

Child Abuse Prevention Policy

The Church of the Good Shepherd United Church of Christ

Statement of Christian Conviction

Matthew 18:4-6 directs us, "Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. 'If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, 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.'" Jesus actually warns us to be very careful how we treat children and makes clear to us how much He values them. Being righteous stewards of the power and privilege of adulthood as it relates to children, is part of Christian discipleship.

The stated mission of our church is to honor, worship, and serve God. Through the eyes of God's blessed children, actions speak louder than words. We are role-modeling as individuals and as a congregation. Harboring these precious little ones in our safe sanctuary allows them to learn, to focus on learning to honor, worship, and serve God. It is the responsibility of the entire congregation to ensure continuity of a climate created which encourages safe practices and observance of this Child Abuse Prevention Policy.

The Child Abuse Prevention Policy is a set of standards that assure that the children in our Church are well cared for in a safe and nurturing environment. The way we treat children at Good Shepherd has always been nurturing and positive, yet we live in a contemporary culture that is suspicious, and demands much more of us. We are expected today, just like schools and childcare facilities, to provide a program that is safe, free from abuse, healthy, and of high quality. Good Shepherd's programs for children and youth are affected by these influences from the culture; the advice of our National and Conference offices; the concern of our liability insurers.

Ministerial Conduct

The ministers of this church include all who serve on its behalf including employees, elected or appointed leaders, volunteers, and authorized ministers.

1. All volunteer/paid employees of the church maintain responsibility for insuring that this policy is followed by all adults while in the presence of the children he/she is responsible for supervising.
2. Ideally, paid/volunteer staff acting as supervising adults for a church activity should consist of at least 2 unrelated adults ages 18 or over.
3. Staff/program volunteers shall never leave a child under the age of 8 unsupervised.
4. Supervising adults shall not abuse, or permit others given access to the children they supervise to abuse, children while under their supervision, nor while utilizing church technology, or through electronic transmission of church activities including:
 - Physical abuse-strike, spank, shake, slap, bite
 - Verbal abuse-humiliate, degrade, threaten, curse, shame, demean
 - Sexual abuse-inappropriate touch or verbal exchange, exposure, pornography
 - Mental abuse-harassment, cruelty, prejudice
 - Neglect-withholding food, water, basic care, containment in small spaces

5. Positive techniques of guidance including redirection, positive reinforcement and encouragement rather than competition, comparison, and criticism are to be utilized. Guidelines and environments will encourage self-discipline and will be monitored with age-appropriate expectations.
6. Using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs during program hours while ministering to Good Shepherd UCC children is prohibited. Smoking or use of tobacco in the presence of children is prohibited. Both instances may be grounds for immediate dismissal.
7. Under no circumstances should paid/volunteer staff release children to anyone other than the authorized parent, guardian, or other adult authorized by the parent or guardian as indicated on sign-in sheet at drop-off. Sign-in sheet will be provided for nursery through grade 2.
8. Assigned paid/volunteer staff are the only youth/adults who will have access to the children placed in the Nursery. Assigned names will be posted by the Nursery Coordinator outside the Nursery door. Nursery attendants will wear a name tag in order to be identifiable by parents placing their child in Nursery care. A sign stating the above will be placed on the Nursery door and beside the Nursery sign-in sheet. Children will be passed from the Nursery space, through the gate, into the physical presence of their parent/guardian.
9. Portraying a positive role model for youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience, courtesy, tact, and maturity is expected of all supervising adults.
10. Paid/Volunteer staff and program participants must allow access by authorized ministers to all instruments of technology used on the grounds of Good Shepherd UCC, or with church sponsored programs as their subjects, including, but not limited to, cell phones, computer files and websites, and cameras. There is no assumption of privacy when using instruments of technology owned by the church or using privately owned instruments of technology on church property or with church programs as their subjects. Failure to allow access by authorized ministers will result in said person being dismissed from access to view the program and possible report of the incident to legal authorities.

Requirement for Ministry

Good Shepherd UCC advocates a positive guidance and discipline policy with an emphasis on positive reinforcement, redirection, prevention, and the development of self-discipline. At no time will abusive actions, as outlined in number 4 of the Ministerial Conduct section, be permitted.

All paid staff and volunteer staff with access to children in their parent's absence will, prior to initial assignment.

1. Fill in and sign a self-disclosure form, the Volunteer Application.
2. Utilize the *Praesidium* service to conduct a single state criminal background check and National Child Abuse Registry clearance for the past 7 years. Original certificates citing absence of criminal and child abuse history in scope of ministry will be delivered to the Appointed Administrator for the Background Clearances for copying, initialing, and storage.
3. All documents cited in the "Requirements for Ministry" section will be on file in the church office in a locked cabinet, prior to beginning ministry. They will be updated every 7 years and copies filed at the church will be shredded for disposal every seven years.
4. Signed "Child Abuse Prevention Policy Sign-Off", indicating receipt of a copy of the policy and intention to comply, prior to assuming volunteer duties. Documents will be filed in a locked cabinet of the church office.

5. Paid/Volunteer staff are required to undergo an interview with their prospective paid/volunteer supervisor, provide 2 references of character from non-related adults, and complete Armatus online training as well as attend ongoing trainings as required by the Christian Education Board. Documentation of successful completion of online modules will be filed by the Administrator for Clearances with clearance documents.

Child and Youth Protection

At Good Shepherd UCC, we entrust at least 2, ideally non-related, adults with the responsibility to care for children during operation of church-sponsored programs. Our building is God's House, a safe sanctuary, as depicted in Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. . . I fear no evil; for you are with me...." Keeping disciples safe demands that we provide for the protection of those who are most vulnerable and who have the least power.

The same dynamics that create a nurturing environment, and may ultimately protect against child sexual abuse, can also open the doors to sexually abusive behaviors. Research has shown that youth who are emotionally insecure, needy, and unsupported may be more vulnerable to the attentions of offenders. By promoting close and caring relationships between youth and adults, organizations can help youth feel supported and loved and thus reduce their risk of child sexual abuse. But that same closeness between a youth and an adult can also provide the opportunity for abuse to occur. Our church must balance the need to keep youth safe with the need to nurture and care for them.

A copy of this policy will be given to every applicant-for paid and/or volunteer positions, to each new member in their new member packet, distributed in the September newsletter, posted on the church website, and posted on the church bulletin board. Applicants will return a signed copy to the church signifying that they have read, understood, and agree to abide by this policy while serving in a position of ministry to children ages 0-18 years of age prior to service in any ministry involving contact with children. Applicants are responsible for keeping a copy of the signed document while unsigned documents are available for download on the church website.

We minister both to and through families, and as such, partner with them in preventing child abuse to their children. Parents are always invited to observe interactions between their child and leaders of those programs. Also, parents are encouraged to educate their children on avoidance of child abuse, as well as reporting of abuse and uncomfortable situations of which they have personal knowledge.

Attached to this policy are:

- Volunteer Application
- Background Check Authorization
- Reference Record Form
- Child Abuse Prevention Policy Sign-Off
- Interview Record Form

It is the responsibility of the Christian Education Board, reportable to Consistory, to ensure that all aspects of this policy are being administered and enforced. During the application process, all church staff and volunteers must be sensitive to the need for confidentiality in the handling of this information.

Child Abuse Prevention Policy Sign-Off

All staff/program volunteers must read and sign this policy. Signed copies will be kept in a locked cabinet of the church office and will be renewed at the onset of ministry or every seven years during continuous ministry.

My signature below indicates I have read and understand the Child Abuse Prevention Policy outlined here. I understand that any violation of this Code of Conduct or Reporting Procedures may result in termination of my employment or volunteer status.

Name(Print)

Signature

Date

Interview Record Form

To be completed by church-selected interviewer

Name of Interviewer _____

Name of Interviewee _____

Position of Interest _____

Date/Time of Interview _____

1. How are you interested in working with children/youth? Preferential ages _____

2. Are you interested in transporting children/youth? Yes no (If yes, supply with "Permission to Verify Documents for Applicants to Provide Transportation" and make copies of driver's license and auto insurance cards.) List states in which applicant has been a licensed driver- _____

3. Describe your attributes that make you a good applicant for the position of _____.

4. What training/supplies/assistance/information will you need from the church to optimize your ministry, or for your decision-making regarding acceptance or denial of this position?

5. Please review your application and make any additions/corrections that now occur to you.
6. Conclude with prayer, statement of appreciation for the application, and a promise of date _____ for notification. Explain that the background searches will cost the church \$___ and request a donation to cover the cost.

Interviewer follow-up:

Applicant notified: date _____ time _____

Via phone e-mail mail

Background searches secured (attach) : Praesidium and DMV(list states)

Application- accepted rejected

Please attach this form to volunteer application and reference record forms and file in locked church office cabinet for 7 years, or until termination of position, whichever is the last to occur.

Reference Record Form

Applicant is responsible to submit this form to *two people* who are unrelated and who have known the applicant for at least 2 years. It is the responsibility of the applicant to insure that the two forms are returned to: The Church of the Good Shepherd UCC, 35 W. Philadelphia Ave., Boyertown, PA 19512.

Name of Applicant _____

Name of Reference _____

Position of Interest _____

Date/Time of Conversation _____

- In what capacity have you known the applicant and for how long?

- Would you rehire the applicant? If no, why not?

- How does the candidate handle frustration and criticism while working with children?

- Was the candidate punctual? Yes No

- When and where have you observed the candidate working with young children?

- Describe the candidate's methods of discipline which you have observed.

- In your opinion, are there any reasons why placing vulnerable clients in the care of the candidate would expose the clients to undue risk or harm?

- Would you be comfortable having the applicant assigned to care for a child in your family?

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Background Screening Consent and Information Form

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Applicant should complete all relevant information and sign and date the form.

Applicant's Full Name (Printed): _____

Maiden Name or Other Names Used: _____

Social Security Number: _____ Date of Birth*: ____/____/____

*NOTE: The above information is required for identification purposes only, and is in no manner used as qualifications for employment, internship, or

service as a volunteer. The United Church of Christ Insurance Board and _____ (THE PRINCIPAL) abides by all applicable state and federal employment laws.

ADDRESSES (for the past 10 Years)

Present

Address _____

City _____ County _____ State _____

Zip _____

How Long at Present

Address? _____

Former

Address _____

City _____ County _____ State _____

Zip _____

How Long at Former

Address? _____

Former

Address _____

City _____ County _____ State _____

Zip _____

How Long at Former

Address? _____

Please list all states and counties of residence since turning age 18: _____

Please circle any of the following states in which you have lived: CA, CO, DE, LA, MA, SD, VT, WV, WY
I, _____, authorize _____ (THE PRINCIPAL) and/or its agents to make an independent investigation of my background, references, character, past employment, education, credit history, adult criminal or police records, and motor vehicle records including those maintained by both public and private organizations and all public records for the purpose of confirming the information contained on my Application and/or obtaining other information which may be material to my qualifications for service now and, if applicable, during the tenure of my service with THE PRINCIPAL. I release the United Church of Christ Insurance Board, and THE PRINCIPAL and its agents and any person or entity, which provides information pursuant to this authorization, from any and all liabilities, claims or law suits in regards to the information obtained from any and all of the above referenced sources used. The name above is my true & complete legal name. All information provided is true & correct to the best of my knowledge:

Signature of Applicant _____

Date _____

Are you applying for employment/service in California, Minnesota or Oklahoma? Yes ___ No ___

If so, do you want a copy of any Consumer Report prepared concerning you? Yes ___ No ___

I understand that California law requires the United Church of Christ Insurance Board and THE PRINCIPAL to give me a copy of any report requested within seven (7) days of the date the information was obtained and that failure to do so will expose the United Church of Christ Insurance Board and THE PRINCIPAL to liability (Section 1786.29).