



**PILLAR CHURCH**  
OF WASHINGTON DC

# INCIDENT PREVENTION & REPORTING POLICY

Creating a safe environment for the church's members,  
ministers, employees, ministries and mission

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## Purpose & General Guidelines

Pillar Church of Washington DC's (hereby known as "the Church" or "Pillar DC") is committed to creating and maintaining programs, facilities and a community in which members, family, staff, volunteers, and visitors can worship, learn and work together in an atmosphere free from all forms of abuse, discrimination, harassment, exploitation or intimidation. All persons associated with Pillar DC should be aware that the church is strongly opposed to abuse, sexual exploitation, and sexual harassment, and that such behavior is prohibited by church policy. It is the intention of the Church to take action in an attempt to prevent and correct behavior that is contrary to this policy and, if necessary, to discipline those persons who violate this policy by means of restorative church discipline and contacting local authorities when necessary.

### Reasons to use the policy

Incidents can happen at any time, take various forms, and have multiple indicators. Pillar DC wants to prevent and minimize all incidents. However, an incident free environment is nearly impossible to have when working and serving with sinful people in a world stained by sin. Pillar DC is a place where people can be heard, facts verified, and incidents will be documented.

Please make use of the policy for the following reasons:

- Incident that is abusive in nature
- A general complaint about a member, staff member, or employee
- Medical or health incident

### Goal

Our goal is to protect members, family members, and friends from abuse, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, or any type of inappropriate behavior by members, employees, officers, volunteers and to protect members, employees, family members, and friends from false accusations and allegations.

### Who is subject to this policy and its use?

- Members of the Church
- Non-members; visitors and family members in contact with ministry volunteers or church staff.
- Staff members, employees, officers, and volunteers

### Brief Definitions<sup>1</sup>

**Abuse:** physical or verbal maltreatment of a person (physically, emotionally, mentally, or physiologically) which is often repeated and regular, but can be singular in nature.

**Incident:** any intentional or accidental act that may be classified as emotional, mental, physical, physiological, or sexual abuse.

**Reporting:** an oral and then written statement of an incident.

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<sup>1</sup> A more comprehensive list of definitions can be found in Appendix A.

## Staff Members & Employees

Pillar Church of Washington DC has both paid staff pastors and employees. A staff pastor or an employee of the church is anyone who is paid by the church on a full-time or part-time basis. All church employees will be required to conduct themselves consistent with characteristics and ethics found in the Scriptures (Matt. 5:1-7:15, 1 Tim. 3, Titus 1). All employees will be subject to the process below for the safety of members, visitors and family members of the church.

### Ministerial Conduct

Consistent with our understanding of the priesthood of all believers, all Authorized Ministers, employees, elected and appointed lay leaders, and authorized volunteers are Ministers to the congregation.

It is important that every Minister to the church be adequately prepared and educated for the ministry in which they serve others, and to understand the ways in which their use or misuse of authority may impact others.

It is the policy of Pillar DC to encourage its Ministers to nurture safety within Ministerial Relationships by being attentive to self-care, education, maintaining appropriate boundaries, and the importance of referring those in need to supportive and helpful resources.

Sexual Abuse, Exploitation or Harassment of members, visitors, or others by anyone engaged in ministry on behalf of Pillar DC is unethical behavior and will not be tolerated within this congregation.

### Requirements for Commencing and Continuing Ministry or Employment

Before beginning their duties, all Ministers will submit a disclosure form similar to the sample attached in Appendix B.

Before beginning their duties, all Ministers will be personally interviewed to assess the suitability of their character and qualifications for the position they seek. All current and prospective employees will undergo a background check, including but not necessarily limited to inquiries of references and a criminal history verification by a third party vendor.

The church will conduct a registered sex offender review for each Minister by searching their name on the Department of Justice website at [www.nsopr.gov](http://www.nsopr.gov). This registered sex offender review will be repeated on an annual basis for all Ministers.

### Training

Abuse training for prevention and awareness and reporting procedures every two years.

## Ministry to Families and Children

Our first goal is to provide a safe, secure, and loving environment for children and youth. We work hard to provide a place where parents feel comfortable leaving their child, under the care and supervision of our ministry teams. Therefore, we have taken steps to protect both children and volunteers. These policies are intended to be a helpful resource in addressing issues of child and youth safety.

### Requirements for Child and Youth Ministry

Pillar DC is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love. In order to promote this, we have established the following guidelines in addition to the general requirements for ministry to the church.

- All volunteers who regularly work with minors are members of Pillar DC.
- All volunteers who regularly work with children and youth will complete and submit a disclosure document in a form substantially similar to the sample attached hereto as Appendix B.
- All volunteers and employees who regularly work with minors will receive orientation regarding safe church policy and procedures.
- It is the policy of this church to provide adequate supervision and safeguards for activities including minors. Two unrelated adults are to be present at every function and in each classroom, vehicle, or enclosed area during any activity involving minors. Minors over the age of 12 may assist an unrelated adult in supervising children and youth activities; however, such assistance does not alter the requirement that at least two unrelated adults be present when the activity involves minors.
- The church will maintain a secure storage database for all volunteer background checks and their results. Volunteer profiles and background checks may be required to be updated from time to time, but only if the worker is still a current volunteer. The assigned deacons and elders will have access to the database.
- All volunteers must have the approval of the Deacon of Childcare before being placed in any position of ministry to children.
- Written consent of one parent or guardian of a minor will be required for all activities off the church property, and any overnight activities.

### Training

#### Orientation

All volunteers will be given appropriate policies that will familiarize them with established age group/ministry guidelines, definition of child abuse, identifying possible symptoms of child abuse, and the church's protection policies regarding safety, security, child discipline and reporting.

A separate guide for "classroom" conduct for leaders and volunteers during activities including minors will be provided during the orientation training.

## Annual Training

The church provides training to all employees and volunteers annually. Such training not only increases the awareness of child protection, but also demonstrates the church's commitment to ensuring the safety of our most vulnerable members.

## Reporting Procedures

In order to maintain a safe environment for members, staff, employees, family members, and visitors, all persons must be aware of their individual responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, admission, or situation which endangers or threatens someone, especially minors. All questions or concerns of suspected activity of abuse or harassment by a ministry team member should be reported to the elders or deacons. Should the activity of concern involve a paid church employee, the matter shall be reported to the elders or outside entities listed below. Pending the outcome of an investigation, all information pertaining to the alleged incident shall be kept confidential. Pillar Church will take steps necessary to protect the integrity of anyone involved in the incident.

All reports of allegations will be taken seriously. Church staff will take appropriate action to record and report allegations in accordance with this policy, the reporting requirements of the District of Columbia, the insurance policy requirements, and, when necessary, the advice of legal counsel. The church staff and employees will comply with any and all state or federal agencies when required by the nature of an incident.

### General Guidelines

- 1.1. The Church staff will thoroughly document all efforts in handling any incident or allegation. Documentation will be made in the Planning Center Online People database as Personnel Notes, Injury Report, or Incident Report. All elders will be notified when any and all notes are created.
- 1.2. The church staff will not deny, minimize, or blame any individual involved in allegations or incidents. Pillar DC will seek to minister to all involved in reported incidents.
- 1.3. The official spokesperson for the church will be the elders or an appointee. No other employees or church members shall speak to the media regarding incidents.
- 1.4. The elders may seek the advice of legal counsel or others to advise it in performing its functions.
- 1.5. The person(s) toward whom the inappropriate behavior, complaint or incident is directed need not be the complainant. Moreover, neither consent nor acquiescence will excuse or exonerate inappropriate behavior. At any time the church may initiate or proceed with the formal complaint process.
- 1.6. In determining whether alleged conduct constitutes abuse, sexual harassment or exploitation, consideration shall be given to the record of the alleged incident(s) as a whole and to the totality of the circumstances, including the context in which the alleged incident(s) occurred.
- 1.7. Any person bringing a abuse, sexual harassment or exploitation complaint or assisting in investigating such a complaint will not be adversely affected in terms and conditions of employment or church membership or affiliation, or otherwise discriminated against or discharged, prior to the completion of the investigation.
- 1.8. If the complainant or respondent is not satisfied with the disposition of the matter by the elders, he or she has the right to appeal to the local, state, or federal authorities,

Praetorian Project Board, SBCV, or the SBC Executive Committee. The subject of any such appeal to any outside entity of the church shall be limited solely to whether the procedures of this policy were followed. The matter will not be reconsidered on the merits and the decision of the outside entity will be the final resolution of the matter. If the external entity determines that the procedures of this policy were not followed, it will, at a minimum, refer the matter back to the elders to complete the processing of the complaint in accordance with these procedures.

- 1.9. Response to the Accuser
  - 1.9.1. All allegations should be taken seriously and emotional support should be given to the accuser. The care and safety of the accuser is the first priority.
  - 1.9.2. All efforts should be made to reach out to the accuser and the accuser's family, extending whatever pastoral and professional resources may be needed.
- 1.10. Response to the Accused
  - 1.10.1. Treat the accused with dignity and support. He/she will be relieved of his/her duties until the investigation is finished.
  - 1.10.2. Pastoral and/or professional resources should likewise be extended to the accused.

### **Complaints and Medical Incidents**

- 1.1. Report any hazardous situations to church leadership immediately and correct the situation as quickly and as safely as possible.
- 1.2. Several approaches may be taken in addressing complaints:
  - 1.2.1. The complainant can attempt to resolve the matter directly with the respondent, the individual accused in the incident.
  - 1.2.2. The complainant can report the incident to an elder or the elders, in an effort to resolve the matter informally.
  - 1.2.3. If an informal resolution of the complaint does not seem wise, appropriate, possible, or does not succeed, the complainant may request that the elders institute formal proceedings documented in the following sections.
- 1.3. If someone is injured in any way, please notify the church leadership (elders or deacons). The elder or deacon notified will then complete an Injury Report. All head injuries must be reported. All injuries to minors, no matter how small, must be reported to the parents or guardians. When filling out the parent/guardian notification section of the Injury Report, please do not use any other child's name. The elders will immediately report medical incident(s) to the church insurance company.

### **Reporting an Elder, Pastor, or Ministerial Staff Member**

- 1.1. All reports concerning an elder, pastor, or staff member will be reviewed internally and addressed appropriately.
- 1.2. All allegations of behavior which call into question the fitness for ministry of any staff or lay pastor will be promptly forwarded to the law enforcement authorities.
  - 1.2.1. Department of Justice - Sex Offense and Domestic Violence Section and the Victim Witness Assistance Unit of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of



Columbia. You will be asked to provide your full name, contact information, and the best time to reach you. They may be contacted at:

- 1.2.1.1. 202-252-7008
- 1.2.1.2. USADC.ReportClergyAbuse@usdoj.gov
- 1.2.2. The Southern Baptist Convention - Reports of instances of abuse to the SBC  
They may be contacted at:
  - 1.2.2.1. 202-864-5578
  - 1.2.2.2. SBChotline@guidepostsolutions.com

## **Reports of Abuse, Sexual Exploitation, and Sexual Harrassment**

- 1.1. Failing to report abuse can have severe consequences to the victim at risk. Therefore, anyone having reasonable cause to suspect abuse, sexual exploitation, or sexual harrassment should talk with the elders or deacons to see what steps could and should be taken to protect the abused and provide any aid to those involved in the incident. Reporting abuse, sexual exploitation, or sexual harrassment can precipitate severe consequences to those involved, so it should never be done casually or thoughtlessly, and certainly not for malicious purposes.
- 1.2. In the event anyone personally witnesses an occurrence in violation of this policy, that person will be asked to complete an Incident Report. All efforts at handling any incident or allegation should be documented. Anyone witnessing such an occurrence should consider the following recommendations as to how such a situation should be handled to ensure the security of the alleged victim and to protect against physical, emotional, or psychological injury to all persons involved:
  - 1.2.1. All incidents shall be reported immediately to the elders or deacons, if available, or to the ministry leader in charge of the event or activity. The incident must be reported by the employee to the elders within 24 hours of the awareness of the incident.
  - 1.2.2. If minors are involved, the parents must be notified by the elders within 24 hours of the awareness of the incident.
  - 1.2.3. The elders will immediately report credible sexual misconduct incident(s) to the church insurance company, church attorney, and denominational officials.
  - 1.2.4. The elders and/or the church elder will notify the proper civil authorities, as directed by the insurance company & church attorney.
  - 1.2.5. The accused should not be confronted until the safety of the abused individual is secured, and only upon advisement by the church attorney.
  - 1.2.6. A prepared statement to the press and to the congregation should only be made by the elders as advised by the church attorney.
  - 1.2.7. Personally secure the safety of the minor(s). Do not leave the minor while reporting the incident.
  - 1.2.8. Do not personally confront the alleged or accused violator of the policy unless imminent injury or damage is present.
  - 1.2.9. The elders, or their appointee will report the incident to the parents or guardians of the minor(s).

- 1.2.10. A duly authorized representative of Pillar DC will be responsible for all communication on behalf of the church.

### Reports by Minors

- 1.1. In the event a minor reports alleged abusive conduct, regardless of where the conduct occurred, (at church, offsite church event, or non-church event) the person initially contacted by the minor must complete a written Incident Report which should include, as much as possible, the precise wording of the minor.
- 1.2. In the event a minor makes an accusation of abuse or neglect occurring in the minor's home, the person initially contacted will report to the elders for disposition of the matter.

### Determinations and Responses

- 1.1. The elders shall make determinations and take actions appropriate to resolve the matter. These may include:
  - 1.1.1. finding that abuse, sexual exploitation, or harassment has occurred, and that the appropriate body of the church is called upon to take action accordingly; such action may include one or more of the following:
    - 1.1.1.1. a formal reprimand, with defined expectations for change behavior;
    - 1.1.1.2. recommending or requiring psychological or psychiatric assessment, counseling and/or treatment;
    - 1.1.1.3. probationary standing, with the terms of the probation clearly defined;
    - 1.1.1.4. dismissal from employment or authorized volunteer position by affiliation with the church.
    - 1.1.1.5. recommend restorative church discipline which could result in excommunication.
  - 1.1.2. finding that abuse, sexual exploitation or sexual harassment did not occur.

## Appendix A:

# Definitions related to Abuse Prevention and Reporting



# PILLAR CHURCH

## OF WASHINGTON DC

### Definitions

**Authorized Minister:** a person who holds ordained ministerial standing or has been commissioned or licensed by an Association of the United Church of Christ or region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). An Authorized Minister is one type of minister within the meaning of this policy.

**Child abuse** is commonly defined as physical injury or death inflicted upon a child by a parent or caretaker (by other than accidental means) neglect or exploitation of a child, sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a child. Child abuse may occur in the home by a caretaker, in a childcare situation, in an organized ministry, whether at the main facility (church) or away, or in any other setting, including on the street by a person unknown to the child.

**Minister:** a person authorized by the church to carry out its ministry. Ministers include elected or appointed leaders of the church, employees, and volunteers, as well as Authorized Ministers.

**Ministerial Relationship:** the relationship between one who carries out the ministry of the church and the one being served by that ministry.

**Minor:** is any individual under the age of 18 years.

**Sexual Abuse** can be violent or non-violent. It is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behavior. Child sexual abuse can involve fondling; penetration of the oral, genital, and anal areas; intercourse; and forcible rape. Other forms of abuse can include verbal comments, any exposure to pornographic materials, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, or allowing children to witness sexual activity.

**Sexual Exploitation:** sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which a Minister engaged in a ministerial relationship with another takes advantage of the vulnerability of the person being served by causing or allowing that person to engage in sexual behavior with the Minister.

**Sexual Harassment:** repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to his or her wishes. It includes behavior directed at another person with the intent of intimidating, humiliating, or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the person to public discrimination. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition or circumstance of instruction, employment, or participation in any church activity.
- Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for evaluation in making personnel or church-related decisions affecting an individual; or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance or participation in church activities or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or church environment.

Prohibited sexual harassment includes unsolicited and unwelcome contact that has sexual overtones, particularly:

- Written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, e-mails, or invitations;
- Verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits, sexual propositions;
- Physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, coercing sexual intercourse; and
- Visual contact, such as leering or staring at another's body, gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters, or magazines.

Sexual harassment also includes continuing to express sexual interest after being informed directly that the interest is unwelcome and using sexual behavior to control, influence, or affect the career, salary, work, learning, or worship environment of another. It is impermissible to suggest, threaten, or imply that failure to accept a request for a date or sexual intimacy will affect a person's job prospects, church leadership, or comfortable participation in the life of the church. It is forbidden either to imply or actually withhold support for an appointment, promotion, or change of assignment, to suggest that a poor performance report will be given because a person has declined a personal proposition; or to hint that benefits, such as promotions, favorable performance evaluations, favorable assigned duties or shifts, recommendations or reclassifications, will be forthcoming in exchange for sexual favors.

## Appendix B:

# Employee / Childcare Worker Disclosure Form



# PILLAR CHURCH

## OF WASHINGTON DC

### Disclosure Form

***Please read each statement carefully and circle either true or not true for each statement.***

Full Legal Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Alias(es): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

1. I have never been convicted of, nor pled guilty or no contest to, a crime. (Exclude convictions that have been sealed, expunged or legally eradicated, misdemeanor convictions for which probation was completed and the case was dismissed, or offenses about which inquiry is not permissible in this state).  
 True  
 Not True
2. If not true, please briefly describe the nature of the crime(s), the date and place of conviction and the legal disposition of the case. The church will not deny a position to any applicant solely because the person has been convicted of a crime. The church, however, may consider the nature, date and circumstances of the offense, as well as whether the offense is relevant to the duties of the position applied for.
3. No civil lawsuit alleging actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; or financial misconduct has ever resulted in a judgment being entered against me, been settled out of court, or been dismissed because the statute of limitations has expired.  
 True  
 Not True
4. If not true, give a short explanation of the lawsuit. (Please indicate the date, nature, and place of the incident leading to the lawsuit; where the lawsuit was filed; and the precise disposition of the lawsuit.)
5. I have never terminated my employment, professional credentials, or service in a volunteer position or had my employment, professional credentials, or authorization to hold a volunteer

position terminated for reasons relating to allegations of actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; or financial misconduct.

True

Not True

6. If not true, give a short explanation. (Please indicate the date of termination; name, address, and telephone number of employer or volunteer supervisor; and nature of the incident(s) leading to your termination.)

7. Do you have a valid drivers' license?    Yes    No

8. With respect to my driving record, I have not had my license suspended or revoked within the last five years due to reckless driving or driving while intoxicated and/or under the influence of a controlled substance.

True

Not True

9. Is there any fact, circumstance, traits, or tendencies you possess that would call into question your being entrusted with the responsibilities of the position or pose any threat to children, youth or adults?

Yes    No    If yes, please provide a brief explanation.

The covenants between persons seeking authorized volunteer positions in the church require honesty, integrity, and truthfulness for the health of the church. To that end, I attest that the information set forth in this application is true and complete. I understand that any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of consideration for, or termination of, the position I am seeking to fill. I acknowledge that it is my duty in a timely fashion to amend the responses and information I have provided if I come to know that the response or information was incorrect when given or, though accurate when given, the response or information is no longer accurate.

Beginning such relationships with an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for a continuing and healthy covenant between volunteers and the church they seek to serve. To that end, I authorize Pillar Church of Washington DC and/or its agents to make inquiries regarding my character and qualifications, including all statements I have set forth above. I also authorize all entities, persons, former employers, supervisors, courts, law enforcement, and other public agencies to respond to inquiries concerning me, to supply verification of the statements I have made, and to comment on and state opinions regarding my background, character, and qualifications. To encourage such persons and entities to speak openly and responsibly, I hereby release them from all liability arising from their responses, comments, and statements.

Pillar Church of Washington DC authorized volunteer and employee recruitment process involves the sharing of information regarding applicants with those persons in a position to



recruit, secure, and supervise both the position I am seeking to fill and program I am seeking to participate in. To that end, I authorize Pillar Church of Washington DC and its agents to circulate, distribute, and otherwise share information gathered in connection with this application to such persons for these purposes. I understand that Pillar Church of Washington DC will share with me information it has gathered about me, if I request it to do so.

I acknowledge my receipt and understanding of the Pillar Church of Washington DC Incident Prevention and Reporting Policy.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(PRINT NAME & SIGN)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(PRINT NAME & SIGNATURE OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN FOR APPLICANTS UNDER 18)

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

References - Please provide two references:

Reference 1:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Reference 2:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

To be completed by Pillar Church of Washington DC or its agent(s):

- Sex Offender Registry ([www.nsopr.gov](http://www.nsopr.gov)) review performed on \_\_\_\_\_
- Personal interview conducted by staff on \_\_\_\_\_
- Reference inquiries completed on \_\_\_\_\_
- Church membership for 6 mos. or association for 1 year confirmed on \_\_\_\_\_
- Safe church awareness training and policy orientation performed on \_\_\_\_\_
- Additionally, if considered for employment: Criminal History Verification (Oxford Document Management) together with Fair Credit Reporting Act notices, completed on \_\_\_\_\_