

Safeguarding Committee

Report to SCYMF Fall Session
October 28, 2023

Current members:

Kendra Purcell, Hillsboro
Bernadine Ritz, Eugene
Jade Rockwell, Camas
Mark Pratt-Russum, West Hills
Juulie Downs, Camas, Clerk

The task of the Safeguarding Committee is to write and implement a policy that will help prevent child abuse within Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting – all SCYMF activities, and all activities in SCYMF meetings. For the last four years, we have drafted, corrected, adapted, submitted and had adopted a policy that we believe will make all our children and youth safer. We are now in the implementing phase of the policy.

1. Since Annual Sessions, we have dealt with two different situations that specifically needed our attention. This has been time-consuming and emotionally demanding. Both situations have been resolved, although not entirely to the satisfaction of everyone involved.

During September and October, we have met seven times by ZOOM, either with just the committee, or with people from the situations. We needed to be sure that we fully understood what their circumstances were, and we needed to help walk the people involved through the policy and how they could fulfill it. Each meeting was about two hours, and then after each meeting, each of us had homework to do, such as further communication, or drafting letters to someone, or arranging for background checks, or making phone calls.

Every one of those tasks has included a heavy weight of emotional work for each of us. These situations can be painful and dark. There is trepidation, difficult conversations and a strong “Mama Bear” instinct to protect children and youth.

The stakes are high, and the risks are not negligible. We’ve prayed a lot! Discussed a lot. Listened a lot to people.

Nevertheless, everyone on the committee and many of the people we've worked with affirm the value and importance of our work. We all have friends or family members who have been abused. We know the long-lasting, deleterious effects abuse can have on a person's life. We know that the damage is multiplied when the abuse is committed in a religious or spiritual context.

So we approach this with enthusiasm and vigor. When we are frustrated or feeling overwhelmed, we lift each other up and encourage one another. We remind each other of the infinite worth of each child and youth that is under our protection. We know how important this is.

All that being said, we see a number of things that would help us do our work more efficiently, and more thoroughly.

2. We need to identify a pastor or another person in each meeting, to be the Person In Charge of this work in their meeting. This person keeps records and submits them into the record system that the Safeguarding Committee keeps at the yearly meeting level. This person receives and helps process "incident reports" when that is needed. This person makes sure that each person that works with children and youth is an Approved Adult in SCYMF. Some meetings have formally chosen who this will be and have let us know. Others need to select a person in their meeting for it.
3. We also need to have a representative from each meeting on the Safeguarding Committee. It was approved at the Annual Sessions this past summer, that this would be part of the definition of the Committee, and it's something we need to have. At the top of this report is a list of our current members, and the meetings they represent. If your meeting is not on there, please talk to Nominating Committee about how to get involved!
4. In Annual Sessions last summer, we requested money for a paid person to help with the record-keeping and logistics of this committee. The original proposal is [here](#). It was taken as a first reading, and now we need to finalize the position and find the person.

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5. We have firmed up our background check process. We have contracted with Protect My Ministry, so that anyone that needs a background check can get one. SCYMF pays for this directly, and neither the individual nor the meeting needs to worry about the money. You fill out the form and submit it.

To be an Approved Adult, you need to go through a video training session, and we are solidifying that process. A number of people have already done this. We will also have training in November for people who need it.

6. The complete policy is [here](#). There will soon also be all the forms needed, and a legal appendix to help clarify some of the legalities that apply to our situation.