



GENERATION SPARK

Christian Mentoring for Teens and Young Adults

Youth Safeguarding Policy

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1. Introduction:

Mentoring is an effective way for an adult to come alongside and support a youth in their journey of faith. Just as Paul invested in Timothy and Lois poured into Eunice, so we as followers of Jesus want to pass on the Christian faith to the younger generation and mentoring is a key way in which we do that. Without safeguards in place, however, mentoring relationships can become unhealthy and leave the mentee and mentor vulnerable to harm and even abuse.

One reason for this is because of the power imbalances present in all mentoring relationships. Often, a mentor is older, more experienced, and holds more influence in the relationship. In many respects, these differences are foundational to the mentoring relationship and reflect the necessary experience and wisdom a mentor needs to effectively support and encourage a mentee’s growth and maturity. This difference in age, experience, knowledge, and role, however, are also types of power which the mentor holds over the mentee. When stewarded in healthy and helpful ways, this power is used by the mentor to promote the flourishing of the mentee.

However, a mentor could also use their power in ways that lead to harm. Mentees often become emotionally connected and even attached to their mentor. The closeness of the relationship can lead to an unhealthy dependence by the mentee on the mentor (and sometimes the mentor on the mentee) that eventually results in disappointment, confusion, misunderstanding, and even boundary crossing. Harm is done when a mentor, intentionally or unintentionally, exploits the mentee's vulnerability for their own gain. A wise mentor will be sensitive to these dynamics and take great care to set and maintain appropriate expectations and boundaries, regularly considering whose emotional needs are being met in the relationship (see Appendix C for more on power dynamics and maintaining healthy boundaries).

2. Purpose of this Policy:

The purpose of this policy is to identify appropriate practices and protections that will safeguard the integrity of the mentor-mentee relationship and ensure that the relationship contributes positively to the growth, well-being, and flourishing of the mentee. More specifically, the goal of this policy is:

- a. To educate mentors and mentees about abuse, the dynamics of power, and especially the responsibility required by people in positions of power;
- b. To ensure that mentors are following appropriate boundaries and have appropriate structures of accountability and support;
- c. To reflect the high value that Jesus places on those who are vulnerable. As Christ's church, we reflect Christ by ensuring that honor and dignity are shown to every person created in God's image;
- d. To provide safe places for any person to come forward with a disclosure of abuse and receive help; and
- e. To equip mentors and the Program Director with clear guidelines for how to respond effectively with justice and compassion to situations of abuse.

3. Definitions:

A. Misconduct

As a ministry, we are committed to holding our leaders and volunteers to the highest standard of behavior. Therefore, the following definitions of abuse go beyond legal definitions to include any form of ungodly conduct, misuse of power, misuse of spiritual authority, sexually inappropriate behavior, and neglect and abuse of their role. These are behaviors that violate the trust and well-being of individuals and the community of believers, and they taint the role held by the offender.

1. Physical Misconduct is:

- Threatened harm or non-accidental injury inflicted on a minor or vulnerable adult, or
- Offensive or harmful contact with an adult;

Physical misconduct is sometimes a single event, but more often a chronic pattern of interacting with a minor or an adult.

2. Sexual Misconduct is:
 - Exploiting or grooming (preparing) of a minor or an adult – regardless of consent or circumstances – for the purpose of sexual touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy with the result of either sexual gratification or power and control over the minor and/or adult;
 - Unwelcome touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy between co-workers/co-volunteers, or
 - Sexual touch, sexual activity, or emotional intimacy between a supervisor and a subordinate who serve together in a church program or church ministry.

3. Emotional Misconduct is:
 - A pattern of behavior of insulting, humiliating, manipulating, and generally instilling fear in an individual in order to control them. Often, the individual's reality becomes distorted as they internalize the abuse as their own failings.

4. Spiritual Misconduct is
 - A pattern of exerting power and control over someone using religion, faith, or beliefs in ways that compromise their well-being and flourishing.
 - Examples of spiritual abuse include using scripture or beliefs to:
 1. humiliate, embarrass, or exploit someone;
 2. coerce someone into giving money or other resources that they didn't want to give;
 3. force an individual to be intimate or have sex; or
 4. pressure someone to do things against their will.

B. Concepts of Power

Power: Power is the ability to influence or affect an outcome. We all have power as human beings; some of us are given more power as a result of our role or our status within a community. When power is stewarded well, it brings flourishing to all people as an expression of the shalom of the kingdom of God.

Abuse of power: Abuse of power can be defined as misusing power to harm another person, or using power and influence for personal gain at the expense of another person. Power can be used to harm another person intentionally or through ignorance, subtly or overtly, to advance one's own desires without regard for the needs or desires of others in ways that disturb the flourishing of others. At the core of all types of abuse are behaviors related to acquiring, maintaining, and misusing power and control.

4. Policy for Program Directors:

The Program Director (or volunteer/staff leader managing the program) is responsible for overseeing training, mentoring agreements, safe spaces, the mentoring log, regular check-ins, and orientation of mentees and parents/guardians as outlined below.

- a. **Training:** The program director will be responsible for sharing and recording the completion of the requirements for mentors, which includes the completion of the training module provided by Generation Spark and Safe Church Ministry on Power Dynamics, Abuse, and Appropriate Boundaries.
- b. **Agreements:** The program director will ensure each mentor signs and dates the mentoring agreement and will file these agreements in a safe place with the church office.

The program director will also be responsible for receiving the signed agreement/permission of parents/guardians of mentees, along with orienting parents/guardians to the Generation Spark Mentoring program and policy.

- c. **Safe Spaces:** The program director will ensure there is a public safe space for mentoring to occur with minors either at the church location or another public venue.
- d. **Logs of Mentoring Meetings:** The program director will develop a system that records each one-to-one meeting between a mentor and a mentee who is a minor - and safely store the one-to-one meeting logs. The log system may be completed via physical sign in/out, SMS text, the use of a mentoring log app, or a completion of a google form that adds the meeting to a spreadsheet. Both the mentor and mentee should “sign” the log and the system should utilize a check-in/out system. If the meeting wasn’t logged, it must be recorded within 24 hours of the meeting.
- e. **Orientation and Check-Ins with the Mentees:** The program director will be responsible for orienting the mentee and providing regular opportunities to share how the mentoring relationship is going. After a month, three months and six months, the Program Director will contact mentees to invite feedback, ask questions, and express any concerns.
- f. **Confidentiality:** All information shared with a mentor about and by the mentee or/and his or her family is confidential. The exception is if there is a disclosure of abuse or neglect by a minor. In this case, mentors and the program director have a duty to report the abuse to civil authorities (see “Responding to Abuse” below).

g. Responding to Abuse: Suspected abuse/neglect requirements

- i. Each mentor and program director shall be considered a mandated reporter. If a mentor or the program director suspects abuse or neglect of a minor, they are required to report the abuse to the civil authorities (Child Protective Services or the Children's Aid Society).
- ii. In addition to reporting suspected abuse to the civil authorities, the reporter should inform their director or supervisor of the report as well as the church's safe church contact person.
- iii. Mentors/program directors should not confront the alleged offender about the abuse. Only the police or CPS/CAS are authorized to notify the alleged offender of the allegations against him or her.
- iv. If allegations or suspicions of harmful or abusive behavior toward a mentee are brought against a mentor, the program director shall suspend the mentor without prejudice from serving in the program until an investigation can be made.
- v. The program director will report these allegations to the church's safe church point person who will follow the church's policy for responding to allegations of abuse.
- vi. If the suspicions include sexual or physical abuse of a minor, the program director will also report the abuse to the civil authorities (CPS/CAS).

5. Policy for Mentors:

In addition to complying with the provisions of the abuse prevention policy of the mentor's church, each **mentor** who is mentoring a minor is responsible for completing training, signing the Mentoring Ministry Agreement, and ongoing compliance with the policy for mentoring minors as outlined below:

- a. **Training:** The mentor will be responsible for completing a training module provided by Generation Spark & Safe Church Ministry on Power Dynamics, Abuse and Appropriate Boundaries.
- b. **Agreements:** Each mentor must sign and date the Mentoring Agreement (Appendix A) and Code of Conduct (Appendix B) and return them to the Program Director.
- c. **Transparency and logging of Mentoring Meetings:** Each mentor must communicate through the appropriate avenue to record one-to-one meetings with a minor. This could be through a physical log, SMS text, mentoring app, or a completion of a google form. Both the mentor and mentee should confirm that the one-to-one meeting took place. This log should function as a check-in/out system. If the meeting wasn't logged, it must be recorded within 24 hours of the meeting.

- d. Transportation:** As a general principle, mentors should not be alone in a vehicle with any youth in the program. In the situation where there is no other alternative to a mentor transporting a mentee, the following provisions must take place:
- i. Clear consent is received from the parents/guardians of the mentee
 - ii. Clear, recorded communication (SMS text or email) is sent to the program director at the beginning of the time that the mentor is alone in the car with the mentee and a followup email or text when the mentor is no longer alone in the car with the mentee.
- e. Propriety and Behavior:** The Code of Conduct (Appendix B) must be upheld by each mentor. Violations of the Code of Conduct will be addressed by the Program Director and may result in suspension from the program. Additionally,
- i. At all times and in all ways, treat the mentee with respect, protecting their value and dignity. This includes respecting the person's background, culture, traditions, ethnicity, and sexuality.
 - ii. Mentors must not be under the influence of or consuming alcohol or marijuana, or any other illegal drugs while mentoring.
 - iii. Mentors should limit physical touch to a pat on the back or a quick hug when the mentee gives clear consent.
 - iv. In language, dress, and behavior, mentors should conduct themselves in professional and respectful ways.
 - v. Mentors should avoid a pattern of giving or receiving gifts, limiting gifts to small tokens on a birthday or at Christmas.
 - vi. It is always the mentor's responsibility to maintain physical and emotional boundaries. Mentors should discourage the relationship from becoming overly familiar or intimate.
- f. Guidelines for Using Electronic Communication (Emailing or Texting):** Electronic communication is a common and easy way to communicate with youth. To ensure healthy uses of electronic communication, the following guidelines should be followed:
- i. Communication should not take place with young people between the hours of 9:00 pm and 7:00 am.
 - ii. Each mentor and mentee is encouraged to establish expectations regarding electronic communication that both foster the mentoring relationship but safeguard healthy boundaries (ie. good times to text, expected response time, frequency of texting, etc.).
 - iii. Both the parents/guardians and the program director should be informed by the mentor at the beginning of the mentoring relationship of how electronic communication will be used to facilitate the relationship.
 - iv. If either the parents/guardians or the program director express concern about the use of electronic communication, the program director shall work with the mentor to establish a plan for electronic communication that is supported by the parents/guardians and safeguards healthy boundaries.

- g. Social Media:** Clear permission and consent from mentees and parents/guardians must be received before public posting of images, or public online interactions.
- h. Confidentiality:** All information shared with a mentor about and by the mentee or/and their family is confidential. The exception is if there is a disclosure of abuse or neglect by a minor. In this case, mentors and the program director have a duty to report the abuse to civil authorities (see “Responding to Abuse” below).
- i. Responding to Abuse: Suspected abuse/neglect requirements**
 - i. Each mentor and program director shall be considered a mandated reporter. If a mentor or the program director suspects abuse or neglect of a minor, they are required to report the abuse to the civil authorities (Child Protective Services or the Children’s Aid Society). Please refer to Appendix D, “Indicators of a Child’s Potential Need for Protection,” for signs and symptoms of abuse.
 - ii. CPS/CAS may also be contacted for consultation in situations where advice on how to proceed is needed; this may be done anonymously.
 - iii. After making such a report, the reporter should inform their director or supervisor of the report as well as the church’s safe church contact person.
 - iv. Mentors/Program Directors should not confront the alleged offender about the abuse. Only the police or CPS/CAS are authorized to notify the alleged offender of the allegations against him or her.

Appendix A

MENTOR APPLICATION FORM (When Mentoring Youth):

This application is to be completed by all adults who will be mentoring children or youth.

General Information:

Date: _____

Full Name: _____

Address City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Do you regularly attend our worship services? Yes / No

If yes, when did you start attending? (Approx. date) _____

Ministry Information:

Briefly describe why you want to serve as a mentor and what gifts and experience you bring to this role.

In a short paragraph, share what you believe and what your faith means to you.

References: List 2 references who have known you for at least 2 years, persons who are not related to you but who have specific knowledge of your character and ability to work with children or youth.

Reference #1

Name: _____

How do you know each other? _____

Length of time known: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Reference #2

Name: _____

How do you know each other? _____

Length of time known: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Personal Disclosure Information:

Please circle response:

1. Have you ever been arrested, convicted, or plead guilty to a crime? Yes / No
If yes, please explain:

2. Has your driver's license been suspended or revoked within the last 12 months? Yes / No

3. Is there any fact, circumstance, or pattern involving your background that would make it inappropriate for you to serve with minors or would compromise the integrity of the church? Yes / No If yes, please explain:

4. Have you ever participated in, or been accused of, convicted or pleaded guilty or no contest to abuse or any sexual misconduct? Yes / No

Church History and Prior Ministry Involvement:

Previous church work involving children or youth (*list church name, city, state, and type of work performed*) if any:

Previous non-church work involving children or youth (*list each organization name, city, state, and type of work performed*) if any:

Applicant's Statement:

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references, churches, or organizations listed in this application to give you any information (including opinions) that they have regarding my character and fitness in my work where I could have access to children, youth, or vulnerable adults. I authorize the release of the information contained in this application to any individuals who make decisions about placing applicants in available positions. In consideration of the receipt and evaluation of this application by Sample Project Christian Reformed Church, I hereby release Sample Project CRC and any individual, church, youth organization, charity, employer, reference, or any other person or organization, including record custodians, both collectively and individually, from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind or nature which may at any time result to me, my heirs, or family, on account of compliance or any attempts to comply, with this authorization. I waive any right that I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any person or organization identified by me in this application.

I agree that, as long as I volunteer at Sample Project Christian Reformed Church in ministry to children, youth, and vulnerable adults, I will attend a Safe Church training session each year.

I further state that I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THE FOREGOING RELEASE AND KNOW THE CONTENTS THEREOF AND SIGN THIS RELEASE AS MY OWN FREE ACT. This is a legally binding agreement that I have read and understand.

Applicant's Signature: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B

CRC CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MINISTRY LEADERS (2021)

As a mentor, I commit to the following:

Confidentiality

- I will use confidentiality appropriately, which means I will hold in confidence whatever information is not mine to share.
- I will not use information shared with me in confidence in order to elevate my position or to depreciate that of others.
- My use of confidentiality will also be guided by mandatory reporting as required by law.

Relational

- I will speak and act, in all my personal and professional relations, in ways that follow the pattern of Christ, who used his power to serve (1 Pet. 5; Mark 10; Phil. 2; 2 Tim. 4:2). I will conduct myself with respect, love, integrity, and truthfulness toward all—regardless of position, status, race, gender, age, or ability.
- To the best of my ability, I will contribute to an environment of hospitality.

Financial

- I will ensure that funds are used for their intended ministry purposes.
- In all financial matters, including the acceptance of gifts, I will act with scrupulous honesty, transparency, and appropriate accountability.
- I will appropriately use accepted accounting practices and regular reviews and/or audits.

Intimate Relationships

- I will maintain standards and appropriate boundaries in all relationships, which are informed by the Scriptures.
- I will keep all of my professional relationships free from inappropriate emotional and sexual behaviors. This includes not engaging in inappropriate intimate contact or a sexual relationship, unwanted physical contact, sexual comments, gestures, or jokes.

Safety

- I will actively promote a safe environment where all persons are respected and valued, where any form of abuse, bullying, or harassment is neither tolerated nor allowed to take place.
- I will report known or suspected cases of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect of minors to the proper government authorities.
- I will support adults who disclose physical, sexual, or emotional abuse in a way that appropriately empowers the person who has been victimized.

Spiritual

- I will acknowledge the use of Scripture and the Spirit's work in the community of the church and, therefore, refrain from presuming to be the sole "voice of God."
- I will use my position as a way to serve the body of believers, rather than myself, for the common good and the cultivation of the gifts of the Spirit.

Additional Commitments

- I will work within my professional competence, especially in counseling situations, and I will refer individuals to other professionals as appropriate.
- I will promote truthfulness, transparency, and honesty in all of my work.
- I will disclose any perceived or actual conflict of interest.
- In all that I do, I will seek to use my position, power, and authority prudently and humbly and in non-exploitive ways.
- In the event that I misuse my power, either intentionally or unintentionally, as a ministry leader, I will acknowledge the harm that has been caused and the trust that has been broken, and I will actively seek restoration with justice, compassion, truth, and grace. I will humbly submit to the insight and accountability of others to ensure that I use any power entrusted to me fully in service to Christ.

Name: _____

Date: _____

For the full Code of Conduct, see

<https://www.crcna.org/synodresources/crc-code-conduct-ministry-leaders?language=en>

Appendix C

KEY QUESTIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING POWER DYNAMICS AND BOUNDARIES IN MENTORING

In the *Suffering and the Heart of God*, Diane Langberg notes: “Fragilities and weakness do not necessarily remove our power at all. They do, however, make us more likely to use power destructively. The weaker and needier we feel, the more dangerous we are in a position of power because we are far more likely to neglect or use the sheep under our care to feed ourselves. Those who feel powerless or inadequate often abuse power.”

1. How might Langberg's insights relate to a mentoring relationship?
2. Who else in your life provides you with support and accountability? Who are they? How do you sustain that accountability? How do you respond when that support and accountability begin to wane?

The Boundary Test for Ministry Leaders¹

As you reflect on your interactions with your mentee, ask yourself the following questions:

- a. The Bullhorn or Transparency Test – How would my actions be perceived if they were made public?
- b. The Test of Fiduciary Responsibility – Whose needs are being met? Are my actions in the best interest of the one that I am ministering to?
- c. The Accountability and Supervision Test – How do my supervisor and colleagues respond when I report my behavior? (Am I willing to honestly share my behavior with them?)
- d. The “Do No Harm” Test – Who might be harmed by my actions?
- e. The Dependency Test – How important or indispensable do I feel in this relationship? Being needed by others is a powerful form of dependency -- ministry is not about me.
- f. The Dependency Test 2 – Does the person I'm [mentoring] show signs of emotional dependency?
- g. The Precedent Test – What kind of precedent am I setting? Am I setting a precedent or creating a culture that accepts certain behaviors that could put someone at risk.
- h. The Exception Test – Do I feel that for some reason this situation or relationship is an exception to the usual rules and limits?

¹ From *Pastors who Prey: Overcoming Clergy Sexual Abuse of Women* Edited by Valli Boobal Batchelor, World Council of Churches publications, 2013 Adapted by CRC Safe Church Ministry 2014.

Appendix D

INDICATORS OF A CHILD’S POTENTIAL NEED FOR PROTECTION

	Physical Indicators	Behavioral Indicators
PHYSICAL ABUSE	<p>Unexplained bruises and welts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ On face, lips, mouth ▪ On torso, back, buttocks, thighs ▪ In various stages of healing ▪ Cluster, forming regular patterns ▪ Reflecting shape of article used to inflict (electric cord, belt buckle) ▪ On several different surface areas ▪ Regularly appear after absence, weekend or vacation <p>Unexplained burns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cigar, cigarette burns, especially on soles, palms, back or buttocks ▪ Immersion burns (sock-like, glove-like doughnut shaped on buttocks or genitalia) ▪ Patterned like electric burner, iron, etc. ▪ Rope burns on arms, legs, neck or torso <p>Unexplained fractures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To skull, nose, facial structure ▪ In various stages of healing ▪ Multiple or spiral fractures <p>Unexplained laceration or abrasions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To mouth, lips, gums, eyes ▪ To external genitalia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wary of adult contacts ▪ Apprehensive when other children cry ▪ Behavioral extremes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Aggressiveness – Withdrawal ▪ Frightened of parents ▪ Afraid to go home ▪ Reports injury by parents
PHYSICAL NEGLECT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consistent hunger, poor hygiene, inappropriate dress ▪ Consistent lack of supervision, especially in dangerous activities or long periods ▪ Constant fatigue or listlessness ▪ Unattended physical problems or medical needs ▪ Abandonment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Begging, stealing food ▪ Extended stays at school (early arrival and late departure) ▪ Constantly falling asleep in class ▪ Alcohol or drug abuse ▪ Delinquency (e.g. thefts) ▪ States there is no caregiver
SEXUAL ABUSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Difficulty in walking or sitting ▪ Torn, stained or bloody underclothing ▪ Pain or itching in genital area ▪ Bruises or bleeding in external genitalia, vaginal or anal areas ▪ Venereal disease, especially in pre-teens ▪ Pregnancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unwilling to change for gym or participate in PE ▪ Withdrawn, fantasy or infantile behavior ▪ Bizarre, sophisticated or unusual sexual behavior or knowledge ▪ Poor peer relationships ▪ Delinquent or run away ▪ Reports sexual assault by caregiver
EMOTIONAL MALTREATMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Habit disorders (sucking, biting, rocking, etc.) ▪ Conduct disorders (antisocial, destructible, etc.) ▪ Neurotic traits (sleep disorders, speech disorders, inhibition of play) ▪ Psychoneurotic reactions (hysteria, obsession, compulsion, phobias, hypochondria) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Behavior extremes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliant, passive • Aggressive, demanding ▪ Overly adoptive behavior: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriately adult • Inappropriately infant ▪ Attempted suicide