

THE JOURNEY CHURCH MANDATORY REPORTING POLICY

We take the safety of our children very seriously and require that anyone working with children must agree to The Journey Church Mandatory Reporting Policy.

This policy is intended to create a safe environment for every child and family that participates in or attends a Journey Church function and must be strictly enforced.

After you have carefully read this policy, please sign the agreement form at the end, and return to the Journey Church Leadership.

Sincerely,

The Journey Church Leadership

OVERVIEW

The Journey Church is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children and their families. To that end, inappropriate behavior and suspicions of abuse or neglect will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law.

The Journey Church requires all Leadership Team members and volunteers working with children to complete preliminary steps before working with or volunteering for service with children.

*Before working with or volunteering in the children's ministry you must have attended The Journey Church for at least six months.

STEP ONE: Screening Process

All volunteers must complete The Journey Church Serving Application and sign The Journey Church Authorization for Background Check.

This background check authorization will be renewed annually.

STEP TWO: Abuse Prevention and Response Training

All volunteers must have a basic understanding of the characteristics of abuse and sexual abuse, and the common behaviors exhibited by abusers.

The Journey Church requires The Leadership Team and anyone working with or volunteering in the children's ministry to complete the Abuse Prevention and Response Training classes as assigned. These classes are free and can be taken online. (Ask your group director for the link.)

This training must be renewed annually.

STEP THREE: Policies & Procedures

The Leadership Team and anyone working with or volunteering in the children's ministry must review the policies and procedures contained in this document and sign the last page indicating that he or she has read and understood the material, and agrees to comply with requirements.

These policies and procedures must be reread and acknowledged annually.

CHILD SAFETY AND MANDATORY REPORTING POLICY

ABUSE TOLERANCE

The Journey Church has **zero tolerance for abuse** in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer at The Journey Church to act in the best interest of the church body in every ministry.

This zero tolerance policy, as well as state law, requires that anyone working with children report abuse or suspected abuse immediately, and take steps to protect the child as set forth in this policy.

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

In order to maintain a safe environment for our children, The Journey Church abides by mandatory state reporting requirements which apply to all those in leadership and volunteers. Those in mandatory reporting positions must be aware of their individual responsibilities to report questionable circumstances, observations, acts, or situations that are indicative of child abuse or neglect. If anyone has a question or concern related to suspected abuse or neglect, that volunteer should immediately contact the Ministry Leader or another member of the Leadership Team to discuss the concern.

All witnessed or suspected instances of abuse or neglect of children must be immediately reported to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS).

HOW AND WHAT TO REPORT

There are two methods of reporting abuse or neglect to MDHHS.

1. **Call the Abuse Hotline at 855-444-3911.**
 - a. If the reporter uses the Hotline, the law requires that the reporter follow up with a written report within 72 hours of making the oral report to the hotline.
 - b. The form used to make the written report is available online at <https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/adult-child-serv/abuse-neglect/childrens/mandated-reporters>, and can be submitted either by fax to 616-977-1158, or email to MDHHS-CPS-CIGroup@michigan.gov. A current sample of this form is attached to the end of this report.
 - c. Make sure you print two copies of the written report. One copy must be provided to the Leadership Team, and the reporter should keep the other copy.
2. **Submit a report through the Michigan Online Reporting System.**
 - a. This method is slower and not the preferred method for reporting. This method requires the reporter to create an account through MI

Bridges. Once the reporter creates an account they will receive a Login link to the reporting system, also referred to by the state as MORS.

- b. Instructions to use the online reporting system are available at <https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/adult-child-serv/abuse-neglect/childrens/mandated-reporters/online-reporting>.
 - c. If you use the online reporting system, and you provide all required information, you do not need to provide any additional report.
 - The legally required information must include:
 1. The name of the child
 2. A description of the child abuse or child neglect.
 3. Other information available to the reporting person that might establish the cause of the child abuse or child neglect, and if known, the manner in which the child abuse or child neglect occurred.
 - If possible, the report should also include:
 1. The names and addresses of the child's parents, the child's guardian, or the persons with whom the child resides;
 2. The child's age.
3. Regardless of the method used for reporting, the reporter must make The Journey Church Leadership aware of the situation as soon as possible.

IMMEDIATE SAFETY CONCERN

If there is a concern for the immediate safety of a child, the reporter should also contact the Oakland County Sheriff's Department and keep the child safe until law enforcement arrives.

1. Keeping the child safe, means not releasing the child until Law Enforcement are present and can investigate the safety of the child.
2. Do not try engage an angry parent or guardian.
3. Do not discuss the matter with the parent or guardian until law enforcement arrives.
4. Seek out a member of the Security Response Team to assist if necessary.
5. Notify The Journey Church Leadership of the situation as soon as possible.

NO PERMISSION IS NEEDED from The Journey Church before reporting to law enforcement personnel or the MDHHS.

If a reporter is unsure of reporting requirements based on the circumstances they are facing, the reporter may immediately contact a member of the Leadership Team for guidance or confirmation of reporting obligations based on the facts available at that time.

Contacting leadership to discuss the matter does not alleviate the reporter from filing a report if there is suspected abuse or neglect. Leadership will help provide the reporter with support through the process.

When in doubt, report.

It is not The Journey Church's job to investigate suspected abuse prior to reporting. The Journey Church is here to provide a safe environment and support for the child, family, and reporter, through the process.

MANDATORY REPORTING
Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement

I have received and read a copy of The Journey Church's Mandatory Reporting Policies and Procedures and understand the importance of the material.

I have reviewed the reporting requirements I agree to fulfill all training and reporting duties. I understand that I may end my voluntary service at The Journey Church at any time, or that The Journey Church may request that I step away from volunteering if I fail to abide by the requirements of this policy.

I understand it is my responsibility to complete the Abuse Prevention and Response Training classes annually.

I understand it is my responsibility to review these guidelines every year or as they may be updated based on necessary legal changes.

I agree to abide by these guidelines while serving with The Journey Church.

Volunteer's name (please print)

Volunteer's signature

Date: _____