

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

and Related Documents

Annville Church of the Brethren
Annville, Pennsylvania

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I. CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Annville Church of the Brethren

Statement regarding abuse:

God embraces children with love, placing their nurture and care in our hand. We believe that children should be safe from all form of abuse and neglect. We, the church, will be advocates for children and establish clearly defined safeguards, policies and procedures for their protection.

We recognize the seriousness and sinfulness of physical, sexual and emotional abuse. This type of mistreatment violates the very image of God. It causes serious damage to the soul, body and spirit of the one abused. It also causes harm to the soul and spirit of the abuser. If abuse does occur, we will seek and support healing measures for all in need.

Our mission is to provide an environment for our children which is safe from all forms of abuse. To be both effective and successful in these efforts, the entire congregation must understand and embrace the policies which will lead to this goal.

What constitutes child abuse?

There are three kinds of child abuse: physical, sexual and emotional. Physical abuse is inflicting bodily injury on a child. Sexual abuse is using a child under 18 years of age in or exposing a child to sexual activities (including a child who is developmentally unable to give consent), with or without his/her consent. Emotional abuse is demanding that the child do more than he/she is able to do, severely criticizing or humiliating him/her for not living up to a demand, or placing upon him/her such unclear requirements that the child cannot understand what he/she is supposed to do. (From "A Cry for Help") This policy deals only with the congregation's response to physical and sexual abuse.

Policy Administration:

The Child Protection Policy applies to all activities in which children or youth participate. Such activities may include, but are not limited to, Sunday School, Junior Church, Kidz Klub, Youth Groups, Children's Choir, and Vacation Bible School. The Child Protection Policy at the Annville Church of the Brethren will be administered by the Child Protection Task Force (consisting of the Christian Education Team Leader, Child Protection Coordinator and Pastor) and shall be applied to any person who is hired, appointed, or who volunteers to work with children or youth.

All persons who work with children or youth will ...

1. Receive orientation regarding our congregation's "Child Protection Policy."
2. Sign and return the "Child Protection Covenant" each year.
3. Begin working with children and youth only after approval from the Child Protection Task Force. The task force will provide mentoring for the first three months for those who are new to working with children in this congregation. Approval for those who will accompany children or youth overnight is contingent upon Criminal Records Check and Child Abuse Clearance Form documentation.

No person who has been convicted of any form of child abuse will be permitted to work with children or youth in any church-sponsored activity.

Guidelines for ministry with children or youth:

Two-Adult Rule / Rule of Three: At least two approved adults should be present during any church-sponsored activity involving children or youth. During that activity, sub-groups may follow the Rule of Three – to always be in a group of at least three (two children with an adult or two adults with a child). Youth may serve as the “second adult” after completing the orientation and signing a “Child Protection Covenant.”

In the rare event when one adult must be alone with one child, they must be observable and interruptible.

Open Door Policy: When there is no window in the classroom door, the door should be left open so that persons passing by can observe.

Dismissal: Parents or someone approved by the parents should pick up children when an activity concludes.

Parental Permission: Parents should sign an annual consent form to permit medical treatment for their child during church activities. Written parental consent should be obtained on a per event basis for off-site or overnight church-sponsored group activities.

Overnight Rule: All adults accompanying an overnight activity must be approved by the Child Protection Task Force as noted above (#3). Both male and female adult chaperones must be present at all times for overnight events if children or youth from both genders are participating. At an overnight camp for children or youth that our congregation leads, each cabin should have two counselors, at least one of whom is an adult.

Non-Sponsored Activities: For activities held in conjunction with other organizations, the Annville Church of the Brethren does not have the authority to approve all adults and cannot guarantee that the sponsoring organization has adopted a Child Protection Policy.

Transportation: Anyone transporting children or youth must be 18 years of age or older, hold a valid senior driver's license, present current insurance of car being used and obey all traffic laws, including use of seat belts. The Rule of Three applies to transportation provided by the church. When that is impossible, parental permission is required.

Physical Discipline: No physical discipline shall be administered at any time. However, physical intervention to protect a child or youth from harming self or others does not constitute physical discipline and may be necessary.

Adult leaders should act in accordance with these guidelines and report any concerns to the Child Protection Task Force.

Guidelines for Reporting Suspected Abuse:

Anyone who works with children or youth has a personal responsibility and moral obligation to report any suspected abuse.

1. Intervene immediately if an incident is in progress. The safety of the victim must be the church's primary concern.
2. Notify the parent(s) or guardian of the victim.
3. Contact a member of the Child Protection Task Force to report the observation or disclosure and cooperate in any subsequent investigation.

Appointment of the Child Protection Coordinator

The Ministries Coordinating Team shall assume responsibility for appointing a Child Protection Coordinator. This person will work together with the Christian Education Team Leader and the Pastor to form the Child Protection Task Force to administer the Child Protection Policy. The Child Protection Coordinator will be appointed to a three-year term with a limit of two consecutive terms of service. The Child Protection Coordinator shall maintain all signed covenants and clearance forms in a confidential manner in a secure location.

Periodic Policy Review

The Ministries Coordinating Team shall assume responsibility for reviewing this policy periodically. The Child Protection Coordinator will initiate a review of this policy with the Ministries Coordinating Team at least every three years.

II. CHILD PROTECTION COVENANT

for all who work with children or youth in the
Annville Church of the Brethren

*I accept the call to serve the Lord through working with children or youth
in the Annville Church of the Brethren.*

I remember how Jesus welcomed the children, took them in his arms, and blessed them.

*I know that I follow Jesus' example when I value young people
and care for them with love and gentleness.*

I recognize the importance of the responsibility entrusted to me.

*I realize that my words and actions toward children and youth will influence
their faith in God and their lives for many years to come.*

*I promise to be responsible in all of my attitudes and actions,
especially toward the children or youth under my care.*

I have carefully read and agree with this congregation's "Child Protection Policy."

*I attest that I have never been charged with nor convicted of child abuse, contributing to
the delinquency of a minor, or any other criminal conduct related to children or youth
or to physical or sexual misconduct.*

*I attest that I will not engage in any inappropriate contact with children or youth –
I will not abuse anyone physically, sexually, or emotionally.
I will not engage in any unbecoming conduct.*

*I covenant and promise to be a good example to the children or youth entrusted to my care.
I will pray and study God's Word regularly, and do my best to reflect God's love to them.*

*I accept the responsibility of my ministries to children or youth with gladness
and I will strive to honorably fulfill my responsibilities with integrity.*

*With the prayers and encouragement of the members of the Annville Church of the Brethren,
with the support pledged to me by the Christian Education Team, and with God's guidance,
I am committed to serve in ministry to children or youth according to the job description.*

Print Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

III. DEFINING CHILD ABUSE

To create a safe, Christian, nurturing environment for children, we need to know the symptoms or signs of child abuse, whether it be physical, sexual, or emotional. In this way, we can be instrumental in preventing further abuse. Also, knowing what signs to report in a suspected abuse case is a safeguard against being sued for neglecting or ignoring or not reporting possible abuse situations. One or two symptoms are not a reason for major concern. Multiple symptoms are a better indicator of possible abuse.

1. PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical signs of physical abuse might include:

- Bruises and welts
- Lacerations and abrasions
- Abdominal injuries, evidenced by constant vomiting, localized tenderness and/or swollen abdomen
- Burns, especially patterned and dry burns
- Frequent and/or unexplained fractures and skeletal injuries

Behavioral signs of physical abuse might include:

- Talking about abuse
- Expressing explicit or implicit fear of adults
- Displaying behavior extremes such as aggressiveness or withdrawal
- Avoiding physical contact with others
- Wearing unseasonable clothing to hide injuries

2. SEXUAL ABUSE

The precise legal definition of child sexual abuse or molestation varies from state to state, but in general, includes any form of sexual contact or exploitation in which a minor is being used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator. In a more common sense, child sexual abuse is:

“Any sexual activity with a child – whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day care situation, a foster/residential setting, or in any other setting, including on the street by a person unknown to the child. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent or another child, provided the child is four year older than the victim.”

Source: National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse, 1992

Child sexual abuse may be violent or non-violent. All child sexual abuse is an exploitation of a child’s vulnerability and powerlessness in which the abuser is fully responsible for the actions.

Child sexual abuse is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behavior for which they are not personally, socially, and developmentally ready. Child sexual abuse includes behaviors that involve touching and non-touching aspects.

Types of abuse that involve touching include:

- Fondling
- Oral, genital, and anal penetration
- Intercourse
- Forcible rape

Types of sexual abuse that do not involve touching includes:

- Verbal comments
- Pornographic videos
- Obscene phone calls
- Exhibitionism
- Allowing children to witness sexual activity

Physical signs of sexual abuse may include:

- Lacerations and bruises
- Nightmares
- Irritation, pain, or injury to the genital area
- Difficulty with urination
- Discomfort when sitting
- Torn or bloody underclothing
- Venereal disease

Behavioral signs of sexual abuse may include:

- Anxiety when approaching church or nursery area
- Nervous or hostile behavior toward adults
- Sexual self-consciousness
- “Acting out” of sexual behavior
- Withdrawal from church activities and friends

Verbal signs may include the following statements:

- I don’t like (a particular adult).
- (A particular adult) does things to me when we’re alone
- I don’t like to be alone with (a particular adult).
- (A particular adult) fooled around with me.

3. EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Physical signs of emotional abuse are less apparent or obvious than in instances of physical or sexual abuse. Physical signs of emotional abuse may include:

- Speech disorders
- Lags in physical development
- Failure to thrive: listlessness, unresponsiveness

Behavioral signs of emotional abuse may include:

- Unpleasant behaviors: hard to get along with, demanding, destructive, cruel, causes trouble, won’t let others alone
- Avoids others, is unusually shy, anxious to please, is too submissive
- Shows low self-esteem: accepts unpleasant treatment from others without protest
- Either inappropriately adult – takes charge of other children; or inappropriately infantile – sucks thumb, rocks constantly

4. NEGLECT

Physical signs of neglect may be evident when the child:

- Appears tired, listless, almost always dirty for days at a time
- Goes to school without breakfast, often without lunch or lunch money
- Wears dirty or inappropriate clothes
- Seems often to be alone for long periods of time
- Obviously needs glasses, dental care or other medical attention

Behavioral signs of neglect may be evident when the child:

- Is frequently absent from or late to school
- Begs or steals food
- Causes trouble in school by often not doing homework, using alcohol or drugs, engaging in vandalism or sexual misconduct

IV. EDUCATING THE CONGREGATION

Our mission is to provide an environment for our children which is safe from all forms of abuse and neglect. To be both effective and successful in these efforts, the entire congregation must understand and embrace the policies that will lead to our goals. Therefore, it is essential to have a program to educate the congregation of the concerns and needs in this area.

A program to educate the congregation, led by the Child Protection Task Force, should include the following:

1. Share the facts (by means of the Parish Happenings). Child abuse is on the rise in this country and it is of epidemic proportions. It has touched every segment of our society including the church family.
2. Identifying the symptoms and signs of child abuse. Most of us would say it is a problem “out there.” We don’t want to think or talk about it and therefore most of us really don’t know much about abuse and neglect.
3. Identifying the potential impact of an allegation of abuse on our church. How would an allegation of abuse in our church impact the child; the child’s family; church membership; the integrity of the church leaders; the larger community of which we are a part; and the legal liabilities?
4. Communication of the need for a program to prevent child abuse can be shared and interpreted in many settings and must be reinforced through several education opportunities. These may include, among others, the following:
 - a. Have a series of elective Sunday School classes for adults on the topic of child abuse and the need for a program to protect the children.
 - b. Hold a special meeting for the entire congregation to focus on a child abuse prevention program.
 - c. Hold a special meeting for parents dealing with issues of child abuse including recognition of signs of abuse; a healthy way of alerting children to certain dangers; and in general raising the awareness of the parents. This could include an educational session with the children using age-appropriate materials.
 - d. Hold meetings for current church workers to educate them in the area of child abuse and raise their level of awareness (see section VII. Training Church Workers).

Always be aware of other creative opportunities to reinforce the concerns in this area.

V. TRAINING CHURCH WORKERS

Annville Church of the Brethren Christian Education Team

An important element of success in the child abuse program is to train all church workers serving in the infant, children and youth ministries, including the workers currently serving. This training should be resourced by workers who have had experience in this area, such as a counselor, social worker or a representative from a child abuse/child protection agency or law enforcement agency.

The training should include a defining of abuse, the prevalence of abuse in the area, the causes and effects of abuse, and a focus on abusers, including the general characteristics and traits of abusers. An explanation of the child protection laws of the state should be given, along with the requirements which the law would place in the church. Also, a detailed explanation of the child abuse prevention program should be shared, along with an outline of the procedures under which the program will be implemented.

VI. REPORT OF SUSPECTED INCIDENT OF CHILD ABUSE

Annville Church of the Brethren

To be completed by a member of the Child Protection Task Force (the Christian Education Team Leader, Child Protection Coordinator, or Pastor), with the cooperation of the person reporting the incident.

1. Name of worker (paid or volunteer) observing or receiving disclosure of child abuse:

2. Victim's Name: _____

3. Victim's age/date of birth: _____

4. Date/place of initial conversation with/report from victim: _____

5. Victim's statement – if appropriate, give detailed summary:

6. Name of person accused of abusing: _____

7. Relationship of accused to victim (paid staff, volunteer, family member, other):

8. Reported to Child Protection Task Force (the CPTF will decide on which following steps to take)

a. Date/time: _____

b. Summary: _____

9. Call to victim's parent/guardian:

- a. Date/time: _____
- b. Name of person contacted: _____
- c. Summary: _____

10. Call to local children and family service agency (name of agency: _____):

- a. Date/time: _____
- b. Name of person contacted: _____
- c. Summary: _____

11. Call to local law enforcement agency (name of agency: _____):

- a. Date/time: _____
- b. Name of person contacted: _____
- c. Summary: _____

12. Other contacts:

- a. Date/time: _____
- b. Name of person contacted: _____
- c. Summary: _____

Signed _____ Date: _____
(person reporting the incident)

Signed _____ Date: _____
(member of Child Protection Task Force)

VII. RESPONSE PLAN TO SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

Any suspected child abuse should immediately be reported to a member of the Child Protection Task Force (the Christian Education Team Leader, Child Protection Coordinator, or Pastor), and the person reporting the suspected abuse should cooperate in any subsequent investigation. An incident report shall be created using the approved "Report Form" (section VIII of this manual), which documents the incident and any subsequent conversation or contact as it takes place.

1. The Child Protection Task Force member shall follow-up on the report in the following ways:
 - a. Speak with the child/youth/vulnerable adult who is alleged to have been abused. In some cases a child may be more at ease if the person who reported the incident is part of this conversation. Staff should not question for details or ask leading questions.
 - b. Determine the next steps. The Child Protection Task Force may review its specific plan for follow-up in any particular situation with legal counsel at any time in the process.
 - c. Report disclosure, per result of consultation, to Child Protective Services, law enforcement agencies, and other appropriate agencies. Although ordained clergy are not legally mandated to report confidential communication, we encourage reporting as a necessary part of moving toward wholeness for all involved.
 - d. Notify parent/guardians of the alleged abuse, contingent upon advice from Child Protective Services or law enforcement agencies when the alleged abuser is a parent or guardian.
2. If the alleged abuser is a volunteer or paid staff of the Annville Church of the Brethren, the Child Protection Coordinator will investigate and arbitrate the situation. If a conflict of interest exists between the perpetrator and the Child Protection Coordinator, the Child Protection Task Force will assign an alternate person(s) to review that particular situation.
3. The Child Protection Task Force will contact the alleged offender to:
 - a. Present him/her with a formal complaint informing him/her of the time and nature of alleged abuse
 - b. Outline the procedure that will be followed
 - c. Hear the alleged offender's response (verbal or written).
4. The Child Protection Task Force will also:
 - a. Consult an attorney regarding compliance with state reporting laws and cooperation with the investigation
 - b. Make available a summary response to the complainant
 - c. Notify the church's liability insurance company
 - d. Remove the alleged offender temporarily from his/her position(s) while a confidential investigation is being conducted.

If allegations are unsubstantiated:

1. Investigations will cease.
2. Every effort will be made to exonerate, reconcile, and restore the person who had been accused.
3. A public statement by the Child Protection Task Force will be made if the person who had been accused so chooses.
4. The Child Protection Task Force will respond with love, care and concern to the complainant(s), to the congregation, and to the person who was accused and his/her family.

If the allegations/investigations demonstrate poor judgment or unwise behavior but not abuse:

1. The Child Protection Task Force will hold the offender responsible and accountable for the behavior. Grace and mercy will be extended in the context of repentance, accountability, and justice.
2. Education and/or counseling will be required to correct behavior patterns.
3. Persons will be removed from susceptible church ministry settings for a period of six months.
4. Actions taken will be communicated to the complainant(s) and to the congregation as necessary.

If allegations/investigations substantiate child abuse:

1. Ministry to the Victim:

- a. Ministry will be done with sensitivity and care.
- b. Pastoral care and spiritual support will be provided.
- c. One person will be named and offered to the victim(s) to serve as an advocate, supporter, and interpreter of the process.
- d. A list of qualified counselors/therapists will be provided.
- e. In the case of multiple victims, opportunity will be made for these persons to meet together for mutual support and prayer.

2. Ministry to the Offender:

- a. Specialized counseling will be required.
- b. The individual will be permanently removed from susceptible positions in the church's ministry.
- c. Pastoral care and spiritual support will continue for the offender and his/her family during rehabilitation.
- d. The Child Protection Task Force will monitor rehabilitation. At the conclusion of rehabilitation there will be full reinstatement into church life with help to use spiritual gifts in non-susceptible ministries.

3. Ministry to the Congregation:

- a. The Child Protection Task Force will report to the Church Moderator any **confirmed** abuse and follow-up, including disciplinary action taken.
- b. Trained professionals will be made available to assist the congregation in addressing concerns to bring healing.
- c. The Moderator will have the authority to notify the Ministries Coordinating Team as deemed necessary.

4. Ministry to the Accused Offender's Family:

- a. Ministry will be done with sensitivity and care, providing support and prayer.
- b. One person will be named and offered to the family to serve as an advocate, supporter, and interpreter of the process.
- c. A list of qualified counselors/therapists will be provided.

Obligation to report cases of child abuse:

23 PA C.S.A. ~6301 ET. Seq. Sets for the Child Protective Service Act. In that act ~6311 requires a “person who, in the course of their employment, occupation or practice of their profession, come into contact with children, shall report or cause a report to be made in accordance with ~6313, (which states that an oral report must be made immediately to the courts, protective service, etc. and then a written report must follow within 48 hours), when they have “reasonable cause to suspect, on the basis of their medical, professional or other training and experience, that a child coming before them in their profession or official capacity is an abused child.”

VIII. RESOURCES

Atlantic Northeast District Church of the Brethren 500 East Cedar Street, Elizabethtown, PA 17022 717-367-4730	A Task Force Sample Policy, other policy samples; List of people as resources
COBYS Family Services 1417 Oregon Road, Leola, PA 17540 717-392-0504	Prevention workshops
<i>Ethics for Congregations in the Church of the Brethren</i> <i>Ethics in Ministry Relations 1996</i> (Statements of Ethics can be found at www.brethren.org/ac/ac_statements/ethics.htm)	Adopted by 1996 Annual Conference Adopted by 1996 Annual Conference
Mennonite Congregational Resource Center 2160 Lincoln Highway East, Lancaster, PA 717-293-5246	Various resources
Parish Resource Center 633 Community Way, Lancaster, PA 717-299-1113	Various resources
Church of the Brethren Congregational Life Ministries 1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, IL 60120 847-742-5100 www.brethren.org/childprotection	Resources for making your church a safe place
Pennsylvania Department of Health 652 West 17 th Street, Erie, PA 16502 800-582-7746 Fax: 814-453-4714 www.padohric.org	Research/information/publications
National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse Child Welfare Information Gateway Children's Bureau/ACYF, Eighth Floor, 1250 Maryland Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20024 800-FYI-3366 www.childwelfare.gov	Select from several web pages related to child abuse topics
<i>Safe Sanctuaries:</i> <i>Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for Children and Youth</i> by Joy Thornburg Melton, Discipleship Resources, 2008	Recommended Book
<i>Reducing the Risk:</i> <i>Keeping Your Ministry Safe from Child Sexual Abuse</i> , 3rd edition Christianity Today International www.reducingtherisk.com	Recommended Video and Training Materials
Pennsylvania Law on Provisions and Responsibilities for Reporting Suspected Child Abuse Domestic Relations (Title 23), Chapter 63, Child Protective Services	