

# Child Safety Policy

Continuing Resolution #16



## St. Peter Evangelical Lutheran Church Norwalk, Ohio

*(adopted by the St. Peter Council on July 14, 2016)*

*These guidelines apply to all ministries of St. Peter Evangelical Lutheran Church, except for Christian Day Nursery School, which has its own safety policies as required by the State of Ohio Job and Family Services.*

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## DEFINITIONS

**ADULT** – any person over the age of 18 years old

**CDNS** – Christian Day Nursery School (preschool)

**CHILD** – any person under the age of 18 years old

**CHILD ABUSE** – a child under eighteen years of age or a mentally retarded, developmentally disabled, or physically impaired child under twenty-one years of age who has suffered or faces a threat of suffering any physical or mental wound, injury, disability, or condition of a nature that reasonably indicates abuse or neglect of the child (ORC 2151)

**EVENTS /ACTIVITIES INVOLVING CHILDREN/YOUTH** – any event or activity in which children and/or youth are under the supervision of adult volunteers or staff members

**INSURED DRIVER** – a legally licensed adult age 25 years or older that carries auto insurance coverage per legal requirement of this state

**MANDATORY REPORTER** – A mandatory reporter is someone required by law to report if they suspect or know that child abuse is occurring

**STAFF** – any person employed by the church; for the purposes of this policy, these are staff members who have regular and direct contact with children

**LIMITED TIME VOLUNTEER** – any person who volunteers but is not paid by the church to support, lead, or supervise children's and/or youth group activities on a limited basis, such as helping the Sunday School teacher once every couple of months, volunteering for Vacation Bible School, or volunteering to chaperone or drive for no more than two children's/youth events/activities per year

**REGULAR ADULT VOLUNTEER** – any person who volunteers but is not paid by the church to support, lead, or supervise events/activities for children/youth on a regular basis such as teaching Sunday School or regularly chaperoning youth group events/activities

**TRAINED VOLUNTEERS/INDIVIDUALS** – persons who have been instructed in these and other safety procedures, including the location of first aid kits, AED, fire extinguishers, exits, and phones, and who have met the criteria for working with children and youth

**VULNERABLE ADULT** – persons 18-21 years old whose mental or physical condition makes them susceptible to abuse

**WITNESS** – any person who observes a reportable event or circumstance

**YOUTH** – any person ages 11 years to 17 years old

## **BUILDING SAFETY**

### **General**

Basic safety procedures require not only common sense, but also the quality of supervision such that the designated leader and/or volunteers put in charge of an activity has knowledge of: any known or hidden dangers in the building or on the church grounds, the proper care and operation of any equipment of the church, pertinent information as to the care and supervision of those attending the activity, and the whereabouts of those attending the activity.

In the event of an emergency, it is important to respond with care and composure. If the group or children/youth need to leave the designated area of the event/activity to get to a safer place, all children/youth must stay together with the adults. The adult volunteer or staff member must stay with the group until the emergency is over.

All staff and adult volunteers should know the location of phones, fire extinguishers, bathrooms, and all possible exit doors to outside. Doors that are normally kept locked should remain locked or be relocked after the event/activity ends.

### **Fire Plan**

In the event of a fire where you are to leave the building, guide your group in an orderly, but quick fashion to the nearest outside door. You will then follow the direction of the emergency personnel until the emergency is over. At all times you are asked to stay calm and help to keep the other adults with you mindful of the safety of all children/youth.

### **Storm Plan**

In the event of a severe storm, groups may take refuge in the youth room, the lower interior hallway, a lower level bathroom or the fellowship hall. Do not use the elevator. Adults should stay calm and be mindful of the safety of all children/youth until the emergency is over.

### **Building Security**

The main church doors are unlocked during worship services, when CDNS is in session, for church and community meetings, and at other times as needed to carry out the church's mission. During school hours (Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., September to May) all visitors to the building are to use the main doors off the parking lot and report to the office before proceeding further into the building. All outside groups who are using the facility should also use the main doors for entrance and exit. Exceptions to this will be made on a case-by-case basis by the Pastor, the Church Council or the Property Committee.

All members and staff should be aware of individuals whose behaviors would give reasonable cause for that member to question that individual's presence in the building. Adult volunteers and/or staff

involved with youth activities should question unknown individuals and either direct them to the church office or accompany them to the outside door. If the adult volunteer/staff member feels that such an individual poses a danger, or if the individual refuses to cooperate, the children/youth should be removed to a secure location and 911 is to be called.

Any and all potentially unsafe individuals and situations observed by an adult volunteer or staff member should be reported to the Pastor, the Director of CDNS (when in session) or another staff member as promptly as the situation reasonably determines. In the absence of any of these individuals, a phone call should be made as soon as possible to the Pastor or Council President. This includes any kind of building and security safety as well as the bodily and spiritual safety of those working or attending the event/activity.

### **Nursery Security**

Young children from the ages of 2 years old through kindergarten are welcome in the nursery while it is staffed by trained personnel. The child to nursery personnel ratio will be no more than 5:1. There are to be at least two trained attendants (who are not related to one another) available at all times.

In the case of a medical or security emergency, the nursery staff is to provide for the comfort and safety of the children in the nursery and then immediately contact the parent(s), a staff member or the Pastor.

Any and all potentially unsafe situations that the trained nursery staff identifies in the nursery should be reported to the Pastor or another staff member as promptly as the situation reasonably determines. In the absence of any of these individuals, a phone call should be made as soon as possible to the Pastor or Council President. Phone numbers for the Pastor, President and other staff members will be posted in the nursery.

## **GENERAL SAFETY POLICIES**

### **Code of Conduct for Adults**

All adults responsible for children and youth will be accountable for their words, actions, and deeds. They are to be Christian role models and mentors to children and youth and understand that their faith formation begins with good examples of Christian living and the continuing development of relationships with Christ and the Church. This applies to parents as well as adult volunteers and staff while attending church-sponsored activities.

### **Code of Conduct for Children/Youth**

All children and youth participating in events and activities of the church have a right to a safe and loving place to worship and grow in faith and service. Children and youth also have a responsibility to demonstrate respect to others. Children and youth participating in church-sponsored events and activities, whether on church grounds or off site, will be respectful to all people, their property, and the environment.

### **Training for Volunteers and Staff**

All paid staff and regular volunteers will be trained in basic safety procedures including but not limited to:

- location of first aid kits
- location of all exits
- location of all accessible telephones
- location of the AED
- storm plan
- fire safety plan
- incident/accident reporting procedures
- allegation response plan
- emergency phone numbers (fire, police, poison, etc.)
- emergency phone numbers for the Pastor and Council President

### **Two Adult Policy**

The Two Adult Rule requires that no matter the number of children/youth attending an event/activity, there will always be two unrelated adults present. This may include the presence of an adult who moves in and out of rooms. If the activity taking place is the only activity in the building, there must be two adults present at all times. At least one adult shall have been trained in the church's safety procedures and meet the criteria for a Regular Adult Volunteer. No child/youth is to be left unsupervised while attending a church event/activity whether on church grounds or off-site. Should the event/activity occur off of church property, the adult volunteer/staff member in

charge of the event/activity will take appropriate measures to ensure that children/youth are properly supervised at all times.

### **Open Door Policy & Visibility**

Any event/activity at the church should be visible and interruptible. This means that any adult volunteer and/or staff member working with youth acknowledge that no event/activity with youth in a one-on-one situation is to be held in isolation. Other adults of the congregation may and will be able to drop in to observe the event/activity by a group. Meetings or sessions with one adult and one child/youth will have a high visibility where the door is kept partially open or there is at least one window in the door or looking into the room. These sessions should be kept to a maximum of 30 minutes.

### **Adult to Child/Youth Ratios**

For children preschool to 6 years old, the adult to child/youth will be 1:5.

For children 7 to 11 years old, the adult to child/youth will be 1:8.

For children 12 to 18 years old, the adult to child/youth will be 1:9.

### **Release of Children/Youth from Event/Activity**

Children/Youth will only be released to their parents or another adult that the parent(s) have given permission to pick up their child/youth. The adult volunteer/staff member in charge of the event/activity will be notified prior to the end of the event about who will pick up the child at the end of the event/activity. Preschool aged children attending Sunday School and/or nursery may only be released to a parent or an adult with permission from the parent(s), or to siblings older than 11 years of age.

### **Overnight Events/Activities**

When there are overnight events/activities with youth/children, only regular adult volunteers and/or staff members will serve as overnight chaperones. This includes any church-sponsored overnight events that take place at the church building or off-site. When an overnight group of children/youth includes both boys and girls, both a male and female leader will be present.

### **Discipline**

All children and youth will be treated with respect. Their basic rights to be safe and comfortable are to be honored. If a situation does arise where a child/youth needs to be removed from a children's/youth event/activity based on inappropriate behavior or safety concerns, parents will be notified and asked to pick up their child/youth. In extreme cases, the family and the appropriate staff member, in consultation with the Pastor, will identify an appropriate plan for future participation in children's/youth events/activities.

***No physical discipline is ever to be exercised by a staff member or adult volunteer.*** Such behavior on the part of a volunteer or staff member may be cause for dismissal as a volunteer or termination of employment.

### **Child Abuse Detection**

All staff members and regular adult volunteers working with children/youth will be trained in child abuse detection and should be familiar with this Child Safety Policy. Each regular adult volunteer and staff member will sign "RECEIPT AND REVIEW OF CHILD SAFETY POLICY & CHILD ABUSE DETECTION MATERIAL" form on an annual basis.

### **Insured Driver Policy**

Only insured and licensed adult drivers, age 25 or older, will be permitted to transport children/youth to any event/ activity. Exceptions may be made for an insured and licensed sibling to drive a younger sibling if requested by the parents when legally permissible. This arrangement must be made known to the adult volunteer and/or staff member in charge of the event/activity prior to the event/activity. No other children/youth are permitted to ride in the vehicle.

### **Information Security and Privacy**

All children, families, volunteers, and employees of the church have a right to the privacy of their personal information. When personal information is gathered for record keeping and event/activity preparation, it will be stored in a secure location in the church office with access being limited to the Pastor. In the event that personal information needs to be shared with a Sunday School teacher, youth volunteer, or other pertinent adults working with the youth, it will be handled with discretion and respect. Records will be updated annually and as information changes.

## **MEDICAL SAFETY PROCEDURES**

### **Emergency Contact Information**

Whenever a church-sponsored event/activity involving children/youth takes place, current emergency contact information for each child will be required. Such contact information will include (at minimum) phone numbers for parents/guardians who will be contactable for the duration of the event/activity, as well as any relevant medical information/limitations, including significant allergies. Additional emergency information may be required, depending on the duration of the event/activity.

Emergency contact information (or a copy thereof) will reside in the physical custody of whichever staff member or adult volunteer is supervising the child/youth. If the group is separated (for transportation or other reasons), the adult in charge of each sub-group should have physical custody of emergency contact information for each child/youth participant of that sub-group.

### **Location of First Aid Kits**

First aid kits are located on the coat rack off the narthex, on the coat rack next to the kitchen and in classrooms 103, 203, and 205. The classroom kits are in backpacks hung near the doors.

### **In A Medical Emergency**

In the event that emergency medical personnel are needed, one of the adult volunteers or staff members working with the child/youth should attend to the child's/youth's medical need first. If necessary another adult volunteer and/or staff member should call 911 and the child's/youth's parent(s).

At least one adult volunteer or staff member is to stay with the ill/injured child/youth until emergency medical personnel or parents arrive. Other adult volunteers or staff members should stay with the rest of the group. If at all possible the ill/injured child/youth should be isolated by either removing them to another area or by moving the group to another area so that the ill/injured child/youth may be better cared for until emergency personnel or parents arrive. In the event of a serious illness/injury, an adult volunteer or staff member should contact the Pastor as soon as possible. After the child/youth's medical care has been addressed, the adult volunteer or staff member who stayed with the child will fill out an Accident/Incident report.

### **Nursery**

If a child should become ill or injured while in the nursery during a church activity, the child's medical need should be attended to first as outlined in the section on In A Medical Emergency. Then the parents should be contacted immediately should the illness/injury be serious. Otherwise, the parents will be informed of the situation upon picking up the young child.

**Sick Policy**

If a child/youth appears to be ill and cannot fully participate or becomes ill during an activity or program, the parents will be contacted and asked to pick the child up from the activity by the leader of the activity. The other adult volunteers are to stay with the rest of the group while the leader contacts the parents. The child/youth will be kept as comfortable as possible, but away from the group until such time s/he can be released to his/her parents or other adult given permission to pick up the child/youth. Children/Youth who have fevers or other demonstrable symptoms of illness should remain at home rather than to expose others to their illness.

## **VOLUNTEER SCREENING**

### **Levels of Involvement**

Per definitions outlined in the beginning of this policy, there are three levels of involvement of adults who will have contact with the children and youth of this church:

- staff members
- regular adult volunteers
- limited time adult volunteers

### **Staff/Volunteer Screening Process**

Potential adult volunteers will be asked to complete a volunteer application and will be expected to provide at least two references from persons not related to them. The potential volunteer will be interviewed by the appropriate staff member and will meet their standards for volunteering.

In addition, staff members and regular adult volunteers will undergo a criminal background screening process prior to employment or involvement with children's/youth events/activities.

### **Ohio BCI/FBI Criminal Background Check**

All potential regular adult volunteers/staff members who will be working with children/youth will be required to have an Ohio BCI/FBI screening. A list of convictions which would prohibit becoming a staff member or regular adult volunteer can be found in the appendices of this document. The cost of the BCI/FBI screening will be paid by the church.

If a staff member or volunteer can provide documentation of having "passed" a BCI/FBI screening for their regular employment, that documentation will satisfy this requirement.

If the background check reveals that an applicant has had multiple arrests without convictions, a review committee consisting of the Pastor, Council President, another Council member and a staff member will evaluate the information to make a determination of the suitability of the individual to be a volunteer with children. Such a decision will generally be made without revealing the name of the individual.

BCI/FBI screening will be redone every five years. This applies to both staff members and regular adult volunteers.

### **Confidentiality**

All information obtained through a BCI/FBI background check will be held in strictest confidence. All printed copies of the background checks will be kept in a separate locked file. Only the Pastor will have access to that information.

## **CHILD & VULNERABLE ADULT ABUSE**

### **Definitions**

There are four commonly defined types of abuse: physical, emotional, sexual, and neglect. The Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) defines abuse as “any recent act of failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation; or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm.” The Ohio Revised Code Section 2151 defines a child or vulnerable adult as “a child under eighteen years of age or a mentally retarded, developmentally disabled, or physically impaired child under twenty-one years of age” and abuse as “a threat of suffering any physical or mental wound, injury, disability, or condition of a nature that reasonably indicates abuse or neglect of the child.”

### **Signs of Abuse**

As part of the training of adult volunteers and staff, printed material on the signs of child abuse will be provided, along with reporting protocols. Adult volunteers and staff are expected to familiarize themselves with the signs of child abuse and if abuse is suspected, to followed the outlined protocols.

### **Reporting Child Abuse/Mandatory Reporters**

A mandatory reporter is someone required by law to report if they suspect or know that child abuse is occurring. The following professionals are required by Ohio Revised Code Section 2151.421 to report suspected cases of child abuse: attorneys, audiologists, child care workers, children services personnel, coroners, day care personnel, dentists, nurses, physicians, including hospital interns and residents, podiatrists, psychiatrists, school authorities, employees and teachers, social workers, speech pathologists, animal control officers/agents.

Ohio law encourages everyone to report alleged child abuse and neglect. In most cases it is an option left for personal and moral decision. As an adult volunteer or staff member, please carefully consider that keeping all children and families safe should be of the highest priority for this church.

If an adult volunteer or staff member suspects that a child/youth is the victim of abuse, that information should be immediately shared with the Pastor or the supervising church staff member so that suitable action can be taken. Volunteers or staff members who are mandatory reporters are expected to report the abuse to the proper authorities (police or Job and Family Services).

If any staff member or volunteer witnesses child abuse taking place in the church, they are to immediately contact the police and then take appropriate action to protect the child. The Pastor should be informed as soon as possible.

## **PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING**

### **Accident/Incident Reports**

In the case of injury/illness or inappropriate behavior involving a child/youth where the parent is to be contacted, an Accident/Incident report will be written by the adult volunteer or staff member acting as first responder to the child/youth. The report will include names of child/youth and adult volunteer/staff member making the report, the date of the accident/incident, the circumstances leading up to the accident/incident as well as the steps taken by the first responder to deal with the child's/youth's needs, and any other pertinent information that would be helpful in the follow up care for the child/youth. A copy of the report will be given to the parents and the original will be kept in a locked file in the church office.

In the case that a report is written for inappropriate behavior, the Pastor or appropriate staff member will follow up with the parents to identify suitable behavioral expectations for the child/youth to participate in future events/activities.

In the case that a report is written for an injury/illness, the appropriate staff member will follow up with the parents to identify when the child/youth may resume participation in future events/activities.

In the event of inappropriate, threatening, or abusive behavior by any adult during a church sponsored event, the supervising staff member will take immediate steps to remove that adult from any contact with the children/youth. An Accident/Incident report will be written, and the supervising staff member, in consultation with the Pastor, will make a plan for future involvement of that individual concerning children's/youth events/activities.

The Pastor will be informed of all such accidents/incidents and will review all reports.

### **Child Abuse Reports**

In the event of reasonably suspected or known case of child abuse, the adult volunteer or staff member will make an immediate report to the proper county/state agencies and to the Pastor or supervising staff member. An Accident/Incident Report will also be completed.

### **Follow-Up Documentation**

The Pastor will follow up with the proper county/state agencies to insure that the care of the case has been properly transferred to them. The supervising staff member or the Pastor will document the time and date of follow up contact with the authorities and any instructions received from them.