

**Child Protection Policy  
Of  
Union United Church of Christ**

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## **General Purpose Statement**

Union United Church of Christ seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the practices below, our goal is to protect the children of Union United Church of Christ from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our employees and volunteers from false accusations.

## **Definitions**

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child,” “children” and “youth” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.

## **Screening of Employees and Volunteers as Determined by Pennsylvania Law**

The Pennsylvania legislature enacted a number of new child abuse prevention laws in 2014. The new law was subsequently updated on July 1, 2015. Before an employee is hired or a volunteer is allowed to work with the children participating in our programs and activities, the employee or volunteer will be screened. This screening includes:

- **Duty to Report Suspected Child Abuse**

The new child abuse prevention laws include changes in who is required to report suspected child abuse and how that suspected abuse must be reported.

  - A. The new Pennsylvania child abuse prevention laws also require that certain mandated reporters undergo training. This can be done in a free online webinar, see the Safe Child Coordinator for details.
  - B. Who has the duty to report suspected child abuse? We all have a moral duty to protect the most vulnerable members of our society. We encourage anyone who suspects that a child is being abused, at any time and under any circumstances, to report that information immediately to the appropriate authorities (Child Line) at **800-932-0313 (TDD: 866-872-1677) or [www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis](http://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis)**
  - C. Certain individuals are required by law to report suspected child abuse immediately to the appropriate authorities. The law refers to these individuals as mandated reporters. Clergy are mandated reporters in Pennsylvania. Individuals who are responsible for a child’s welfare or who have direct contact with children accept responsibility for a child as part of the individual’s integral role in a regularly scheduled program, activity, or service are also mandated reporters. This includes both paid workers and volunteers.
- **Required Certifications**

Pennsylvania requires certain certifications to be obtained by paid employees and volunteers having direct contact with children.

  - A. Employees are required to obtain certain certifications if they have routine interaction with children. “Routine interaction of children is now defined by the statute. It is “regular and repeated contact that is integral to a person’s employment or volunteer responsibilities.”

- B. The law requires that individuals who are 14 years old or older applying for or holding a paid position as an employee with a program, activity, or service as a person responsible for the welfare of a child, or as an employee having direct contact with children, submit the following certifications to the person responsible for employment decisions:
  - 1. A Pennsylvania State Police Background Check;
  - 2. A Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Certification; and
  - 3. A Federal Bureau of Investigation Certification
  
- C. These same requirements apply to adult volunteers selected who are applying for or holding an unpaid position with a child-care service, a school or a program, activity, or service as a person responsible for the child's welfare or having direct volunteer contact with children.
  - 1. Volunteers, however, need not submit a Federal Bureau of Investigation Clearance Certification if the volunteer position is unpaid, and the volunteer has been a continuous resident of Pennsylvania for the 10 years prior to applying for the position.
  - 2. The submission forms for Volunteers are free.
  
- D. Certifications for employees and volunteers must be obtained every 36 months.
  
- E. Employers and organizations that select volunteers must maintain records of the certifications

- **Review of Offenses**

A Safe Child Team consisting of the Consistory President, Pastor(s), the Director of Christian Education, and the Pre-School Director will review all disclosure forms and background checks that contain an offense of any kind.

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will preclude an individual from working with children will be determined on a case-by-case basis by a minimum of 3 members of the Safe Child Team. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Also those included by state law that preclude someone from working with children.

### **Screening Administration and Records Maintenance**

Responsibility for assuring that their volunteers have completed all certifications and training; and that their employees and volunteers have been screened before working with children rests with the following staff members as applicable: Pastor(s), the Director of Christian Education and the Pre-

School Director. The Safe Child Coordinator is to make sure that employee records are updated in concurrence with state law.

The Christian Education Committee will appoint a Safe Child Coordinator, subject to the approval of the Consistory, to administer screening and maintain records. Responsibility for administering employee and volunteer screening and for maintaining records in a secure and confidential manner at the church rests with the Safe Child Coordinator.

### **Two Adult Rule**

It is our goal that a minimum of two adult workers will be in attendance with children at all times during our programs and activities.

At least one of the two adults must be age twenty-one (21) or older.

Some classes for children may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom must remain open and there must be at least three students with the adult teacher.

Two adults are required in the church nursery, or the nursery must be closed.

### **One-On-One Rule**

We do not allow children to be alone with an unrelated adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity. The only exception to this rule is private counseling or instruction between a church employee and a child. In these instances, the parent or guardian must first complete a One-On-One Permission Form. In addition, the private counseling or instruction must be done in close proximity to other adults, with doors open if there is no window in the door to see into the room.

### **Gift Rule**

No adult, teacher or otherwise, may give a gift or gifts to an individual child without the knowledge of the child's parent or guardian and one of the following staff members as applicable: the Pastor(s), the Director of Christian Education or the Pre-School Director.

### **Open Door Policy**

Doors on rooms used with children must have a window in the door; otherwise the door must remain open.

Doors on rooms used with children must not be able to be locked from the inside of the room.

### **Transportation of Youth to and from Church Sponsored Events**

All drivers must meet the following criteria:

Anyone with a valid driver's license may drive himself/herself. Anyone with a valid driver's license may also drive siblings with written permission from his/her parent or guardian.

All drivers for children and youth events:

1. Must be a minimum of twenty-one (21) and a maximum of seventy (70) years old;
2. Must have a valid drivers license; and
3. Must have no record of convictions within the past five years for driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol, driving with a suspended or revoked license, or reckless driving.
4. Must fill out Vehicle Transportation Form.
5. Must have PA state certifications for background checks.

All vehicles utilized must be currently insured, and must have a valid vehicle registration and a valid inspection sticker.

The parent or guardian of any child who may ride with an employee or volunteer must complete a Transportation Permission Form in advance.

Seat belt and car seat usage must be strictly enforced.

### **Nursery Procedures**

For children attending the church nursery, a security check-in/check-out procedure will be followed. The child will be signed in by a parent or other adult. The parent or other adult will indicate on the sign-in form the name of the person or persons authorized to pick up the child. The nursery worker will release the child only to the authorized person. If the nursery worker does not recognize the authorized person, identification will be required. If identification cannot be provided, or if a person other than an authorized person attempts to pick up the child, the Director of Christian Education or a Pastor will be contacted. The Director of Christian Education or a Pastor will be responsible for releasing the child.

A child's diaper will only be changed if an attendant on duty is willing to do so AND a parent has initialed the appropriate column on the attendance sheet. Otherwise, the cell phone number listed will be called.

### **Sunday School and Children's Church Departure Procedures**

Children participating in Sunday School and Children's Church may only leave with a parent or guardian, unless the parent or guardian has completed an authorization form allowing the child to depart on his/her own, or with a designated sibling.

### **Pre-School Departure Procedures**

Children must leave the Pre-School with their parent or guardian, unless the parent or guardian has authorized otherwise. Identification must be provided to Pre-School staff before a child may depart with authorized persons other than parents or guardians.

## **Sick Child Policy**

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at Union United Church of Christ and its Pre-School. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should not be brought to Pre-School, Sunday School, Children's Church or any other children's programs or activities:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours
- Emitting green or yellow fluid from the nose
- Eye or skin infections
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease

Church employees reserve the right to disallow attendance or participation in any class or church event, by any child deemed in the church employee's discretion to evidence any of the above symptoms.

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up.

## **Medications Policy**

It is the policy of Union United Church of Christ and its Pre-School not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with the Director of Christian Education or the Pre-School Director to develop a plan of action.

Exceptions to the medications policy shall be documented in writing.

## **Corporal Punishment Statement**

It is the policy of Union United Church of Christ and its Pre-School not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. If assistance is needed with disciplinary issues, employees and volunteers should consult with one of the following staff members as applicable: The Pastor(s), the Director of Christian Education or the Pre-School Director.

## **Restroom Guidelines**

For the protection of all, employees and volunteers should never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class or activity.

Classrooms should never be left unsupervised by an adult if a child must use the restroom.

### Second Grade and Younger

If a classroom bathroom is not available, workers should escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom. They should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, then allow the children inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door and leave the stall door open as he/she assists the child.

### Third Grade and Older

The buddy system should be used, in which at least two children of the same gender accompany and return with each other to and from the restroom. The adult leader will direct which restroom is to be used.

### **Accidental Injuries to Children**

In the event that a child is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an Incident Report will be completed and given to our Safe Child Coordinator to be filed and is available upon request.

### **Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse**

For purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action (or lack of action) which potentially endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes:

- Physical abuse – any physical injury to a child which is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- Emotional abuse – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- Sexual abuse – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- Neglect – depriving a child of their essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Employees and volunteers may have the opportunity to become aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child participating in our programs and activities. In the event that an individual involved with children at this church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child participating in our programs and activities, this should be reported immediately to Child Line at **800-932-0313** (TDD: 866-872-1677) or **[www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis](http://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis)**. Then alert the Pastor(s), the Director of Christian Education or the Pre-School Director.

### **Other Organizations Using Our Facilities**

Any other organization for children and youth that uses our facility must:

1. Provide us with a completed form listing all volunteers with dates of certifications with signature of group leader stating their volunteers have met PA state guidelines.

Responsibility for obtaining this information and maintaining it in a secure and confidential manner at the church rests with the Church Administrator. This information will be given to the Safe Child Coordinator to keep on file.

### **Responsibility for Child Protection Policy**

The Christian Education Committee will be responsible for the implementation and maintenance of this Child Protection Policy. Overall responsibility for fulfilling the general purpose of this Child Protection Policy rests with the Consistory.

### **Forms**

The following forms will be used in conjunction with this Safe Child Policy:

- One-On-One Permission Form
- Transportation Permission Form
- Vehicle Authorization Form
- Incident Report
- Outside Organization Volunteer Clearance Form

The forms may be amended from time to time as the Christian Education Committee may determine necessary at its exclusive discretion.

### **Adoption**

This Safe Child Policy is adopted by the Consistory of Union United Church of Christ on August 17, 2015.

### **Revisions**

February 23, 2017