

# New Holland Mennonite



**Child/Youth Protection Policy and Procedures Manual**

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## **New Holland Mennonite Church, New Holland, Pennsylvania**

**No longer will violence be heard in your land, not ruin or destruction within your borders. You will call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise. Isaiah 60:18**

### **I. Theological Statement/Purpose**

It is the desire of New Holland Mennonite Church to be a congregation seeking to be the hands and feet of Jesus in a broken world. Within our faith community, we grow together in the body of Christ as we draw closer to God in a trusting, nurturing atmosphere. As part of this mission, it is the goal of New Holland Mennonite Church to provide a safe environment for our children, church members, visitors, and the community who participate in our programs and use our facilities. A safe environment is one that provides for the protection of the physical, emotional, and spiritual health and well-being of every person created in the image of God. This atmosphere is to be free of exploitation, intimidation, verbal, physical or sexual abuse or misconduct, and harassment.

These policies and procedures have been established to:

1. **Provide a safe environment and protect all children who attend New Holland Mennonite from an abuse situation in all areas of his/her life.**

***Luke 18:16: But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."***

Children are special to God and we want to do all we can to protect our children from any kind of abuse. In a dark and fallen world, the reality of abuse directed towards children should not be overlooked. Our church is not immune to the effects of sin and it would be presumptuous for us to assume that this problem could never occur in our church body. It is our goal to do all we can to protect the children God has placed under our care.

***James 4:17: If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.***

2. **Protect our child/youth workers from being suspected or falsely accused of wrongful behavior toward a child.**

A false accusation can do great damage even to an innocent youth worker. These policies will function to protect those who participate within our church (as defined in Section 3) from false accusations.

3. **Lower the legal risk at New Holland Mennonite by establishing a policy that meets the test of "reasonable care."**

In the unfortunate event of an accusation or report of abuse, the entire church body can be drawn into a painful and costly conflict. In addition, divisions in the church can sometimes arise due to disagreements over how the abuse was allowed to occur and how the situation should be handled. In this situation, church leaders can become distracted from important ministries. Legal charges may be filed which could lead to a prolonged lawsuit and associated costs. All of these issues could greatly impact New Holland Mennonite Church and its leadership. These policies and procedures will set forth how to proceed in the unfortunate event that an incident occurs within our church body.

4. **To guard the honor and reputation of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

As a faith community, we strive to follow Jesus Christ in word and deed. We are called by Christ to act with integrity and love in all of our relationships and to avoid the exploitation of

vulnerable people or the use of positions of power within the church. Any kind of abuse that may occur within a church setting can be very destructive and it is our desire to protect “the name of Jesus” as well as those who worship and fellowship at New Holland Mennonite Church.

## **II. 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:

1. Any recent act or failure to act by a perpetrator which causes non-accidental serious physical injury to a child.
  - a. 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.
  - b. Serious physical injury means an injury that causes a child severe pain or significantly impairs a child’s physical functioning, either temporarily or permanently.
2. 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:
  - a. 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.
  - b. Seriously interferes with a child’s ability to accomplish age-appropriate development and social tasks.
3. Sexual abuse or exploitation: (1) the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of a child to engage in or assist another individual to engage in sexually explicit conduct. (2) 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. It also includes 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.
4. Endangering 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.
5. Serious physical neglect by a perpetrator constituting prolonged or repeated lack of supervision or the failure to provide the essentials of life, including adequate medical care, which endangers a child’s life or development or impairs the child’s functioning.
  - a. 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.

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

### III. Terms and Definitions

**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.

**Mandated Reporter:** Effective 12/31/14, the PA 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,” or “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, accepts responsibility for a child.” These adults are known as “mandated reporters.” (as defined CPSL Title 23 PA.C.S. Chapter 63). This includes volunteers, as well as staff.

**Pastor:** a minister under call to the congregation.

**Child Protection Committee:** implements and enforces the Safe Church Policies and Procedures.

**Approved Adult:** anyone 21 years age and older who has satisfied the requirements of the Child Protection Policy. An approved adult can be an employee or non-employee of the congregation. Approved adults include, but are not limited to:

- a. All employed staff
- b. Sunday school teachers/helpers
- c. Children’s church teachers, leaders, and helpers
- d. Boys Club, volunteers, and helpers
- e. Jr. and Sr. High Youth Group leaders, assistants, and chaperones
- f. Nursery volunteers
- g. Anyone else who works directly with children/youth
- h. Safe Church Committee members

**Child Advocate:** The Chair of the Child Protection Committee.

**Youth Volunteer:** Anyone 20 years old or less who works under the supervision of an approved adult.

**Teaching Assistant/Helper/Adult Volunteer:** a person who may or may not be a member of the congregation and who has a specific talent or experience to share with children/youth at a particular event/class. A teaching assistant’s opportunity is temporary and must be supervised by approved adults.

### IV. The Child Protection Committee (CPC)

**The Safe Church Committee of New Holland Mennonite Church shall consist of the Pastor, Children and Youth Sunday School coordinator, and two members at large. All members of the Committee will be approved by the Elder Board.**

**The Child Protection Committee will:**

1. Implement and enforce the Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
2. Review and make recommendations to the Elder Board for revising congregation policy and procedures 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.
5. Monitor Approved Adults to ensure that policies are being followed.
6. Keep Leadership Team apprised of all activities of the Committee.
7. Be kept apprised of investigations.

**The Pastor will:**

1. Review and process all volunteer applications.
2. Ensure that all required forms are received for all applicants and proper records are being maintained.
3. Interview applicants, if necessary, i.e. criminal background.
4. 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.
5. Maintain all clearances.
6. Receive and process reports of suspected abuse (see "Reporting Suspected Child Abuse).
7. Make available, upon request of an individual, his/her clearance reports.
8. Call meetings as often as needed.

## **V. 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.

An approved adult must:

1. Attend New Holland Mennonite Church for a minimum of six (6) months. **Application to become an approved adult may be submitted prior to this time on a case-by case basis.**
2. Complete an Approved Adult Application form and the required clearance forms. Clearances are required for all applicants and New Holland Mennonite Church will pay the fees associated with the application process. (Fees are waived for all volunteers.)
3. Participate in a standard initial training session.
4. Sign and comply with the Child Protection Covenant.

**Required Application Forms to Become an Approved Adult under this Section. Available forms are located in the Appendix:**

1. Approved Adult Application
2. Child Protection Covenant
3. Request for Criminal Record Check and Child Abuse Clearance Form
4. Pennsylvania State Police Request for Criminal Records Check Form
5. Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance Form
6. Letter of Acceptance as an Approved Adult

**Required Clearances:**

Church volunteers are required by the Child Protective Services (CPSL) to obtain background checks. However, most churches, including New Holland Mennonite Church, have policies requiring volunteers to obtain the following clearances:

1. Child Abuse History Clearance Form (CY-113) Free
2. Pennsylvania State Police Request for Criminal Record Check Form (SP4-164) Free
3. Volunteers who have not lived In PA for 10 years are also required to get the FBI fingerprint records check.

Background checks will be repeated every five (5) years; and, after a break in service of more than one (5) year.

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

All church staff hired July 1, 2008 and after with a significant likelihood of contact with children must also obtain FBI Clearance (fingerprinting) in addition to the above background checks 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 Pastor. Clearances are confidential and will only be made available to the pastor of the congregation, the Chair of New Holland Mennonite Church and the Child Protection Committee members.

The Pastor will be 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 which reports you possess, and note the dates of the reports on the list for:
  - a. Staff and volunteers who have the required background check reports and those reports that are less than five (5) years old. No new reports are required until five (5) years from the date of the existing reports.
  - b. Such personnel and volunteers who do not have the required background check reports, or in cases where the required reports are over five (5) years old, new reports are required.
3. Note on the list when the reports need to be renewed, and note on the list the date 60 days before to initiate the process of obtaining renewed reports.
  - a. New reports are to be obtained every five (5) years from the date of the existing reports.
  - b. New reports are required for all personnel and volunteers who have had a one (1) year break in continuous service.
4. Retain copies of all reports, even ones that are super ceded by renewed reports, in confidential locked files.

## VI. 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 the Appendix.
2. **Sexual Abuse Prohibited:** Those who accept this 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 the Appendix.
3. **Two Approved Adults Rule:** Two Approved Adults should be present during any church sponsored children/youth activity. (The only exception to the "Two Approved Adults" policy is in the youth mentoring program – see full description below.) In some instances, a designated 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.
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.
  - a. 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.
  - b. **Diapering:** Approved Adult must change clothes or diapers and inform another adult when this takes place. A parent can also be recruited to change clothes or diapers.
  - c. **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.
  - d. **Preschool:** An Approved Adult must accompany preschool age children to the bathroom. The adult will remain outside the stall. If assistance is required, the approved adult should encourage independence but can assist with minimal tasks if necessary (belts, snaps, etc.).
  - e. **Exceptions:** There may be exceptions to these bathroom procedures for children with disabilities. These will be addressed on an individual basis with input from the parents.

6. **Empty Room Policy:** After an activity, check rooms to ensure that all participants have vacated the room.
7. **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** :
  - a. Use corporal punishment, including spanking
  - b. Subject children to cruel or severe punishment, humiliation or verbal abuse
  - c. Deny any child food as a form of punishment
  - d. Punish any child for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet.
8. **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 a touch on private areas, those areas covered by a bathing suit, or a kiss on the mouth are inappropriate.
  - c. Discipline of any type involving physical contact is not permitted.
9. **Permission Slips:**
  - a. General – Parents/guardians need to fill out and sign a General permission form, which includes pertinent medical information, allergies, if any, emergency phone numbers, and the opportunity to cross out any activities in which their child is not allowed to participate. These forms will be updated every year and filed in the church office.
  - b. 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.
  - c. Medical Release Forms - 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.
    - i. The form must be completed by parents/guardians and returned to the Sunday School Superintendent for Sunday School events and all children’s activities, or the Youth group leader for youth group participation.
    - ii. A copy of the completed form will be kept on file in the Church Office.
    - iii. 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 office.
10. **Overnight Activities:** Overnight activities involving children/youth shall be chaperoned by at least two (2) Approved Adults. Boys and girls will sleep in separate areas with at least two (2) Approved Adults of the same gender directly supervising each group. If the minimum level of 1:6 supervision cannot be achieved, the activity must be canceled.



- 11. Transportation of Children/Youth:** When children/youth are transported for church activities, they shall be transported in groups with at least one (1) Approved Adult in each vehicle.
- 12. Personal Vehicle Transportation:** To transport children/youth in a personal vehicle, the driver must be 21 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 (5) years will be ineligible to drive for youth activities.
- 13. Appropriate Supervision Ratios:** Day trips/overnight activities on or off church property, ratios of adults to children/youth is as follows:

Grade	Number of Youth (Not related to approved adult)	Number of approved adults required	Plus One additional adult for each add't number of youth
Pre School – 3	4	2	4
4-5	6	2	4
6-12	6	2	6

- a. If mixed genders, 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.)

- 14. Youth Mentoring Program:** Youth mentors are same-gender, Approved Adults, chosen by youth, and approved by the Pastoral Team and the Safe Church Committee, to provide friendship and companionship for youth throughout their teenage years. Mentors are offered to youth to facilitate their spiritual growth and maturity, complementing the role of parents. These relationships are an exception to the policy of needing two (2) Approved Adults present for all activities with youth. This additional risk is addressed by the following policies:

- a. All mentoring with children or youth should always occur in a public place, never in a private car, or in a vacated building.
- b. In the event of one-on-one evening meetings, be aware of time. This is to avoid any appearance of impropriety, and to discourage mentor pairs from meeting late in the evening.
- c. Mentors are not to engage children/youth in counseling that requires professional help. For example – drug or alcohol addiction, sexual assault by a dating partner, severe problems with parental relationships, sustained depression or chronic anxiety, eating disorders, suicidal tendencies, etc. The need for formal or professional counseling should be turned over to the Pastoral Team.

## KEY POLICY

Any person who seeks possession of a key to New Holland Mennonite Church will have a clearly stated reason for needing a key and will be approved by the Church Council.

1. Certain people are authorized by virtue of their position in the church to hold keys. These people include, but are not limited to, paid employees, officers of the church, committee chairs and youth group leaders, and (as appropriate for your church). Church Council will approve the list of positions to whom keys are given and their current holders once each year.

2. Any other person who seeks possession of a key to the church facilities will have a clearly stated reason for needing a key and will need to be approved by the Church Council
3. All keys shall be of a type that cannot be duplicated, in order to eliminate unauthorized reproduction.
4. The keys will be assigned by the Pastor, following approval of the recipient by the Church Council. The Pastor will distribute or arrange for the distribution of the keys once they are assigned. If there is a need for additional keys, the Pastor will obtain new keys with Church Council approval.
5. Records of key holders will be maintained by the church's Administrative Assistant and kept on file. Keys shall be returned when they are no longer needed by the holder, and the return will be documented.
6. It will be the responsibility of the Pastor to monitor who is in possession of keys and request the return of keys from persons no longer authorized to hold them. Keys are not to be loaned to unauthorized persons, duplicated, or kept beyond the time that they are needed. Authorized key holders may loan their key to a spouse if the spouse has signed the Key Receipt Form and the Statement of Compliance. Authorized Youth leaders may share a key as long as each leader has signed the Key Receipt Form and the Statement of Compliance.
7. Key holders will be required to sign a Statement of Compliance, and submit a Key Receipt Form.
8. No key holder will use his/her key to access the church with a child or children not his or her own (or of whom the key holder is not a legal guardian or foster parent of) at a time when there is no church related activity being held in which the child and the key holder are involved. This is intended to prevent a situation where an adult key holder is alone with a child in the facility. In the rare case an exception is to be made to this provision, a written note from the child's parent or legal guardian must be submitted to the church office and approved by the Pastor or Child Advocate prior to entry.

### **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 Safe Church Committee, 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.

### **Minimum guidelines under which a known sexual offender may participate:**

- 1. Offenders are expected to comply fully** with all restrictions and requirements placed upon them as a result of any legal actions, and provide the designated Pastor or Child Advocate 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 Pastor or Child Advocate 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 Pastor or Child Advocate that the individual is in treatment.
- 3. Offenders will not accept any leadership** or representational position within or on behalf of this church. **Known sexual offenders can never become Approved Adults.**
- 4. The Child Protection Committee 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 Child Protection Committee 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 Child Protection Committee 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 Pastor or Child Advocate 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.

## **Reporting Suspected Child Abuse**

### **How “mandated” reporting works in PA:**

**Anyone may report suspected child abuse.** However, the PA CPSL imposes a reporting mandate, or requirement, on any individual who comes into contact with children in the course of his or her work or professional practice and has “reasonable cause to suspect” that the minor has been abused. These individuals are known as “mandated reporters”.

Church staff that should be considered mandated reporters under the CPSL are those who routinely come into contact with children, including pastors, music ministers, youth directors and any other paid staff expected to come into contact with children on a regular basis. Volunteers who are “approved

adults” are not considered mandated reporters under the CPSL; however, best practices in church settings require all such persons to immediately report any suspected abuse to the person designated in this policy, who in turn will make the required report. **Our church follows this practice.**

**The mandate (requirement) to report applies only to those children with whom the mandated reporter comes into contact through church related activities/work. The CPSL stipulates that the abused child must actually be “under the care, supervision, guidance or training of [the mandated reporter] or of an agency, institution, organization or other entity with which that person is affiliated.”**

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.

**A mandated reporter need not make a first-hand observation of the suspected child abuse victim.** Second-hand reports of abuse must be reported to the proper authorities if the mandated reporter has “reasonable cause to suspect” that child abuse has occurred.

**For practical purposes,** this means if a pastor is informed by a church member that a child who lives next door to her is being abused by her older brother – and the child is NOT a participant in church related activities – the legal “requirement” to report is not there. If the child, however, is attending Bible school, there is a requirement to report under the “care/guidance/or supervision” clause in the CPSL.

The CPSL specifically grants legal immunity to any individual who, in good faith, makes a report of suspected child abuse.

#### **Internal guidelines for reporting suspected abuse:**

An employee or an Approved Adult who has reasonable cause to suspect that a child/youth under their care, guidance or supervision, or a child/youth not directly under their care, guidance or supervision but involved in any church program or activity, has been abused by anyone (including but not limited to the child/youth’s family, guardians, an Approved Adult or volunteer) shall immediately inform the Pastor or the Child Advocate and document the suspected abuse by completing a **Suspected Child Abuse Incident Report**. (See Appendix).

**The church is not responsible for investigating or determining whether or not abuse has occurred. 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 the church.**

**If a child is injured or in pain, call 911 for an ambulance. The Pastor and/or Child Advocate will immediately make an oral report by calling The Pennsylvania ChildLine and Abuse Registry (ChildLine) at 800 932-0313 as required by law. The legal reporting obligation is met by calling ChildLine.**

**Following the required oral notification to ChildLine, the Lancaster County Children and Youth Agency (717 299- 7925) may also be contacted by the Pastor or Child Advocate, 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 Pastor or Child Advocate must complete a written report of the suspected abuse **on Form CY-47** (See Appendix), based on the oral report and Suspected Child Abuse Incident Report of the Approved Adult or volunteer and send it to:

**Lancaster County Children and Youth  
900 East King Street  
Lancaster, PA 17602**

**This is a legally required report.**

The Pastor or Child Advocate shall notify the volunteer or staff person who reported suspected abuse to the date the written report on Form CY-47 was sent. The employee or Approved Adult may also report reasonable suspicions directly to ChildLine; however, such a report does not relieve the obligation to inform the Pastor or Child Advocate and complete an Incident Report.

The congregation will cooperate fully with government authorities investigating allegations of abuse. The initiative for investigating alleged abuse resides with the Department of Public Welfare (DPW) and shall not be carried out by the congregation.

As a required reporter, the Pastor can request certain information about a child who was the subject of a report of suspected child abuse that they made.

Information can be requested verbally or in writing from the county agency. The information that can be released to the mandated reporter is limited to:

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

All allegations of child/youth abuse or serious physical neglect will be taken seriously by the pastor(s), Eldership, and the Child Protection Policy Committee. 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.

**Follow-up, investigation, documentation:**

1. Following placement of the call to report suspected abuse to ChildLine, the Child Advocate or pastor will inform the parent (provided that **neither** of the custodial parents is suspected of abuse). **If a custodial parent is the alleged abuser, 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 and Conference should be contacted after the report is filed as a matter of routine practice if the alleged abuse involves a staff person. The alleged abuser will have their ministry restricted to exclude contact with children immediately; and may be placed on paid leave for a designated period of time during the investigation
4. If an incident is reported that does not rise to the level of making a mandated report the Child Advocate will inform the child's parent(s) or guardian(s) of the concern and document the meeting.

**Information:**

1. The extent to which information will be shared with the congregation will be determined by Eldership and others as appropriate. The input of the Area Conference Minister may be sought and, if pastoral staff is involved, AMEC may be consulted in making this decision.
2. All necessary parties will cooperate with the investigations made by the police.
3. The Eldership will authorize the Pastor or Eldership 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 Eldership.
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 Eldership with assistance from the Area Conference Minister.

**Violations of Child Protection Policy:**

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 Child Protection Committee (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 shall disqualify any person from working with children/youth until the investigation is completed. The CPC may temporarily or permanently disqualify any person(s) from working with children/youth, as the committee deems appropriate.

Alleged violations of the policy, other than abuse, shall be immediately reported to the SCC Chair who will report it to the Administrative Pastor. The Child Protection Committee will investigate the alleged violations of the policy. If a person(s) is found to be in violation of the policy, the SCC will determine what disqualification or disciplinary action, if any, is necessary.

## **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 will be required to review a tape (video, audio) of the training each year after the initial training. Adults will not be approved to take care of children until after they have completed the required training and signed the Child Protection Covenant.

The full copy of the Child/Youth Protection Policy and Procedures Manual is available on the church website.

#### **PROCEDURES FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING:**

##### **Staff and Volunteers:**

1. A training video will be offered prior at beginning of each school year. It will be considered a mandatory part of volunteer training and employee orientation.
2. The church's Pastor will maintain a record of who has received training and the dates.

##### **Children and Youth:**

A Christian Education curriculum on healthy physical, emotional, and sexual boundaries, including sexual abuse prevention, shall be offered several weeks per year. 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 from Dove's Nest, to use.

##### **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.
  - a. Summary information about different types of offenders
  - b. General characteristics of a pedophile, lifestyle issues, access to victims, orientation

- c. The grooming process
- d. Sex offense therapy (brief overview) – Use of polygraph
- 2. **Dynamics of victimization** (shame, secrecy, trauma symptoms)
  - a. Defining child sexual abuse under PA CPSL
  - b. Long and Short Term Consequences of child sexual abuse
- 3. **Role of the supervisor**
  - a. Close Accompaniment of offender while on church property
  - b. Assure no contact with children, including verbal/emotional/physical
  - c. 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 known sexual offender and the agreed upon guidelines using various means of communication.**



## Recognizing Child Abuse

### Recognizing Indicators of Child Abuse

The physical signs of child abuse include bruises, burns, or broken bones. However, not all signs of abuse, even physical or sexual are visible. There are also behaviors that may indicate that child abuse has occurred. Many of these indicators may also occur in children who have not been abused, and they may not be seen in children who have been abused. Use discretion and discernment.

There are a variety of ways the trauma of abuse is experienced. We recognize the trauma another person is experiencing by the physical indicators we can see and the behavioral indicators we can experience. The earlier child abuse is identified, the earlier help can be given to help children and families minimize the long-term effects. Early detection can also help avoid additional incidents of child abuse and decrease further traumatization.

These are considered child abuse even if there is no evidence: Unreasonable restraining or confining a child. Forcefully shaking a child under one year of age. Forcefully slapping or striking a child under one year of age. Kicking, biting, throwing, burning, stabbing, or cutting a child in a manner that endangers a child.

There are six different types of abuse recognized in CPSL 2014: physical, inducing or fabricating medical symptoms, mental, sexual, causing death, and neglect. For the different kinds of abuse, there may be both physical and behavioral indicators. Some abuse may have no visible indicators of any kind. These are *indicators* and do not always or immediately imply that abuse is occurring.

### Child Physical Abuse

#### Physical Indicators

Unexplained injuries  
Unbelievable or inconsistent explanation of injuries  
Multiple bruises in various stages of healing  
Bruises located on face, ears, neck, buttocks, back, chest, thighs, back of legs and genitals  
Bruises that resemble objects such as hand, fist, belt buckle or rope  
Injuries that are inconsistent with a child's age and development level  
Burns

#### Behavioral Indicators

Fear of going home  
Extreme apprehensions/vigilance  
Pronounced aggression or passivity  
Flinches easily or avoids being touched  
Play includes obscene behavior or talk  
Unable to recall how injuries occurred or account of injuries is inconsistent with nature of injuries

**2. Inducing or fabricating medical symptoms:** Difficult to identify. An indicator can be frequent trips to emergency room. Medical staff are most likely to identify this type of abuse. Typically perpetrated by women and, in most cases (75%-85%), the mother. Also known as *Munchausen syndrome by proxy*.

### **3. Child Mental Abuse**

#### Physical Indicators

Frequent complain  
Nausea, stomachache, headache, etc.  
Bed wetting  
Self-harm  
Speech disorders

#### Behavioral Indicators

Expresses feelings of inadequacy  
Fear of trying new things  
Overly compliant  
Poor peer relationships  
Excessive dependence on adults  
Habit disorders (sucking, rocking, etc.)  
Eating disorders

### **4. Child Sexual Abuse**

#### Physical Indicators

Sleep disturbances  
Bed wetting  
Difficulty in walking or sitting  
Difficulty in urinating  
Pregnancy  
Positive testing STD/HIV  
Excessive or injurious masturbation  
    male or female

#### Behavioral Indicators

Sexually promiscuous  
Developmental age-inappropriate  
    sexual play and or drawing  
Cruelty to others  
Cruelty to animals  
Fire setting  
Anxious  
Withdrawn

5. Causing the death of a child through any act or failure to act.

### **6. Child Neglect**

#### Physical Indicators

Lack of adequate medical or dental care  
Often hungry  
Lack of shelter  
Child's weight is significantly lower than what  
    is normal for his/her age and gender  
Developmental delays  
Persistent (untreated conditions, lice, diaper rash)  
Exposure to hazards (illegal drugs, rodent/insect  
    infestation, mold)  
Clothing that is dirty, inappropriate for weather,  
    too small or too large

#### Behavioral Indicators

Not registered in school  
Inadequate or inappropriate supervision  
Poor impulse control  
Frequently fatigued  
Delinquent behavior  
Mistrusting