



GROW DEEP. STAND TALL.
WILLOW STREET MENNONITE CHURCH

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

KEEPING OUR KIDS SAFE.



TABLE OF CONTENTS
CHILD PROTECTION POLICY
Willow Street Mennonite Church

CONTENTS:	PAGE #
A. Purpose	2
B. Definition under PA law	2
C. Definition of Terms	4
D. Child Protection Committee	5
E. Selection of Approved Adults	6
Qualifications	6
Required Application Forms & Clearances	6
Pertaining to Volunteers	7
Pertaining to Employees	7
Record Keeping	8
F. Training & Education	9
G. General Guidelines for Protection of Children & Youth	9
Abuse Prohibited	9
Two Approved Adult Rule	10
Visibility	10
Bathroom & Diapering	10
Empty Room Policy	10
Church Key & Combination Recipients	11
Expressions of Affection	11
Permission Slips	11
Chaperones for Overnight Activities	11
Transportation	11
Being Alone with a Child	12
Facility Use by Outside Groups	12
H. Youth Mentoring Program	12
I. Nursery Protection Guidelines	12
J. Children & Youth Classroom Protection Guidelines	13
K. Suspected Child Abuse Reporting & Response	14
How to Report Child Abuse	15
Follow-Up after Report	15
Acts Demonstrating Poor Judgment	16
L. Regulations & Requirements Regarding Sexual Offenders Attending WSMC	16
Appendix of Forms	19

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

WILLOW STREET MENNONITE CHURCH

A. Purpose

1. The purpose of this policy is to provide a safe environment and protect all children from abuse in WSMC-sponsored events/activities. It applies to both volunteers and paid workers who work in church programs which involve minors. We recognize the seriousness and sinfulness of all types of child abuse. This type of mistreatment violates the very image of God. It causes serious damage to the mind, body, and spirit of the one abused, and causes harm to the mind and soul of the abuser.

We attempt to prevent abuse by adopting safeguards and by addressing charges of abuse. Should abuse occur, we will seek and support healing measures for the abused and abuser. We seek to follow the above in the manner of our Lord who addressed evil clearly with the ultimate goal of bringing wholeness and healing to all.

2. We also want to protect our child/youth workers from being suspected or falsely accused of wrongful behavior toward a child. Such accusations can do a great deal of damage to an innocent worker. Our procedures for maintaining a safe environment and admonishing inappropriate behavior are designed to prevent a compromising situation in the first place, and to strengthen a worker's defense against false accusations.
3. A third purpose of this policy is to guard the honor and reputation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

B. 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. Pennsylvania law (CPSL [Title 23 PA.C.S. Chapter 63] defines child abuse as 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).
 - a. Kicking, biting, throwing, burning, stabbing or cutting a child in a manner that endangers the child.
 - b. Unreasonably restraining or confining a child, based on consideration of the method, location or the duration of the restraining or confinement.
 - c. Forcefully shaking a child under one year of age.
 - d. Forcefully slapping or otherwise striking a child under one year of age.
 - e. Interfering with the breathing of a child.

- f. Causing a child to be present at a location while a violation of 18 PA. C.S. §7508.2 (relating to operation of methamphetamine laboratory) is occurring, provided that the violation is being investigated by law enforcement.
2. **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.
3. **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.
4. **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 shocking 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 essential of life, including food, shelter or medical care.
5. **Causing the death** of a child through any act or failure to act.
6. **Sexual abuse** – 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. Any recent act or failure to act is defined as occurring within the last two years. Sexual abuse or exploitation is 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:
 - a. 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.
 - b. 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.
 - c. Actual or simulated sexual activity or nudity for the purpose of sexual stimulation or gratification of any individual.
 - d. Actual or simulated sexual activity for the purpose of producing visual depiction, including photographing, videotaping, computer depicting or filming.

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.

7. Other Acts of Child Sexual Abuse

- a. Leaving a child unsupervised with an individual other than the child's parent who the perpetrator knows or reasonably should have known:
 - i. Is required to register as a Tier II or Tier III sexual offender under 41 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.
 - ii. Has been determined to be a sexually violent predator under 42 PA.C.S. § 97.99.24 (relating to assessments) or any of its predecessors.
 - iii. Has been determined to be a sexually violent delinquent child as defined in 42 PA.C.S. §97.9912 (relating to definitions)

- b. 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 PAC.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 assault)
 - vi. Aggravated indecent assault, as defined in 18 PA.C.S. §3125 (relating to aggravated indecent 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. § 5901 (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)

C. Definitions of Terms

The following are definitions by the Child Protective Services Law:

1. **Child:** An individual under 18 years of age.

2. **CPSL (Child Protective Services Law):** Pennsylvania has long had a Child Protective Services Law (CPSL); however, in recent years, 24 pieces of legislation have been enacted, changing how Pennsylvania responds to child abuse. These changes significantly impact the reporting, investigation, assessment, prosecution and judicial handling of child abuse and neglect cases.

3. **Mandated Reporter:** The PA CPSL imposes a reporting mandate or requirement on “a 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 responsible for the child’s welfare or has direct contact with children.” Based on the Law, all WSMC staff and volunteers working with children are considered Mandated Reporters of suspected child abuse. Mandated reporters are required to report directly to authorities when abuse is suspected.

The following are definitions by Willow Street Mennonite Church:

4. **Approved Adult:** Anyone over 18 years of age who has satisfied the requirements of the Child Protection Policy and required state-specified screening/checks. An Approved Adult can be an employee or a volunteer of WSMC and is considered a Mandated Reporter.
5. **Youth Volunteer:** Any worker under 18 years of age. There is no background clearance requirement, but they may work only in conjunction with an Approved Adult.
6. **CPC (Child Protection Committee):** A Willow Street Mennonite Church group which implements and monitors the enforcement of the Child Protection Policy.
7. **Pastor(s):** Those called to pastoral ministry by the congregation. This includes Lead Pastor and Youth Pastor.
8. **Person in Charge or Designee:** The “Person in Charge of the Institution or their Designee” is responsible for facilitating cooperation with authorities on a suspected child abuse investigation; and is also responsible for receiving notification from the mandated reporter that a suspected abuse report has been filed. For these specific purposes, the **Person in Charge** at our church is the Lead Pastor.
9. **WSMC:** Willow Street Mennonite Church.

D. The Child Protection Committee (CPC)

The CPC will consist of at least the Lead Pastor, the Youth Pastor, the Children’s Ministry Director, and the Preschool Director. The committee will insure that:

1. Implementation and monitoring of the Child Protection Policy is occurring.
2. Background checks (PA State Police Criminal Record Check and PA Child Abuse History Clearance, plus FBI Fingerprint checks for employees and also for volunteers who have not lived in PA continuously for the last 10 years) are completed and required forms are completed for all applicants.
3. A list of Approved Adults is maintained.
4. All workers, teachers, and staff are emailed a copy of this policy to be read and a covenant to be signed. A printed copy will be given as requested or can be viewed on the church website. Instruction on the nature of Child Abuse and evidence of Child Abuse will be part of the approval/renewal process.

5. Receive and process reports of suspected abuse.
6. Monitoring is done to insure the policies are being followed.
7. CPC meetings are called as needed, and no less than once a year.
8. The Church Board is kept updated.
9. The Church Board is apprised should there be an investigation by state or local authorities of alleged abuse where either the alleged perpetrator or alleged victim, or both, have a connection to WSMC.

E. Selection of Approved Adults

1. Qualifications

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:

- a. Attend Willow Street Mennonite Church regularly for a minimum of 6 months unless waived by the pastoral staff.
- b. Complete an Approved Adult application form and the required clearance forms. Clearances are required for all applicants. Receipts for fees may be submitted to the church office for reimbursement. (Note: The PA State Police Criminal Records Check and the PA Child Abuse History Clearance check are both free for volunteers).
- c. Participate in a standard initial training session. Every two years participate in additional training.
- d. Sign and comply with the Child Protection Covenant.
- e. After approval, notify the Lead Pastor if arrested or convicted of an offense that would constitute grounds for denial of employment or volunteer work with children, or named as a perpetrator in an founded or indicated report of abuse (See Appendix Form **Review of Legal Disqualifications**). Under PA law, such written notification is required within 72 hours of the staff person's or volunteer's arrest, conviction or notification that s/he has been listed as a perpetrator in the statewide database.

2. Required Application Forms & Clearances for Volunteers & Employees

A cover sheet with detailed instructions for the applicant will accompany the required forms. All required clearances and internal documents must be processed prior to working with children. After clearance results are received and following approval, a Letter of Acceptance as an Approved Adult will be given to the applicant. Forms are located in the Appendix:

- a. Approved Adult Application
- b. Child Protection Covenant
- c. Volunteer Statement (only for volunteers)
- d. Prospective Employee Form (only for employees)
- e. Consent/Release for return of Child Abuse Clearance to Church
- f. Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance Form (CY-113)
- g. Pennsylvania State Police Request for Criminal Records Check Form (SP4-164)
- h. FBI Fingerprint Record Check (electronic only via COGENT at https://www.pa.cogentid.com/index_dpw.htm)
 - i. All Employees must obtain the fingerprint record regardless of duration of residence in PA.
 - ii. Volunteers who have not lived in PA for the past 10 consecutive years and who cannot affirm that they are not disqualified from working with children

under Pennsylvania's laws or the laws of any other jurisdiction are required to get the FBI fingerprint records check.

- i. Child Abuse Training Completion Certificate (only for employees, electronic only)

3. **Pertaining to Volunteers**

- a. All adult church workers applying for an unpaid position responsible for the welfare of a child or having direct contact with children are required to obtain clearances. Volunteers may submit copies of clearances obtained through other employment or volunteer service, providing they are still current, defined as having been obtained in the last 60 months. WSMC is legally required to obtain these clearances.
- b. Volunteers are required to complete a Current Volunteer Statement stating that they understand and accept their responsibility to act as mandated reporters of suspected child abuse and to affirm that they are not disqualified from service working with children {pursuant to§6344(C)}, or have “not been convicted of an offense similar in nature to those crimes listed in subsection (C) under the laws or former laws” of any other jurisdiction. This Statement should be completed every 60 months as part of renewal, and includes a box to check to indicate ongoing and continuous PA residency. When seeking recertification, any volunteer not a resident for the past 10 years must obtain the FBI fingerprint record check.
- c. Clearances may be obtained electronically, rather than completing and mailing paper forms.
 - i. If application for clearance is filed directly and paid for by the applicant, the applicant shall provide the church office with access to the electronic record of results, or a printed certification.
 - ii. If application for clearance is filed and paid for by the church, the church office will receive results of the clearances directly and can provide a record of the results to the applicant.
- d. Volunteer Temporary Assignment – In cases where volunteers are serving with children on a short-term basis of less than 30 days in one calendar year, or are coming from outside the church to work on a specific church project working with children, these volunteers will not be required to become Approved Adults as long as they are in compliance with the clearance standards and practices of their sponsoring agency and home state. They must complete either a Pennsylvania Resident or a Non-Pennsylvania Resident Temporary Volunteer Form (see appendix). An example of this would be a Vacation Bible School held at WSMC in which volunteers from other participating churches are helping to care for children.

4. **Pertaining to Employees**

- a. An individual applying for a paid position as an employee responsible for the welfare of a child or having direct contact with children must obtain background checks as a condition of employment. Direct contact with children is defined by Statue as, “the care, supervision, guidance or control of children, or routine interaction with children.” Employees may submit copies of clearances obtained through other employment (not volunteer service), providing they are still current, defined as

having been obtained in the last 60 months. Employees are required by the CPSL to obtain background checks.

- b. Background checks will be repeated every 60 months, or as otherwise required by state law; and may be required after a break in service for an extended time.
- c. WSMC may employ applicants for positions where they will have contact with children, or supervise those who do, on a provisional basis for a single period of no more than 90 days, if ALL of the following conditions are met:
 - i. Applicant has applied for all required clearances and employer has copy/documentation of completed request.
 - ii. Employer has no knowledge of anything that would disqualify the applicant{pursuant to §6344(C)}*
 - iii. Applicant affirms in writing he/she is not disqualified from employment related to working with children {pursuant to§6344(C)},* or “has not been convicted of an offense similar in nature to those crimes listed in subsection (C) under the laws or former laws” of any other jurisdiction. (PA Prospective Employee Statement – *see List of Disqualifiers on back of form)
 - iv. The employer requires that the applicant not be permitted to work alone with children, and that applicant work in the immediate vicinity of a permanent employee.
- d. If the information obtained via the required clearances reveals that the applicant is disqualified from employment, the applicant shall be immediately dismissed.
- e. Every 5 years all employees who work with children need to also register for and complete *Recognizing & Reporting Child Abuse: Mandated & Permissive Reporting in PA Online Training*. See https://www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu/webapps/portalexecutetabs/tabAction?tab_tab_group_id=_2_1. A copy of their Child Abuse Training Completion Certificate must be given to the church office.

5. Record Keeping

Applications and related forms for staff and volunteers will be locked in a confidential file under the jurisdiction of the church office. Clearance results are confidential and will only be made available to church office staff and to the chair of the CPC. Church office staff will follow these recordkeeping steps:

- a. Create and maintain a master list of all employees or staff and volunteers who have regular contact with children in the course of their work.
- b. Determine which background checks you possess, and note the dates on the list. For staff and volunteers who have the required background checks which are less than 60 months old, no new checks are required until 60 months from the date of the existing checks. For such employees or staff and volunteers who do not have the required background checks, or in cases where the required checks are over 60 months old, new checks are required.

- c. Note when reports need to be renewed, and note on the list the date 60 days before to initiate the process of obtaining renewed reports. New reports are to be obtained every 60 months from the date of the existing reports. New reports are required for all employees or staff and volunteers who have had a one (1) year break in continuous service.
- d. Retain copies of all reports, even ones that are superseded by renewed reports, in confidential locked files; or if reports are obtained electronically ensure digital records are strongly password protected with limited access. Because any records pertaining to children and youth, and staff/volunteers that 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 charges for sexual abuse of a minor currently extends until the victim's 50th birthday, with legislation being proposed to eliminate the statute of limitations altogether. Records may be digitized and stored electronically, in an appropriately secure, password-protected manner.

F. Training and Education

1. **Child Protection Policy** – New child/youth workers will be given the link to our Child Protection Policy on the church website. A printed copy will be given if requested.
2. **Initial Training** – As part of the approval process to work with our children, volunteers and staff must participate in an initial training which includes: recognizing and responding to suspected child abuse, mandated reporting, the “grooming process,” as well as other congregational policies and practices.
3. **Continuing Education** – All Approved Adults are required to take training every two years to maintain clearances. The church will offer these trainings. Volunteers and staff who cannot attend trainings must watch/listen to a recording of the training. Workers who do not keep current by attending a training every two years will lose their clearance to serve.
4. **Child Abuse Awareness** – Periodically Child Abuse Awareness will be offered to parents and other congregants. “Circle of Grace” is a curriculum supplement which will be used with our children and youth to help them recognize inappropriate conduct on the part of adults or older children, and to empower them to respond appropriately.

G. General Guidelines for Protection of Children & Youth

1. **Child Abuse Prohibited:** Those who accept the special responsibility of working with the congregation's children/youth shall not violate that responsibility by intentionally, knowingly or recklessly causing physical injury; mental injury; sexual abuse or serious

physical neglect of children/youth; induce or fabricate medical symptoms 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 by 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. (The only standard exception to the "two Approved Adults" policy is in the youth mentoring program – see full description below.)

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 under age 18 must 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, two children/youth with a four or more year age difference should not be sent to isolated settings, (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, so their parents can assist as needed. If you do 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.
 - a. Diapering: Two approved adults must be present when clothes or diapers are being changed. A parent can also be recruited to change clothes or a diaper.
 - b. 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.
 - c. Preschool Age: An approved adult must accompany preschoolers 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.).
6. **Empty Room Policy:** After an activity, check rooms to ensure that all participants have vacated the room.

7. **Church Key & Combination Recipients:** Recipients of a church key or lock combination must sign a key policy that states they are responsible for helping ensure the safety of children and adults as well as possessions in the facility, and they will not be in the facility with a child not their own if no other Approved Adults are present.
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 body-to-body 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.
9. **Permission Slips for Activities:**

These forms are located in the Appendix.

 - a. Emergency Medical Authorization / Activity Permission form – Children/youth must have permission to participate in activities. Parents/guardians need to complete and return this form, which includes pertinent medical information and emergency phone numbers, a medical release, and general permission for day field trips. These forms will be updated every year and filed at the church.
 - b. Overnight Activity Permission form – Children/youth must have permission to participate in overnight activities. 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. All children/youth participating in day field trips or overnight activities must have the Emergency Medical Authorization form on file before they will be allowed to participate.
 - i. A copy of the completed form will be kept on file at the church.
 - ii. Each time a field trip or overnight event occurs, the original must be taken with an adult leader while a copy remains at the church.
10. **Chaperones for 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.
11. **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 at least 20 years of age or older. Anyone who has had their license revoked or suspended within the past four years will be ineligible to drive for children and youth activities.

12. **Being Alone with a Child Exception:** In a situation where an adult has a legitimate reason to be alone with a child, parental consent should be obtained.
13. **Facility Use by Outside Groups:** Any outside groups or organizations which use our church facilities on a recurring basis, where children are on-site as part of the activity, will be made aware of our policy and will confirm in writing their willingness to adhere to it.

H. Youth Mentoring Program

1. Youth mentors must be same-gender, Approved Adults, chosen by the youth and approved by the youth pastor. Mentors are to help facilitate the spiritual growth and maturity of the mentee, complimenting the role of their parents.
2. The mentor and mentee will each keep a log of the times and places they meet. The child's parent or legal guardian will initial the log the child keeps. The logs will include designation of the date/times/place of each meeting. All logs are subject to review by the youth pastor. (Log form in Appendix.)
3. All mentoring with children or youth should occur in a public place; never in a car or in a vacated building.
4. In the event of one-on-one meetings, be aware of time. This is to avoid any appearance of impropriety and to discourage mentor pairs from meeting late into the evening.
5. In the event that it becomes evident the child/youth is in need of formal or professional counseling (i.e. drug or alcohol addiction, sexual assault, sustained depression, eating disorders, suicidal tendencies, etc.), the youth pastor should be notified by the mentor.

I. Nursery Protection Guidelines

The nursery of WSMC 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. Forms are located in the Appendix.

1. Parents will complete a Nursery Registration 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 on the Nursery Sign-In Sheet each time children are delivered to care, and children will only be released to those listed on the Sign-in Sheet.
3. Parents should label all bottles, juices, blankets, toys and any other personal belongings. Pacifiers should be attached to the child or labeled. Only dry food snacks are allowed in the nursery. 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**:
 - 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.
5. If a child needs to proceed to the bathroom, an Approved Adult 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. 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. At least one parent/guardian shall remain in the church while the child is in the nursery during the worship service or other official church activities.
7. Children must be picked up immediately following the worship service or church activities and checked out in the log by a parent or a person designated on the Nursery Registration Form.
8. If an incident occurs that results in physical injury, parent(s) will be notified and an incident report will be completed.

J. Children & Youth Classroom Protection Guidelines

WSMC 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/guardians will complete a Children’s Sunday School Information Form (see Appendix) at the beginning of every Sunday School year. A copy of the classroom protection guidelines will accompany the form. Children up through 2nd grade will only be released to parents or those listed on the form. Grade 3 and up may leave to connect with parents/guardians at the close of Sunday School. Parents may indicate on the form if they choose to pick up children instead.
2. Two Approved Adults should be present in the classroom. If that is not possible, a designated Approved Adult will circulate outside the classroom area or be within easy reach to provide assistance if needed.

3. 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 shall be kept open.
4. 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.
5. Normally teachers who accompany a child to the bathroom should remain outside the bathroom door while the child is inside. If a child needs assistance with dressing, undressing or cleanup, two Approved Adults shall be present. If only one Approved Adult is available, the door to the bathroom shall be left open. If anything unusual occurred during this assistance, the parent will be notified at pickup.
6. Children in grades K-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.
7. Report any inappropriate conduct or relationship between an adult worker or volunteer and a child promptly to the lead pastor or someone on the CPC.
8. 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 Discipleship Director. **No one shall:** use corporal punishment, including spanking, humiliation or verbal abuse.

K. Suspected Child Abuse Reporting & Response

Pennsylvania law requires that all Mandated Reporters make a direct report to state authorities when they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is the victim of child abuse, under any of the following circumstances:

- 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;
- 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.

Note: WSMC Mandated Reporters are Mandated Reporters of abuse both within and outside of the church context; that is, a child need not be participating in a church program, activity or service in order for a Mandated Reporter to make a report of suspected abuse about that child. Individuals who are not regarded as Mandated Reporters are still encouraged to report suspected child abuse.

1. How to Report Child Abuse

- a. If you know of or have reasonable cause to suspect an incident(s) of child abuse, you are required by law to report that immediately either at www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis or by calling **CHILDLINE 1-800-932-0313**. Suspected child abuse must be reported whether it's a recent or past incident.
- b. If the report of suspected abuse has a connection to WSMC, you must then report the incident to our Lead Pastor, who will ask you to complete and return a form, entitled Suspected Child Abuse Incident Report (see Appendix).
- c. If the abuse was reported via ChildLine, within 48 hours, you must complete a CY-47 form (found online or in the Appendix). A copy is to be given to the Lead Pastor, and the original submitted to Lancaster County Children and Youth Agency (900 East King Street, Lancaster PA 17602, 717-299-7925). Within 3 business days of the completion of their investigation, (if an investigation is undertaken), The Department of Human Services will provide you with the results; you need to share that information with our Lead Pastor. No CY-47 must be completed and filed if the initial report was filed electronically and you received confirmation that the Department received the report.

Note – Neither you nor the church is responsible for investigating or determining whether or not abuse has in fact occurred. It may be necessary to ask several questions to get clarification solely to determine if you have reasonable cause to suspect that abuse has occurred, but detailed questioning of the child and/or the alleged abuser should be done by legal authorities, not the church.

All allegations will be taken seriously by the Pastor and other members of the Child Protection Committee, and will be treated in strict confidence. Your name will be kept confidential, although you will need to identify yourself to the legal authorities.

- d. Any child/youth worker who is under investigation for alleged abuse or criminally charged for an offense involving a child is required to notify the Child Protection Committee immediately.

2. Follow-Up After a Report Has Been Filed With ChildLine

- a. In the event that an alleged abuser **is** a custodial parent or resides in the same household as the child, **legal authorities** will inform the child's parent(s) of the allegations. If the alleged abuser is **not** one of the child's parents or household members, our **Lead Pastor** will inform the child's parent(s).

- b. The identities of the victim and the mandated reporter are by law confidential.
- c. The church will not enter into discussion with the alleged abuser while a legal investigation is underway. The alleged abuser will be removed from all positions with supervisory authority over or contact with children, pending the completion of the investigation.
- d. If the alleged abuse involves a staff person, occurs on church property, or involves a church volunteer, the church's insurance company as well as Lancaster Mennonite Conference will be notified.
- e. If abuse has occurred, the extent to which information is shared with the congregation will be determined by the Church Board. Bishop input may be sought, certainly so if the allegations include pastoral staff. The Board will authorize the Lead Pastor or other designated person to act as the official spokesperson for the congregation; only that individual may speak for the congregation regarding the situation.
- f. Pastoral support will be offered to all parties involved. Decisions about how this support will be given will be made by pastoral staff and the Church Board.
- g. Individuals who admit to, or plead guilty to, or are convicted in a court of law of any form of child abuse, are immediately and permanently disqualified from working with children/youth in the congregation.

3. Acts Demonstrating Poor Judgment

The CPC will determine what response to actions demonstrating poor judgment is appropriate on a case-by-case basis.

L. Regulations & Requirements Regarding Sexual Offenders Attending WSMC

A person who is classified as a sexual offender or disqualified to work with children through background check results and who may or may not be listed on the Megan's Law Website is welcome to attend services/activities at WSMC; failure to comply fully with the restrictions and requirements will mean that the person will no longer be able to attend services/activities at WSMC. Depending on the circumstances and at the discretion of the CPC, additional restrictions may be incorporated into an individual covenant.

1. If on parole, such a person:

- a. Agrees to provide the pastor with a copy of the probation and parole agreement, including its terms and conditions, as well as contact information for the parole or probation officer assigned.
- b. Agrees to sign a Contract for Sexual Offenders attending WSMC (Sample Contract located in Appendix) completed in counsel with the Probation/Parole Officer.

- c. Agrees to engage in professional counseling specifically addressing their abusive behaviors. The pastor will be given the name of the agency and the mental health professional, and will be granted limited authorization for the therapist to verify that the individual is in treatment.
- d. Agrees to inform the pastor immediately if counseling sessions are terminated.
- e. Agrees to cooperate fully with the “Supervisor” assigned to them by the congregation.
- f. Will only attend services/activities when there is a person willing to serve as their “Supervisor”.
- g. Agrees to meet on a regular basis with a small group of “Covenant Partners” identified by the CPC, for spiritual, emotional and practical support. The “Supervisor” will not serve as a “Covenant Partner”.
- h. Is ineligible to work with minors in the congregation in any capacity, or to accept any leadership or representational position within or on behalf of this church.
- i. Agrees to full disclosure to the congregation.
- j. Agrees that should they relocate membership or substantially attend another congregation, the pastor will seek to inform the leadership of that congregation of the conditions of these guidelines.

2. If no longer on parole, such a person:

- a. Agrees to meet with the Pastor and Church Board representatives.
- b. Agrees to sign the Contract for Sexual Offenders attending WSMC with stipulations put in place as the Church Board deems appropriate.
- c. Agrees that disclosure to the congregation would be at the discretion of the Church Board.

3. Procedures & Guidelines for Supervisors of Sexual Offenders:

- a. **Qualifications:** Supervisors must be unrelated to the offender. They need to receive training by a professional agency which must include information on sexual offender dynamics and the long-term impact of sexual abuse on victims. If the offender is on probation or parole, the training may need to be approved by the officer of the court who is handling the case.
- b. Supervisors must themselves have approved child protection clearances.
- c. It is the role of the supervisor to **protect children from any interaction with the offender**. They are also protecting him/her from violating parole or being falsely accused.
- d. The offender will have read, agreed to the conditions of, and signed our Sexual Offender Contract. The Supervisor will receive a copy of that contract and will need to acquaint themselves with the limitations placed on the particular offender.
- e. The Supervisor will clarify with the offender at which entrance they will meet when the offender arrives.

- f. During services, the offender must sit between their supervisor and another adult or an aisle, always on the same row with and within five seats of the supervisor.
- g. The offender will not be permitted to negotiate these procedures and guidelines.

APPENDIX OF FORMS

1. Approved Adult Application
2. Approved Adult Covenant of Child Protection
3. Current Volunteer Statement
4. Prospective Employee Statement
5. Consent/Release of Information Authorization Form for the PA Child Abuse History Clearance
6. Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance Form
7. Pennsylvania State Police Request for Criminal Record Check Form
8. FBI Fingerprint Record Check (electronic only at https://www.pa.cogentid.com/index_dpw.htm)
9. Child Abuse Training Completion Certificate (electronic only at https://www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu/webapps/portalexecutetabs/tabAction?tab_tab_group_id=_2_1)
10. List of Disqualifiers (on back of Volunteer Statement, Prospective Employee Statement, & Approved Adult Application)
11. Pennsylvania Resident Temporary Volunteer Form
12. Non-Pennsylvania Resident Temporary Volunteer Form
13. Emergency Medical Authorization / Activity Permission form
14. Overnight Activity Permission form
15. Mentoring Log Form
16. Nursery Registration Form
17. Nursery Guidelines for Parents
18. Nursery Sign-in Sheet
19. Children's Sunday School Information Form
20. Suspected Child Abuse Incident Report
21. Report of Suspected Child Abuse CY47
22. Sample Contract for Sexual Offenders Attending WSMC