

# **Indian Hill Church**

## **Safe Church Policy**

**Adopted by the Vestry-Session**

**March 19, 2002**

**Revised and approved**

**September 12, 2007**

**Indian Hill Church  
Cincinnati, Ohio**

**SAFE CHURCH POLICY**

We, as a Christian community, believe that children should be safe and well cared for and consider it to be our pastoral responsibility to strive to provide a loving, secure environment for children when we gather. As advocates for children, we establish these procedures and policies for their pastoral care and protection.

This policy has been reviewed and accepted by the Children's Christian Education Committee and the Youth Education Committee. It was adopted by the Vestry-Session on March 19, 2002 and Revised and approved, September 12, 2007

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**Copies will be given to adults who work with minors, parents, youth, Vestry-Session members, and ushers. Adults who work with children will be asked to sign the attached Form # 1. Signed forms will be kept on file.** Additional copies of this policy will be available through the church office.

We hope that all adults in the congregation will take an active role in implementing this policy.

Current clergy members:

The Rev. Patricia Merchant, Episcopal Rector  
The Rev. David Hawley, Presbyterian Pastor

Current educational directors:

Ann Pardue, Director, Children's Education  
Alexis Kent, Youth Director

# Safe Church Policy Indian Hill Episcopal Presbyterian Church

## Section 1

### I. GUIDELINES FOR PARISHIONERS AND GUESTS OF INDIAN HILL CHURCH

- **Child abuse** and **inappropriate touch** are prohibited and will be subject to appropriate legal action if warranted.
- Two adults will be assigned to all groups involving **minors** whenever possible. In cases where it is not possible, we will staff the classroom with one adult and one or more teens.
- When any one-on-one interactions between adults and **minors** take place on church property, they will be conducted in an environment that provides visibility to others. Another adult will know the whereabouts of and the participants in such meetings.
- Pastoral counseling sessions, confirmation meetings and field trips may be occasions where an adult and **minor** are alone. Another adult, parent, or guardian will know when and where these meetings take place. Adults must receive explicit permission from the **minor's** parents for all one-on-one meetings.
- Adults will not make **secret deals** with **minors**.
- Adults will not drive **minors** alone without express prior permission from the **minor's** parents.
- Adults will not recruit **minors** while on church property for non-church sponsored outings or activities, unless the clergy or education directors have given permission.
- There is an “**open door policy**” that encourages parents, clergy, and other teachers to visit and observe **children's** programs.

### II. GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS OF MINORS AT INDIAN HILL CHURCH

- All **minors** are expected to be in Child Care, Church School, or Church during normal Sunday worship and education time at Indian Hill Church. Children will not be released from Child Care or Sunday school until worship concludes or until their parents pick their children up in person.
- Parents are responsible for the behavior and whereabouts of their **minors** between scheduled activities and during Coffee Hour and in Sunday services.
- When **minors** are not in the above-mentioned areas during Sunday services, ushers or another adult will notify parents and parents will need to take responsibility for their **minor**.
- All **youths** participating in worship will remain in the church during the service time. They may leave the Sanctuary only with the permission of an adult in charge and must return promptly.
- Parents are responsible for the whereabouts of their **minors** during events at Indian Hill Church, which are held at times other than Sunday hours.

- Custodial parents must inform clergy members, educational directors and adults who work with their **minors** of the potential for custody kidnapping.
- Parents who are not on the church premises during Sunday school are required to notify teachers in writing of their whereabouts and contact numbers.

### **III. GUIDELINES FOR USHERS AS RELATED TO MINORS**

- During the course of normal duties ushers are asked to keep an eye open for **minors** in unauthorized areas of the church building.
- If an usher or other adult locates a **minor** out of an authorized area, the minor will be told to return to Church or class.
- If the **minor** does not respond, the adult will tell the parent/guardian of the **minor** that he/she was not in a designated area.
- The observing adult will notify the clergy or education directors when **minors** are not responsive or found repeatedly outside designated areas.

### **IV. PROCEDURE FOR ENFORCING INFRACTIONS OF THE GUIDELINES**

- When parishioners witness infractions of the guidelines, they will immediately respond to the situation and speak directly to those involved.
- The parishioner will also report any infraction to the clergy or educational directors.
- The clergy and educational directors will handle all situations with appropriate discretion.
- Limits may be placed on those involved at the discretion of the clergy, wardens, or clerks on a case-by-case basis.

## Section 2

### I. Process: Adults who work with minors

We will follow an interviewing process, which will include the following steps:

1. All potential volunteers and paid adults who work with children will have an informal interview with the Children's Ed. or Youth Ed. director, and/or clergy staff. After this interview they will decide what level of direct child involvement the volunteer will have. Indian Hill Church reserved the right to check references when appropriate, and keep notes. We further reserve the right to check the town registers of sex offenders in the town where staff and volunteers live.
2. All adults who work with children will sign a statement indicating that they:
  - a. are aware of what is meant by child abuse;
  - b. have never been convicted of child abuse or had such conviction expunged, or been dismissed from any position because of inappropriate behaviors towards children;
  - c. are aware that Indian Hill Church will actively follow-up any accusations and will take appropriate pastoral and legal action if warranted.
  - d. have read and understand the Indian Hill Church Safe Church Policy.
3. The following adults who work with minors on a regular basis-are required to have training in the prevention, identification, and detection of symptoms of child abuse, and in the creation of a safe parish: Committee chairs of the Youth and Children's Ed Committees, Confirmation Mentors, and all employees. This training is recommended for all other education volunteers and Vestry-Session members. Only training from the Diocese and Presbytery will fulfill this requirement. -This training will be necessary during the first year of the adult's involvement. Training will be updated at the discretion of the children's and youth directors and/or clergy staff. A schedule of training sessions can be found at [www.episcopal-dso.org](http://www.episcopal-dso.org). A document verifying attendance of a training session will be maintained in the church office.
4. All clergy staff and other employees having regular interaction with children, will have background checks.

### II. Guidelines for adults who work with minors

- Child abuse and inappropriate touch are prohibited and will not be tolerated.
- Two adults will be assigned to all groups involving **minors** whenever possible. In cases where it is not possible, we will staff the classroom with one adult and one or more teens.
- When any one-on-one interaction between adults and minors take place on church property, they will be conducted in an environment that provides visibility to others. Another adult will know the whereabouts of and the participants in such meetings.
- Pastoral counseling sessions and field trips may be occasions where an adult and minor are alone, another adult, parent or guardian will know when and where these meetings take place.
- Adults will not make secret deals with minors.
- Adults will not drive minors alone without express prior permission from the minor's parents.

- Adults will not recruit minors while on church property for non-church sponsored outings or activities, unless the clergy staff or the Ed. directors have given permission.
- There is an “open-door” policy that encourages parents, clergy, and other teachers to visit and observe children’s and youth programs.
- All non-staff adults who work with minors will be known members of the Indian Hill Church.
- Adults who work with minors will not give gifts to individual minors without prior knowledge of the parents and/or the Ed. directors or clergy.
- Adults who work with minors will not be allowed to take minors on outings alone unless expressly approved by clergy or an Ed. director.
- Adults who work with minors must obtain the express approval of the clergy staff, Ed. directors for any outings and must obtain IHC permission slips signed by parents/guardians.

### **III. Procedure for enforcing infractions of the guidelines**

- The adult(s) who witness an infraction of these guidelines, will immediately report the situation to the educational directors or clergy.
- The educational directors or clergy will handle all situations with appropriate discretion.
- Limits may be placed on those involved at the discretion of the clergy, and/or educational directors on a case-by-case basis.
- Parents of minors will be notified within 48 hours and the infraction will be documented.

### **IV. Protocol for reporting suspected child abuse**

Under Ohio law, anyone who provides ‘spiritual counseling through prayer’ is a mandated reporter of child abuse and neglect. That includes the clergy, educational directors, and all volunteers who work with minors. These individuals have no discretion in reporting suspected abuse or neglect. They are required by law to report to authorities. Should an adult who works with minors be informed of or have reasonable suspicion of the child abuse of a minor, no matter where it took place, the following protocol will be followed:

Everyone involved in the reporting process will be sensitive to the minor who has disclosed child abuse.

- Listen and respect the minor.
- Do not deny or explain the alleged abuse/neglect.
- Tell the minor that it is not his/her fault and that he/she deserves to feel safe.
- Do not be judgmental of the alleged abuser, since it is often someone that the minor cares for deeply.
- Some minors will want you to promise that you won’t tell about the abuse before they disclose to you – keep telling them gently that some secrets must be told, especially if someone is being hurt.
- Respect the privacy of the minor and the alleged abuser by not telling any more people than necessary.

The ultimate responsibility for reporting suspected cases of child abuse to DSS and the pastoral issues arising around such cases lies with the educational directors and/or clergy

1. If an adult who works with minors suspects child abuse, the suspicion will be conveyed that day to the appropriate educational director or clergy member. The report will be made on the Report of Suspected Child Abuse/Neglect form (see appendix 2) and supplemented by a verbal summary.

In the event that the alleged perpetrator is a member of the clergy, the report will be made to a warden or clerk. The warden or clerk will immediately contact the diocesan office for Pastoral Concern or the Presbytery office.

2. The clergy member will meet as soon as possible with the informant of suspected child abuse or neglect and such advisors as the clergy member deems necessary to review the information.
3. If there is reasonable cause to believe a minor has been the victim of abuse, an educational director or clergy member will notify the Department of Social Services that same day by telephone, and in writing within 48 hours. The educational director or clergy member will inform the parents of the minor that there are concerns for the minor's well-being and that DSS has been notified, unless the clergy member decides that notifying the parent might further endanger the minor.
4. All information discussed is to be held confidential. In each case, documentation that this process has been followed will be made by the educational director and/or clergy member and kept in a locked file.
5. The clergy member will inform the Vestry-Session immediately that a report has been made to DSS. Names and details are not necessary.

## Section 3

### Appendix 1, Forms

1. Abuse/Neglect Affidavit (for adults who work with children)
2. IHC Children and Youth Church School Registration, Medical and Field Trip Form
3. Parent Release Form for Media Recording

**APPENDIX 1: Forms**

**Form #1:**

**Abuse/Neglect Prevention Affidavit**  
(for adults who work with children)

I, the undersigned, confirm that I am aware of the kinds of activity which constitute physical, emotional or sexual abuse and/or neglect of a minor. I affirm that I have never been convicted of such activity or had such conviction expunged from my record, nor have I ever been dismissed or asked to leave a position because of abusive behavior towards a minor. I affirm that I have read and understand the Indian Hill Church Safe Church Policy. I further affirm that I am aware that Indian Hill Episcopal Presbyterian Church will follow up any charge of abuse toward any adult who works with minors in the parish, and that the parish will take appropriate legal action if warranted.

Signature of Volunteer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

Signature of Educational Director or Clergy \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

**INDIAN HILL CHURCH**  
Children and Youth Church School Registration Form—2006-2007

**Family Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Nickname \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_ Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Interests: \_\_\_\_\_

Allergies or medical information (please list all medications) : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Nickname \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_ Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Interests: \_\_\_\_\_

Allergies or medical information (please list all medications) : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Nickname \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_ Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Interests: \_\_\_\_\_

Allergies or medical information (please list all medications) : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Name  
\_\_\_\_\_

Father's Name  
\_\_\_\_\_

Mother's work or cell phone  
\_\_\_\_\_

Father's work or cell phone  
\_\_\_\_\_

Parent email address \_\_\_\_\_

Do you prefer to receive email or paper mail or a phone call or all? (Please circle preference)

## EMERGENCY INSTRUCTIONS

Occasionally children attend church school classes or church events when their parents are not in the building. We welcome the children but also want to insure their safety in emergencies. Please help us with the following information:

In case of an emergency, we may be reached at the following numbers:

Home \_\_\_\_\_ Work \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

If, after a reasonable period of time, we cannot be reached at the above numbers, we provide these alternative contacts:

Emergency contact: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_  
name number relationship

Child's physician:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Number \_\_\_\_\_

Child's dentist:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Number \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred hospital: \_\_\_\_\_

If we cannot reach you in event of an emergency, we will phone 911, the Life Squad, or the Indian Hill Rangers to transport your child for emergency care.

### Medical Authorization

I/We, the parent(s) or legal guardian of \_\_\_\_\_, a minor, hereby authorize and consent to any x-ray examination, anesthetic, medical, or surgical diagnosis or treatment and hospital care which is deemed advisable by, and is to be rendered under the general or special supervision of any licensed

### FIELD TRIP PERMISSION

I (We) give permission for our child (children),

\_\_\_\_\_

(please list each child's name)

to participate in church class field trips. We understand that transportation to and from these events will be provided by Church school teachers and/or parents in their private cars. We further agree not to hold the Indian Hill Church liable for any accidents or injuries that might occur during these trips.

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Parent signature #1 \_\_\_\_\_ Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Parent signature #2 \_\_\_\_\_ Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE COMPLETE EMERGENCY AND FIELD TRIP INFORMATION ON BACK**  
Revised 6/06

## Parent Release Form for Media Recording

I, the undersigned, do hereby grant or deny permission to Indian Hill Episcopal Presbyterian Church (IHC) to use the image of my child or children, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(please list each child's full name)

as indicated by my selection(s) below. Such use includes the display, distribution, publication, transmission, or other use of photographs, images, and/or video taken of my child for use in materials that includes, but may not be limited to, printed materials such as brochures and newsletters, videos, and digital images such as those on the IHC Web site ([www.indianhillchurch.org](http://www.indianhillchurch.org)). I agree that these images may be used by IHC for the purposes stated below and that these images may be used without further notifying me.

- Deny permission to use my child's image at all.
- Grant permission to use my child's image in the following ways (mark all that apply):
  - Limited usage within the church:** I want my child's image used within the IHC setting only (not in the larger community).
  - Unrestricted usage:** I give unrestricted permission for my child's image to be used in print, video, and digital media. *I understand that the child's last name will not be used in conjunction with any video or digital images and that names will not appear with the photographs.*

Parent/guardian signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*If you have questions, contact Ann Pardue at 513-561-6805 ext 307 or Alexis Kent at 561-6805 ext 306.*

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*Tear Here for Parent Record*

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- Deny permission to use my child's image at all.
- Grant permission to use my child's image in the following ways (mark all that apply):
  - Limited usage within the church:** I want my child's image used within the IHC setting only (not in the larger community).
  - Unrestricted usage:** I give unrestricted permission for my child's image to be used in print, video, and digital media. *I understand that the child's last name will not be used in conjunction with any video or digital images and that names will not appear with the photographs.*