

## SAFETY PROCEDURES



The second step for providing a safe place for children is conscientious and intentional safety procedures. These procedures are designed to reduce the possibility of abuse to the children and to protect staff persons and volunteers from unwarranted accusations. Again, these are MINIMUM standards and each children's activity, program and/or ministry may adopt more stringent requirements.

1. Training is a requirement for all staff persons and volunteers working with children in church, children's activities, programs, and/or ministries. New staff members and volunteers will attend an initial training orientation that includes information regarding this policy, safety procedures, as well as information on how to identify and report child abuse. After the initial orientation session, all current staff members and volunteers shall attend an annual policy update session (refresher).
2. Two Adult Rule : no fewer than two unrelated, screened, qualified adults (age 18 or older) must be present at all times during any church sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children and/or youth. Furthermore, the adults must be at least 5 years older than the oldest young person in the group. All adults in direct contact with children in ministry must have their clearances in order to participate. When we are the host church for a ministry event ALL volunteers involved must have the appropriate clearances in order to participate.
3. Registration cards must be completed by the legal guardian for all children who participate in any church activity/ministry. A new card must be prepared at least annually and parents should be encouraged to keep the information current.
4. Attendance must be recorded at all activities/ministries, including both the children and the adults present. Late arrivals or early departures should be noted on the attendance forms.
5. All volunteers/staff who can understand a covenant shall sign a participation covenant.(10) In a situation that an activity, program, and/or ministry is continuous, this covenant can be in the form of clear, posted, or printed rules that are explained to the participants at the outset of the program.
6. In addition to other clearances, volunteer application, and participation covenant, drivers of children need to fill out a driver clearance form.
7. Each passenger should have a seat belt and the use should always be enforced. Car seats or booster seats are required for children up to the age of 8 years.
8. If possible two unrelated adults should be in each car. If only one adult is taking a carload of children, the group should all meet at the church, travel together and return to the church so the children can be picked up by a parent or guardian. Where possible, use caravans of cars as you travel.
9. Minimum supervisory standards will include the "two-adult rule". The two-adult rule requires that no matter the size of the group or the setting, there will always be at least two unrelated adults present. This may include the presence of an adult "monitor " who moves in and out of rooms, through the church's halls, etc.(11)(12)
10. Each room or space designated for children's activities, programs, and/or ministries shall have a window in the door or the door shall be left open such as a restroom, if an adult's presence is required. All activities, programs, and/or ministries should occur in open view. Should the children's activity, program and/or ministry be an outdoor program or occur in a setting which makes it difficult to comply with this Policy, the staff person/volunteer in charge of the activity, program and/or ministry shall take appropriate measures to make sure that the setting suits the activity, program, and/or ministry and the children are properly supervised.
11. Adults will not sleep in the same bed with a child or children. In a hotel-type or dormitory setting it is recommended that, if possible, an adult room is between two children's rooms. (In order to minimize the possibility of danger from within the group as well as from strangers, choose a hotel where the rooms open to the interior of the building rather than the outside, if possible.) In camping situations, adults will not sleep in the same tents as children(unless they are immediate family). In a setting where adults and youth are in a large open area, adults will sleep in a separate area of the room from the children. No permission for boys to enter the room where girls are sleeping and no permission for girls to enter the room where boys are sleeping will be given. (13)
12. Registration materials for activities, programs, and/or ministries in which children are outside of the direct supervision of their parents/guardians shall require a signed written permission forms renewed annually. These forms should include pertinent health information and be completed in order for the child to participate in the activity, program, and/or ministry.

13. Parents will have advance notice and full information regarding the activity, program, and/or ministry in which their child will be participating. Parents will also be notified of any activity, program, and/or ministry in which a staff person and/or volunteer will be alone with their child. Children who are attending intergenerational events must have a parent/responsible adult who will take responsibility for them at said event.
14. Staff persons and/or volunteers should be conscious of safety concerns when leading activities and games. Proper equipment and adequate supervision of the activity, program, and/or ministry should always be in place.
15. No drugs, alcoholic beverages, weapons or fireworks will be allowed.
16. No permission or opportunity for children to separate themselves from the group, with or without an adult, will be granted or provided.
17. No inappropriate touching creating the perception that the personal space and privacy of the individual is being violated will be allowed.
18. Bathroom Needs: when possible, children will be encouraged to take care of their own bathroom needs, but should a child require assistance, the outer bathroom door will remain open while one volunteer assists the child with an additional volunteer being present. For younger children assistance will be provided. For elementary age assistance should be limited to fastening and unfastening clothing. If more assistance is needed parental permission should be received in advance. When accompanying a child to take care of his/her own bathroom needs, the volunteer will check the bathroom and stalls prior to the child entering the bathroom. Again, the outer door should be left open. It is encouraged that with high school students there be a buddy system created to help insure safety. All other children, including middle school students, should be accompanied by safe sanctuary trained persons.
19. Media – written permission must be obtained from a parent/guardian prior to posting photos of children/youth on a website or in other public locations and names will not be included. This permission may be obtained as part of the activity registration forms.
20. Cyber Safety- receive parental permission to communicate with children/youth via e-mail, instant messaging, texting or sending data to them via computer, cell phone or other device. Never post identifiable information online – do not use “broadcast” emails – use “BCC” option. Be cautious when sending out dates, times, locations and participants. Limit what is communicated in electronic prayer requests – use only first names. Conduct any communications in a professional manner. Save any communications you have with children/youth as electronic paper trails can be important. If you are uneasy about any topic addressed in an email, send a BCC to a parent/guardian. Honor privacy, but not secrecy. If abuse is divulged electronically, follow standard reporting procedures. Do not post anything to your social networking site that you would not want printed in the church newsletter, newspaper, or on your resume. Remove inappropriate comments, photos, etc. Encourage youth to do the same.

## **REPORTING**

Once an incident of child abuse occurs or allegation of an incident is made, it is crucial that it be dealt with speedily and in a clearly outlined manner. The staff person or volunteer in charge of the activity in which the alleged abuse was observed or disclosed shall immediately remove the alleged victim and perpetrator from the situation and obtain information necessary, using the incident report form (appendices C and D), such as the alleged victim’s name, his/her age and address, the alleged perpetrator’s name, age, address, and relationship, if any, to the alleged victim, type of abuse, place of injury, and location of incident. (20)

The staff person or volunteer who observed the abuse or to whom abuse is reported shall report the incident immediately to Pennsylvania CHILDLINE and Abuse Registry@ 800-932-0313 (14), to make a report and submit a written CY47 form (15) to the Cumberland County Children and Youth within 48 hours. (20)

Persons who are the objects of the report shall be required to refrain from all activities at the church until the incident is resolved. In any removal of a person from any children’s activities, care should be taken to handle this in a discreet manner, documenting all conversations and recognizing that an investigation is still being conducted.