

CHILD PROTECTION POLICYApril 2014

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Statement of Purpose

Leadership in the Church demands the highest standards of moral integrity and personal responsibility. It is a gift of the Spirit that can only be effectively exercised in an environment of trust. As the Gospel witness makes abundantly clear, "From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded." (Luke 12:48)

Since trust is so fundamental to the well-being of the Christian community, Christian people have the right to expect that those they choose as leaders (both lay and ordained) understand and are committed to standards of behavior that are trustworthy. In receiving the Sacrament of Baptism, we enter into a sacred covenant with God and are adopted into the covenant family of the Church (W-2.3004, Gen 17:7-14, 2 Cor. 1:21-22). Trust is a key component that exists in this covenant. As the Church and the body of Christ we are united with all the people of God in every place and every time (W-2.3005, 1 Cor. 12:12-13, Eph. 4:4-6). We are bound to serve and to respect the dignity of every human being (G-1.0200, W-2.3004, and Micah 6:8). When, therefore, this solemn trust is broken through some form of misconduct, particularly sexual, not only is someone's dignity diminished and her or his well-being seriously harmed, but also harm is done to the community of faith. Where there is no trust, there can be no community.

St. Paul Lutheran Church (SPLC) is committed to maintaining a safe environment for every child and young person involved in its program ministry. We are committed, not only to maintaining a community, but also to building it and not only to maintaining trust, but also to enriching the atmosphere of trust in our community.

In today's environment, a well-balanced, proactive prevention policy is necessary for any institution entrusted with the care of children and youth. In response, This policy applies to all those who work with children and youth through SPLC programs both on and off campus, including full-time and part-time staff, youth leaders, and volunteers, whether they be church members, visitors, or guests.

I. Statement of Policy

St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, 4686 East Walnut Street, Westerville, Ohio 43081 (hereinafter SPLC) is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children of SPLC from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

II. Implementation of Policy

Implementation of the Policy will include:

- Careful selection of staff, teachers, care givers and others involved in activities with children and youth
- Orientation and training of these individuals
- Supervision of these individuals
- Accurate reporting of incidents of child abuse or neglect
- Responding to incidents or allegations of abuse or neglect
- Monitoring the policy and procedures to insure compliance
- Healing process for the congregation
- The Personnel Committee shall be responsible for the oversight, monitoring and enforcement of the Policy.

III. Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the following terms are defined: “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term “worker” includes both paid and volunteer persons who work with children.

Adult:	Any person eighteen (18) years of age or older
Background Check:	A procedure used to perform a Criminal Information Request (with fingerprints) or any other procedure used to check a person’s background for criminal activity.
Minor/Child:	A person under the age of eighteen (18) or a mentally retarded, developmentally disabled, or physically impaired child under twenty-one (21) years of age.
Staff:	Pastors, youth director, music director, lay ministry coordinator, secretary, custodian, and any other employees of SPLC.
Volunteer:	Persons providing services at SPLC, on behalf of SPLC, but are not employed by SPLC for those services
Childcare Worker:	Any employee or volunteer assigned tasks related to children and youth of all ages at SPLC
Abuse:	Any willful behavior that endangers one’s development, security, or health. Abuse may be perpetrated on a child or youth by an adult or another child or another youth.
Bullying/intimidation:	Behavior, often between children and/or youth, that results in a person feeling threatened, fearful or coerced.
Emotional Abuse:	Verbal or unspoken messages (such as gestures) or written language insinuating another person is worthless, bad, unloved or undeserving of love or care. This may include disparaging and derogatory terms.
Neglect:	Abuse in which a person endangers a person’s health, safety or welfare through negligence. Neglect may include withholding food, clothing, medical care, education, and even affection and affirmation of the person’s self-worth.
Physical Abuse:	Any non-accidental physical injury causing substantial risk or impairment of physical well being inflicted or allowed to be inflicted upon a person by another person.

Sexual Abuse: A specific abuse in which a person is tricked, coerced, bribed or in any way involved in sexual contact. Examples of sexual abuse may include groping, fondling, intercourse, incest, the exploitation of prostitution, and the exposure and inappropriate use of internet access to view pornographic sites.

IV. Selection of Workers

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

a) Six Month Rule

No applicant will be considered for any position involving contact with minors until she/he has been involved with SPLC for a minimum of six (6) months, unless this requirement is waived by recommendation of the Education and Youth Committee and approval of Church Council, based on, but not limited to:

1. Reference from previous employer where the applicant worked with children and approval of Church Council.
2. Current state approved childcare certification.
3. Completion of BCI of Ohio and FBI criminal background checks.

b) Written Application

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by SPLC. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous SPLC affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at the SPLC.

c) Personal Interview

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

d) Reference Checks

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicant's references will be checked, where possible. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at SPLC.

e) **Criminal Background Check**

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (who will interface with children) and for the following categories of volunteers:

- Those who will be involved in Sunday School/preschool/Vacation Bible School unless accompanied by a staff person or volunteer who has undergone the criminal background check;
- Those who will be involved in overnight activities with children;
- Those counseling children;
- Those involved in one-on-one mentorship of children; and
- Those having occasional one-on-one contact with children (such as, church sponsored athletic team coaches and vehicle drivers).

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing the church to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will be unable to work with children. A background check completed for other purposes (another employer or volunteer commitment) within the past 2 years will be accepted, if a copy of the report is provided to SPLC.

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by a Pastor on staff, Council President, or designee on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. 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. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at the SPLC.

V. Training

SPLC Personnel and Administration Committee will provide for training on this child protection policy to all new workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All workers are strongly encouraged to attend these training events.

VI. Two Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adults will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open and there should be no fewer than five (5) students with the adult teacher. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation. In the case of two related adults acting as supervisors, there shall be no less than 3 children being supervised.

In the event there is agreement between the supervising adult(s) and the parent for waiving this rule, written consent by both parties will be documented and forwarded to the Personnel and Administration Committee for tracking any recurring or common situations that should

be addressed through revision to the policy. If verbal consent is received by the supervising adult, it should be witnessed by another adult and both the supervising adult and the witness will document the consent.

VII. Teenage Volunteers

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters (paid or volunteer) who are under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage volunteers:

- Must be at least age 14
- Must be screened as specified above.
- Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

VIII. Open Door Policy

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

IX. Check-in/Check-out Procedure

For children below kindergarten level or developmentally disabled or physically impaired child, a security check-in/check-out procedure will be followed.

1. In the nursery, the child will be signed in by a parent or guardian, who will receive a “child check” for the child similar to a claim check. The parent or guardian must present the “child check” in order to sign out the child from our care. In the event that a parent or guardian is unable to present the “child check,” the Senior Pastor, Council President, or designee will be contacted and will be responsible for releasing the child to the care of a parent or guardian after discussing the surrounding circumstances with the parent or guardian.
2. In the preschool classroom, a log book of students containing forms completed and signed by the parents, will be maintained at all times, with a check-in and check-out procedure for each class time.

X. Restroom Guidelines

For the protection of all, workers 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.

The workers accompanying one or more children to the bathroom should 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 they assist the child.

Children five years of age and younger should use a classroom bathroom if one is available. 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, and then allow the children inside.

XI. Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child or youth 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 in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

XII.Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at SPLC. 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 dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours
- Green or yellow runny nose
- Eye or skin infections
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease, including head lice

Children who are observed 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 for the day.

XIII.Medications Policy

It is the policy of SPLC 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 with the permission of a parent on a case-by-case basis, or by 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 ministry leader to develop a plan of action.

XIV.Discipline Policy

It is the policy of SPLC 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. Workers should consult with the Senior Pastor, Council President, or designee if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

XV. Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological or emotional health and development.

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at this SPLC becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the Senior Pastor, Council President, using the Abuse Incident Report form, for further action including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at this SPLC or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. The adult alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation.
3. Civil authorities will be notified, and the SPLC will comply with the state’s requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. The SPLC will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
5. The Senior Pastor, Council President, or designee will be our spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he or she is alleged to be involved. We will seek the advice of legal counsel before responding to media inquiries or releasing information to the congregation. All other representatives of the church should refrain from speaking to the media.
6. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be permanently removed from their position working with children or youth.

XVI. Acknowledgments

Advent Evangelical Lutheran Church, Child Participation and Protection Policy: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse

First Mennonite Church, Bluffton, OH, Safe Sanctuary for Children and Youth

Shandon Presbyterian Lutheran Church, www.shandonpres.org, Child Protection Policy

GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING ABUSE AND RESPONSE PLAN

(to be distributed to all staff and volunteers working with children)

1. Any incident or reasonable suspicion of abuse shall be reported, in writing, using the Abuse Incident Report Form, or orally to a member of the pastoral team.
2. A member of the pastoral team shall notify the parent or guardians of the victim and help insure the immediate safety of the victim.
3. The accused abuser shall be treated with dignity, but will be immediately removed from further church involvement with children or youth.
4. The reporter, in cooperation with the pastoral team, will notify the Franklin County Sheriff's Dept. (419 227-3535) and/or Franklin County Children Services (419 227-8590) as stated in Ohio laws.
5. A written record shall be kept in a secured place concerning the steps taken in response to the allegations. The lead pastor will confidentially maintain all information.
6. The church will seek guidance from the Southern Ohio Synod staff and obtain legal counsel as deemed necessary.
7. Regardless of the action taken by law enforcement or human services agencies, SPLC may work with the alleged victim, the accused, and their families in order to seek resolution and healing. All parties involved will be treated with dignity, compassion and respect.
8. A brief and honest statement will be prepared at the discretion of the Church Council that can be made to the congregation without giving unnecessary details, placing blame, interfering with the victim's privacy or violating any confidentiality concerns.

ABUSE INCIDENT REPORT FORM

St. Paul Lutheran Church

Westerville, OH

Person reporting the incident _____

Date _____

Location where incident occurred _____

Describe the details of the incident including the names of the victims and alleged abuser(s):

Please give this completed form to one of the pastors at SPLC.

ABUSE SYMPTOM(S) REPORT FORM

St. Paul Lutheran Church

Westerville, OH

Person reporting: _____

Date: _____

Name of alleged victim: _____

Describe the symptoms that were observed and the circumstances that led to this observation:

Please give this completed form to one of the pastors at SPLC.

EXCEPTION TO THE 2-PERSON RULE FORM

St. Paul Lutheran Church

Westerville, OH

Date: _____

Name of Adult Supervising Child(ren): _____

Name of Child(ren) _____

Event: _____

Reason for exception (e.g, only one adult present, two adults are related), and any other relevant details:

Expected length of time of the exception:

The below signed agree to allow the exception to the two-person rule as described above:

Parent or Guardian of Child

Supervising Adult

Signature of adult witness, if permission is granted by phone.

Please submit this completed form to one of the pastors at SPLC, who will forward it to the Personnel and Administration Committee for identification of trends.