



Merom Camp & Retreat Center, Inc.

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Safe Camp Policy

Approved December 8, 2018
by the Merom Camp & Retreat Center, Inc.
Board of Directors

These procedures have been adapted from the Indiana-Kentucky Conference, United Church of Christ, the National Offices of the United Church of Christ (UCC), Immanuel UCC, Louisville, St John's UCC, Indianapolis and St Paul's UCC Evansville.

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Theological Statement:

As a community of Christian faith, Merom Camp and Retreat Center, Inc. (hereinafter MCRC) is committed to creating and maintaining programs, facilities, and a community in which employees, volunteers, and persons served by MCRC can work together in an atmosphere free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation and/or intimidation. Furthermore, MCRC strives to maintain an atmosphere that teaches and values interpersonal relationships as taught by Jesus in the Golden Rule and which recognizes God’s love for all persons.

Golden Rule – NRSV citations

In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets. *Matthew 7:12*
Do to others as you would have them do to you. *Luke 6:31*

The policies herein are established to recognize that each person [and position] brings value to the organization. These policies are also established to identify the accountabilities for each person. The covenants between persons in leadership roles and MCRC are established to support accountability towards attendees of all ages.

By-Laws Section 2: Mission Statement

MCRC is a year-round camp and retreat facility committed to helping individuals and groups experience, understand and practice their Christian faith at every state of their development.

Merom provides a safe place, facilities, staff and program for congregations, families, and non-profit organizations who seek such a setting and accommodations.

Core Values:

MCRC believes in the individuality, dignity and value of all people. MCRC recognizes the value in volunteer leadership and with the help of all leaders will identify leadership skills in others. Leaders are to interact with participants in a professional and caring manner. To this end, MCRC will provide guidelines to maintain a safe environment for all.

MCRC encourages its employees and volunteers to nurture safety within relationships and activities by being attentive to self-care, education, maintenance of appropriate boundaries, and referral of those in need to supportive and helpful resources. It is understood that children, youth and adults may be in a vulnerable situation and employees and volunteers must be attentive to and respectful of their needs. With this understanding, when “children” and “youth” are used, it is the intent that all vulnerable people are covered by these terms.

It is the intention of MCRC to take action to prevent and/or correct behavior that is contrary to these core values; and, if necessary, to discipline those persons who violate these core values. A mediation process may be started to evaluate inappropriate behavior and, when appropriate, seek corrective measures towards the possibility of returning to participation.

Basic Rules and Age Definitions

- Adults shall be 18 (and out of high school) and older.
- Adults 21 or older are required for youth or children’s overnight events.
A minimum of 2 adults (male and female for mixed gender groups) are necessary for events.
 - o Adults that are related to one another, when co-leading, count as 1 adult (spouses, siblings, parent/child). An additional adult is required as the second adult because family members are not required to testify against one another in legal cases.
- Leaders are staff or volunteers that have been approved and invited to oversee an event or activity.
 - o Leaders 18, 19 and 20 are considered to be “leaders in training” and must be supervised by adults 21 or older.
 - o Leaders under 18 are considered youth and must be supervised by an adult 21 or older.
- Participants are attendees at programs, events or activities.
 - o Children – 12 and younger;
 - o Youth – 13 up to Sept 1st of the year after they have, or would have, completed high school;
 - o Adults - 18 (and out of high school) and older.

Ratios Adults to Youth

- o 1 adult per 10 high school youth; 1 adult per 8 junior high youth; 1 adult per 6 elementary children
- o Adults should match gender of youth
 - Example: 4 boys and 3 girls requires 1 man and 1 woman

- Example: 24 boys and 15 girls requires 3 men and 2 women for junior and senior high; 4 men and 3 women for elementary

Expectations and Behavior Guidelines:

MCRC provides events and activities for children, youth, young adults and adults. These programs create opportunities where all participants are safe, open to discuss ideas and are free from judgment and/or harassment.

Programs, events and activities vary and may have additional rules, boundaries, guidelines, age requirements, training and forms.

Prior to employment, volunteering, and/or participating as an adult at a children/youth event, MCRC will conduct a criminal background check and character reference.

Expectations

- Assure appropriate boundaries are set and communicated to the participants.
- Abide by and enforce the rules and boundaries set for the program/event.
- Monitor behavior and redirect individuals as appropriate.
- Treat all people with dignity and respect.
- Be inclusive of all people at the program/event.
- Participate fully and help when needed.
- Help all people feel welcome and comfortable.
- Identify harassment, bullying, threats, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, physical or verbal abuse, use of profanity, endangerment, neglect, intimidation or discrimination among participants and take appropriate action.
- Adults are automatically in mentor positions.
- Adults have responsibilities to all participants.
- Complete health form and registration forms for events.
- Leaders are mandated reporters by state law.

Behavior

- Discussions are to be handled with care and nurture. Private discussions should be in a public place away from others so the conversation can be private yet observed.
- Discretion and modesty are necessary at all times.
- Allow privacy and discretion for others especially when showering, changing clothing and preparing for activities.
- Be sensitive to verbal and non-verbal expressions of discomfort.
- Harassment, bullying, threats, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, physical or verbal abuse, use of profanity, endangerment, neglect, intimidation or discrimination of children, youth, volunteers, employees or participants is unacceptable and is cause for disciplinary action.
- Tobacco use – chewing, smoking, vaping, et cetera - is only allowed away from participants in a designated area.
- Use or possession of alcohol, controlled substances, firearms, ammunition and weapons are not permitted.

Housing

- Gathering is to be in public spaces.
Sleeping spaces are considered sanctuaries.
 - o Only participants assigned to the room are to be in the room.
 - o Shall be determined by gender (family camp programs may differ).
 - o Multiple youth with a minimum of one adult may share a room, following the stated ratios of youth to adults.

Driving

- Drivers should be 25 or older to transport people.
- Copies of valid driver's licenses shall be kept for the duration of the driver's program/event participation. After completion of the trip, the copies shall be destroyed.

- Private vehicles used for MCRC use must have their own insurance, which is primary. MCRC insurance is secondary up to the limits of the MCRC insurance policy.
- Vehicles rented for MCRC use should purchase the collision/loss damage insurance (vehicle insurance). MCRC insurance is secondary up to the limits of the MCRC insurance policy.
- Drivers are responsible to make sure all occupants wear seat belts.
- Drivers will abide by all traffic laws.
- During medical emergencies, these guidelines may be lifted.

Requirements for Employment or Volunteering with minors

Procedures:

1. Initial Participation (first year as a chaperone, a leadership position, or new employee) and any time there is a year or more lapse in participation.
 - a. Form A must be completed and submitted to the MCRC office in a timely manner prior to the event.
 - b. Form B will be sent to references by the MCRC office.
2. Annually
 - a. MCRC uses the Praesidium’s “Praesidium Package” (through The Insurance Board) for all employees and volunteers. This package includes: multi-state criminal background check, individual county background check, national sex offender registry check, alias search, social security number trace, and driver’s record.
 - b. Provide current email to the MCRC office prior to first MCRC event in the calendar year.
3. MCRC office will provide notification when this process has been completed.
4. Parent/guardian permission will be sought for employees and volunteers under 18 that are required to complete this process.
5. The completed forms are to be kept in a secured location. These forms will be kept according to the Internal Controls Policy.
6. Adults that have not completed background checks must be accompanied by an adult that has completed the background check.

Ministry Contacts Involving Participants

Friendships develop naturally among participants. Friendships are important to everyone’s development. Leaders must recognize and maintain boundaries within friendships that develop such as maturity and age differences.

With the diverse opportunities increasingly accessible for contacting one another, it is recommended that contacts through e-mail, phone calls and/or uploading information to social network sites (examples: Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, etc.) be held until after the event concludes. This will limit exposure of participants while they attend an event. It is recommended that social contacts be initiated only by youth. Adults may initiate contacts to encourage additional participation in church-related events or to facilitate on-going pastoral care.

It is our protocol to provide event contact information and digital photos to participants. MCRC will maintain contact information which may be used to notify participants of additional events, stewardship requests or MCRC updates.

Complaint/Resolution Process

Recognizing the need for some participants to express their concerns – whether an intentional affront or not – these are the guidelines to follow-up concerns and complaints. For a full description of this process, refer to the Mediation Form (available through MCRC office).

The person(s) toward whom the inappropriate behavior is directed need not be the complainant. Moreover, neither consent nor acquiescence will excuse or exonerate inappropriate behavior. MCRC may initiate or proceed with the formal complaint process at any time.

The appropriate program/event leader, in consultation with MCRC Executive Director, will take the leadership in determining how best to assure the safety of all. If a complaint involves the program/event leader, an adult that learns about the complaint is to consult with the MCRC Executive Director.

When a complaint occurs, the first response is to confirm that all individuals understand the incident and MCRC's Core Values.

Repetition of inappropriate behavior is not acceptable.

Complaint Occurs

- 1) A complaint has been expressed (either verbal or written). This includes but is not limited to bullying, inappropriate behavior, sexual exploitation, harassment, physical or verbal abuse.
 - a) Persons involved will be pulled aside separately by the leader of the program/event or MCRC Executive Director to discuss the complaint.
 - i) If the complainant is a child or youth, an adult advocate may be appointed by the program/event leader or MCRC staff.
 - (1) Nature of complaint
 - (2) Mind-set of child or youth
 - (3) Maturity of child or youth
 - ii) If the person(s) involved in the complaint is a child or youth, the same consideration will be made to provide an advocate.
 - b) Initiate the mediation process to study and resolve the complaint
 - c) Immediate removal of participant from the activity/event may occur depending on the nature and severity of the complaint.

Resolution Process

- 2) Possible resolutions for any complaint. This includes, but is not limited to, bullying, inappropriate behavior, sexual exploitation, harassment, physical or verbal abuse.
 - a) Participants' acknowledgement of occurrence and agreed to correct behavior.
 - b) Formal, written reprimand on file with notations to appropriate authorities.
 - i) Appropriate oversight committee or board
 - ii) Civil authorities such as child protective services (CPS) or law enforcement.
 - iii) Ecclesiastical authorities for Authorized Ministers such as an Association (UCC) or other appropriate denominational body.
 - c) Removal from the program/event at any point in the process (initiated complaint, investigation, mediation)
 - d) Probationary standing – with written outline of terms.
 - e) Immediate termination of participation or volunteer leadership.
 - f) Banned from working with children and/or youth at MCRC
 - g) Complaints under this policy involving MCRC employees will be addressed as outlined in the MCRC Personnel Policy.

Follow-up

- 3) Continue the mediation process until completed.
- 4) If the complaint is determined to be invalid, particularly in the case of sexual exploitation, harassment, physical or verbal abuse, then actions will be taken to support the individual's return to participation.
- 5) Either party may question the resolution and request the MCRC Executive Director to further investigate the complaint.
- 6) The event leadership needs to encourage the event participants to respond in a Christian manner so that everyone can participate fully in the event without retaliation or judgement.
- 7) MCRC may need to contract legal counsel and insurance agent for this complaint as appropriate.

- 8) Appropriate written records of the investigation, actions and resolutions of the matter shall be kept on file at MCRC office.

Definitions

Abuse - Physical and/or Verbal:

Injury caused to an individual mentally or physically, either by words, actions, or physical contact.

Bullying

Intentional intimidation, threatening gestures, words and/or actions an individual initiates against another person(s).

Inappropriate Behavior

Behavior that is inconsistent with MCRC's Core Values.

Sexual Exploitation:

Sexual activity or conduct (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which a person takes advantage of the vulnerability of the person.

Sexual Harassment:

Repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to his or her wishes, including behavior directed at another person with the intent of intimidating, humiliating or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the person to public discrimination.

Note:

Page 8 is blank so forms print correctly

Form A

Information and Disclosure Form

Form A

Page 1 of 2

CONFIDENTIAL

Page 1 of 2

An authorized staff member will submit a request to Praesidium to have a "Praesidium Package" background check completed electronically for volunteers and staff. This package includes: multi-state criminal background check, individual county background check, national sex offender registry check, alias search, social security number trace and motor vehicle record.

Legal First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Email (required for Praesidium notifications): _____

Preferred Phone Number: _____ Cell _____ Land Line _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Birth Date: _____

Circle all that apply: Board Committee Confirmation Retreats Summer Camp Youth Events Work Camps

Home church: _____ Town: _____ Program/event _____

- 1. Have you ever been convicted of, pled guilty or no contest to a crime?
Yes _____ No _____ If yes, provide an explanation on attached sheet of paper.
2. Has a civil lawsuit been filed against you alleging actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; or financial misconduct?
Yes _____ No _____ If yes, provide an explanation on attached sheet of paper.
3. Has a formal complaint relating to ecclesiastical, educational, employment or volunteer setting ever been made against you alleging actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; financial misconduct?
Yes _____ No _____ If yes, provide an explanation on attached sheet of paper.
4. Is there any other fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question you being entrusted with responsibilities including adults, children or youth?
Yes _____ No _____ If yes, provide an explanation on attached sheet of paper.
5. With respect to my driving record, I have had my license suspended or revoked within the last five years.
Yes _____ No _____ If yes, provide an explanation on attached sheet of paper.

RELEASE AND AUTHORIZATION

I acknowledge that the information provided is true and complete. I understand any misrepresentation or omission is grounds for rejection. It is my responsibility to update the information as appropriate. I authorize MCRC to investigate all statements contained in this disclosure and reference form. I also authorize all persons and entities to respond to inquiries concerning me, to supply verification of the information provided, and to comment on and state opinions regarding my background and character. I hereby release all such persons and entities from all liability and responsibility arising from their doing so.

By completing this form I have read and agree to follow MCRC Safe Camp Policy.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Table with 2 columns: Office Use Only, Valid Dates. Rows include Praesidium, Date Completed, and MCRC rep.

Information and Disclosure Form
CONFIDENTIAL

Name: _____

REFERENCES: Please list three adults not related to you or one another. One of your references should be a 'faith' reference (pastor, youth advisor, church member).

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Preferred Phone # _____ Cell _____ Land Line _____

E-mail _____

In what capacity does this person know you? _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Preferred Phone # _____ Cell _____ Land Line _____

E-mail _____

In what capacity does this person know you? _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Preferred Phone # _____ Cell _____ Land Line _____

E-mail _____

In what capacity does this person know you? _____

Form B

Character Reference Form

Form B

CONFIDENTIAL

An authorized staff member will submit a request to Praesidium to have a "Praesidium Package" background check completed electronically for volunteers and staff. This package includes: multi-state criminal background check, individual county background check, national sex offender registry check, alias search, social security number trace and motor vehicle record.

Reference for: _____

The above has authorized all persons and entities to respond to inquiries, to supply verification of the information provided, and to comment on and state opinions regarding this person's background and character. All such persons and entities are released from all liability and responsibility arising from their doing so.

Reference Information:

How long have you known this person (approximately)? _____

In what capacity do you know this person? _____

1. To the best of your knowledge, is there any fact or circumstance involving this person that would call into question being entrusted with responsibilities for adults, children or youth?

Yes _____ No _____ If yes, give a short explanation (use additional space as needed).

2. Please rate this person's ability to relate to; be supportive & understanding of:
(For ratings of 1 or 2, please explain, use additional space as needed)

Adults 5=Highly Rated 4=Above Average 3=Average 2=Less than Average 1=Not a Strength

Children 5=Highly Rated 4=Above Average 3=Average 2=Less than Average 1=Not a Strength

Youth 5=Highly Rated 4=Above Average 3=Average 2=Less than Average 1=Not a Strength

3. Please rate this person's ability to maintain appropriate boundaries:
(For ratings of 1 or 2, please explain, use additional space as needed)

5=Highly Rated 4=Above Average 3=Average 2=Less than Average 1=Not a Strength

Please feel free to make additional comments:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Preferred Phone # _____ Cell Land Line

E-mail _____