

Child Protection Policy (CPP)

Effective July 1, 2015

Mission Statement

The mission of Grace's Child Protection Policy (CPP) is to provide a safe environment for the spiritual development of its children and youth, as well as to enlist, train, and support a volunteer staff to carry out the mission following God's Word and using the life of Christ as their example. We expect that our CCP will provide an effective system to reduce risk of abuse, deter perpetrators through a screening process, and respond appropriately if an incident occurs.

Application Process

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church welcomes anyone interested in working or volunteering with the children of the Church. After prayerful consideration, the Church has implemented some suggestions made by the Lower Susquehanna Synod and in accordance with state laws in an effort to provide a safe environment for the children of the Church.

The Synod recommends that those individuals who have access to children in the various ministries of the Church undergo a pre-established screening process before they begin working with children.

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church requires that individuals complete the following application process if called to minister to the children of the Church. All employees of the church must also follow this process:

1. Complete the Approved Adult Application (Appendix A-I). Attend an interview session with the Children, Youth and Family committee if requested.
2. Consent to a PA State Criminal Record Check (via the Approved Adult Application) or show us an original and provide us with a copy of your record check.
3. Show us an original of your PA Child Abuse Clearance results and provide us with a copy.
4. Provide the results of an FBI Fingerprint Check *OR* if you have lived in the state of PA in the last ten (10) years consecutively, provide a signed Disclosure Statement Application for Volunteers *Required by the Child Protective Service Law* (Appendix A-III). Employees of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church are required to have the FBI Fingerprint Check and will not be eligible to sign the Disclosure Statement in lieu of the check.
5. Sign a Child Protection Covenant (Appendix A-II). This also serves to acknowledge that you have read and understood Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church's Child Protection Policy and agree to comply with it.

Individuals applying to be an Approved Adult must have maintained an active membership in a church congregation for the past one (1) year, and continue to be an active member after being accepted as an approved adult. Those who have not met this requirement may be required to undergo further screening, including but not limited to providing a list of references and interviewing with the Senior Pastor and Youth Director.

If a history of abuse/molestation of children, or criminal record against a person is found by the Committee, these individuals may be offered opportunities to volunteer services in other areas of the Church, and pastoral guidance and counseling will be offered to assist them to understand the Church's responsibility to provide protection to its children and to the members of the congregation.

Applications and related information will be locked in a confidential file in the Church office, with access limited to those Committee individuals involved in the screening process via the church staff. A record of the Approved Adults shall be maintained and reviewed on an annual basis by church staff.

All clearances must be renewed every 36 months. Renewal dates will be determined by the date on the clearance document itself.

Appropriate Behavior Guidelines

Two Adult Rule - Two approved adults must be present during any church activity involving the supervision of anyone under the age of 18. In an emergency, an adult who has not yet been approved may work with an Approved Adult. The adult who has not yet been approved may not be left alone with children or youth. (note: an *unapproved* adult may not be used).

Parental Permission - in a situation where an adult has a legitimate reason to be alone with a child/youth, such as individual counseling or transportation, parental consent in the form of a permission slip shall be obtained. A bound logbook will be kept for any such situation. ~~and located in the church office.~~

Permission Slips - Children must have permission to participate in any overnight activity or any activity that takes place away from Church grounds. Permission must be in writing and signed by a parent or guardian. It must identify the activity in which the children/youth will be participating. If an overnight situation occurs, at least one approved adult of each gender should be in attendance.

Open Door Policy – doors should be left open as standard practice. If doors must be closed, all windows in the door must be left uncovered. Persons outside the room must be able to see into the room.

Empty-Room Rule – when leaving an empty classroom or youth room after an activity, the door shall be left open.

Overnight Rule – all adult chaperones must complete the screening process and be approved before they may accompany children/youth overnight.

Expressions of affection - adults must use caution when expressing affection toward children/youth. Follow these guidelines:

1. Always ask permission before touching.
2. Respect a child/youth’s choice in touch.
3. Never make a child/youth feel uncomfortable.
4. Be aware of where you place your hands on the child/youth.
5. A body-to-body embrace, a touch on private areas (those covered by a bathing suit), or any type of kiss in inappropriate.

| <u>Appropriate Displays of Affection</u> | <u>Inappropriate Displays of Affection</u> |
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| Always ask permission before touching | Any form of unwanted affection |
| Pats on shoulder or back | Full frontal or “bear hugs” |
| Handshakes | Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas |
| High fives | Lying down beside children |
| Fist bumping | Kisses or Massages |
| Verbal praise | Patting children on thigh, knee or leg |
| One arm around shoulders | Tickling or Wrestling |
| Holding hands while walking or during prayer | Touching or hugging from behind |
| | Compliments related to physique/body development |

Bathroom Procedure – Children over 4 years of age will be escorted to the restroom. The volunteer will stand in the hallway and wait for the child to be finished. Younger children who may need assistance: one volunteer may assist the child while another stands nearby. The door to the restroom must remain open. Diapering will be done only in an observable area with doors open.

Periodic Checks – will be made of classrooms to insure that appropriate behavioral guidelines are being followed. An usher or an officer of the day shall make these checks during the worship hour for the Nursery.

Electronic Communication - All communication through electronic media (email reminders, text messages, etc.) must be copied to the staff person’s direct supervisor. When communication with an individual supervised child is necessary, every effort will be made to include the child’s parent in the message.

Social Media - Volunteers may not communicate directly with supervised children through any form of electronic communication or social media. Furthermore, volunteers and staff may not take or use pictures, video or audio recordings of students to use on their *personal social media* accounts at any time.

Short-Term Volunteers - (i.e. last minute parent classroom helpers, or last-minute youth volunteers) may assist an Approved Adult for no more than three hours or one event

without going through the process to become an Approved Adult.

Volunteers Under Age 18 - Assistance by individuals under age 18 shall be allowed only after the individual has participated in an educational session that reviews the **Child Protection Covenant** (Appendix A-II). Volunteers under age 18 are not required by law to obtain criminal background checks.

Definitions

Child abuse, according to the CPSL, means intentionally, knowingly or recklessly doing any of the following:

- Causing bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- 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.
- Causing or substantially contributing to serious mental injury to a child through any act or failure to act or a series of such acts or failures to act.
- Causing sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any act or failure to act.
- Creating a reasonable likelihood of bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- Creating a likelihood of sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- Causing serious physical neglect of a child.
- Causing the death of the child through any act or failure to act.

Child abuse also includes certain acts in which the act itself constitutes abuse without any resulting injury or condition. These recent acts include any of the following:

- Kicking, biting, throwing, burning, stabbing or cutting a child in a manner that endangers the child.
- Unreasonably restraining or confining a child, based on consideration of the method, location or the duration of the restraint or confinement.
- Forcefully shaking a child under one year of age.
- Forcefully slapping or otherwise striking a child under one year of age.
- Interfering with the breathing of a child.
- Causing a child to be present during the operation of a methamphetamine laboratory, provided that the violation is being investigated by law enforcement.
- Leaving a child unsupervised with an individual, other than the child's parent, who the parent knows or reasonably should have known was required to register as a Tier II or III sexual offender or has been determined to be a sexually violent predator or sexually violent delinquent.

"Recent" is defined as an abusive act within two years from the date the report is made to ChildLine. Sexual abuse, serious mental injury, serious physical neglect and deaths have no time limit.

Sexual abuse and harassment can include the following:

1. Verbal sexual suggestions, innuendoes or jokes.
2. Leering or ogling.

3. Intrusive touching, including pats, squeezes, hugs, pinches, kissing, brushing against someone's body
4. The use of pornography
5. Sexual assault or attempted sexual assault

Policy Specific Definitions

Youth – defined as participants ages 18 years or younger, or still attending high school at the time of the event.

Approved Adult – anyone over the age of 18 who has satisfied all the requirements of the Child Protection Policy and the application procedure for Approved Adults.

Committee – is defined as Pastor and two other members of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church. Suggested members might be the Youth Ministry Liaison, the Sunday School Administrator or a member of the ~~Christian Education Board~~ Children, Youth, and Family Ministry Committee.

Response Procedures to Allegations of Child Abuse, Sexual Abuse or Harassment

1. According to Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, a **mandatory reporter** is defined as “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”. In addition it includes “Clergyman, priest, rabbi, minister, Christian science practitioner, religious healer or spiritual leader of any regularly established church or other religious organization”. Therefore, all those working directly with children in their role at Grace are considered **mandatory reporters**.
2. If a volunteer, staff member, or employee suspects abuse of a child or suspects an adult offender within the congregation, Pennsylvania state law requires the individual to contact the Pa Department of Welfare **CHILDLINE at 800-932-0313** or by reporting online at:
<https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home>
3. Additionally, the person making the report will notify the Senior Pastor or Congregation Council President immediately. The Senior Pastor or Congregation Council President may not dissuade the individual or make an independent determination of whether to report.
4. Within 48 hours of making the report to **CHILDLINE**, a written report of suspected child abuse shall be made to the county children and youth agency where the abuse occurred. The Senior Pastor, or in his/her absence, the Congregation Council President shall engage the reporter, as needed, in preparing the CY-47 form (Appendix 20a) and shall supply the reporter with a copy of the completed form as filed. If the original report was made online, an additional written report is not needed.

5. All allegations of abuse will be taken seriously by the Church Council and the Pastor and will be immediately reported to the Bishop of the Lower Susquehanna Synod.
6. The local police department will be notified immediately by the Pastor or Council President in cases of criminal activity of any type. The phone call or other type of notification will be documented.
7. An Approved Adult, the Pastor or Church Council President will arrange medical care in cases of physical injury to a child. If none is present, the Officer of the Day and/or the Adult Leader of said group will make arrangements with immediate follow up to the Pastor or Church Council President. All arrangements will be documented.
8. The Pastor along with the Church Council President will notify parents or guardians of all children involved in an alleged incident, unless the parents or guardians are the persons suspected of the abuse. The phone call or visit will be documented.
9. The Church Council President will notify the insurance carrier when the reporting procedures have been initiated.
10. The Church Council President will arrange for legal counsel if necessary for the protection of the Church.
11. The Church Council will authorize the Pastor, Council President, one of the Council members, or appropriate legal counsel to act as official spokesperson for the Church if necessary. Only the authorized person or persons can speak for the Church to the news media, government agencies, attorneys, or others.

This policy shall come into compliance with any such changes in statute and shall be reviewed, updated, and edited by the Children, Youth, and Family Committee for Congregational Council ratification within 60 days of any statutory enactment.

Attachments:

Approved Adult Application - Appendix A-I

Child Protection Covenant– Appendix A-II

Disclosure Statement Application for Volunteers *Required by the Child Protective Service Law* (for those who have lived in the state of PA for 10 consecutive years) – Appendix A-III