Certification and documents
- Signed and dated Authorizations for a CORI Check
- Signed and dated Statements of Compliance
- CORI reports

## **D. YOUTH PROTECTION AND SUPERVISION**

### **D.1 YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY**

The Church of the Pilgrimage is committed to creating a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love. In order to ensure this, the church will provide supervision for all activities and programs involving children and youth, and the church will employ practices which provide for the safety of children, youth, and those who care for them.

### **D.2 YOUTH PROTECTION PROCEDURES**

#### **1. Two Adult Principle**

Efforts should always be made to have a minimum of two adults (not married to each other) present with a child or children under 18 years of age in the COTP or at any COTP activity on or off COTP premises. The only exceptions to this principle are that an adult may be alone with a child (or children) if:

- A. The adult is the child's parent, or relative, or legal guardian.
- B. The adult has received permission from the child's parent or legal guardian to be alone briefly with the child.
- C. The adult has both passed a CORI check and been authorized by the Board of Christian Education and/or the BCE Chairperson to travel as an Authorized Driver with youth in a car on an Authorized COTP Day Field Trip or COTP

Overnight Event.

- D. A child's behavior is disruptive in the church school, and one of the two adult teachers in a classroom needs to leave it briefly to seek the DCE or the child's parent(s) or guardian(s) to come to the classroom.
- E. One of the two adult teachers in a classroom needs to leave the classroom briefly in order to provide for the well being or safety of a child, for example, to assist a child who has become ill or who needs to go to a bathroom.

Apart from the exceptions noted above, efforts should always be made to have two adults, not married to each other, with a child or children under 18 years of age at all times, in the COTP or at any COTP activity on or off COTP premises. If the two adults are a married couple, then efforts should always be made to have a third adult also present to satisfy this Two Adult Principle.

All outside groups which are authorized by the COTP to rent COTP facilities or use them without charge must also abide by this Two Adult Principle.

## **2. Five Year Older and Minimum Age Rules**

- A. Supervisors and Chaperones must be at least five years older than the oldest participant in the COTP class, group, or activity they supervise.
- B. A person must be at least thirteen years old to help in the nursery or church school classrooms, except when Board of Christian Education or the BCE Chairperson authorizes particular children under the age of thirteen to give such help.

## **3. Medical Release Forms**

- A. All youth participating in an COTP Day Field Trip or COTP Overnight Event must have a Medical Release Form (See Section F) on file with the COTP before they can participate in that trip or event.
- B. The Supervisor of each COTP Day Field Trip or COTP Overnight Event will:
  - 1. Issue Medical Release Forms so the parent(s) or guardian(s) of youth can complete and return them to the event Supervisor.
  - 2. Keep for a minimum of three years all signed Medical Release Forms on file in a secure location in the COTP, as determined by the Board of Christian Education.
- C. Each time an COTP Day Field Trip or Overnight Event occurs, an original Medical Release Form must be submitted for each participating youth and taken to that trip or event by a COTP authorized Supervisor of that activity. Also, a copy of each of those Medical Release Forms must be kept on file in a secure location in the COTP, as determined by the Board of Christian Education.

## **4. Authorized COTP Youth Events**

A. Categories of Authorized COTP Youth Events are as follows:

1. Youth Fellowship Events. These are Board of Christian Education authorized youth events which take place in the COTP or in another local locale under the supervision of BCE appointed supervisors. Parents or Guardians take complete responsibility for transporting their youth to and from these events.
  2. Youth and Family Events. These are events, usually in the wider community, which the Board of Christian Education encourages COTP families and their youth to participate in together, but which the COTP does not sponsor. Parents or Guardians take complete responsibility for transporting their youth to and from these events and supervising their own youth at them.
  3. Day Field Trips. These are youth events which are authorized by the Board of Christian Education, which are scheduled to take place off COTP property, and which require COTP Authorized Drivers. The only adults allowed to participate in COTP Day Field Trips are those authorized to do so as Supervisors, Chaperones, Drivers, or Authorized Adult Guests.
  4. Overnight Events. These are youth events which are authorized by the Board of Christian Education and take place overnight either on COTP property or elsewhere. The only adults allowed to participate in COTP Overnight Events are those who have already passed a CORI check and who have been authorized to participate in those events as Supervisors, Chaperones, Drivers, or Authorized Adult Guests.
- B. All COTP Youth and Family Events, Day Field Trips, and Overnight Events must be approved by the Board of Christian Education before they can take place and before fund raising can begin for them. If possible, proposals for such events should be received by the Board of Christian Education at least one month in advance of the event.
- C. The Board of Christian Education, the BCE Chairperson, or the DCE must authorize all Supervisors, Chaperones, Drivers, and Authorized Adult Guests who participate in COTP youth activities, and such authorization must be made in accordance with the requirements of this *Safe Church Policies and Procedures*.
- D. Full information about COTP programs should be made available beforehand to the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the youth who participate in them. Such information should include: the purpose and basic agenda of the scheduled event; trip or overnight; the names of Supervisors, Chaperones, and Drivers; dates and times; costs; and the method of transportation.
- E. Parents or guardians must complete and return a signed Day Field Trip Consent Form or Overnight Event Form to the COTP, and have a signed Medical Release Form for their child on file with the COTP, before their child can participate in that trip or event.



## 5. Vehicle Rules

- A. Drivers for Authorized COTP Day Field Trips or COTP Overnight Events must be 25 years old or older. They must fill out an Authorized Driver Application Form and provide the COTP with copies of their driver's license, the registration of the car they will drive COTP youth in, and the summary page of their car insurance policy, all of which must be on file in a secure location of the COTP as determined by the Board of Christian Education. Authorized Drivers must have at least the minimum amount of car insurance required of them by the COTP Board of Trustees.
- B. If possible, Authorized Drivers will have passed a CORI check prior to driving for an COTP Day Field Trip or Overnight Event. However, if a CORI report has not been requested or received from the CHSB by that time, a CORI check must be completed soon afterwards. Any Authorized Driver who fails to pass a CORI check will automatically lose their Authorized Driver status and no longer be eligible to drive for COTP Day Field Trips or Overnight Events.
- C. Persons who have not had a CORI check and passed it may serve as Authorized Drivers for COTP Overnight Events, but they may not stay overnight with COTP youth at such events.
- D. Anyone who has had their driver's license revoked or suspended within the past five years will be ineligible to drive for COTP youth activities. However, individuals whose driver's licenses were revoked or suspended more than five years ago may be eligible to drive for COTP youth activities, but only if the Safe Church Committee determines that such eligibility is appropriate. The Safe Church Committee will report their determinations of the eligibility of individuals to serve as COTP drivers to the appropriate COTP Supervisors of youth activities which use such drivers.
- E. All occupants of vehicles used in COTP youth activities must wear seat belts.

## 6. Appropriate Supervision

The Two Adult Principle noted in D.2, subsection 1 of this *Safe Church Policies and Procedures* must be followed in all COTP events involving youth, by all Authorized Volunteers, Church Staff Members, and Paid Employees of the COTP. It will be the responsibility of Supervisors and Chaperones to oversee all youth attending such events and provide for their well being. Other requirements for adult supervision of COTP youth are as follows:

- A. On COTP Day Field Trips efforts should always be made to have at least:
  - 1. One adult (Supervisor or Chaperone) for every four youth in grades PreSchool through 4<sup>th</sup> Grade,
  - 2. One adult (Supervisor or Chaperone) for every 6 youth in 5<sup>th</sup> Grade through

age 17.

3. Supervisors and Chaperones must be at least five years older than the oldest participant in the COTP class, group, or activity they supervise.

B. On COTP Overnight Events on or off church property:

1. Efforts should always be made to have the following minimum levels of adult supervision (authorized Supervisors and Chaperones combined) for the number of youth:

One to five male youth require at least two male adults.

One to five female youth require at least two female adults.

When the total number of youth attending [either gender] exceeds ten, the minimum total number of adults [either gender] needed to supervise the group are as follows:

Eleven to fifteen youth require at least five adults.

Sixteen to twenty youth require at least six adults.

Twenty-one to twenty-five youth require at least seven adults.

Twenty-six to thirty youth require at least eight adults.

If the above minimum levels of supervision cannot be achieved, the activity may be canceled and the church cannot be held responsible for any deposit fees which are lost as a result of that cancellation.

2. Boys and girls must sleep in separate areas from each other and each group must have at least the minimum number of adults (Supervisors or Chaperones) of the same gender present as noted in section C.6, subsection 1, B above.

### **D.3 DISCIPLINE**

The purpose of discipline with youth in the COTP is to maintain order in a manner consistent with the teaching of Christian responsibility, respect, and cooperation.

1. No youth in any COTP youth class, event, or trip will be disciplined by the use of any form of physical punishment.
2. Supervisors and Chaperones are expected to listen to the COTP youth they are supervising, and clearly communicate expectations of appropriate behavior to them.
3. An exception to the Two Adult Principle is as follows: If a child's behavior is disruptive in the church school, one of the two adult teachers in a classroom may leave it briefly to seek the DCE or the child's parent(s) or guardian(s) to come to the classroom.

### **D.4 APPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES AND BEHAVIOR**

Activities that involve intimate physical contact are not suitable recreational activities for

COTP youth programs. Smoking, drinking of alcohol, use of illegal drugs, and improper language are not allowed.

#### **D.5 YOUTH PROTECTION AND SUPERVISION DOCUMENTATION**

The Board of Christian Education or its designated representative(s) will obtain all signed forms and documentation required by section D of this *Safe Church Policies and Procedures* and maintain them in a secure location in the COTP as determined by the Board of Christian Education. Such forms and documentation include, but are not limited to:

- Medical Release Forms
- Information on authorized COTP youth fellowship events, youth and family events, field trips, and overnight events
- Day Field Trip and Overnight Event Consent Forms
- Record of the authorization of Supervisors, Chaperones, Authorized Adult Guests, and Authorized Drivers for Authorized COTP youth events and trips
- Authorized Driver's Application Forms and copies of these current documents for each Authorized Driver: Driver's License, Car Registration, and Car Insurance Policy summary page

#### **D.6 OUTLINE OF YOUTH PROTECTION POLICIES**

Length of time a volunteer needs to attend church before supervising youth:	An active participant in the church
Criminal background (CORI) checks conducted automatically for these positions:	All paid church staff employees, including all interim and settled Pastors Youth Group Supervisors, Chaperones Church School Teachers, Nursery Supervisors Confirmation Class Teachers and Mentors Authorized Teaching Assistants Authorized Drivers, Authorized Adult Guests
Signed statement of compliance with <i>Summary of Youth Protection Policies</i> will be required of:	Anyone having regular, direct contact with children Any organization renting/using the COTP facility Any individual in possession of a COTP fob or key
Fob/Key Policy:	Fob and Key holders must be authorized by the Board of Trustees or their designated representative(s). Fobs and Keys distributed and records maintained by the COTP Office Manager
Two Adult Principle:	Efforts should always be made to have two Adults (not married to each other) with a child (or children) who is not their own or a relative, at all times unless they have parental consent [Limited exceptions, see <i>Safe Church Policy and Procedures</i> , D2 subsection 1]
Five Year Older Rule:	Supervisors, Chaperones must be 5 years older than the oldest child in their class or group.
Minimum Age Rule:	Helpers in Nursery, Church School must be at least thirteen years old, unless younger and authorized by the BCE or its Chairperson
Medical Release Forms required for:	COTP Day Field Trips, COTP Overnight Events

Authorization of the BCE needed for:	All COTP Youth Fellowship Events, Day Field Trips, Overnight Events. BCE encourages COTP families to participate in certain Youth and Family Events, but does not sponsor them
BCE, BCE Chairperson, or DCE must authorize:	All Supervisors, Chaperones, Drivers, and Adult Guests in COTP youth activities
Adult to child supervision ratios:	Two Adult Principle -- all COTP youth activities Additional guidelines as follows, with adults below being Supervisors or Chaperones and the Five Year Older Rule applies: <u>COTP Day Field Trips</u> Preschool- Grade 4 – 1 adult every 4 youth Grade 5- age 17 -- 1 adult every 6 youth <u>COTP Overnight Events</u> 1-5 male youth – at least 2 male adults 1-5 female youth -- at least 2 female adults 11-15 youth total -- at least 5 adults 16-20 youth total -- at least 6 adults 21-25 youth total -- at least 7 adults 26-30 youth total -- at least 8 adults
Drivers for COTP Day Field Trips or Overnight Events:	Must be 25 years or older Must have a safe driving record Must have at least the minimum amount of car insurance required of them by the COTP Board of Trustees
Discipline:	Positive, non-physical discipline only
Appropriate activities and behavior:	No activities involving intimate physical contact. No smoking, drinking of alcohol, use of illegal drugs, or improper language.

## **D.7 SUMMARY OF YOUTH PROTECTION POLICIES**

The following policies must be followed by all persons.

### **1. The Safety of Any Child Suspected of Being Abused Must Be Ensured.**

#### **2. Suspected Child Abuse must be reported.**

The Church of the Pilgrimage of Plymouth, Massachusetts requires that anyone participating in COTP activities or using COTP facilities who suspects that child abuse has taken place must immediately report it to the church's Safe Church Committee. Upon receiving such a report, the Safe Church Committee will immediately make an oral report of the incident to the Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS) at 800-792-5200 (Child-At-Risk-Hotline). The individual suspecting the abuse may also make an immediate oral report to DSS.

The initial reporter will also be required to make out two written reports about the incident, one to the church within 24 hours and one to DSS within 48 hours. Members of the Safe Church Committee can assist with those reports

The names and phone numbers of those to contact are posted in the Church Office and in church lobbies. If the Safe Church Committee can't be reached, contact the church's Pastor or Director of Christian Education, or a Plymouth police officer if the above cannot be reached.

#### **3. The Two Adult Principle must be followed.**

Efforts should always be made to have a minimum of two adults (not married to each other) present with a child (or children) under 18 years of age in the church facility or at any church sponsored event off the church's property. The only exceptions to this Two Adult Principle are that an adult may be alone with a child (or children) if:

- The adult is the child's parent, other relative, or legal guardian.
- The adult has permission from the child's parent or legal guardian to be alone briefly with the child
- The adult is serving as an Authorized Driver for the church.
- One of two adult teachers in a classroom must leave the classroom briefly in order to provide for the well being or safety of a child, for example, to assist a child who has become ill or who needs to go to a bathroom.

#### **4. Five Year Older Rule**

Classroom, nursery, and youth group Supervisors and Chaperones must be five years older than the oldest participant in the class, group, or activity they supervise.

#### **5. Appropriate Activities and Behavior**

Activities that involve inappropriate physical contact are not suitable recreational activities.

Smoking, drinking of alcohol, use of illegal drugs, and improper language are not

allowed.

## 6. Medical Release Forms

All youth must have a signed Medical Release Form on file with the COTP before they can participate in an COTP Day Field Trip or Overnight Event.

Full versions of The Church of the Pilgrimage's Safe Church Policies and Procedures are located in red binders in the Church Office, the Rev. John Robinson Center, and Allerton Hall.

# E. SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

## E.1 REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE AND RESPONSE POLICY

Allegations of child abuse must be immediately reported to the Safe Church Committee (SCC) and the Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS). Members of the COTP church community, including COTP volunteers working with youth, are morally obligated to report reasonable suspicions of child abuse. Concern to maintain confidentiality should not keep anyone from making such a report to the COTP and the DSS, because children are vulnerable and have an overriding right to the protection of the COTP and the DSS.

All allegations, reports, and DSS rulings on child abuse must be handled with respect for the dignity of everyone involved and with regard for their privacy as appropriate. All information obtained and all actions taking during the process of reporting allegations of child abuse and making responses after those reports have been submitted must be documented. The Safe Church Committee will obtain all such documents and maintain them in a secure location in the COTP as determined by the Safe Church Committee and approved by the Board of Trustees.

All COTP employees, volunteers, and the SCC will cooperate fully with DSS and police investigations of suspected child abuse. In performing its duties in this Section E. Suspected Child Abuse of this *Safe Church Policies and Procedures*, the SCC shall, as indicated herein, seek legal counsel from the COTP's insurance provider.

## E.2 ADDITIONAL DEFINITIONS

**Mandated Reporter:** a person who, by virtue of their profession or position, is required by the Massachusetts Child Protection Act *Mass. Gen. L. c. 119 Section 1 et seq.* to report to the Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS) all reasonable suspicions of child abuse. The law applies to these categories of church personnel:

1. Clergy members, ordained or licensed ministers;
2. Persons who perform official duties on behalf of a church that are recognized as the duties of clergy, ordained or licensed ministers; and
3. Persons employed by a church to supervise, educate, coach, train or counsel children on a regular basis [includes those who are paid and those who volunteer].

The COTP interprets the Massachusetts Child Protection Act *Mass. Gen. L. c. 119 Section 1 et seq.* to mean that people who serve in the following employed or volunteer COTP positions are such Mandated Reporters:

1. Pastor
2. Director of Christian Education
3. Music Director
4. Church Organist
5. Children's Choir Director
6. Church School Teachers
7. Youth Group Leaders
8. Board of Christian Education Members
9. Members of the Board of Deacons
10. Assisting Clergy
11. Office Manager
12. Sexton
13. Safe Church Committee Members

### **COTP and DSS Reports:**

**COTP Oral Report:** a verbal report which is made immediately to the COTP Safe Church Committee when child abuse is suspected. If a member of the SCC is not available, the report is made to the COTP Pastor or DCE.

**DSS Oral Report:** a verbal report which a member of the Safe Church Committee makes by telephone to the Massachusetts Department of Social Service at 800-792-5200 (Child-At-Risk-Hotline) as soon as a report of suspected child abuse is received. If a member of the SCC is not available, the report is made by the COTP Pastor or DCE.

**COTP Safe Child Incident Report:** a written report that must be submitted to the SCC within 24 hours after a DSS Oral Report of suspected child abuse was made. The COTP Safe Child Incident Report must contain all the information necessary to complete a DSS Mandated Report on that suspected abuse. The person who originally reported the suspected abuse will make out this Safe Child Incident Report in conjunction with the Safe Church Committee, or in conjunction with the COTP Pastor or DCE if a member of the SCC is not available to help. The SCC will maintain this report in its secure files.

**DSS Mandated Report:** a written report that must be submitted to the Department of Social Services within 48 hours after that suspected abuse was reported orally to DSS. The completion and submission of this Mandated Report will be overseen by the SCC, or by the COTP Pastor or DCE if a member of the SCC is not available. The SCC will receive and maintain a copy of this report in its secure files.

**Individual DSS Reports:** an individual not on the SCC may choose to contact DSS directly to submit their own DSS Oral Report and/or DSS Mandated Report regarding a particular allegation of child abuse. In such situations, the SCC will offer to help the individual fill out the DSS Mandated Report, but that individual must be identified on that Mandated Report as the reporter. Also, the SCC will ask such individuals to fill out an COTP Safe Child Incident Report and submit it to the SCC to maintain in its secure files.

### **E.3 REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE**

| \_\_\_ Reports are to be made in the following sequence.

### **1. Ensure the Child's Safety**

When a person suspects that a child has been abused, the very first priority is to be sure that child is as safe as possible, physically and emotionally. 911 should be called if the injury or situation seems to require immediate attention from medical, police, or fire fighting personnel.

### **2. Make Oral Reports and Inform Parents or Guardians**

- A. Once the safety of the child has been ensured, the person suspecting the abuse, or their designee, such as the Pastor, the DCE, or any other Mandated Reporter, should immediately inform a member of the Safe Church Committee of the suspected abuse. If a member of the SCC is not available, the report should be made to the COTP Pastor or DCE. The names and phone numbers of the members of the Safe Church Committee are posted by the SSC in the Church Office, The Rev. John Robinson Center, and Allerton Hall.
- B. Once SCC members, or in their absence the COTP Pastor or DCE, receive a report of suspected child abuse, they will immediately:
  - 1. Seek to inform the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the allegation of their child's abuse, unless the parent(s) or guardian(s) have been alleged to be the abuser(s).
  - 2. Submit by telephone a DSS Oral Report of the alleged abuse to the Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS). The phone number for making oral reports to DSS is 800-792-5200 (Child-At-Risk-Hotline). That number is also posted in the Church Office, The Rev. John Robinson Center, and Allerton Hall.
  - 3. Inform and seek legal counsel from the COTP's insurance provider, including counsel regarding any public statements about the situation which will be made to the congregation as a whole or to the media.
- C. All actions taken in accordance with this section of the COTP *Safe Church Policies and Procedures* must be documented and given to the SCC to maintain in its secure files.

### **3. Inform Appropriate COTP Leaders As Needed**

It is the policy of the COTP that if a DSS Oral Report of alleged child abuse is made against any COTP employee or volunteer, that employee or volunteer must be immediately removed from all contact with children in COTP sponsored programs, at least until DSS rules on the legitimacy of the allegation made and on whether or not it is appropriate for that COTP employee or volunteer to have contact with children.

It is vital that the acts within our COTP mentioned in this section, be handled with as much discretion, fairness, and respect for all involved as possible, and with the recognition that DSS still needs to investigate and render its judgment on the



allegation made.

If a member of the SCC is not immediately available to carry out the SCC duties prescribed in this section, then those duties will be carried out as soon as possible, by either the COTP Pastor or DCE, as appropriate in the situation.

- A. Once a DSS Oral Report of alleged child abuse is made against an COTP employee or volunteer, the SCC committee must immediately [and if possible, in consultation with the COTP's insurance provider] inform the chairperson of the COTP board, committee, or supervisor of that employee or volunteer, that such a DSS Oral Report has been made and that they, in their supervisory role, must immediately remove that employee or volunteer from all contact with children in COTP sponsored programs, at least until DSS rules on the allegation.
- B. In addition to above section E.3, subsection 3, A, if a DSS Oral Report of alleged child abuse is made against an COTP employee or volunteer whose ecclesiastical standing is held by an Association of the United Church of Christ, such as an COTP Pastor, Commissioned Minister, or assisting clergy person, the SCC will immediately inform the Moderator, who, in turn, will consult with the Southeast Area Conference Minister of the MACUCC about any additional steps which may be taken by the COTP and/or the UCC Association which holds the individual's ecclesiastical standing.
- C. All actions taken in accordance with this section of the *COTP Safe Church Policies and Procedures* must be documented and given to the SCC to maintain in its secure files.

#### **4. Submit the COTP Safe Child Incident Report Within 24 Hours**

- A. The person who originally suspected the child abuse should, in conjunction with the SCC, complete and submit the COTP Safe Child Incident Report to the SCC within 24 hours after the DSS Oral Report of the suspected child abuse was made. If a member of the SCC is not available to help with that Incident Report, that person should complete and submit it in conjunction with the COTP Pastor or DCE. That Safe Child Incident Report must contain all the information necessary to complete a DSS Mandated Report on the suspected abuse.
- B. All actions taken in accordance with this section of the *COTP Safe Church Policies and Procedures* must be documented and given to the SCC to maintain in its secure files.

#### **5. Submit the DSS Mandated Report Within 48 Hours**

- A. Within 48 hours after the suspected abuse of a child was reported orally to DSS, a DSS Mandated Report on that suspected abuse must be completed and submitted to DSS. The completion and submission of this Mandated Report will be overseen by the SCC, or by the COTP Pastor or DCE if a member of the SCC is not available.
- B. All actions taken in accordance with this section of the *COTP Safe Church Policies and Procedures* must be documented and given to the SCC to maintain in

its secure files.

## **6. Individual DSS Reports May Be Made**

An individual not on the SCC may choose to contact DSS directly to submit their own DSS Oral Report and DSS Mandated Report regarding a particular allegation of child abuse. In such situations, the SCC will offer to help the individual fill out the DSS Mandated Report, but that individual must be identified on that Mandated Report as the reporter. Also, the SCC will ask such individuals to fill out an COTP Safe Child Incident Report and submit it to the SCC to maintain in its secure files.

### **E.4 RESPONSES, DSS RULINGS, AND DOCUMENTATION AFTER REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE**

#### **1. Responses After Reporting Suspected Child Abuse**

- A. All allegations, reports, and DSS rulings on child abuse must be handled with respect for the dignity of everyone involved and with regard for their privacy as appropriate.
- B. All COTP employees, volunteers, and the SCC will cooperate fully with DSS and police investigations of suspected child abuse.
- C. Pastoral support will be offered to all parties within the COTP who are involved in a suspected child abuse situation connected with the COTP, including those who have made the complaint and/or abuse reports, the accused, the families of both, and the congregation. Decisions about how this support will be given will be made by the church's ministerial staff in accordance with COTP By-laws in consultation with the Safe Church Committee and the Board of Deacons, as appropriate.
- D. Once a DSS Oral Report of alleged child abuse is made, the SCC will immediately inform and seek legal counsel from the COTP's insurance provider, including counsel regarding any public statements about the situation which will be made to the congregation as a whole or to the media.

#### **2. DSS Rulings On Allegations Made Against COTP Employees or Volunteers**

- A. When the SCC receives a DSS ruling on an allegation of child abuse made against an COTP Employee or Volunteer, the SCC will immediately convey that ruling to the Board of Trustees and to the COTP board, committee, or supervisor which oversees that employee or volunteer, so that appropriate steps can be taken with that individual in accordance with the DSS ruling and the *Safe Church Policies and Procedures* and *By-laws of the COTP*.
- B. In addition to the above section E.4, subsection 2, A, when the SCC receives a DSS ruling on an allegation of child abuse made against an COTP employee or volunteer whose ecclesiastical standing is held by an Association of the United Church of Christ, the SCC will immediately inform the Moderator, who, in turn, will both convey that ruling to and consult with the Southeast Area Conference

Minister of the MACUCC about any additional steps which may be taken by the UCC Association which holds the individual's ecclesiastical standing and/or by the COTP in accordance with its Safe Church Policies and Procedures and By-laws.

- C. Any actions taken in accordance with this section of the *COTP Safe Church Policies and Procedures* must be documented and given to the Board of Trustees and to the SCC to maintain in its secure files.

### **3. Documentation**

All information obtained and all actions taking during the process of reporting allegations of child abuse and making responses after those reports have been submitted, must be carefully documented and signed, including dates, times, and locations of all activities and meetings; the names of the persons present; any decisions or conclusions made; and any further action to be taken. The Safe Church Committee will obtain all such documents and maintain them in a secure location in the COTP as determined by the Safe Church Committee and approved by the Board of Trustees.

## **F. APPENDIX:** Forms found in the section are referred to throughout the Safe Church Policies and Procedures document.

- Medical Release Form
- CORI Request Form
- Hold Harmless Agreement
- Day Field Trip Consent Form
- Overnight Event Consent Form
- Authorized Driver Application Form
- FOB/Key Agreement
- Application for Employment
- Application for Use of Facility
- Incident Report
- Mandated Reporting
- Safe Child Incident Form
- Statement of Compliance
- Summary of Youth Protection Policies
- Building Use Rules & Regulations