

Abuse Policy

Jacob's Well Community Church

As a community, Jacob's Well Community Church is committed to protecting the vulnerable, caring for survivors, and holding abusers accountable. Our commitments come from God, who is a refuge for the abused and never ignores their cry (Psalm 9:9, 12). Our community seeks to embody Jesus's priority of justice for the vulnerable, especially children.

Abuse is a particularly grievous sin (and often a crime). It occurs whenever someone in a position of power and trust violates or exploits someone who is often powerless to stop it. Abuse is sadly a common reality in this world. As Christians, we cannot face abuse if we are in denial about the reality of abuse. Instead, Jesus calls us to be "wise as serpents." (Matthew 10:16). We all must become educated about abuse and take responsibility to uphold our policy.

Our goal is to prevent and respond appropriately to abuse by becoming a community that is educated on various forms of abuse and common dynamics, clarifying appropriate boundaries, and doing the hard work of holding each other accountable. All persons should experience an environment of safety and justice, and one that is free from any form of abuse.

By its very nature, our community includes interaction with vulnerable children and adults. Intergenerational and interabled relationships are part of the richness of the church, and to be celebrated. Sadly, many within churches have acted in predatory ways toward vulnerable people, and bad actors will often seek environments with vulnerable people. We recognize that there is not a stereotypical abuser, that abuse in all its forms is almost always perpetrated by someone known to the victim, and that abusers utilize a variety of tactics to gain trust, deceive both victims and others within a community, and keep the abuse secret. This policy only states that we all must take ownership of our community as we together walk with God who loves justice and hates oppression.

Definitions

Abuse: In general, abuse occurs when a person in a position of power and/or trust (e.g. pastor, elder, boss, mentor, supervisor, parent, adult, older child, etc.) uses that position to exploit or violate someone who is more vulnerable (e.g. a child, someone who is sick, elderly, or disabled, student, supervisee, intern, immigrant, etc.). That exploitation or violation can take a variety of forms such as emotional, financial, physical, sexual, spiritual, etc. Abuse may also occur without a clear power differential, between peers, by means of threats or other manipulation.

Sexual Abuse: When a person in a place of power and/or trust, engages in sexual behavior with a child or an adult under their supervision, authority, mentoring, or spiritual care, including:

Sexual Contact: Any intentional touching of a person's breasts, buttocks, groin, genitals, or other intimate parts. Touching may be over or underclothing and may include the perpetrator touching another person or making another person touch the perpetrator, or making another person touch their own body. This also includes contact with non-sexual areas of the body for the sexual gratification of the perpetrator (such as with certain paraphilic disorders).

Sexual Penetration: Any act or attempted act of vaginal or anal penetration, however slight, by a person's penis, finger, other body part, or an object, and/or any oral-genital contact.

Non-Contact Sexual Acts:

- observing a person's nudity or sexual activity or allowing a person to observe sexual activity;
- recording, photographing, transmitting, showing, viewing, streaming, or distributing intimate or sexual images, audio recordings, or sexual information of persons
- exposing one's genitals or inducing a person to expose their own genitals
- within a power dynamic (boss-employee, doctor-patient, teacher-student, pastor-congregant, adult-child), communicating sexual desire or sexually stimulating content toward a person

A child cannot consent to any sexual behavior with an adult or older child.

Clergy Sexual Abuse: sexual abuse (see above) by clergy, elder, or other leader holding formal spiritual authority with a person under their spiritual care and/or supervision, whether an adult or a child. It is an abuse of power, whether or not this is criminalized by state law.

An adult under the authority, care, or mentorship of a leader cannot consent to sexual activity. Even when both people are adults and the contact is not forcible, any crossing of sexual boundaries within a power structure is not an “affair” or a “relationship” but an egregious abuse of power. Adult sexual abusers often develop an emotional and spiritual connection and then exploit it. While not always recognized as a crime according to state laws, this is a serious violation, and Jacob's Well Community Church will treat it as such. If any staff person wishes to pursue a consensual romantic relationship with someone under their spiritual care or a power hierarchy within Jacob's Well Community Church, they must contact the Elder Team for the sake of transparency and to discuss any appropriate boundaries given the power dynamics or other factors.

Sexual Assault: sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the consent of the victim. Sexual *harassment* (discussed in the next section) generally violates civil laws—all have a right to work or learn without being harassed—but in many cases is not a criminal act. Sexual assault, however, usually refers to acts that are criminal. Some forms of sexual assault include:

- Penetration of the victim's body, also known as rape
- Attempted rape
- Forcing a victim to perform sexual acts, such as oral sex or penetration of the perpetrator's body
- Fondling or unwanted sexual touching

Consent is words or overt actions indicating a freely given agreement to the sexual act or contact. Silence or the absence of an explicit “no” does not equal consent. Physical submission by the victim - such as “freezing” or “fawning” in fear - does not equal consent. A “no” at any point, despite any prior communications otherwise, does not equal consent. Consent also implies the ability to say no in a mutual relationship: Children, certain vulnerable adults (based on functioning related to factors such as intellectual disabilities, age, mental health, or other vulnerabilities), or those within a power differential (e.g. with a religious leader, mentor, teacher, or supervisor) are unable to consent to sexual activity. Other circumstances such as intoxication or unconsciousness also render a person unable to give consent to sexual activity.¹ Deception or manipulation of a person also renders that person unable to consent.

¹ For more discussion on consent including state laws see <https://www.rainn.org/articles/legal-role-consent> and https://apps.rainn.org/policy/?_ga=2.24798265.200928410.1590493313-413255437.1539433206

Sexual Harassment: The legal definition of Sexual Harassment by the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (1980) is “Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

1. submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual’s employment
2. submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual;
3. such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.”

Beyond the legal definition, harassment, sexual or otherwise, can also occur in a community, conference, or event when the people involved are not employees of the church. In accord with our values, sexual harassment is not restricted to what is defined as sexual harassment under the law. Jacob’s Well Community Church considers any unwanted sexualized behavior or sexualized behavior within a power differential to be a serious form of harassment (including unwanted touch or communication, other unwanted sexual attention, or any behavior that objectifies or degrades.)

Other Harassment: Other common forms of harassment include bullying, stalking, and acts of discrimination. Harassment can include discrimination against a specific group of people based on age, race, sex, ethnicity, national origin, religion, language, disability, health conditions, socioeconomic status, marital status, domestic status, or parental status.

Intimate Partner Violence (Domestic Violence): A pattern of behavior where a person in, or who has been in, an intimate relationship uses tactics of control, belittling, isolation, fear, stalking, and/or intimidation to dominate, harm, degrade, or otherwise undermine the worth and agency of the other person in the relationship. Intimate partner violence can be physical, verbal, emotional, sexual, social, or financial.²

Financial Abuse: The illegal or improper use of a vulnerable person or his/her financial resources for another’s profit or advantage. Some examples of financial abuse may include: the taking of money or property; forging a signature; getting a person to sign a deed, will or power of attorney through deception; coercion or undue influence; or, illegally or improperly adding names to bank accounts or safety deposit boxes. The elderly in particular are often targeted for financial abuse.

Physical Abuse: Non-accidental physical injury (ranging from bruises to severe fractures or death) by way of bodily contact (such as slapping, punching, pushing, beating, kicking, shaking or striking with an object) or non-injurious contact with the goal or effect of intimidating, threatening, or controlling.

Emotional Abuse: When a person holding power and trust uses a pattern of controlling and domineering behaviors such as shaming, insulting, degrading, intimidating, threatening, humiliating, and/or domineering. Bullying is a common term for acts that typically constitute emotional abuse.

Spiritual Abuse: a form of emotional abuse, meaning a pattern of coercive or domineering behaviors using religion, usually by a person who holds power and trust. Many acts of abuse in a religious environment will have a spiritual dimension. Examples include:

- Use of religious ideology, precepts, tradition, or sacred texts to harm

² For more information and examples, an excellent resource is The Duluth Model at <https://www.theduluthmodel.org/wheels/>

- Compelling a person to engage in religious acts against his or her will
- Abuse that occurs in a religious context or by a religious leader
- Invoking of divine authority to manipulate a person into meeting the desires of the abuser
- Using spirituality or spiritual authority to dismiss a person's perspective, agency, or value
- Attempts to use the divine, sacred texts, sacred tradition, theology, or spirituality to put their leadership or decisions beyond questioning or accountability
- Attempts to spiritualize or justify harm using the divine, sacred texts, sacred tradition, theology, or spirituality

Stalking: A pattern of unwanted, fixated and obsessive behavior which is intrusive and causes fear of violence, alarm, or distress. Stalking is a terrifying reality and is now recognized as a crime in all fifty states.

Examples of stalking include (from The Justice Department's Stalking Victimization Survey):

- Making unwanted phone calls/texts or sending unwanted messages or emails
- Following or spying on the victim
- Showing up or waiting at places without a legitimate reason
- Leaving unwanted items, presents, or flowers
- Posting information or spreading false or confidential information about a person or victim on the internet, in a public place, or by word of mouth.

Administrative Policy

Safeguarding Team and Duties

The Safeguarding Team is responsible for equipping the community of Jacob's Well Community Church for effective prevention and response.

Team Structure

Our Safeguarding Team shall comprise a group of 3–6 persons, at least 50% of whom are women and at least one of whom is a man. No members of the team shall be staff or elders of the church.

Our current team is

Kari Matthews karimatthews1211@gmail.com

Dana Dalbak dana7dalbak@gmail.com

Nicole Starcevich itsadeal@rocketmail.com

Jake Starcevich jacobstarcevich@gmail.com

Alison Kern ali.nicole7777@gmail.com

- The chair of the Safeguarding Team is a member of the leadership team. The team as a whole, or through their chair, reports to the elders.
- The chair should not be a staff member or elder.
- When reporting to the elders, any elder who is themselves or is a relative of someone about whom the safeguarding team is reporting shall be excluded from the communication.
- The elder board shall ensure that the Safeguarding Team is accomplishing its stated goals, but shall not direct how the Safeguarding Team decides to accomplish them.
- The Safeguarding team can delegate tasks to staff or elders when they decide to, but the responsibility to ensure that the tasks are accomplished resides with the Safeguarding Team.
- A Team member shall serve for 3 yrs. Two founding members may serve an additional year, to provide overlap with incoming new team members. Previous Team members may again serve on the team

after a one year lapse.

- Recommendations for new Team members should be sought from the congregation. New members will be chosen by consensus of both the elders and the current Safeguarding Team.

Duties of the Safeguarding Team:

- Maintain rigorous familiarity with the Jacob's Well Community Church Abuse Policy
- Implement and oversee compliance with the Jacob's Well Community Church Abuse Policy
- Brief all staff, volunteers, and the congregation on the application of the policy on a regular basis at a frequency determined by the safeguarding team.
- Receive, Document, and Respond to any policy violations or concerning behavior
- Lead in responding to any allegations of abuse (see below)
- Conduct or coordinate screening of pastors, officers, staff, and volunteers.
- Complete continuing education from a qualified organization on a regular basis
- Assure staff implement an adequate ongoing education plan for the whole church

Screening of Pastors, Officers, Staff, and Volunteers

Jacob's Well Community Church shall utilize the following screening tools:

For all pastors, officers, and staff:

- The completion of a written application, including questions related to abuse and protecting the vulnerable.

Applications should include:

- written questions related to abuse and protecting the vulnerable
 - written acknowledgement of having read and understood the Policy
 - written request for disclosure of any criminal history, and violent or abusive behavior
 - written consent authorization for background check and reference check.
- At least three references are to be contacted. These references should include:
 - Previous employers (if applicable) and any work with survivors or vulnerable persons
 - At least one reference not supplied directly by the applicant (ask references for references)
 - A background check.
 - Criminal history search provided by a professional screening agency
 - Confirmation of education and employment
 - State sex offender registry check
 - State central child/dependent adult abuse registry check if available.
 - An interview that explores a candidate's written application and includes questions related to abuse, protecting the vulnerable, and the Jacob's Well Community Church Abuse Policy
 - An internet/social media search may be considered

For volunteers:

- A "get-to-know-you" interview with children's ministry staff.
- A background check, as noted above.

If the screening process yields information that an individual abused a child or others in any way, or has been convicted of a violent and/or sexual crime, that individual may not work with children or vulnerable adults in any capacity. If any potentially concerning information comes to light or if the screening process shows that a candidate has ever been accused or convicted of any type of crime, Jacob's Well Community Church may consult with an expert to help assess the situation.

[If formal membership is implemented, screening of members may be considered as an addition to the policy:

- The completion of a membership course, including questions related to our abuse policy and whether they have ever abused or been accused of abuse*
- A commitment to the Jacob's Well Community Church Abuse Policy*
- State sex offender registry check (when publicly accessible)]*

Training

The Safeguarding Team shall develop an educational plan, to be approved by the Elder Team. The plan will address continuing education on abuse, including continuing education for the team, the leadership, volunteers, and the church as a whole.

Expected Healthy Boundaries

At all times, our community upholds the following standard of respect and safety:

Show respect in physical touch, space, and visibility.

- Appropriate touch, whether an adult or child, should always be welcomed by the person (If you are not sure, just ask - e.g. Can I give you a hug?).
- Touch within a significant power difference should be observable to others (e.g. between an adult and a child).
- Children who need assistance in the restroom outside of the children's ministry must be helped by their own parent or guardian. Within the children's ministry, all diapering or assistance must be observable by two screened adults.
- Be considerate of others and give them appropriate space: Notice the body language of others and be aware of your impact on others.
- Stay in visible and accountable spaces: No one should be alone with a child who is not their own child, including giving rides. The exception is a relationship that is already in existence outside the church and that already involves the giving of rides outside the church.

Show respect in your communication.

- Determine to use words that convey the respect always due to others.
- Avoid any language that belittles or objectifies (e.g. commenting on a person's body or sexual attractiveness).
- Avoid sexualized comments including jokes, stories, experiences, or sharing sexualized content (such as images, video or other media) or engaging in any other sexualized communication.

Show respect in agency and personal boundaries.

- Healthy people do not seek to control others, but rather encourage and empower others to take healthy agency in their own life (e.g. making decisions for someone or taking control of an aspect of their life such as directing their finances or career or social life).
- Avoid volunteering inappropriately intimate information or asking someone to reveal intimate details or personal information when the person is not ready or comfortable doing so.
- Give agency to others (e.g. "Where would you be comfortable meeting up?").
- Always respect the "no" of others in setting personal boundaries.

It is always the responsibility of the person in the position of greater power to maintain appropriate boundaries with others. The following behaviors are unacceptable by any pastors, elders, deacons, leadership

team, or other staff at Jacob's Well Community Church:

- Any abuse of power as defined by this policy
- Sexual harassment of any kind, including unwanted sexual attention, comments, or unwanted physical touch
- Behavior or words that discriminate against anyone based on age, race, sex, ethnicity, national origin, religion, language, disability, health conditions, socioeconomic status, marital status, domestic status, or parental status
- Any words that belittle or threaten

Abusers often use charm or other tactics to manipulate others. Targets of abuse often report feeling flattered and then later confused, upset, guilty, ashamed, and like it is all their fault. Victims should know that although it is normal to feel this way, abuse is never their fault. Those in positions of power and trust are responsible and able to respect appropriate boundaries.

Abusers are often skilled at explaining away concerning behavior. Anyone who experiences or has information regarding behavior or a policy violation should report it as soon as possible to the Safeguarding Team, who will then document it. All of us should be mindful of what is happening around us and speak up to the Safeguarding Team if anyone is demonstrating concerning behavior, crossing boundaries, or violating this policy in any way.

Responding to Boundary Violations

Jacob's Well Community Church takes all policy violations and all concerns related to respect and safety seriously. Any person who witnesses or learns of a violation of this policy is encouraged to inform a member of the Safeguarding Team as soon as possible. Furthermore, any concerns related to vulnerable persons should be brought to the attention of a member of the Safeguarding Team. The Safeguarding Team will document all concerns or policy violations and collaborate on any appropriate response and accountability. Any concerns about the Safeguarding Team may go to the Elder Team or a Pastor.

Responding to Abuse and Harassment

Jacob's Well Community Church is committed to providing a timely and effective response to any allegations or findings of abuse or harassment within our church. We will work to create an environment where anyone feels comfortable raising questions and concerns, coming forward with reports of any misconduct, and being proactive about preventing and responding to abuse. In responding to abuse, Jacob's Well Community Church will always prioritize the safety and needs of the victim(s) and other vulnerable persons. It is hard for victims to come forward in most circumstances. Jacob's Well Community Church will do its best never to blame victims for struggling to come forward, delaying disclosure, or other common disclosure behavior.

Immediate Response Protocols

1. When there is a reasonable belief that any person is in immediate danger (e.g. an act of violence is actively happening or has just occurred), call 911. After the call, contact a member of the Safeguarding Team.
2. If any person within Jacob's Well Community Church encounters a disclosure of abuse, any evidence or knowledge of abuse, or any reasonable belief of abuse against a minor (age 17 or younger), that adult must immediately report to 800-25-ABUSE (800-252-2873).³ Then call

³ For more information on reporting child abuse or neglect in Illinois, visit <https://dcfs.illinois.gov/safe-kids/reporting.html>

local law enforcement.

3. Please note that Domestic Violence or Intimate Partner Violence with children in the home requires a report in Illinois when the children are directly abused or when they observe abuse.⁴
4. If any person within Jacob's Well Community Church encounters a disclosure of abuse, any evidence or knowledge of abuse, or any reasonable belief of abuse against a vulnerable adult (e.g. elder abuse age 60 and up, or abuse against an adult with intellectual disabilities age 18-59), that adult must immediately report to the Illinois Adult Protective Services hotline at 866-800-1409.⁵ Then call local law enforcement.
5. If any person within Jacob's Well Community Church encounters a disclosure of abuse, any evidence or knowledge of abuse, or any reasonable belief of abuse against an adult, that person must report as soon as possible to the Safeguarding Team or Elder Team
6. If the victim is now an adult, but the abuse was against them as a minor, we will support them and respect their agency in reporting. The only exceptions are if the abuse occurred within our church community and/or the name of the perpetrator is known.
7. DO NOT try to investigate the matter. Any delay in reporting could result in a loss of critical evidence, potentially be a violation of the law, and worst of all, enable the continued abuse of vulnerable children or adults. After the report, contact a member of the Safeguarding Team.
8. After receiving any information from any above steps, a Safeguarding Team member shall inform the entire team (except a person or family member of a person who is involved in perpetrating alleged abuse) as soon as possible and document the information. If there are concerns or allegations involving a member or members of the Safeguarding Team, the report may go to any member of the Elder Team.
9. The Safeguarding Team and Elder Team shall ensure reports have been made to proper authorities (law enforcement and social services when applicable) in situations of potential abuse, as explained above, including child abuse and neglect, elder abuse, and abuse against an adult with intellectual disabilities. In other cases involving an adult victim, the Safeguarding Team and Elder Team will respect the agency of any adult victim(s) with regard to whether the adult victim(s) reports personally to the appropriate authorities. The decision of a survivor to personally report adult abuse and/or cooperate with authorities is ultimately their choice. However, the Safeguarding Team should work to encourage and support the victim(s) in every possible way. There may be situations where the Safeguarding Team will report information pertaining to a potential crime against an adult or child, even when the victim is not ready to do so. When reporting is required or is in the judgment of the Safeguarding Team in the best interest of the safety of others, the Safeguarding Team may coordinate with the Elder Team as well as consult with national or local experts and the victim to make a safety plan when there is any potential reason to believe the victim or others may still be in danger (e.g. in cases involving domestic violence, stalking, assault, or threats). The Safeguarding Team will also seek to communicate as sensitively as possible the reason for reporting to the victim.

⁴ For more information, visit <https://isp.illinois.gov/DomesticViolence>

⁵ For more information on reporting elder abuse or abuse against a vulnerable adult, visit <https://ilaging.illinois.gov/protectionadvocacy/abuse.html>

10. After receiving any information from any above steps, the Safeguarding Team will coordinate with the Elder Team on critical response issues, including:
 - a. Assessing Safety
 - b. Assessing Accountability or Boundaries for Alleged Perpetrators
 - c. Implementing Care for any Victims and Families
 - d. Connecting to Specialized Resources

11. When the alleged perpetrator is within the church, the Safeguarding Team shall make any recommendations regarding administrative leave, suspension, other restriction, or discipline to the Elder Team. This will be reevaluated as necessary as the situation develops. It is strongly recommended that any person, but especially clergy or other leaders, is put on leave with restricted access to any vulnerable persons by the local Elder Team when there are credible or substantive allegations of abuse as defined above. This would be a temporary step until the completion of any investigations and/or the Elder Team has sufficient information to make a determination concerning any personnel decisions, credential status, and/or other accountability.

12. Any person facing an allegation of abuse, and any family member or close mentor of such a person, must recuse themselves from these response protocols, whether a member of the Safeguarding Team or Elder Team.

Further Response Protocols

Whenever possible, the Safeguarding Team should refer the victim(s) to local expert help (where available) and/or national organizations such as The National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-SAFE), The Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network Hotline (RAINN - 1-800-656-4673), or The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration's National Helpline (SAMHSA) (1-800-662-HELP).

Our local abuse resources include:

Nearest Child Advocacy Center: McLean County Children's Advocacy Center | 309-888-5656
 Nearest Domestic Violence Shelter: MCCA (Mid Central Community Action), The Neville House | 309-827-7070
 Sexual Assault Center: YWCA of McLean County | 309-556-7000
 Other Local Resources: Path Crisis Center Resource Directory | 2-1-1
 Behavior Health Urgent Care, Center for Human Services, 520 N. Center St., 309 827-5351

Any victim has a right for their privacy to be respected as much as possible. At times, it may be necessary for Jacob's Well Community Church to share certain information in order to safeguard other vulnerable persons and allow for any other potential victims to come forward.

The Safeguarding Team shall coordinate further appropriate responses, including but not limited to:

- Ensuring all potential crimes against children and vulnerable adults have been reported to appropriate authorities according to the policy above
- Taking any further action for the protection of vulnerable persons
- Facilitating cooperation with any investigations, including helping investigators assess the possibility of other victims and communicating in appropriate ways within the church or with others
- Ongoing, appropriate care for the victim(s) including helping them connect with professional trauma-informed care if desired
- When appropriate, with careful attention to protecting the privacy of any victims, offering public support and/or opposing harmful narratives toward victims

- Maintaining contact with the alleged offender during any investigations or administrative leave to ensure proper boundaries and accountability, especially with regard to controlling the narrative, retaliation, and access to other vulnerable people
- Caring for others in the church and coordinating with outside resources as needed
- Documenting relevant actions and information related to the case
- Reaching out to qualified experts with questions or when an Independent Consultation or Investigation is appropriate

Independent Consultation and Investigation

There are several scenarios when it is strongly advisable that Jacob's Well Community Church pursue independent consultation or investigation in response to allegations of abuse or harassment, such as:

- Authorities decline to investigate a report of abuse even though there is evidence of wrongdoing.
- An adult victim is not ready to report allegations of a criminal nature to the authorities
- The alleged offender is not charged with criminal wrongdoing by the authorities after an investigation, but sufficient concerns remain whether the alleged offender engaged in wrongful conduct that may disqualify him/her from continued participation in the organization.
- There is a serious pattern of misconduct with a lack of factual clarity among the leadership and/or congregation with regard to the allegations
- The alleged offender is a member of the Elder Team, a Pastor, or the Safeguarding Team.
- The alleged victim(s) requests an investigation or there is a strong belief that there may be other victims.
- The church wishes to investigate and assess how it responded to the allegations of abuse in order to better understand how it could have responded more effectively and to improve for the future.

The Safeguarding Team will make a recommendation to the Elder Team regarding the wisdom of independent consultation or investigation. If the Elder Team declines to engage in an independent consultation or investigation, they, along with the Safeguarding Team shall document all related information along with an account of their decision. The documentation shall be made known and available within the church for the sake of transparency, while protecting the privacy of any potential victims.

When the Elder Team decides to engage in an independent investigation, it must be conducted by an organization or persons completely independent of Jacob's Well Community Church and experienced in investigating cases of the specific form(s) of abuse or misconduct in view. The organization or persons should utilize a multidisciplinary team of trained investigators (examples can include current or past law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and/or mental health experts) who are trained in best practice investigative standards, have significant experience investigating a wide range of misconduct and/or abuse cases, and utilize trauma-informed practices in their investigations.

Upon completion of an investigation, the independent investigating body will deliver to the Elder Team a report that will consist of its investigative findings, analysis, and recommendations. Any personnel decisions will be made in view of the recommendations of the report, by the Elder Team, according to the values and employment practices of Jacob's Well Community Church and in communication with the Safeguarding Team.

Those who use any position of power to abuse as defined by this policy shall never again serve in any formal

role within Jacob's Well Community Church.

Retaliation

Jacob's Well Community Church prohibits any form of retaliation against any individual or group who are involved in any activity in this policy, such as reporting concerns or potential evidence, or cooperating in a criminal or independent investigation. Retaliation can take many forms, including, but not limited to, shunning, violence, threats, or intimidation that would discourage some persons from engaging in activity required or encouraged by this policy. Actions in response to a good faith report or response under this policy are considered retaliatory if they could reasonably have an adverse effect on the wellbeing of an individual or if they impact their ability to fully participate in church activities, including compliance with this policy. Reports, concerns, or questions about retaliation should be immediately reported to the Safeguarding Team or a member of the Elder Team. All individuals and groups of individuals engaging in retaliation will be held accountable under this policy.

Caring for Survivors

Survivors should have agency over sharing their story. When survivors choose to do so, they need our utmost support.

This support will include:

- Listening and staying calm
- Affirming without judgment
- Validating strong emotions (such as anger, betrayal, and confusion)
- Respecting their privacy
- Encouraging and empowering their agency
- Encouraging them to seek professional medical or mental health care as appropriate
- Asking if there is anything practical the church can do

Our support will recognize our limitations and will not offer therapeutic, legal, or other professional advice, but will focus on personal support and empowerment. We will be careful to avoid causing further harm, and under NO circumstances - even when the abuse is alleged and not proven - will we:

- Place any portion of blame for the abuse on the victim
- Probe for intimate details of the abuse
- Express disbelief
- Attempt to silence the victim
- Encourage noncompliance with the law
- Express support for the alleged perpetrator
- Urge meeting with, reconciliation with, or forgiveness of the alleged perpetrator

Receiving an abuse disclosure is an honor; it is a sign of trust. Survivors often choose to disclose their abuse years, even decades, after it occurred. Jacob's Well Community Church encourages anyone receiving an adult's abuse disclosure to be guided by the responses found in Appendix A.

Policy on Known Sex Offenders

Jacob's Well Community Church is committed to holding admitted or convicted offenders we believe are repentant to a high standard of accountability. Known offenders who do not demonstrate that they are repentant are extremely dangerous and are not welcome in our church. Jesus welcomed sinners, but he did not command us to welcome wolves among the sheep. Known offenders who wish to have any connection to

our church must be willing to undergo a process designed to assess their individual situation, ongoing repentance, and what safeguards are appropriate. Offenders must agree to accept whatever accountability and safeguards our leadership, in consultation with experts, deem appropriate. Offenders must be willing to agree to this before the process of assessment begins. No assessment will begin if the victim(s) of the perpetrator are still in our church, since any victim should be free to worship without their perpetrator present.

If a convicted offender asks to join our community, we will contact experts to assist with the assessment of the situation. Similarly, if an individual was in the past credibly accused of abuse, the Safeguarding Team will contact an outside expert on how to best proceed.

Leaders will use the following process:

1. Interview with the Known Offender
2. Interview with other Relevant Parties (e.g. family, treatment provider, counselor, parole officer, etc.)
3. Acquiring Records relating to the Offender
4. Assessing Repentance in Consultation with Experts (e.g. assessing cognitive distortions)
5. [If applicable]: Setting Level of Participation, Accountability, and Safeguarding Requirements (Including listening to any known survivors about the impact in their life, and accountability on and off church property).

Leaders will consult with experts as needed throughout this process to ask appropriate questions and assess them. No one who is convicted of or who has admitted to abusing a child may work with children or vulnerable persons in the ministry of our church, have any access to children in our church (on or off church property), or hold any position of power or trust, even if it is not directly connected to ministry to children. Any offender who evidences deception, minimization, excuses, victim blaming, or other indicators they are not repentant shall not be allowed any connection to our church. Unrepentant offenders are not welcome.

Any adult who is a convicted or admitted sex offender who attends group activities shall agree to have their name known to the congregation and shall abide by all accountability and safeguards. Any adult offender who is known or believed to be attracted to children or fantasizes about children will not attend any settings with children.

The safeguards shall address accountability on and off church property and will involve communication with appropriate persons such as family, friends, employers, counselors, and parole/probation officers. The safeguards shall be reviewed as needed, and at a minimum every year by leadership and the Safety Team, and in consultation with child protection experts.

When a known offender is judged to be repentant and has some connection to the church, those who have responsibility to minister to him or her will have specific training.

Appendix A

DO Say	DON'T Say
Thank you for telling me.	Why are you telling me this?
I'm glad you're safe now	Why didn't you ____ (scream/stop him/etc)

You did the right thing ____ (asking for help/telling me/reporting the abuse/etc)	What do you mean when you say he abused you? What exactly did he do?
I'm glad you're talking with me.	Tell me more details about what happened.
I'm sorry this happened to you. How can I help?	Why did he do that to you? Had you done something to make him think that was okay?
Take as much time as you need.	You need to forgive and move on.
Things may never be the same, but they can get better.	Don't worry, it's going to be all right.
I am here.	It'll take some time, but you'll get over it.
I stand with you. This congregation stands with you.	Calm down and try to relax.
	Try to be strong.
The following should only be said if the victim indicates these concerns are on his/her mind.	It was so long ago, why are you still letting your abuser win by hanging on to it? Let it go.
It is OK to be angry.	You should get on with your life.
It is OK to still love your abuser.	Time heals all wounds.
The following should only be said if the victim indicates these concerns are on his/her mind.	DON'T Say
It's understandable you're feeling that way.	Out of tragedies good things happen.
Your reaction is not an uncommon response.	You're lucky that ____ didn't happen.
You're not going crazy. These are normal reactions following an assault.	It was God's will. I know how you feel.
I believe you.	Perhaps you misunderstood.
It wasn't your fault.	Better to receive punishment in this world than the next

From *The Child Safeguarding Guide*, Basyle Tchividjian and Shira Berkovits

Appendix B- Potential Indicators of Child Abuse

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse if a child has:

- Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
- Difficulty, pain or blood in the genital area when walking, sitting, or using the bathroom
- Discharge from the penis or vagina

- Injuries (e.g., bruises, tearing, bleeding), itching, or swelling in the genital, vaginal, or anal area
- Urinary tract infections, yeast infections, sexually transmitted diseases
- Pregnancy

It is atypical for children to engage in the following sexual behaviors:

- Placing mouth on sex part
- Asking others to engage in sexual acts
- Trying to have intercourse or imitating intercourse
- Undressing others, especially if done forcefully
- Imitating sexual positions with dolls
- Inserting an object into vagina or anus, especially if the child continues to do so despite pain
- Manually stimulating or having oral or genital contact with pets
- Making sexual sounds
- Inserting tongue in mouth when kissing

Consider the possibility of physical abuse if you notice:

- Frequent injuries of any kind (e.g., bruises, cuts, fractures, burns)
- Especially if the child is unable to provide an adequate explanation of the cause of injury
- These injuries may appear in distinctive patterns such as grab marks, human bite marks, cigarette burns, or impressions of other instruments
- Pay particular attention to injuries that present on both sides of the head or body, as accidental injuries typically only affect one side of the body

Consider the possibility of neglect if a child:

- Is obviously malnourished, listless, or fatigued
- Begs, steals, or hoards food or complains frequently of hunger
- Is consistently dirty or has severe body odor
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
- Untreated illness, injuries, health (e.g., unfilled cavities) or serious educational needs
- Broken or missing eyeglasses, hearing aid, or other necessary aids or equipment
- Has an untreated need for glasses, dental care, or other medical attention
- Stays at school outside of school hours
- Frequently absent or significant academic struggles
- Is inappropriately left unsupervised
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs

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