

Abuse Policy - Retreat Version

H2O Church

As a community of disciples, H2O 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 the cry of the abused (Psalm 9:9,12). Our community seeks to make disciples who embody God's concern for justice and the protection of the vulnerable.

The purpose of this retreat policy is to communicate what our expectations are of you the participant and what you can expect of H2O as we all seek to prevent abuse, and respond appropriately to any incidents or allegations of 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, partner, etc.) uses that position to exploit or violate someone who is more vulnerable. That exploitation or violation can take a variety of forms such as emotional, financial, physical, sexual, spiritual, etc.

Healthy Boundaries

At all times our community upholds the following standards of respect and safety. These standards apply during any time of ministry or gathering related to the ministry of our church, both formal and informal.

Show respect in physical touch, space, and visibility:

- Appropriate touch, whether an adult or child, must always be welcomed by the person and accountable to others. This is especially important with any power differential. (If you are not sure, just ask - e.g. Can I give you a hug?)
- Children who need assistance in the restroom must be helped by their own parent or guardian.
- Be considerate and respectful 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 with children and vulnerable adults: No one should be alone with a child who is not their own child (including giving rides).
- No one should engage in the physical discipline of a child who is not their own child.
- No one is to provide alcoholic beverages, tobacco, drugs, contraband, or anything that is prohibited by law to minors.

Show respect in your words:

- 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 inappropriate jokes or stories.

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, officers, or staff at H2O 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 harass or 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.¹
- Any words that belittle or threaten.

Abusers often use charm and 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 concerning behavior or a policy violation should document it and speak up as soon as possible to the Safeguarding Team. 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, Abuse, and Harassment

H2O Church takes seriously all policy violations and all concerns related to respect and safety. 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 members are:

- Abby Waynick, Volunteer (313-806-0892, waynicka@umich.edu)
- Ben Brand, Pastor (734-845-6032, ben.brand@h2okzoo.com)
- Sara Brand, Staff (734-576-5795, sara.brand@h2okzoo.com)
- Troy Wallace, Staff (989-859-8778, troy.wallace@h2okzoo.com)

The Safeguarding Team will document all concerns or policy violations and collaborate on any appropriate response and accountability. If a member of the Safeguarding Team is involved, the person involved will be recused from any deliberations or response. If you would be more comfortable talking to another leader about the situation, this is always acceptable.

For additional information including response protocols, caring for survivors, more thorough definitions, and more see our full or condensed abuse policies at h2okzoo.com/policies.

¹ H2O Church is exempt from certain claims of unlawful employment practices because of its status as a religious organization and/or other type of entity recognized as being provided such an exemption by various federal laws, state laws, county codes and/or ordinances. To the fullest extent permitted, H2O expressly claims any and all exemptions available to it under applicable laws regarding and/or related to unlawful employment practices. Exemptions claimed by H2O include, but are not limited to, those exemptions available to it under: (1) the First Amendment to the United States Constitution; (2) the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993, 42 U.S.C. §2000bb et seq.; (3) Section 702 of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-1(a); (4) applicable state constitutional provisions regarding religious freedom; (5) applicable state statutes regarding religious freedom; (6) any successor provisions to any of the foregoing laws; and (7) any and all other applicable federal and state laws, county and local codes and ordinances. Nothing contained in this policy is intended to, nor should it be interpreted as, waiving any exemption(s) or defense(s) that H2O may have, claim, and/or be entitled to claim either now or in the future.