

# SafeConduct & Youth Protection Policies

**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF ROBESONIA**  
Robesonia, Pennsylvania

## SafeConduct Policies

### Introduction & Biblical Mandate:

Jesus said, “Whoever welcomes [a] child... welcomes me” (Matthew 18:5).

Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of the church and in the realm of God.

Jesus also said, “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones..., it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6).

Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to the little ones, the children.

We are to care well for others in their times of distress.

Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” “Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me” (Matthew 25:40, 45).

As recorded by James, “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.” “Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord.” (James 1:27; 5:14)

### **Background:**

The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church state that “children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional, and sexual exploitation and abuse”.

‘Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation, and ritual abuse (“ritual abuse” refers to abusive acts committed as part of ceremonies or rites; ritual abusers are often related to cults, or pretend to be) occur in churches, both large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural, and racial lines. It is real, and it appears to be increasing. Most annual conferences can cite specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation within churches. Virtually every congregation has among its members adult survivors of early sexual trauma.

Such incidents are devastating to all who are involved: the child, the family, the local church and its leaders. Increasingly, churches are torn apart by the legal, emotional, and monetary consequences of litigation following allegations of abuse.

God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong.

(From *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church*, 2000; pages 180-181. Copyright © 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by permission.)

The following set of policies are based on *Safe Sanctuaries; Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church*, 2004, by Joy Thornburg Melton, The United Methodist’s Discipleship Resources, Nashville, TN.

Child abuse is a problem that transcends denominational affiliation. Thus, in covenant with all United Church of Christ and other Christian congregations, we adopt this policy for the prevention of abuse of youth in our church.

### **Purpose:**

Our congregation’s purpose for establishing this SafeConduct Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our youth and safe interactions among people of all ages.

The following set of policies are intended to accomplish four tasks:

- (1) Reduce the possibility that abuse will take place within the church;
- (2) Reduce the possibility of false accusations of abuse;
- (3) Have a healthy process to address abuse accusations;
- (4) Increase the overall safety within the church.

### **Statement of Covenant**

Therefore, as a Christian community of faith and a United Church of Christ congregation, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth, as well as all the workers with children and youth, and in all our church relationships. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will educate all our workers with children and youth regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods (including first aid and methods of discipline); we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law; and we will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

### **Conclusion**

In all of our ministries with youth, and in our relationships with one another, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each youth will be “surrounded by steadfast love, ...established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal” (From “Congregational Pledge 2,” “Baptismal Covenant II,” in *The United Methodist Hymnal*, p 44).

## Levels for Workers

There are two levels of persons who work with youth and the infirmed within the church: CHYLD Workers and Teen Aides.

### (1) CHYLD Workers

#### Children Hospital Youth Leadership and Discipline

This is for those who are working with children and youth; visiting shut-ins, hospitalized, and homebound; providing leadership of children and youth, or leadership of those who provide care for children, youth, and visitations; those who make the decisions about responding to allegations of abuse; and those who have oversight of Adults, Teen Aides, and Teen Leaders who are ministering to the youth and the infirmed.

Required of the following:

Paid Staff  
Spiritual Council Members  
Chairpersons of the Standing Committees  
Teachers of classes with minors (Sunday school & VBS)  
Youth Group Advisors  
Nursery Department Attendants  
Members of the Christian Education Committee (as they supervise Teachers, Nursery Personnel, Youth Group Advisors, etc)  
Those serving on the Ecclesiastical Council  
Hospital, Homebound, Shut-in, & Prison Visitation Persons  
Greeters/Ushers (if being used to assist in the nursery)

Requirements:

- (1) Not have been found guilty of abuse by a secular court or ecclesiastical judgement
- (2) Be: (1) a member in good standing for at least 6 months; (2) an associate member for at least 6 months (having had been in worship at least 6 times in the past 6 months); or (3) be a paid staff person
- (3) Be 18 years old or older
- (4) Pass a standard criminal background check to be renewed every 5 years
- (5) Pass a standard history of abuse background check to be renewed every 5 years
- (6) Complete a “SafeConduct Interview”
- (7) Have three references: one from a relative and two from independent non-relatives, which are to be contacted by either the Christian Education Committee or the Search Committee.

- (8) Sign the “SafeConduct Participation Covenant” (which indicates you have read the SafeConduct Policies and intend to follow them, and it includes a question as to whether or not there is any reason that you know of that you should not be able to work with youth)
- (9) Complete an application, pastoral profile, or “Time and Talent” sheet
- (10) Be educated in child protection safety, be educated in identifying and reporting suspected abuse, and periodically review the SafeConduct Policy booklet - to be renewed every 5 years (more frequently if directed by the Christian Education Committee or Spiritual Council, such as when there are updates to the law or changes in the policies). Education includes: (1) SafeConduct course offered by the Christian Education Committee; (2) SafeConduct course offered by the Heidelberg Association, the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference, or the Pension Boards of the UCC (or a course endorsed by either of those bodies); (3) a child safety/youth protection course approved by the BSA, Girl Scouts USA, or a PA school district; (4) a course that meets the requirements of a PA licensing body (such as needed for licensed child care workers, healthcare workers, counselors, etc).; (5) a course pre-approved by the Christian Education Committee or Spiritual Council.
- (11) If you have lived outside of Pennsylvania in the past 10 years; or if you are a paid staff person or intern; or if you are going to be participating in the Mind, Body, & Spirit Club, submit the results from a federal fingerprint background check.
- (12) Actively maintain good membership standing, associate member standing, and/or staff position.
- (13) Additional State Documentation  
Volunteers must sign the Pennsylvania “Disclosure Statement Application for Volunteers”  
New Paid Staff and Interns must sign the Pennsylvania “Disclosure Statement Application for Provisional Employment”

### Staff Specific Requirements:

- (1) For new staff and interns, the three background checks must either be: (1) received on or before the first day of serving in that position; or (2) applied for before their start date, submitting evidence by their start date of having had applied for the background checks, and the results must be received within 90 days of the start date in order to continue in that position.
- (2) Paid staff and interns must utilize the Pennsylvania employee background check process and not the Pennsylvania volunteer background check process. Volunteers may use either the volunteer or employee background check reports.
- (3) The United Church of Christ of Robesonia will provide the funds to pay the fees for staff and interns for their background checks on the renewal schedule listed above. The United Church of Christ of Robesonia will reimburse newly hired staff for their background checks, for those who need new background checks at the time of their hiring/calling, if they are hired/called and if they are approved by the background checks.

### (2) **Teen Aides**

Those teens (12-17 years old) who assist CHYLD workers in order for their to be appropriate adult to child ratios (at least two adults are needed for two-deep leadership). At least two CHYLD workers needs to be working with these teens. A Teen Aide does NOT count as one of the minimum two needed for the “Two Adult Rule”, nor does a Teen Aide count as one of the minimum for the “Rule of Three,” as (a) a Teen Aide by definition is a minor, and (b) there needs to be at least two adults when working with the Teen Aide to prevent a one-on-one (adult-youth) situation with the adult and Teen Aide.

These teen leaders may only be considered as an assisting leader if they are working with children who are at least three years younger themselves. This does not refer to teens working with their peers.

A Teen Aide may not be used toward the count of two-deep leadership, but may be used toward the count of leader to child ratio when working with youth who are at least three years younger than themselves.

Teen Aides may *not* administer discipline. Discipline is only to be carried out by adults.

Required of:

- Those assisting in classrooms (Sunday school & VBS)
- Those assisting in the nursery

Initial Requirements:

- (1) Sign the “SafeConduct Participation Covenant” (which indicates you have read the SafeConduct Polies and intend to follow them, and it includes a question as to whether or not there is any reason that you know of that you should not be able to work with youth)
- (2) Not have been found guilty of abuse by a secular court or ecclesiastical judgement (religious judgement)
- (3) Be 12-17 years old
- (4) Have been active in the life of the church for at least 6 months prior to becoming a Teen Aide.
- (5) Review of SafeConduct Policies every 5 years (or whenever significant updates are made, or otherwise specified by the leadership)
- (6) Those 14 years old an older must be instructed on: (a) what it means to be a Mandated Reporter; and (b) how to report alleged abuse.

### **(3) Teen Teachers & Care Providers**

Those teens who are 14 years or older must meet the CHYLD Worker requirements if their care is beyond aiding an adult. This includes:

- (1) providing babysitting for someone outside of their family;
- (2) being the primary teacher of a classroom; and
- (3) regularly providing care for nursery age children (including assisting in the nursery).

This is NOT required for 14-17 year olds who are giving a presentation, performance, lecture, sermon, and the like in a large open forum, such as in the sanctuary during worship, at an event in the fellowship hall, or at an event outside the building. Whenever youth are providing such leadership, there are to be adults present who meet the below standards of the “Two Adult Rule” or the “Rule of Three.”

### **(4) Youth Leaders**

Those who are of youth group age (approximately 11-20 years old), who hold a leadership position in the church.

These youth provide leadership for their peers (also ages 11-20 years old), but cannot be used as Teen Aides for younger youth, unless they have completed the Teen Aides requirements.

Those under the age of 18 years old do NOT qualify as one of the two adults for the “Two Adult Rule”, nor do they qualify as one of the three adults for the “Rule of Three.”

### **(5) Visitors**

Adults who do not have CHYLD Worker, who are visiting a child/youth activity, because their child is involved in the activity.

For example: a parent who wishes to visit and observe their child’s Sunday school classroom; a grandparent who stays with their own grandchild in the nursery; a guardian who comes to watch their teen bowl at a youth group event.

The visitor’s interactions with children are to be limited within reason to interactions only with their own child. Visitors may not be in the rooms by themselves with children. Visitors do not count as one of the basic two adults for two-deep leadership. For example: a visitor can take their own child to the bathroom, but not any other children; however, a visitor may participate in public interactions where common courtesy dictates, such as helping to hand out crayons or holding hands with the group in a prayer circle. Visitors should not initiate physical interactions with children. For example: visitors should not offer a child a hug, rub their back, comb their hair, button trousers, change a diaper, etc. (with the exception of their own child).

If a child’s parent/guardian/adult begins to regularly participate in a classroom or other youth setting, the Christian Education Committee should encourage them to acquire CHYLD Worker status. However, whether a Visitor does or does not complete the CHYLD Worker process, they are still to have continued access to their child.

**(6) Parents/Guardian**

A child’s own parent/guardian is exempt to the two-adult rule, driving rule, sleeping rules, and changing/bathroom rules. For example: a son and his father may be in a room by themselves; a 17 year old mother may drive her own daughter on church activities; a child and their own parent may share the same sleeping quarters.

**(7) Drivers**

Adults who have CHYLD Worker or Chaperone status, a valid driver’s license, and insurance. Evidence of license and insurance should be renewed every 5 years.

An individual must be at least 18 years old to drive youth for a church activity.

**Two Adult Rule:**

No adult may be alone with a child at any time (with the exception of their own child). This is also known by the phrase “two-deep leadership.”

The two adult rule applies for electronic communication, as well. If an adult is communicating to a youth through text, e-mail, or other social media, a second adult must be included in the message (such as that youth’s parent/guardian or another CHYLD approved adult) or the contact must be made through a service that enables other adults to read the communication (such as using “Flocknote” or similar service).

An “adult” (including in regard to the “two adult rule”) refers to someone who is 18 years old or older. An individual with CHYLD Worker Status who is under 18 years old does NOT count toward the minimum requirement of two adults.

**Adult to Child Ratio:**

*Regardless of the ratio, a minimum of two adults are required.*

Except where otherwise noted:

Youth Group Age (12 years old and older)

The ratio for working with youth group age children is at least 1 adult to 12 youth. For offsite trips, leaders are to schedule a minimum ratio of 1 adult to 8 youth. There must be a minimum of two adults.

Grammar Age (5 to 11 years old)

The ratio for working with grammar age children is at least 1 adult to 8 youth. There must be a minimum of two adults.

Nursery Age (under 5 years old)

The ratio for working with nursery age children is at least 1 adult to 4 children. There must be a minimum of two adults.

For any activity involving minors, at least one CHYLD Worker needs to be present. It is recommended and encouraged that at least one or more additional CHYLD Worker be scheduled as a backup or substitute for any such event or activity, due to the possibility of illness or emergency of an adult and the possibility of a greater than anticipated turnout of youth.

For youth group and grammar age children the other adult can be within the building on the same floor, but does not necessarily need to be within the room. However, in such cases where there is only one adult in the room, the room must have an unobstructed window or have the door open, the lights need to be on, the children need to be in plain sight, and the second adult must check in randomly.

Examples: the Sunday school teacher in the Fellowship Hall may be considered to be the second leader for the teen Sunday school classroom, an Elder in the parlor can be considered the second leader if the pastor is counseling a minor in his/her study. If the youth group is meeting in Fellowship Hall and photocopies are needed, one of the adults may go upstairs briefly to run off photocopies. However, if the youth group is

meeting and there are only two adults, one adult may not leave the building to pickup pizza (leaving one adult by themselves with the youth).

Except for taking children to the restroom and emergencies, two leaders need to be present in the room with nursery age children.

In the event that two persons are not present, the leader must make every reasonable attempt to be in a public area with the youth. Examples would include: outside the building under the roof at the doors along Pearl Street, outside the building at the top of the steps along Penn Avenue, in the hallways in the mall, etc. For instance, when there are only two leaders for an event, and the one adult leader needs to take a youth to the hospital, the other leader should move the rest of the youth to a more public and open space, if reasonably and safely possible. Because of such possibilities, it is recommended to have at least three or more adults scheduled for events.

Adult leadership for any event involving minors cannot be led solely by a married couple or adults of the same household; a third adult is required. Married couples do not count as two separate adults, unless a third adult is present.

For any worship service where an attendance of 25 or more persons are expected, at least two ushers/greeters shall be on duty. For any worship service where an attendance of 75 or more persons are expected, at least four ushers/greeters shall be on duty. The head usher shall appoint two ushers to be in the rear of the sanctuary during the worship services. For services of less than 25 persons, one usher and at least one other CHYLD Worker or Chaperone shall be scheduled by the Worship Committee to be available (which could include the another usher, worship leader, pastor, sexton, organist, or choir director).

At least two ushers must remain in the building until every minor has left or is in the care of their parent/guardian. For all other events, at least two CHYLD Workers or Chaperones need to remain in the building until every minor has left or is in the care of their parent/guardian.

At least every three years, all ushers need to be trained by the Worship Committee, all teachers need to be trained by the Christian Education Committee, and all Youth Advisors need to be trained by the Christian Education Committee in the following: location and use of fire extinguishers and fire blankets, location of first-aid kits, knowledge of persons with medical training within the church, the practice of the person with the highest medical training being in charge in a medical situation, when and what to do in contacting the police or ambulance.

### **Rule of Three:**

In the event that the Two Adult Rule cannot be met by two CHYLD Worker Status approved adults, supervision can be provided by one CHYLD Worker Status approved adult with an additional two or more other adults present for Grammar Age and Youth Group Age youth. Those three may *NOT* all be from the same household. The Rule of Three exception may *NOT* be used for Nursery Age youth.

### **Counseling & Pastoral Care**

In the event that a minor comes for counseling or pastoral care when the secretary or other adult is not present in the building. The pastor shall first call a CHYLD Worker (such as an Elder), requesting them to sit in the sanctuary or parlor. The Christian Education Committee shall maintain a list of five persons (preferably Elders) which the pastor can call for this purpose. In the event that the pastor exhausts the list of five persons without anyone being able to be present, or in the event that it would be inappropriate for one or more of those five to be present (such as being a relative to the minor), then the pastor shall inform two Spiritual Council members the date and time that he/she has met with the minor. This information is confidential.

If one-on-one counseling and pastoral care is taking place in a room, the door to that room is to have an unobstructed window, where the second adult is able to randomly visually observe that there is no inappropriate interaction taking place within the room.

One-on-one counseling should not exceed a standard 50 minute session. If a session exceeds 60 minutes, it should be documented when the session took place, from what time to what time, and the reason why an exception was made, which should always indicate how it was in the parishioner's/client's best interest.

Ongoing counseling is when there are more than six sessions within a twelve month time period for the same presenting issue.

A signed permission to provide care by the parent/guardian is required for ongoing one-on-one counseling or pastoral care with a youth under the age of 14 years old. When appropriate to care, it is preferred and encouraged that a parent/guardian for youth ages 14-17 years old sign a permission to provide care for ongoing counseling; however, if not appropriate to their care, the reason is to be documented, and the individual is to sign permission to provide care.

### **Restroom Policy**

In the absence of a parent/guardian of a nursery age child, it is “best practice for most situations” if an approved CHYLD Worker or Teen Aide (a) accompanies children to and from the restroom, (b) enters the restroom to ensure it is safe before any child enters the restroom, and then (c) the adult or aide waits outside the restroom.

If assistance is required, the CHYLD Worker adult can assist the child with the door propped open, so that a second screened adult can visually monitor the assisting adult. It is recommended that two screened adults be present when assistance is required in the restroom.

### **Premise Monitors**

Premise monitors are additional screened adults who patrol hallways and common areas within the church’s facility when children, youth, or vulnerable adult activities occur. They can observe classrooms and activity areas through windows or open doors on a roving basis. They can also help maintain the Two Adult Rule or the Rule of Three if a worker must step out of the room or assist a child in the restroom.

### **Non-Youth Specific Events**

For events that are not specifically youth or children events, but where youth or children might come to participate, at least two CHYLD Workers should be present to provide oversight of the adult-youth interactions, to ensure those interactions are compliant with the church’s SafeConduct Policies.

For example: Youth might come to Soup and Such to help and/or receive community service hours. They might come with or without a parent, as such the committee overseeing the Soup and Such activity is responsible for scheduling/assigning two CHYLD Workers to be present during that activity.

### **Offsite and Overnight Activities:**

For any event involving one or more female youth, at least one female adult is needed (or that youth’s parent/guardian); and for any event involving male youth, at least one male adult is needed (or that youth’s parent/guardian).

#### **Separate Child/Adult Sleeping/Changing Areas:**

With the exception of a parent/guardian and their own child, adults shall have separate sleeping areas from that of youth. Adults may not sleep in the same bed, adjoining bed, or tent as youth (with the exception of their own child). With the exception of immediate family (i.e. husband and wife), males shall have separate sleeping area from that of females.

Example: if at a youth lock-in within a church’s fellowship hall, separate sections for youth & adults, and males & females must be identified and maintained, or separate rooms must be used.

There shall be separate areas for dressing and undressing available for adults & youth and separate areas for males & females. There shall be separate showering facilities for youth/adults and males/females, or established and posted separate showering times.

In the event of an emergency, where for safety an exception is made, such as for high adventure outings (i.e. when monitoring a possible concussion or allergic reaction, to prevent/treat hypothermia, a youth’s fear of being alone in a tent (if there is not another youth of the same gender), damage to shelter/tents, needing to divide up the group to get help, etc.), the parent/guardian needs to be made aware that an exception was made, two members of the Christian Education Committee shall be informed, and every reasonable effort must be made to maintain the integrity of the intent of these policies.



### **Car-pooling:**

In regard to car-pooling: The two adult rule applies. In the event that two adults are not within the same vehicle, vehicles shall keep one another in sight while driving as best as is reasonably and safely possible. Youth need to be picked up and dropped off from a public place (such as the church), unless a parent/guardian has given prior approval.

Unnecessary unscheduled stops may not be made unless at least two adults are present. Example: A necessary stop could include stopping for a youth to use a public restroom; an unnecessary stop could include spontaneously stopping to buy ice cream.

Each car shall have its own copy of the driving directions, map, GPS, and/or a working knowledge of the route and destination. This is to reduce the chance that a driver will make a "risky" lane change or intersection crossing to stay with the group, which may lead to an accident.

### **Nursery Age Children Pick-Up:**

As nursery age children may not be able to voice concern if the wrong person is picking them up, the Christian Education Committee shall develop a method by which nursery age children are picked up by the appropriate adult. The method should be included in a parent nursery booklet.

Potential examples include: matching tags; returning a church nursery beeper; photo identification; hand stamps; etc.

### **SafeConduct Paperwork:**

The Christian Education Committee shall appoint a SafeConduct Coordinator and a SafeConduct Co-coordinator. These persons shall meet the CHYLD Worker level requirements, be able to maintain confidences, and be affirmed in their positions by the Consistory.

The SafeConduct Coordinators shall ensure that the paperwork of persons as it relates to the SafeConduct Policies is up to date.

Background checks, investigations, and rulings shall be maintained in the church office in a secure location by the office secretary. This documentation is confidential and is to be treated as such.

Applications and training certificates shall be maintained in the church office in a secure location by the office secretary.

The office secretary shall also maintain a computerized listing of adults who are able to work with youth using the church membership database (software limitations may apply).

### **Safety Equipment:**

The Trustees shall appoint someone to annually check all the fire extinguishers, fire blankets, emergency lighting, AED, and first-aid kits (preferably someone with medical or first-aid training/knowledge). A list of first-aid supplies shall be created and those supplies maintained.

All of the above needs to be in proper working condition, in its proper location, and not expired.

### **Universal Precautions:**

Because of the general concern that some very serious and life-threatening illnesses can be spread through contact with blood and other body fluids, when an accident occurs, it is necessary to institute some precautionary procedures. HIV is one disease that can be spread in this manner, but there are a wide variety of other diseases that can be spread through contact with blood, drainage from scrapes and cuts, feces, urine, vomit, respiratory secretions (nasal discharge), and saliva. If you have contact with any of the body fluids, you are at risk for various diseases, though the risk is very low and dependent upon the type of contact made and the type of fluid involved. It is simply good policy to treat all spills of body fluids as infectious in order to protect anyone from becoming infected.

### **How Should Blood and Body Fluid Spills Be Handled?**

Disposable, waterproof, latex gloves (or equivalent latex-free gloves) should be worn when you come into direct contact with body fluids (bloody noses, vomit, clothing soiled by stool or urine, scrapes).

When taking off your gloves turn them inside out without having your unexposed hands coming into contact with the external part of the glove.

Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water after disposing of used gloves.

If no gloves are available and your hands come into contact with these fluids, you should vigorously wash your hands and other affected skin, using soap and running water, after direct contact has ended.

Proper cleaners shall be stored out of the reach of children in the nursery and in the kitchen/pantry.

### **General Safety:**

All cleaners, paints, toxic/poisonous fluids/powders, etc. shall be kept out of the reach of children and/or in a child-secure cabinet/closet.

Baby powder may not be used in the nursery due to potential respiratory problems.

All electrical outlets in the nursery are to be covered.

In order to keep the nursery safe, the nursery room may only be used as the nursery.

At least twice a year the Christian Education Committee shall conduct a fire drill, where all the children shall be led to the evergreen trees on the far side of the parking lot. This drill shall be done during appropriate weather. The Sunday school teachers are to ensure that all children are accounted for (both in the lot and in returning to the classrooms), that at least one adult is blocking traffic and ensuring safe passage across the parking lot, and that at least one adult has checked all the rooms to ensure that all children have left the building together. In the event of a drill or an actual fire, all parents shall be informed of the drill/fire. Parents are to pick children up from the area by evergreen trees in the event of an actual fire.

### **Hospital and Home Visitations**

Visitations of minors in their homes should only be done with the consent of their parents/guardians. The parent/guardian should be home during the visit.

When visiting a minor in the hospital: (1) parent/guardian should be present; and/or (2) the door to the room should remain open, unless otherwise specified by medical personnel.

When visiting an adult in the hospital, rehabilitation unit, or nursing home the door to the room should remain open, unless requested to be closed by the patient/resident or otherwise specified by medical personnel.

### **Medications:**

When at all possible, no one shall give a minor medications except their parent/guardian. In emergency situations where the parent/guardian is not available and/or will not be available within a reasonable amount of time and medication is given, an incident report shall be written up. Medications include, but are not limited to: Tylenol, Tums, antacid, cough syrup, medicated cough drops, Benadryl, etc.

No minor shall be given aspirin or medication with aspirin within it unless directed to do so by a medical doctor.

### **Illegal Substances:**

Illegal substances may NOT be used by adults or minors.

### **Tobacco Products:**

Minors may NOT use tobacco products at any church activity. Minors shall NOT be given tobacco products. Tobacco products may NOT be used by adults or minors in any area within the church building or on the church grounds or property. Adults using tobacco products during a church activity or event must do so discreetly (i.e. out of reasonable visual view of minors) and out of range of second hand smoke. When at the church building, smoking is only permitted at the black and green smoking receptacles near the handicapped parking spaces, located at the rear of the fellowship building.

This rule includes tobacco substitutes, such as clove cigarettes and e-cigarettes.

### **Corporal Punishment:**

Hitting and spanking whether with an open hand, closed hand, or object is NOT permitted. In the event that a child's behavior becomes uncontrollable, the child's parent/guardian is to be contacted to collect their child. In the event that a child needs to be restrained for their safety, the safety of another child, or the safety of another person, as little force as needed is to be used.

The two adult rule applies when disciplining a child. In certain circumstances, (such as to protect a child from further embarrassment) an adult may want to speak with a child out of earshot of others; however, in doing so they must remain visible to other adults. For example, discussing behavior with a youth one on one behind a closed classroom door would not be appropriate; standing on the sidewalk with a youth in front of the fellowship hall's glass windows to discuss behavior would potentially be a more appropriate location.

### **Clearances from Other Organizations:**

If an individual has received a Pennsylvania clearance through another organization (such as a school or day care center), that clearance may be used here. Clearances need to be renewed every three years.

### **Incident Reports:**

An incident report is to be completed for the following scenarios. If you are unsure whether or not to fill out a report, err on the side of filling it out.

- (1) A person is injured within the church facility or during a church activity and needs first-aid or other medical treatment
- (2) A person does physical harm to another person (i.e. hitting, biting, scratching, etc.)
- (3) A child was spanked, restrained, or needed to be taken home by their parent/guardian
- (4) Abuse or suspected abuse has taken place.

Incident reports that result in intervention by an Ecclesiastical Council are to be filed by the chair of the Spiritual Council. All other incident reports are to be filed by the chair of the Christian Education Committee.

### **Identification of Abuse:**

At least once every two years the Christian Education Committee is to offer training in identifying abuse.

### **Mandated Reporter**

As of July 2015, a complete list of mandated reporters for Pennsylvania can be found at [www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov](http://www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov). The following adults are considered mandated reporters in regard to the church setting and are required to report suspected child abuse if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse:

- A clergy person
- A spiritual leader of any regularly established church or other religious organization
- 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 a person responsible for the child's welfare or has direct contact with children.
- An individual supervised or managed by a person listed above, who has direct contact with children in the course of employment.
- An attorney affiliated with an agency, institution, organization or other entity, including a school or regularly established religious organization that is responsible for the care, supervision, guidance or control of children.

### **When must mandated reporters make a report?**

Mandated reporters are required to 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:

- They come 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.
- They are directly responsible for the care, supervision, guidance or training of the child, or are 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.

It is not required that the child come before the mandated reporter in order to make a report of suspected child abuse nor are they required to identify the person responsible for the child abuse to make a report of suspected child abuse.

### **What if a mandated reporter has general concerns about a child, but does not suspect abuse?**

Concerns related to the safety of children including, but not limited to inadequate housing, clothing and supervision, can be referred to ChildLine or the county children and youth agency for assessment as general protective services cases.

### **How do mandated reporters make a report of suspected child abuse?**

Mandated reporters must make an immediate and direct report of suspected child abuse to ChildLine either electronically at [www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis](http://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis) or by calling 1-800-932-0313.

If an oral report was made to ChildLine, a report of suspected child abuse (CY 47) must also be completed and forwarded to the county children and youth agency within 48 hours after making the report. This form can be obtained at [www.KeepKidsSafe.pa.gov](http://www.KeepKidsSafe.pa.gov) or from the children and youth agency. If a report is made electronically, no CY-47 is required to be completed.

A mandated reporter does *not* have to know for sure that the child was abused. A mandated reporter is responsible to make the report when they *suspect* a child is a victim of abuse.

### **Internal Reporting**

After making the report to ChildLine, mandated reporters are required to immediately thereafter notify the person in charge of the institution or the designated agent of the person in charge.

Within the United Church of Christ of Robesonia a report can be made to: the Consistory President, the Consistory Vice President, Pastor(s), Christian Education Chairperson, and/or the SafeConduct Coordinator.

The mandated reporter should document: (1) when they became aware of suspected abuse; (2) when they reported the suspected abuse to ChildLine; and (3) when and to which leader within the United Church of Christ of Robesonia they reported. The leader should document that the mandated reporter has made the appropriate report to ChildLine; and then: (1) communicate the allegation to the Pastor, chair of the Spiritual Council, or vice chair of the Spiritual Council for an Ecclesiastical Council meeting (the allegation should not be reported to the alleged perpetrator at this point in the process); or (2) to the Consistory President and Chair of the Committee on Ministry if the alleged perpetrator is a pastor or seminarian intern of the church.

### **Contacting Authorities and Professionals:**

In the event of allegations of abuse, (in addition to the mandate report to ChildLine) the Pastor and President of Consistory shall work together to contact other professionals, including but not limited to: other Appropriate Authorities (i.e. Police), Conference Minister, Chairperson of the Committee on Ministry of the Heidelberg Association, Counselors/Therapists, Insurance Representative, and Lawyer.

### **Informing the Congregation:**

The Pastor and/or President of Consistory shall discern how, when, and what to inform the congregation in the event of allegations of abuse. If there is a strong disagreement between the Pastor and President on how and what to say, they are strongly encouraged to consult with the Conference or Association leadership for guidance and/or mediation.

### **Speaking with the Media:**

The Pastor and President of Consistory are the only two persons authorized to speak with the media (newspaper, radio, television, magazine reporters, etc.) without prior Consistory approval.

### **Backup to the President and Pastor**

In the absence of the President/Pastor, or in the event that the President/Pastor is the one for whom the incident refers, then the Vice President of Consistory is the backup person for the above responsibilities. The Consistory Secretary shall be the backup for the Vice President.

### **Spiritual Support**

If the alleged victim is a member of the church, the Spiritual Council is to appoint an Elder to be a spiritual support resource to that individual (to the extent that the individual and/or parents would desire such efforts of support). The Elder should not have one on one contact with the alleged victim. [Examples include: meeting with the individual in a public place, meeting with an individual with parents/guardian present, meeting with the individual with another Elder].

If the alleged perpetrator is a member of the church, the Spiritual Council is to appoint an Elder to be a spiritual support resource to that individual (to the extent that the individual and/or parents would desire such efforts of support). The Elder should not have one on one contact with the alleged perpetrator. [Examples include: meeting with the individual in a public place, meeting with an individual with parents/guardian present, meeting with the individual with another Elder].

If the alleged situation involves the Pastor or a member of the Pastor's family, another clergy person approved by the Association or Conference leadership should be temporarily employed to provide pastoral care where there are conflicts of interest (or potential conflicts of interest) during the investigation of the allegation.

### **Internal Discipline in Regards to Accusations of Abuse:**

Even if a person is found guilty by a secular court and receives punishment from a secular court, a process of investigation, discernment, discipline, and support needs to take place within the church, as well. That process shall be carried out by the Ecclesiastical Council following the church's Discipline/Reconciliation Policy.

### **Ecclesiastical Action Records:**

Records of ecclesiastical actions are confidential and are to be filed by the chair of the Spiritual Council, in accordance with the church's Discipline/Reconciliation Policy. Consistory is to provide a secure filing system for such records. Reporting of ecclesiastical actions to the Consistory and/or others is to follow the church's Discipline/Reconciliation Policy.

### **Known/Alleged Offender:**

If you are an individual who has been found guilty of child abuse by a secular or ecclesiastical ruling, if you have committed abuse but have not been found guilty, and/or if you are wants/desires to commit abuse, you may not engage in one on one situations with youth, you may not be a leader in youth specific ministries, and you are not to allow yourself to be in a situation where such abuse could take place.

If you are an individual who has been found guilty of elder abuse by a secular or ecclesiastical ruling, if you have committed abuse but have not been found guilty, and/or if you are wants/desires to commit abuse, you may not engage in one on one situations with the elderly, hospitalized, infirmed, shut-in, or homebound, you may not be a leader in elder or homebound specific ministries, and you are not to allow yourself to be in a situation where such abuse could take place.

A person with a history of abuse who participates in worship, Sunday school, or general fellowship activities is to be assigned an adult “discipleship companion” to be with them while participating in said activity. A “discipleship companion” must be an able-bodied adult, who is able to maintain confidential information. The “discipleship companion” is assigned by the SafeConduct coordinator or co-coordinator. The Christian Education Committee shall maintain a list of eligible “discipleship companions.”

A person who is under investigation for an alleged act of abuse is to be assigned a “discipleship companion”, and that individual is not permitted to participate in youth specific ministries or hospital/homebound visitation ministries.

In the event that the alleged offender is a parent whose child is involved in ministries of the church, the Spiritual Council shall establish for the alleged offender guidelines specific to that situation and pastoral support for the alleged offender’s child(ren) and spouse.

### **Internet, Social Media, Bulletin Boards:**

Annually, at the beginning of the school year, the Christian Education committee shall endeavor to collect permission slips from the parents/guardians of minors for the publishing of photographs.

The first and last names of youth may *not* be included with a picture of a youth on the website. A first or last name may only be included with a picture of a youth with parental/guardian consent. Addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and other contact information for minors may *not* be included on the web site or social media sites.

First and last names of youth may *not* be included pictured on bulletin boards. First names or last names may be included (but *not* both).

For artwork displayed during the week in the hallways, classrooms, and other public areas within the church, first name and last initial may be used or first initial and last name may be used, but *not* both first and last name.

When picturing a youth in the bulletin or printed newsletter, first and last names may only be used with parental/guardian consent.

Pictures, addresses, and first and last names of youth may be included in the church directory. Individual cell phone numbers and e-mail addresses of minors may *not* be included in a directory provided to the general congregation. That information may be provided for youth group phone chains, peer contacts among youth, office staff, Sunday school teachers’ contact lists, youth group leaders, and the like.

Personal contact information of adults may only be used on the website and social media sites with that adult’s permission. This includes address, phone number, and e-mail address. In general, it is recommended that the church’s contact information be used for the website and social media, and that personal contact information (such as the chairperson’s home phone and e-mail) be used for the newsletter and bulletin articles.

### **Exceptions:**

#### **Obituaries**

Obituaries may contain first and last name, photo, birth date, city of residence, and other information common to obituaries. The obituary may contain any information already publically available on an existing obituary (such as found in a newspaper or a funeral home’s website).

#### **Public Knowledge or Public Fund Pleas**

In the event of a special fund plea first and last name and photo may be included on the web site or social media sites with parental/guardian consent. An example would be when supporting a fund for a child to help with medical expenses, where a plea is being made to the community.

Another exception is when the knowledge has already been made public by the news media. An example would be when raising funds to support a child survivor of a natural disaster, when and if the news media has already given that information to the public.

### **Committee Oversight:**

This policy has been adopted by Consistory on September 27, 2015, to be implemented by the end of 2015.

The Consistory has assigned the Christian Education Committee as the committee to have the primary oversight of maintaining the SafeConduct policies, processes, and procedures. As such: (1) all persons elected or appointed to the Christian Education Committee need to be in compliance with these policies prior to membership on the committee; (2) the committee needs to include no less than three members; and (3) the committee needs to include at least one adult male and one adult female member.

The Christian Education Committee is to maintain these policies, maintain the lists of those who may and may not work with youth, conduct training, process related paperwork, conduct interviews, check references, and maintain sufficient quantities of appropriate resources and supplies.

The lists of those who have been informed that they cannot work with youth are confidential.

The Christian Education Committee shall annually review the SafeConduct Policies, the current literature regarding safety within churches, the state laws regarding child abuse reporting, the expectations of our insurance company, and related information published and presented by our denominational bodies. The Christian Education Committee shall present to the Consistory any recommended changes. A two-third Consistory vote is required to amend these policies.

### **Vaccinations**

For the protection of both the care provider and the care receiver, all CHYLD Workers are strongly encouraged but not required to consult with their primary care provider and to be up-to-date with all appropriate vaccinations according to the recommendations of their primary care provider, including, but not limited to Flu Vaccination and COVID Vaccination.

CHYLD Workers are to keep themselves at an appropriate distance from care receivers and/or use appropriate physical barriers when they are at a reasonable risk of being contagious to another, such as when exhibiting COVID symptoms or within the CDC guidelines of exposure for potentially being contagious. In following CDC guidelines and/or care institution guidelines, appropriate distance may mean recommended distance of social distancing and/or may mean temporarily keeping oneself isolated and not participating in an event or care providing ministry. In following CDC guidelines and/or care institution guidelines, appropriate physical barriers may include masks, gloves, gown, etc; appropriate covering of mouth and nose when sneezing/coughing; and should include regular washing of hands.

### **Building Keys**

Anyone who is entrusted with a key to the building, must either: (1) have CHYLD Worker Status; (2) Teen Aide Status; or (3) sign a document that states that they have received, read, and will follow the church's SafeConduct Policies. Individuals are not to pass keys to other individuals who have not met that criteria. This guideline may be satisfied by including the appropriate wording in the building use form or by having the appropriate wording in an additional separate document.

## **Terms and Definitions:**

### **Physical Abuse**

Abuse in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to a child. Examples may include violent battery with a weapon (knife, belt, strap, stick, and so forth), burning, shaking, kicking, choking, fracturing bones, and any of a wide variety of non-accidental injuries to a child's body.

### **Emotional Abuse**

Abuse in which a person exposes a child to spoken and/or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty. Emotional abuse sends a message to the child of worthlessness, badness, and being not only unloved but undeserving of love and care. Children exposed to emotional abuse may have experienced being locked in a closet, being deprived of any sign of parental affection, being constantly told they are bad or stupid, or being allowed or forced to abuse alcohol or drugs. Emotional abuse is often very difficult to prove and is devastating to the victim.

### **Neglect**

Abuse in which a person endangers a child's health, safety, or welfare through negligence. Neglect may include withholding food, clothing, medical care, education, and even affection and affirmation of the child's self-worth. This is perhaps the most common form of abuse.

### **Sexual Abuse**

Abuse in which sexual contact between a child and an adult (or another older and powerful youth) occurs. The child is never truly capable of consenting to or resisting such contact and/or such sexual acts. Often, the child is physically and psychologically dependent upon the perpetrator of the abuse. Examples of sexual abuse may include fondling, intercourse, incest, and the exploitation of and exposure to child pornography or prostitution.

### **Spiritual Abuse**

Spiritual abuse sends a message to the child of worthlessness, being unforgivable, and not able to be loved by God; or that the child or loved one is eternally cursed by God. Spiritual abuse is often very difficult to discern from differences in doctrine. It is important that those teaching, advising, or praying with children are aware of the beliefs of the church and denomination and are maintaining their own healthy spiritual life.

### **Ritual Abuse**

Abuse in which physical, sexual, or psychological violations of a child are inflicted regularly, intentionally, and in a stylized way by a person or persons responsible for the child's welfare. The abuser may appeal to some higher authority or power to justify the abuse. The abuse may include cruel treatment of animals or repeated threats of harm to the child, other persons, and animals. The abuse may include rituals and artifacts from actual religious services or "reversed" religious rituals and may even take place in churches. Reports of ritual abuse are often extremely horrifying and may seem too grim to be true. Children making such reports must not be ignored.

### **Definition of a Minor**

Anyone under the age of 18 years old.

### **Definition of an Adult**

Anyone who is 18 years old or older.

### **Abuse, as defined by Pennsylvania Law - as of August 2015**

Child abuse, according to the Child Protective Service Law (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.