

ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH, Enola PA
Keeping Kids Safe Policy
Christian Education Committee
Effective Date: May 1, 2003, Rev. July 2015

POLICIES

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church recognizes the importance of ensuring a safe and protected environment for its children and youth against abuse. The following policies and procedures outline necessary steps to educate our staff, volunteers and congregation to be proactive about the safety of our young people. The purpose is to create an effective system that will reduce the risk of abuse, deter predators from our congregation through screening, and offer guidance and direction if an incident occurs.

DEFINITIONS (for more information, go to <http://keepkidssafe.pa.gov/>)

* A **child or youth** is any person under 18 years of age.

* According to the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law (CPSL [Title 23 PA.C.S. Chapter 631]), **child abuse** 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.

* The Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) defines **direct contact with children** as, "The care, supervision, guidance or control of children or routine interaction with children."

* Any 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 is considered a **mandated reporter** and is required to report suspected child abuse if s/he has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse.

* An **approved adult** is anyone over 18 years of age who has satisfied all the requirements of this policy. An approved adult can be a volunteer or an employee of the congregation.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A. **Who is Qualified to Serve:** All volunteers must have maintained an active membership or participation in the life of the congregation for at least six months before they can apply to be a volunteer. Volunteers with less than six months active participation in the life of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church shall be partnered with qualified workers.

B. **Two-Adult Rule:** Whenever possible, two approved adults should be present during any church activity involving the supervision of anyone under the age of 18. Preferably, one of these adults should be a parent of one of the participating children or youth, or at a minimum, someone over 21 years of age.

C. **Parental Permission:** In a situation where an adult has a legitimate reason to be alone with a child, parental consent should be obtained, and supervisors are to be notified in advance. In addition, permission slips are to be completed by the parent or guardian of the child/youth for any overnight activity or any activity that takes place away from church grounds in which the parent or guardian is not present.

D. **Open-Door Policy:** When possible, doors should be left open so that persons passing by can observe inside. If the doors are closed, persons passing by must be able to see into the room.

E. **Overnight Rule:** Only approved adults may serve as chaperones for overnight activities. Preferably, one adult of each gender will be present.

F. **Expressions of Affection:** Adults must use caution when expressing affection toward children/youth. True expressions of affection contribute to a warm, healthy relationship. Remember to place reasonable limits on physical interaction: Respect a child's/youth's refusal of affection. Never make a child/youth feel uncomfortable. Be aware of where you place your hands (a pat on the bottom or a bear hug could be misinterpreted by a child or an observer). Note that a body-to-body embrace, a touch on private areas (those covered by a bathing suit) or any type of kiss is inappropriate.

G. **Transportation of Children:** When children and youth are transported for church activities, they shall be transported in groups with at least one approved adult.

H. **Adult/Child Ratio:** One adult per every seven (7) youth is the preferred ratio.

I. **List of approved adults:** All approved volunteers will be added to the list of qualified workers and will be posted publicly, and all pertinent paperwork will remain on file in the church office.

INCIDENT REPORTING AND RESPONSE

A. A mandated reporter must make a report of suspected child abuse if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a 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.
- An individual 14 years of age or older makes a specific disclosure to the mandated reporter that the individual has committed child abuse.

B. Mandated reporters must make an immediate and direct report of suspected child abuse to ChildLine either electronically at www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis or by calling 1-800-932-0313. Once a report has been filed, you are required to follow up with a written report to your immediate supervisor (pastor or committee chair). Willful failure to report suspected abuse is punishable by law, and all reporters are guaranteed anonymity.

C. All parties with knowledge of a report of abuse must exercise proper judgment, confidentiality, sensitivity and compassion with the alleged victim(s) and perpetrator.

D. All allegations of child abuse or serious physical neglect will be taken seriously. All reporting steps should be documented, including a log of phone calls, personal visits, and written reports.

D. If the media contacts Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church regarding an incident, they will be referred to the synod office.

INSTRUCTIONS

A. All rostered staff, employees, and volunteers of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church engaging in the care, teaching supervising, escorting or any other activity with children under the age of 18 will be educated and screened according to the policies set forth. (This policy also applies to all Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church chartered scouting organizations.)

B. All of the above, without exception and regardless of length of time and service, working with children MUST:

1. Review this policy.
2. Participate in a congregation-authorized training session.
3. Complete the application form. Note that by signing and submitting the application, you are agreeing to abide by this policy. These will be kept securely on file in the church office.

4. Provide copies of Act 33 Clearances (see C below)

C. All prospective volunteers must obtain the following clearances:

- Report of criminal history from the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP); and
- Child Abuse History Clearance from the Department of Human Services (Child Abuse).

Additionally, a fingerprint based federal criminal history (FBI) submitted through the Pennsylvania State Police or its authorized agent is required if:

- The position the volunteer is applying for is a paid position; and
- The volunteer has lived outside the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in the last 10 years.

Volunteers who are not required to obtain the FBI Clearance because they are applying for an unpaid position and have been a continuous resident of Pennsylvania for the past 10 years must swear or affirm in writing that they are not disqualified from service based upon a conviction of an offense under §6344.

If you were approved as a volunteer before July 1, 2015, and do not have clearances (because you previously were not required to obtain clearances) you have until July 1, 2016, to get your clearances. If your clearances are older than 36 months, you also have until July 1, 2016, to get your clearance. Copies of clearances from another employer or volunteer organization are acceptable.

As of July 25, 2015, fees for the Child Abuse History and Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check have been waived for all volunteers.

D. All new applications will be reviewed by at least two members of the Keeping Kids Safe Committee (a standing committee of this congregation, appointed yearly by the Congregation Council based on information provided by the applicant and his/her references. [Note: This needs to be added to the Constitution and Bylaws.]

ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH, Enola PA
Children/Youth Ministry/Volunteer Application Form

Please complete this application if you are interested in working in any position involving ministry with children and youth. It is being used to help the church provide a safe and secure environment for those children and youth who participate in our programs and use our facilities.

Personal

Full Name _____ Date Completed _____

Address _____

City/Zip _____ Email _____

Phone: Home _____ Work _____ Cell _____

Occupation: _____ Employer: _____

Social Security Number _____ Driver's License Number _____

Are you 18 years of age or older? Yes No

Have you ever been accused of abusing a child? Yes No

If yes, please explain.

Have you ever been involved in a child abuse investigation as a witness, alleged victim or alleged abuser? Yes No

If yes, please explain.

Do you have any physical handicaps or conditions that would prevent you from performing certain types of activities relating to youth or children's work? _____ If yes, please explain.

Church Activity

Name of church of which you are a member: _____

Do you regularly attend worship at Zion? _____

List the name of other churches you have attended regularly during the past five years.

Experience

List all previous experience working involving children and youth.

List any gifts, callings, training, education, or other factors that have prepared you for children/youth work and that might help enrich the lives of our children and youth.

Do you belong to any clubs or organizations that involve ministry to, or interaction with, children?

If yes, please give the name and type of adult/child activity in which you are engaged.

Personal References (not relatives)

1. Name _____
Address _____
Day Phone # _____ Evening Phone# _____
Email _____
Relationship to you _____

2. Name _____
Address _____
Day Phone # _____ Evening Phone# _____
Email _____
Relationship to you _____

Applicant's Statement

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references or churches listed in this application to give you any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my character and fitness for children/youth work. I release all such references from any liability for furnishing such evaluations to you, provided they do so in good faith and without malice. I waive any right that I may have to inspect references provided on my behalf.

I affirm that I am not disqualified from employment of volunteer service based on convictions to crimes listed in §6344(c) or similar crimes in non-Pennsylvania jurisdictions.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the Constitution and policies of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church. I have read and understand these guidelines, and I hereby subscribe to them because I want to participate in making this congregation a safe place for the spiritual development of our children.

Applicant's Signature

Date

FOR COMMITTEE USE ONLY

Keeping Kids Safe Committee Review

Signature

Date

Signature

Date

Signature

Date

Clearances Obtained

 Date

 Date

 Date

Pennsylvania Child Abuse History

Pennsylvania State Police
Criminal Record Check

Federal Criminal History
Background Check

ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH, Enola PA
Children/Youth Worker/Volunteer Reference

Applicant Name _____

Reference Name _____

The purpose of this confidential reference is to determine if the applicant would be a suitable youth or children's worker. Our ultimate goal is to provide a safe environment for those under our care. We appreciate your willingness to help us. All information given will be held in the strictest confidence.

1. How long have you known the applicant and in what capacity?

2. Does the applicant work well with others?

3. Is there anything about the applicant's character that would exempt him/her from working with children and youth?

4. Do you have any information that causes you to withhold your recommendation of this person to work with children and youth?

5. If there is any other information you would like to give concerning this applicant, please do so.

6. I confirm the accuracy of the above statements to the best of my knowledge.

Reference Signature

I prefer to talk with the pastor or Screening Supervisor by phone. Yes _____ No _____

Phone: _____ Best time to reach me _____

Letter/newsletter article May/June 2015

Living into Pennsylvania's New Child Protection Laws

No doubt you have heard that Pennsylvania recently revised its child protection laws in an effort to improve the state's efforts to track and fight child abuse. These new laws affect all those who work with children, both employees and unpaid volunteers, including those volunteering in churches and faith-based organizations.

This new PA law extends beyond paid employees so that it is applicable to those unpaid volunteers "responsible for the welfare of a child or having direct contact with children." The Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) defines "direct contact with children" as "The care, supervision, guidance or control of children or routine interaction with children."

The new legislation expands the definition of "mandatory reporters" to include not just paid (church) employees who work with children and youth, but also volunteers over age 18 who work with children in regularly scheduled programs. For us, this means that all Sunday School teachers, nursery attendants, VBS volunteers, youth group leaders and each of our staff members have become mandatory reporters.

Mandatory reporters are those who, when they have reasonable suspicion of child abuse, are required to call the state Child Line. The new law puts the burden on each mandatory reporter to notify state authorities directly, and not just to their supervisor. Once a report has been filed through Child Line, they are required to follow up with a written report to their immediate supervisor. Willful failure to report is punishable by law, and all reporters are guaranteed anonymity.

The new law calls for background screenings to be conducted on all mandated reporters every 36 months. This means that here at Zion we will need to have in place procedures for the initial screenings and all follow-up screenings. While we have some of these clearances on file for our volunteers, many are out of date. Volunteers must have current clearances by July 1, 2016 (a year's extension was recently enacted due to the large volume of requests); employees must have current clearances by December 31, 2015.

The required background clearances include:

- * Child Abuse History Clearance (through PA Department of Welfare) - \$10 fee
- * PA State Police Criminal Record Check - \$10 fee
- * FBI Fingerprint Record Check (all employees and volunteers who have lived in Pennsylvania for less than 10 years) - \$28.75 fee

We are pleased to say that Zion has had a child protection policy (*Keeping Kids Safe*) in place for more than 12 years. It has recently been updated and will be shared with those who will need background checks. Hopefully it will answer all of your questions. Volunteers will be expected to obtain these clearances on their own (two of the three can be done online). If the cost for doing so becomes an issue, we can work with you to arrange for payment.

We are committed to making our congregation a safe place for all children to worship, play, sing or just have fun. We thank you in advance for your cooperation.

The Christian Education Committee

Obtaining Child Abuse Clearances

Certain individuals, in order to work or volunteer with children, are required to obtain clearances which may include the following:

- Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance
- Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) Criminal Record Check
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Criminal Background Check

Who needs child abuse clearances?

- Employees having contact with children
- Foster/adoptive parents
- School employees governed by the Public School Code
- School employees not governed by the Public School Code
- Volunteers

The Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance can be submitted and paid for online through the Child Welfare Information Solution (CWIS) self-service portal, www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis. Submitting an application online allows individual applicants to receive their results through an automated system that will notify the applicant once their results have been processed. Applicants will be able to view and print their results online.

All necessary instructions and links to apply for these clearances can be found at <http://www.dhs.state.pa.us/findaform/childabusehistoryclearanceforms/index.htm>.