

Mt. Lebanon Evangelical Presbyterian Church

Child Protection Policy

THEOLOGICAL STATEMENT

Recognizing God's love and concern for all children (Luke 18:16), Mt. Lebanon Evangelical Presbyterian Church will strive to do everything possible to protect children from abuse.

PURPOSE FOR OUR POLICY

This policy applies to all church sponsored activities for minors (persons under 18 years of age). It applies to any church sponsored off-site activity or overnight that involves minors. In short, this policy applies in every situation where a minor is at the church or involved in a church supervised activity (on or off site) where the minor's parent or guardian is not physically present and exercising supervision of the minor.

The implementation and documentation of a Safe Church Policy strives to reduce the risk of child abuse and neglect for the following reasons:

- *Children and Youth are a gift from God* (Genesis 1: 26-28) and the church has a divine mandate to provide for their safety and nurture. Child abuse and neglect can adversely affect a child for life.
- *Families must be assured that their children's safety and nurture at church is secure.* The victimization of a child can devastate a family for years.
- *Church Staff needs protection from personal harm and unfounded allegations* or compromising situations that can adversely affect their reputation and well-being.
- *Church leaders may be liable for damages resulting from negligence* in the implementation and documentation of the Child Safety Policy.
- *The Church Community suffers with the minor and his or her family should child abuse and neglect occurs.* This suffering may manifest itself in interpersonal stresses, in financial loss, and in legal process. Often the church's mission and reputation becomes suspect to those in the larger community setting.
- *To guard the honor and reputation of our Lord Jesus Christ.* If a child in our church is harmed through a member's sin, some people will inevitably think less of the church and of our Lord. We are committed to doing everything in our power to prevent such dishonor from happening, and protecting our children from abuse is one way to do so. Although the issue of child abuse is an unpleasant one, we believe that God can use our response to these concerns for good (see Romans 8:28-29). **Instead of viewing the screening process as a "necessary evil," we see it as an opportunity to promote teamwork (I Cor. 12:12-31), to demonstrate mutual submission (Eph. 5:21), and to get to know one another better.** Through this process we can learn more about our gifts and abilities, which will help us to encourage each other in our work with the young people in our church (Heb. 10: 24-25).

CHILD ABUSE AS DEFINED UNDER PA CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES LAW (CPSL)

Although this policy focuses primarily on child sexual abuse, all forms of child abuse are prohibited, and are included under this policy.

Definitions of abuse from the **Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law (CPSL [Title 23 PA.C.S. Chapter 63]**, are as follows:

Intentionally, knowingly or recklessly doing any of the following:

1. **PHYSICAL ABUSE** Causing bodily injury through any recent act or failure to act. Creating a reasonable likelihood of bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.
Bodily injury is impairment of physical condition or substantial pain.
 The following are “per se” acts of child abuse (meaning the act itself, apart from the outcome, is considered child abuse).
 - Kicking, biting, throwing, burning, stabbing or cutting a child in a manner that endangers the child.
 - Unreasonably restraining or confining a child, based on consideration of the method, location or the duration of the restraint or confinement.
 - Forcefully shaking a child under one year of age.
 - Forcefully slapping or otherwise striking a child under one year of age.
 - Interfering with the breathing of a child.
 - Causing a child to be present at a location while a violation of 18 PA.C.S. §7508.2 (relating to operating a methamphetamine laboratory) is occurring, provided that the violation is being investigated by law enforcement.
- a. Any recent act or failure to act by a perpetrator which causes non-accidental serious physical injury to a child.
 - *Serious bodily injury* means bodily injury that creates a substantial risk of death or causes serious permanent disfigurement or protracted loss or impairment of function of any bodily member or organ.
 - *Serious physical injury* means an injury that causes a child severe pain or significantly impairs a child's physical functioning, either temporarily or permanently.
- b. Fabricating, feigning or intentionally exaggerating or inducing a medical symptom or disease which results in a potentially harmful medical evaluation or treatment to the child through any recent act.
2. **MENTAL ABUSE** Causing or substantially contributing to serious mental injury to a child through an act or failure to act or a series of such acts or failures to act.
Serious mental injury is a psychological condition, as diagnosed by a physician or licensed psychologist, including the refusal of appropriate treatment, that:

- a. Renders a child chronically and severely anxious, agitated, depressed, socially withdrawn, psychotic or in reasonable fear that the child's life or safety is threatened; or
 - b. Seriously interferes with a child's ability to accomplish age-appropriate developmental and social tasks.
- a. An act or failure to act by a perpetrator which causes non-accidental serious mental injury to a child.
Serious mental injury means a psychological condition, as diagnosed by a physician or licensed psychologist, including the refusal of appropriate treatment, that:
- Renders a child chronically and severely anxious, agitated, depressed, socially withdrawn, psychotic, or in reasonable fear that his or her life or safety is threatened
 - Seriously interferes with a child's ability to accomplish age-appropriate development and social tasks

3. NEGLECT Causing serious physical neglect of a child.

Serious physical neglect is any of the following when committed by a perpetrator that endangers a child's life or health, threatens a child's well-being, causes bodily injury or impairs a child's health, development or functioning:

- a. A repeated, prolonged or egregious failure to supervise a child in a manner that is appropriate considering the child's developmental age and abilities.
- b. The failure to provide a child with adequate essentials of life, including food, shelter or medical care.

A child will not be deemed to be physically or mentally abused based on injuries that result solely from environmental factors that are beyond the control of the parent or person responsible for the child's welfare, such as inadequate housing, furnishings, income, clothing and medical care.

4. DEATH Causing the death of the child through any act or failure to act.

5. SEXUAL ABUSE OR EXPLOITATION Causing sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any act or failure to act. Creating a likelihood of sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any recent act or failure to act.

Sexual Abuse or Exploitation is any of the following :

- The employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of a child to engage in or assist another individual to engage in sexually explicit conduct which includes but is not limited to, the following:

- Looking at the sexual or other intimate parts of a child or another individual for the purpose of arousing or gratifying sexual desire in any individual.
- Participating in sexually explicit conversation either in person, by telephone, by computer or by a computer-aided device for the purpose of sexual stimulation or gratification of any individual.
- Actual or simulated sexual activity or nudity for the purpose of sexual stimulation or gratification of any individual.
- Actual or simulated sexual activity for the purpose of producing visual depiction, including photographing, videotaping, computer depicting or filming.
- The employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of a child to engage in or assist another individual to engage in simulation of sexually explicit conduct for the purpose of producing visual depiction, including photographing, videotaping, computer depicting, and filming.
- Any of the following offenses committed against a child: rape, sexual assault, involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, aggravated indecent assault, molestation, incest, indecent exposure, prostitution, sexual abuse, or sexual exploitation.

This paragraph does not include consensual activities between a child who is 14 years of age or older and another person who is 14 years of age or older and whose age is within four years of the child's age.

6. **ENDANGERING THE WELFARE OF CHILDREN** A recent act, failure to act or series of the acts or failures to act by a perpetrator which creates an imminent risk of serious physical injury to or sexual abuse or exploitation of a child. A parent, guardian, or other person supervising the welfare of a child less than 18 years of age, or a person that employs or supervises such a person commits an offense if he knowingly endangers the welfare of the child by violating a duty of care, protection, or support.

The following are per se acts of child abuse-

Leaving a child unsupervised with an individual, other than the child's parent, who the actor knows or reasonably should have known:

Is required to register as a Tier II or Tier III sexual offender under 42 PA. C.S. Ch. 97 Subch. H (relating to registration of sexual offenders), where the victim of the sexual offense was under 18 years of age when the crime was committed.

Has been determined to be a sexually violent predator under 42 PA. C.S §9799.24(relating to assessments) or any of its predecessors.

Has been determined to be a sexually violent delinquent child as defined in 42 PA.C.S. §9799.12(relating to definitions).

Any of the following offenses committed against a child (Criminal Code)

- (i) Rape, as defined in 18 PA. C.S §3121 (relating to rape).
- (ii) Statutory sexual assault, as defined in 18 PA. C.S §3122.1 (relating to statutory sexual assault).
- (iii) Involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, as defined in 18 PA. C.S §3123 (relating to involuntary deviate sexual intercourse).
- (iv) Sexual assault, as defined in 18 PA. C.S §3124.1 (relating to sexual assault).
- (v) Institutional sexual assault, as defined in 18 PA. C.S §3124.2 (relating to institutional sexual assault).
- (vi) Aggravated indecent assault, as defined in 18 PA. C.S §3125 (relating to aggravated sexual assault).
- (vii) Indecent assault, as defined in 18 PA. C.S §3126 (relating to indecent assault).
- (viii) Indecent exposure, as defined in 18 PA. C.S §3127 (relating to indecent exposure).
- (ix) Incest, as defined in 18 PA. C.S §4302 (relating to incest).
- (x) Prostitution, as defined in 18 PA. C.S §5902 (relating to prostitution and related offenses).
- (xi) Sexual abuse, as defined in 18 PA. C.S §6312 (relating to sexual abuse of children).
- (xii) Unlawful contact with a minor, as defined in 18 PA. C.S §6318 (relating to unlawful contact with a minor).
- (xiii) Sexual exploitation, as defined in 18 PA. C.S §6320 (relating to sexual exploitation of children).

Any recent act or failure to act is defined as occurring within the last two years.

TERMS USED IN THIS POLICY:

Child or Youth – any person considered a minor under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, that is, a person who is under 18 years of age

Pastor – a minister under call to the congregation

Child Protection Committee (CPC) – Implements and enforces the Child Protection Policy

Approved Adult – anyone at least 18 years of age who has satisfied the requirements of the Child Protection Policy. An Approved Adult can be an employee or a non-employee of the congregation. Approved Adults include, but are not limited to:

- a. All employed staff to include associate pastors, children and youth directors, preschool and nursery room directors, business manager, choir and organ directors administrative support, custodians and others who are in a position receiving compensation from MLEPC
- b. Kingdom Kids preschool staff , assistants and volunteers
- c. Moms Morning Out staff and volunteers
- d. Youth & Children’s Ministry Sunday School/Children’s Church Teachers/Helpers
- e. Youth Group Leaders, assistants and chaperones
- f. Nursery staff and volunteers
- g. Vacation Bible School teachers, volunteers and helpers
- h. Children and Youth Ministry Teams
- i. Child Protection Committee members
- j. Anyone else using the church who works directly with children/youth

Child Advocates – Any CPC member

Volunteer Youth – Youth who are less than 18 years of age who works under the supervision of 2 approved adults.

Paid Youth- Youth ages fourteen through seventeen receiving compensation for church related activities. These youth will also be required to obtain the child protection clearances.

Approved Youth- anyone 14-17 years of age who has satisfied the requirements of the Child Protection Policy. An Approved Youth can be an employee or a non-employee of the congregation. Approved Youth must obtain clearances.

THE CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE

The Child Protection Committee (CPC) shall consist of the Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor, Business Administrator, Youth Director, Youth Elder, Children’s Director, Children’s Elder and Kingdom Kids Director.

The Committee will:

1. Implement and enforce this Child Protection Policy.
2. Review and make recommendations to the Session for revising congregation policy regarding the safety of our children/youth.
3. Provide/arrange for training for all staff and approved adults working with the children/youth regarding child abuse and the Child Protection Policy.
4. Maintain a list of Approved Adults and make available to the church community.
5. Monitor Approved Adults to ensure that policies are being followed.
6. Keep Session apprised of all activities of the committee.

7. Receive and process reports of suspected abuse.
8. Be kept apprised of investigations.

The CPC members:

1. Ensure that required forms are received for all applicants and proper records are maintained.
2. Call meetings as often as needed, but no less than once each year

The Administrative Assistant:

1. Store all applications.
2. Collect and forward requests for clearances, with cover letters, to PA State Police and PA Department of Public Welfare; as well as FBI Fingerprint clearances for staff
3. Maintain all clearances.
4. Maintain reports of suspected abuse.
5. Make available, upon request of an individual, his/her clearance reports.

SELECTION OF APPROVED ADULTS

To protect the children/youth in our care, the following guidelines are established for those who desire to work with children/youth less than 18 years of age.

Approved Adults must:

1. Attend MLEPC for a minimum of 6 months unless granted a variance by the designated Children and/or Youth Ministries.
2. Complete an Approved Adult application form and the required clearance forms. Clearances are required for all volunteers
3. Attend a standard initial training session.
4. Sign and comply with the Child Protection Covenant.

Required Application Forms to Become an Approved Adult

The following forms are located in the Appendix:

1. Adult Application
2. Pennsylvania State Police Request for Criminal Records Check Form
3. Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance Form
4. Child Protection Covenant

Required Clearances

Church volunteers working with children 17 years old and younger are required by the Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) to obtain the following background checks:

Child Abuse History Clearance Form (CY-113)
Pennsylvania State Police Request for Criminal Record Check Form (SP4-164)
Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) Criminal Background Checks (SP4-164A) or Signed Swear and Affirm Document

Background checks will be repeated every 5 years.

CPC members may accept copies of clearances that are no more than two years old from volunteers that have obtained the above clearances through other employment or volunteer work. CPC members also have the authority to require new clearances upon the start of volunteering if deemed appropriate. Any potential volunteer or employee with clearances older than two years must obtain new clearances for working with children in the church.

Prospective employees applying to engage in occupations with a significant likelihood or regular contact with children, in the form of care, guidance, supervision or training must obtain new background checks as a condition of employment. This would include (for example) a Christian Education Director, Youth Pastor, and other church staff expected to have regular contact with children. Employees are required by the CPSL to obtain background checks.

All church staff hired 7/1/08 and after with a significant likelihood of contact with children must also obtain FBI clearance (fingerprinting) in addition to the above background checks.

See https://www.pa.cogentid.com/index_dpw.htm (COGENT) to locate a fingerprint processing center near our church.

RECORDS

Applications and related forms for staff and volunteers will be locked in a confidential file under the jurisdiction of the CPC. Clearances are confidential and will only be made available to a CPC member.

The church Administrative Assistant is responsible for maintaining these records and following these record keeping steps.

1. Create and maintain a master list of all personnel and volunteers who have regular contact with children in the course of their work
2. Determine clearance status, and note the dates of the reports on the list;
 - For staff and volunteers who have the required background check clearances and those clearances are less than five (5) years old, no new clearances are required until five (5) years from the date of the existing clearances.
 - For such personnel and volunteers who do not have the required background check clearances, or in cases where the required clearances are over five (5) years old, new clearances are required.

3. Note on the list when the clearances need to be renewed, and note on the list the date 60 days before to initiate the process of obtaining renewed clearances
 - New clearances are to be obtained every five (5) years from the date of the existing clearances.
 - New clearances are required for all personnel and volunteers who have had a two year break in activity from the church. CPC members have the authority to ask for new clearances after any break in service if deemed appropriate.
4. Retain copies of all clearances, even ones that are superseded by renewed clearances, in confidential locked files.

RECORD RETENTION

Because any records pertaining to children and youth; and staff/volunteers who work with them may become the subject of legal proceedings at some future date, no such records should be part of any automatic records destruction plan by the church. This includes child and youth registration and permission forms, as well as staff and volunteer clearances. Such records should only be destroyed with the written approval of the CPC, and in accordance with the state statute of limitations related to sexual abuse of minors. In PA, the statute for filing criminal and civil charges for certain types of sexual abuse of a minor extends to 50 years past the victim's 18th birthday. Records may be digitized and stored electronically.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

POLICY ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

This policy will be available to the entire congregation in a manner and at a web-based and/or physical location easily accessible. New members will be directed to the web or physical location, and/or given a copy of the policy.

In order to be an approved adult, a volunteer or staff member must participate in an initial training that covers recognizing and responding to child abuse, mandated reporting requirements, and church guidelines and practices. Volunteers or staff who cannot attend sessions in person will be required to review a tape (video, audio) or a power point of the training prior to serving with youth. Adults or youth will not be approved to take care of children until after they have completed the required training.

All approved adults and staff will receive a full copy of the Child/Youth Protection Policy and Guidelines, sign a Statement of Compliance and sign a Child Protection Covenant.

PROCEDURES FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Staff and Volunteers

1. Training will be offered at the beginning of each church school year. It will be considered a mandatory part of volunteer training and employee orientation.

2. The church's Administrative Assistant will maintain a record of who has received training and the dates.
3. Training will include the use of professional training materials on child abuse, including specific information about child sexual abuse, behavioral signs, and how to respond to a disclosure; the grooming process sexual offenders often use to engage children; a review of policies and procedures that are specific to MLEPC and pertinent to the work in which the employee or volunteer will be involved; and instruction in the use and completion of the various forms.

Parents and other Congregants

Child Abuse Awareness education will be offered at least once each year for parents and other congregants, and shall include information about the spiritual, as well as psychological and physical, impact of abuse. The educational sessions will be at least one hour in length, may be provided in various formats, such as an adult education class, a whole-congregation meeting, a special workshop in the evening or weekend, etc.

Children and Youth

Christian Education curriculums on healthy physical, emotional, and sexual boundaries, including sexual abuse prevention, may be offered. The purpose is to provide our children and teens with the opportunity to receive age-appropriate information in a faith-based context to help them to recognize inappropriate conduct on the part of an adult or older child, and to empower them to say no, and tell a "safe adult" at church, home, school.

Teachers will be provided with any needed training, as well as curriculum material, to use.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

To ensure that a nurturing Christian environment for children/youth is maintained within the congregation, to protect children/youth who participate in activities sponsored by the church from sexual, mental, and/or physical abuse, and to protect the congregation's members from false allegations of abuse, the congregation has adopted the following policy:

1. **Child Abuse Prohibited:** Those who accept the special responsibility of working with the congregation's children/youth shall not violate that responsibility by causing physical injury, which is non-accidental; mental injury, which is non-accidental; sexual abuse or serious physical neglect of children/youth; or any other act described as child abuse in this policy or the laws of our state.
2. **Sexual Abuse Prohibited:** Those who accept the special responsibility of working with the congregation's children/youth shall not violate that responsibility by having any interaction with a child/youth where the child/youth is being used for sexual stimulation of the adult or a third person regardless of whether or not the behavior involves touching, or any other act described as sexual abuse in this policy or the laws of our state.

3. Two Approved Adults Rule: Two Approved Adults should be present during any church sponsored children/youth activity.

In some instances where unforeseen circumstances result in two approved adults not being present (for example, an unexpected absence of a teacher on a Sunday morning) a designated approved adult will circulate outside the classroom area or be within easy reach to provide assistance if needed. In a mixed group, whenever possible, a male and a female Approved Adult should be present.

Helpers (youth under age 18 caring for children up to age 12) or occasional care assistants may work under the supervision of approved adults.

4. Visibility: All activities/meetings with children/youth must be conducted in a way that allows visibility, e.g., glass areas of doors should not be obstructed, curtains/blinds should be open, when possible, door should be open or a window should allow easy observation of the room. Where possible, conduct activities in a public place, with another person within sight and sound of the activities.

Because abuse is sometimes perpetuated by an older, stronger child/youth, do not send two children/youth with a four or more year age difference to an isolated setting, e.g., bathroom, tent, empty classroom

5. Bathroom and Diapering: In general, children should be encouraged to use the bathroom before and after classes or other activities. In this way parents can assist as needed.

If you need to take a child to the toilet, be aware of your visibility and the child's privacy, e.g., adult stands holding public bathroom door open while child enters toilet stall alone.

Diapering: Two approved adults must be present when clothes or diapers are being changed. The parent can also be called in to change clothes or a diaper.

Two and Three Year Olds: An approved adult must accompany children to and from the bathroom and inform another adult when this takes place. The adult will assist the child only when necessary. If assistance is needed, the adult must leave the stall door open.

Preschool: An approved adult must accompany preschoolers to the bathroom. The adult will remain outside the stall or bathroom. If assistance is required, the approved adult should encourage independence but can assist with minimal tasks if necessary (belts, snaps, etc.).

6. **Empty Room Policy:** After an activity, check rooms to ensure that all participants have vacated the room.
7. **Expressions of Affection:** True expressions of affection toward children/youth can be a manifestation of Christ's love for all of us. A kind word of encouragement to a child/youth or a pat on the back can be a small but significant act for both the adult and the child/youth. That being said, adults must use caution and common sense when physically expressing affection toward children/youth.
 - a. Respect a child's/youth's refusal of affection
 - b. Be aware of appropriate hand placement. A child/youth or an observer could misinterpret a pat on the bottom or a bear hug. Note that an extended embrace; a touch on private areas (those areas covered by a bathing suit), or a kiss on the mouth is inappropriate.
 - c. Discipline of any type involving physical contact is not permitted.

NURSERY PROTECTION GUIDELINES

The nursery of MLEPC is designed to provide a place of safety and caring for our youngest church participants, while allowing their parents to participate in worship or activities. As such, the following policy is designed to protect the children, parents and volunteers who participate:

1. Parents or guardians will complete a **Nursery Registration/Medical Information & Release form** when the child first enters care and will also receive a copy of the **Nursery Guidelines** for Parents.
2. Parents should sign children in and out in log book or **Nursery Sign-In Sheet** each time children are delivered to care, and children will only be released to those listed on the **Registration** form.
3. Parents should label all bottles, juices, blankets, toys, diaper bag and any other personal belongings. Pacifiers should be attached to the child. Snacks containing nuts are never allowed due to allergies. Small snack items that can be choked on, such as grapes, are not permitted.
4. Discipline Plan: Limit setting is directed toward maximizing the growth and development of the children and is for protecting the group and the individuals within it. Positive reinforcement is the major tool of appropriate discipline. Volunteers will verbalize to the child when she/he is behaving in an inappropriate manner. Volunteers will redirect a child who appears to be "headed for trouble." If a child is repeatedly displaying inappropriate behavior and redirecting has not worked, parents/guardian will be asked to come to the nursery. Nursery volunteers **WILL NOT**:
 - Use corporal punishment, including spanking
 - Subject children to cruel or severe punishment, humiliation or verbal abuse
 - Deny any child food as a form of punishment
 - Punish any child for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet.
5. If a child needs to proceed to the bathroom, an approved volunteer shall accompany him/her. Stay outside the door and let the child use the toilet. If help is needed with wiping

or dressing, help the child while keeping the door to the bathroom open. Encourage the child to wipe him/herself. Let the parent know that the child used the toilet and whether or not assistance was needed. Help the child wash his/her hands thoroughly with soap and running water. Wash your own hands. If a problem arises when a child needs to use the toilet, a parent will be contacted.

6. Children must be picked up immediately following service or church activities and checked out in the log by a parent or a person designated on the emergency contact form.
7. At least one parent/guardian shall remain in the church while the child is in the nursery after worship or other official church activities have ended.
8. Should an incident occur that results in physical injury, parent(s) will be notified and an incident report will be completed.

The following forms are located in the Appendix:

Nursery- Registration/Medical information & Release
Nursery Sign-in Sheet
Nursery Guidelines

CHILDREN AND YOUTH CLASSROOM PROTECTION GUIDELINES

MLEPC is committed to creating a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love. It is the policy of the church to provide adequate supervision for all classroom activities. We also expect all employees and volunteers who work with minors to complete and submit an application to be approved adults.

1. Parents will complete a **Registration, Medical Information & Release, and General Permission – Children & Youth Form** when a child first enters an education classroom. Children will only be released to those persons listed on the form.
2. Copies of this policy referring to general or specific protection guidelines will be provided to the parents of children attending Sunday School and youth group activities.
3. In every classroom there will be at least two Approved Adults, with any exceptions approved by the appropriate Session team and notification to the CPC.
4. No teacher shall be alone with a child in the bathroom for purposes of toileting, clean up from craft or art projects, or care of injury, except when necessary. In this case the door to the bathroom and classroom shall be kept open.
5. No teacher working with our children shall place him/herself in a compromising situation by being alone with a child or children out of sight of other teachers or aides.
6. Normally teachers who accompany a child to the bathroom should remain outside the bathroom door while the child is inside.
7. If a child needs assistance with dressing, undressing or cleanup, two approved adults shall be present.
8. If a child needs assistance with dressing, undressing or cleanup, and only one approved adult is available, the door to the bathroom shall be left open.

9. If anything unusual occurred during this assistance, the parent will be notified at pickup.
10. If for any reason, a teacher or aide is left alone in a classroom, the classroom door shall remain open.
11. Children in grades 2-12 can use the bathrooms unescorted, provided they return within a reasonable time frame. This privilege can be granted or rescinded at the teacher's discretion.
12. When Sunday school teachers or volunteers of the Youth (grades 6-12) take a class off of the church grounds they must have the signed, written permission form from each youth's parent or guardian in their possession. The original form must be kept with the teacher or volunteer, and a copy of the form kept with the appropriate staff member in the church.
13. Report any inappropriate conduct or relationship between an adult worker or volunteer and a child promptly a member of the church staff or CPC member.
14. Limit setting is directed toward maximizing the growth and development of the children and for protecting the group and the individuals within it. Positive reinforcement is the major tool of appropriate disciplining. Verbalize to the child when he/she is behaving in an appropriate manner. Redirect a child who appears to be 'headed for trouble'. If a child is repeatedly displaying inappropriate behavior, and redirecting has not worked, and talking to the child has not worked, then the parent will be notified. The teacher will pass on information of repeated inappropriate behavior to the Children's or Youth Director.
No one shall: use corporal punishment, including spanking, humiliation or verbal abuse.

PERMISSION SLIPS/MEDICAL RELEASE FORMS, OVERNIGHT ACTIVITIES, TRANSPORTATION

Permission Slips

General-Children/youth must have permission to participate in activities. Parents/guardians need to complete and return a Child and Youth Registration form, which includes pertinent medical information and emergency phone numbers, a medical release, and general permission for field trips. These forms will be updated every year and filed in the church.

Specific-Children/youth must have permission to participate in any overnight activity or any activity that takes place away from church grounds. The permission must be written, signed by a parent or guardian, and must identify the activity in which the child/youth will be participating.

Medical Release Forms for field trips: All youth participating in a youth group or going on a field trip with either a youth group or the Sunday school must have a Medical Release Form on file before they will be allowed to participate.

- A copy of the completed form will be kept on file in the church.
- Each time a field trip or overnight event occurs, the original must be taken with an adult leader while a copy remains in the church.

Overnight Activities

Overnight activities involving children/youth shall be chaperoned by at least two Approved Adults. Boys and girls will sleep in separate areas with at least two approved adults of the same gender directly supervising each group. If the minimum level of supervision cannot be

achieved, the activity must be cancelled; this may result in the loss of deposit fees for which the church cannot be responsible.

Transportation of Children/Youth: When children/youth are transported for church activities they shall be transported in groups with at least one Approved Adult in each vehicle.

Personal Vehicle Transportation. To transport children/youth in a personal vehicle, the driver must be 18 years of age or older. Drivers must have a copy of their driver's license, registration, and proof of insurance on file in the church office. **Anyone who has had their license revoked or suspended within the past five years will be ineligible to drive for youth activities.**

APPROPRIATE SUPERVISION RATIOS

Day trips on or off church property: Ratios of adults to children/ youth

Grade	Number of Youth (not related to approved adult)	Number of approved adults required	Plus one additional adult for each additional number of youth
Preschool - 2	4	2	4
3-5	12	2	4
6 – 12	12	2	6

Overnight trips on or off church property: Ratios of adults to children/ youth

Grade	Number of Youth (not related to approved adult)	Number of approved adults required	Plus one additional adult for each additional number of youth
Preschool - 2	NA	NA	NA
3-5	12	2	4
6 – 12	12	2	6

If mixed genders attend an overnight activity, the boys and the girls will be considered two separate groups with the above ratios applied to both groups (e.g. If there are nine boys and three girls, there must be two male adults and two female adults).

The following forms are located in the Appendix:

Registration, Medical Information & Release
General Permission – Children & Youth
Parent or Guardian permission for Special Activity

SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE REPORTING AND RESPONSE; RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS/ADMISSIONS; OR CRIMINAL CHARGES

REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

HOW “MANDATED” REPORTING WORKS IN PA

Anyone may report suspected child abuse. However, the PA Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) imposes a reporting mandate, or requirement, on any adult who comes into contact with children in the course of his or her work or professional practice, specifically including “clergyman, priest, rabbi, minister, Christian Science practitioner, religious healer or spiritual leader of any regularly established church or other religious organization,” and “an individual paid or unpaid, who, on the basis of the individual's role as an integral part of a regularly scheduled program, activity or service, is a person responsible for the child's welfare or has direct contact with children.” These adults are known as “mandated reporters.”

Church staff that should be considered mandated reporters under the CPSL would include those who routinely come into contact with children, such as pastors, music ministers, youth directors and any other paid staff expected to come into contact with children on a regular basis, as well as their supervisors. Volunteers who accept the responsibility of caring for children (“Approved Adults” under this policy) are also considered mandated reporters under the CPSL beginning December 31, 2014. Staff or volunteers whose job or service responsibilities do not include care or direct contact with children as defined by the CPSL (such as most administrative or custodial staff, kitchen workers, adult ministry volunteers) are not considered mandated reporters unless they supervise those who are.

WHEN TO REPORT

The CPSL stipulates that a report is required when

- The mandated reporter comes into contact with the child in the course of employment, occupation and practice of a profession or through a regularly scheduled program, activity or service;
- The mandated reporter is directly responsible for the care, supervision, guidance or training of the child, or is affiliated with an agency, institution, organization, school, regularly established church or religious organization or other entity that is directly responsible for the care, supervision, guidance or training of the child; and,
- The mandated reporter has reasonable cause to believe that a child under the care, supervision, guidance or training of the church or the reporter, has been abused

The following two items require a report, regardless of whether the child is under the care of the reporter, or the church:

- A person makes a specific disclosure to the mandated reporter that an identifiable child is the victim of child abuse; or
- An individual 14 years of age or older makes a specific disclosure to the mandated reporter that the individual has committed child abuse.

Examples of children considered by the CPSL to be **under the care or supervision of a church** would include pre-school or other students, children enrolled in child-care programs, children being “babysat” during worship services or gatherings, children participating in educational, sports, music, recreational or other church ministries such as summer camp, Bible school, youth group, etc.

The mandate to report applies to all suspected child abuse, not just abuse that has been perpetrated by someone within the church. Possible abusers could include, for example, parents, relatives, older siblings, neighbors, coaches, school teachers, family friends and other children. If neither the victim nor the alleged offender is connected with the church, the mandated reporter does not need to notify the church or complete internal church policy requirements.

A mandated reporter need not be able to determine who is responsible for the abuse, i.e., identify the alleged offender.

A mandated reporter need not make a first-hand observation of the suspected child abuse victim.

The CPSL specifically grants legal immunity to any individual who, in good faith, makes a report of suspected child abuse. Failure to report suspected abuse by a mandated reporter can result in charges and fines. A mandated reporter may also be charged as a “perpetrator” in some cases for failure to protect a child.

The new law also specifically preserves previous law on confidential communications to clergy, but that is a very narrow exception that rarely applies beyond the Catholic confessional. Persons being counseled by church staff should understand that reporting of child abuse is required by law.

REPORTING AND DOCUMENTING SUSPECTED ABUSE - Overview

An overview of the action steps and the sequence in which they must be taken is provided below, with details in the following section of policy. Again, if neither the victim nor the alleged offender is connected with the church, the mandated reporter does not need to notify the church or complete internal church policy requirements.

First: The mandated reporter must “immediately” report to ChildLine. (legal requirement)

Second: The reporter must then “immediately thereafter” inform the CPC a report has been made. (legal requirement)

Third: The reporter must complete an internal Child Abuse Incident Report and give it to the CPC. (policy requirement)

Fourth The reporter must complete and file a written CY47 report with local CPS within 48 hours after making an oral report to ChildLine. An electronic report does not require a written CY47. (legal requirement)

Fifth: The reporter must provide a copy of the CY47 report to the CPC along with documentation of when it was filed. (policy requirement)

Sixth: The Department of Human Services (DHS) will inform the reporter of the results of the investigation no later than 3 days after it is concluded, which is generally within 30-60 days. The reporter will then inform the CPC of the results. (policy requirement)

Seventh: The CPC will note on the internal Child Abuse Incident Report the date the results were provided by the reporter, and file any related documentation. (legal requirement)

REPORTING AND DOCUMENTING SUSPECTED ABUSE –Detail

An employee or an Approved Adult who has reasonable cause to suspect that a child/youth has been abused by anyone (including but not limited to the child/youth’s family, guardians, church staff member, an Approved Adult or volunteer) **or who receives a specific disclosure as previously described in this policy shall make an immediate and direct report of suspected child abuse to ChildLine either electronically at www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis or by calling 1-800-932-0313, the Pennsylvania ChildLine and Abuse Registry (ChildLine) as required by law.** The legal reporting obligation is met by contacting ChildLine, either electronically or by telephone. However, as of 12/31/14, there is “no wrong door” for reporting, and mandated

reporters that make reports directly to local Child Protective Services or the police will not be in technical violation of the law.

The legal obligation of the mandated reporter as of 12/31/14 (including volunteers, i.e., “Approved Adults”) is to “REPORT IMMEDIATELY” to ChildLine and immediately THEREAFTER notify the CPC. The mandated reporter must provide his/her name, telephone number and email address when making the report to ChildLine.

The reporter shall then document the suspected abuse by completing a **Suspected Child Abuse Incident Report**. (See Appendix). The CPC will then have the responsibility for facilitating the cooperation of the church with the investigation of the ChildLine report.

Neither the mandated reporter nor the church is responsible for investigating or determining whether or not abuse has occurred prior to making a report. The standard under the law for reporting is that “a reasonable person has cause to believe the child has been abused.” It may be necessary to ask the child or person alleging the abuse has occurred for some clarification solely in order to determine if there is cause to believe abuse may have occurred.

Detailed interviews and extensive questioning with the child and/or the alleged abuser should be conducted by legal authorities, not by the church.

If a child is injured or in pain, call 911 for an ambulance.

If anyone is in immediate physical danger, call 911 for police assistance.

Following the required oral or electronic notification to ChildLine, your local Children and Youth Agency (see attached sheet for contact information for your county) may also be contacted by the CPC or the reporter, as this follow-up call puts the reporter directly in touch with the persons who are familiar with the community and will be taking action on the report made to ChildLine. This may also facilitate a faster response.

Within 48 hours of the oral report to ChildLine, the mandated reporter who made the original report must complete a written or electronic report of the suspected abuse on **Form CY-47** (See Appendix), based on the mandated report and Suspected Child Abuse Incident Report of the Approved Adult or volunteer and send it your County agency. If the original report was electronic, the follow up report is not needed.

Contact information about Children and Youth agencies are located in the Appendix:

This is a legally required report.

The reporter shall notify the CPC of the date the written report on Form CY-47 was sent, and provide a copy for the church records. The staff person so notified may also report reasonable

suspicious directly to ChildLine; however, such a report does not relieve the obligation under this policy of the original reporter to inform the CPC and complete an Incident Report. The initiative for investigating alleged abuse resides with the Department of Human Services (DHS) and/or law enforcement, and shall not be carried out by the congregation. There is no requirement that multiple reports of the same alleged incident(s) of abuse be filed by the church.

All allegations of child/youth abuse or serious physical neglect will be taken seriously by the pastor(s), Session, and the CPC. These allegations will be treated in strict confidence. All reporting steps taken will be documented, including a log of phone calls, personal visits, and written reports. Documentation should be kept in a secure file in the Church office.

All communications regarding the report of suspected child abuse shall attempt to protect the dignity and privacy of those persons affected by the report including the alleged child/youth victim and the person suspected of child abuse, while at the same time ensuring that persons in responsibility and law enforcement authorities remain fully informed. **The name of the mandated reporter and anyone who cooperates in an investigation should also remain confidential. Release of the name of the mandated reporter or anyone who cooperates in an investigation is prohibited by law.**

FOLLOW-UP, INVESTIGATION, DOCUMENTATION

1. Following placement of the call to report suspected abuse to ChildLine, the CPC will inform the parent (provided that **neither** of the custodial parents is suspected of abuse), **being careful not to reveal the identity of the mandated reporter. If the alleged abuser is a custodial parent, or resides in the same household as the child, his or her first contact about the allegation should come from either Child & Youth Services or the police, not the church.**
2. The church should not enter into discussion with the alleged abuser after a report has been filed and during the course of the legal investigation about the details of the complaint. The alleged abuser will be removed from any position in which he or she has supervisory authority over children pending the completion of the investigation.
3. The insurance company, Session, Board of Trustees and, if required, Presbytery of the Alleghenies (POA) should be contacted after the report is filed as a matter of routine practice if the alleged abuse involves a staff person, if the abuse occurred on church property, or if the abuse involved a volunteer caregiver. The alleged abuser will have his/her ministry restricted to exclude contact with children immediately; and if employed by the church, may be placed on leave for a designated period of time during the investigation.
4. The Department of Human Services has 3 days from the date it receives the “results” of the investigation based on the report to inform the mandated reporter (NOT the

church) as to:

- the final status of the child abuse report, in other words, whether it is indicated, founded or unfounded and
- any services provided, arranged for or to be provided by the county agency to protect the child.

In accordance with this policy, the mandated reporter will share the above with the CPC as soon as practicable after receiving results from DHS. Investigations are to be concluded by CPS in 30 or 60 days. The CPC will indicate in the space provided on the Suspected Child Abuse Incident Report the date that the mandated reporter provided the information (if applicable) and file any documentation with the report.

5. If an incident is reported that does not rise to the level of making a mandated report, the CPC will inform the child's parent(s) or guardian(s) of the concern and document the meeting.

SHARING INFORMATION

1. The extent to which information will be shared with the congregation will be determined by Session and others as appropriate. The input of the POA may be sought and, if pastoral staff is involved, the Ministerial Relations Advisory (MRA) or Trustee Personnel Committee may be consulted in making this decision. **The identity of the victim and the mandated reporter are confidential by law and it is legally prohibited to share their identities.**
2. All necessary parties will cooperate with the investigations made by the police.
3. The Session will authorize the Pastor or Session designee to act as the official spokesperson for the congregation. Only the authorized person or persons may speak for the congregation to the news media, government agencies, attorneys, or others.

CONTINUING THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

1. Pastoral support will be offered to all parties involved, including those who have made the complaint, the alleged abuser, the families of both, and the congregation. Decisions about how this support will be given will be made by pastoral staff and the Session.
2. If the allegations involve pastoral staff, the ministry of the church will need to be maintained while the issue is being addressed. Decisions regarding how this will be accomplished will be made by the Session with assistance from the POA.

RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS/ADMISSIONS; OR CRIMINAL CHARGES

Persons who admit to or plead guilty to or are convicted in a court of law of any form of physical or sexual abuse of a child/youth will be immediately, permanently, and completely disqualified by the CPC from working with children/youth in the congregation. Persons who admit to a Pastor or any member of the CPC any type of physical or sexual abuse of a child/youth but who have not appeared in a court of law will be disqualified from working with children/youth in the congregation.

Allegations of sexual or physical abuse of anyone shall disqualify any person from working with children/youth until an investigation is completed. If an arrest has been made and charges filed by the police for any violent crime, including any physical or sexual abuse of anyone, the volunteer or staff person will be immediately removed from any susceptible environments with children or vulnerable populations until the investigation and legal process are complete. This serves not only as protection to children and vulnerable others but also as protection for the person alleged to have transgressed, as such a person is often highly vulnerable to accusations of inappropriate conduct based on perception of risk, which may or may not be well-founded. An Approved Adult or staff member who is under investigation for alleged abuse, or criminally charged for an offense involving a child is required to notify the CPC or a supervising staff member as soon as the investigation begins.

The CPC may temporarily or permanently disqualify any person(s) from working with children/youth, as the committee deems appropriate. Effective 12/31/14, certain offenses automatically disqualify anyone from working in a paid or unpaid position with children.

VIOLATIONS OF CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Alleged violations of the policy, other than abuse, shall be immediately reported to the CPC who will report it to the Pastor and the Clerk of Session, if deemed appropriate. The CPC will investigate the alleged violations of the policy. If a person(s) is found to be in violation of the policy, the CPC will determine what disqualification or disciplinary action, if any, is necessary.

Allegations were not Abuse, but a Demonstration of Poor Judgment

1. The CPC will hold the offender responsible and accountable for the behavior. Grace and mercy are extended in the context of repentance, accountability and justice.
2. Education and/or counseling will be expected to correct unhealthy behavior patterns.
3. The church may consider helping with the cost of sessions as an extension of the church ministry.
4. The offender will be removed from susceptible environments for a stated period of time, and not function in any supervisory capacity over children and youth for at least one year, after which an evaluation determining fitness for this ministry should be made

by the Pastoral team. The 2nd such occurrence of demonstration of “poor judgment” will result in the individual being precluded from any future ministry with children.

5. Communicate action taken with complainant and congregation as needed.

PROVIDING COMMUNITY FOR KNOWN SEXUAL OFFENDERS

Brothers, if someone is caught in sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently....Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:1-2 (NIV)

Individuals who have been adjudicated by a court or child protective services findings as sexual offenders **and/or have admitted to past sexual abuse of children** and are willing to abide by the guidelines set forth in this policy, are welcome to attend worship services and adult educational activities. Such individuals are hereafter referred to as “known sexual offenders” or “offenders”.

The minimum guidelines by which any known offender may participate in the life of the congregation are set forth below, and shall be incorporated into a covenant specific for the individual offender which is to be signed by the offender prior to participation.

Depending on the circumstances and at the discretion of the CPC, additional restrictions may be incorporated into an individual covenant. If an individual is on probation or parole, specific provisions related to contact with children, participation in counseling, and others, will be incorporated into the covenant. The individual covenant may also permit participation in additional church activities (other than those involving children) if circumstances warrant.

An individual on probation or parole for a child sexual offence may have restrictions placed on church attendance as part of their probation/parole condition. On occasion, an exception to a “no church attendance” provision of probation or parole may be made by an officer of the court, based on the church’s capacity to manage the offender in a way that keeps them from contact with children. Any individual on probation or parole must provide the CPC with a copy of the probation and parole agreement, including its terms and conditions, as well as the contact information for the parole or probation officer assigned.

1. **Offenders are expected to comply fully** with all restrictions and requirements placed upon them as a result of any legal actions, and provide two members of CPC with copies of any judgments, conditions of parole, or other documents in which restrictions on or requirements as a result of convictions or judgments are stated.
2. **Offenders are expected to participate in a professional counseling program**, specifically addressing their abusive behaviors. Offenders will provide the name of the agency and mental health professional to the CPC at the time of request for

participation. The offender may be asked to periodically sign a limited disclosure authorization for the therapist to verify to the CPC that the individual is in treatment. In a case of extreme financial hardship where the offender cannot afford counseling (and is not required by the court to be in counseling) the CPC will work with the offender to create an alternative plan that may include participation in a community-based group for sexual offenders or other affordable programs.

3. **Offenders will not accept any leadership** or representational position within or on behalf of this church, unless granted a variance by Session. **Known sexual offenders can never become Approved Adults.**
4. **The CPC will assign supervisors to any offender participating in the life of the congregation.** They will be adults who are not related to the offender. They will receive training by a professional agency that will include information on sexual offender dynamics, the long-term impact of sexual abuse on victims, and any specific conditions related to participation under the specific covenant established. If the offender is on probation or parole, the training may need to be approved by the officer of the court handling the case.
5. **The CPC will identify a small group of “covenant partners” for offenders.** This small group will provide spiritual, emotional and practical support and will meet with the offender on a regular basis. The supervisors and “covenant partners” will not be the same individuals.
6. **The offender may participate in worship in the sanctuary and attend adult Sunday school classes.** The CPC may designate a specific service and time for attendance. Any other activities the offender is permitted to participate in will be detailed in the covenant.
7. **A supervisor must accompany the offender at all times when on church property.**
8. **At no time should the offender deliberately place him or herself in or remain in any location in or around the church facilities which would cause undue distress to others.**
9. **At least twice each calendar year and as otherwise requested,** the offender shall meet with and report to the designated CPC regarding status of adherence to these guidelines.
10. **If the offender should decide to relocate membership (or substantially attend) another congregation,** the designated pastor will seek to inform the leadership of that congregation of the conditions of these guidelines.

Supervisors of Sexual Offenders

Should the church decide to welcome a known sexual offender into fellowship in accordance with the guidelines established in this policy, a group of supervisors will receive at minimum 3

hours of training to include the following items prior to welcoming the offender to the congregation.

If the offender is currently on probation or parole, permission by the supervising county office to include the offender, as well as their approval of the organization providing the training and the curriculum, may be required.

1. Dynamics of sexual offending (blame, impulsiveness, denial, deception; role of fantasies)

Summary information about different types of offenders
 General characteristics of a pedophile, lifestyle issues, access to victims, orientation
 The grooming process
 Sex offense therapy (brief overview) – Use of polygraph

2. Dynamics of victimization (shame, secrecy, trauma symptoms)

Defining child sexual abuse under PA CPSL
 Long and Short Term Consequences of child sexual abuse

3. Role of the supervisor

Close Accompaniment of offender while on church property
 Assure no contact with children, including verbal/emotional/physical
 Monitor offender compliance with policy & covenant guidelines

4. Specific information about the particular offender, including any terms of probation or parole, and guidelines agreed to by covenant with the church.

The church will inform membership of the inclusion of a known sexual offender and the agreed upon guidelines using various means of communication.

Use of Facilities by Outside Organizations

Outside groups and organizations using the church facilities on a recurring basis are to be made aware of this policy and must adhere to it or must provide evidence of their own policy and procedures, subject to review and acceptance by MLEPC.

- **If their policy does not include a “two adult” rule; clearances and training for volunteers; procedures for immediate reporting of suspected child abuse to Childline; and a prohibition on adults being alone in the facility with a child not their own, the organization is required to comply with these provisions.**

An adult representative of outside groups will be required to sign a Statement of Compliance (appendix a) for the sponsoring organization before use of the facilities will be granted.