

Child Safety Protection Policy

Parkview Mennonite Church

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Table of Contents

[Introduction](#)

[Scriptural Basis for Protecting and Caring for Children](#)

[Part 1: Definitions of Abuse](#)

[Physical Abuse](#)

[Mental Abuse](#)

[Neglect](#)

[Sexual abuse](#)

[Other Acts of Child Abuse:](#)

[Part 2: Child Protection Team](#)

[Responsibilities](#)

[Annual Activities Checklist](#)

[Part 3: Guidelines for Staff and Volunteers](#)

[Mandated Reporting](#)

[Who are mandated reporters?](#)

[“Reporting Out”](#)

[“Reporting Up”](#)

[Presence of Sexual Offenders in the Congregation](#)

[Part 4: Youth Pastor/Leaders Policy](#)

Introduction

Parkview Mennonite Church recognizes the seriousness and damage of all abuse. This type of mistreatment violates the very image of God. It causes serious damage to the mind, body, soul and spirit of the one abused. It also causes harm to the mind, soul, and spirit of the abuser.

Through our policies and guidelines, we seek to make our church environment a safe place for all who worship and fellowship with us. We attempt to prevent abuse by adopting worker supervision and certification policies and guidelines that minimize the opportunities in which abuse could occur.

If abuse does occur, we will seek to follow Christ's example in that He addressed evil with the ultimate goal of bringing wholeness and healing to all. To do that, we will seek and support healing measures for the victim and also for the alleged perpetrator.

Scriptural Basis for Protecting and Caring for Children

Matt 18:2-6 ² He called a little child and had him stand among them. ³ And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

⁵ "And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. ⁶ But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. NIV

Mark 10:13-16 People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁵ I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." ¹⁶ And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them. NIV

Matt 18:10 "See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven." ^a NIV

Ps 127:3 Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. KJV

Part 1: Definitions of Abuse

Definitions of abuse from the **Pa. Child Protective Services Law [CPSL. [Title 23 Pa. C.S Chapter 63] as amended December, 2013, to be effective December 31, 2014**, as follows:

Physical Abuse

Causing bodily injury through any recent act or failure to act. Creating a reasonable likelihood of bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act. Bodily injury is impairment of physical condition or substantial pain. The following are “per se” acts of child abuse (meaning the act itself, apart from the outcome, is considered child abuse.)

- Kicking, biting, throwing, burning, stabbing or cutting a child in a manner that endangers the child.
- Unreasonable restraining or confining a child, based on consideration of the method, location or the duration of the restraint or confinement.
- Forcefully shaking a child under one year of age.
- Forcefully slapping or otherwise striking a child under one year of age.
- Interfering with the breathing of a child.
- Causing a child to be present at a location while violations of 18 Pa. C.S. 7508.2 (relating to the operation of a methamphetamine laboratory) are occurring, providing that the violation is being investigated by law enforcement.
- Fabricating, feigning or intentionally exaggerating or inducing a medical symptom or disease which results in a potentially harmful medical evaluation or treatment to the child through any recent act.

Mental Abuse

Causing or substantially contributing to serious mental injury to a child through an act or failure to act or a series of such acts or failures to act. Serious mental injury is a psychological condition, as diagnosed by a physician or licensed psychologist, including the refusal of appropriate treatment, that:

- Renders a child chronically and severely anxious, agitated, depressed, socially withdrawn, psychotic or in reasonable fear that a child’s life or safety is threatened;
- Seriously interferes with a child’s ability to accomplish age appropriate developmental and social tasks.

Neglect

Causing serious physical neglect of a child. Serious physical neglect is any of the following when committed by a perpetrator that endangers a child's life or health, threatens a child's well-being, causes bodily injury or impairs a child's health, development or functioning:

- A repeated, prolonged or conscionable egregious failure to supervise a child in a manner that is appropriate considering the child's development age and abilities.
- The failure to provide a child with adequate essentials of life, including food, shelter or medical care.
- Causing the death of a child through any act or failure to act.

Sexual abuse

Causing sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any act or failure to act. Creating a likelihood of sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any recent act or failure to act. Sexual abuse or exploitation is the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement or coercion of a child to engage in or assist another individual to engage in sexually explicit conduct, which includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Looking at the sexual or other intimate parts of a child or another individual for the purpose of arousing or gratifying sexual desire in any individual.
- Participating in sexually explicit conversation either in person, by telephone, by computer or by a computer-aided device for the purpose of sexual stimulation or gratification of any individual.
- Actual or simulated sexual activity or nudity for the purpose of sexual stimulation or gratification of any individual.
- Actual or simulated sexual activity for the purpose of producing visual depiction, including photographing, videotaping, computer depicting or filming.
- This definition does not include consensual activities between a child who is 14 years of age or older and another person who is 14 years of age or older and whose age is within four years of the child's age.

Other Acts of Child Abuse:

The following are per se acts of child abuse:

- Leaving a child unsupervised with an individual, other than the child's parent, who the actor knows or reasonably should have known:
 - a. Is required to register as a Tier II or Tier III sexual offender under 42 Pa. C.S., Ch. 97 Subch. H (relating to registration of sexual offenders), where the victim of the sexual offense was under 18 year of age when the crime was committed.

- b. Has been determined to be a sexually violent predator under 42 Pa. C.S. 9799.24 (relating to assessments) or any of its predecessors.
 - c. Has been determined to be sexually violent delinquent child as defined in 42 Pa. C.S. 9799.12 (relating to definitions).
- Any of the following offenses committed against a child (Criminal Code)
 - a. Rape, as defined in 18 Pa. C. S. 3121 (relating to rape)
 - b. Statutory sexual assault, as defined in 18 Pa. C.S. 312.1 (relating to statutory sexual assault)
 - c. Involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, as defined in 18 Pa. C.S. 3123 (relating to involuntary deviate sexual intercourse)
 - d. Sexual assault, as defined in 18 Pa. 3124.1 (relating to sexual assault)
 - e. Intentional sexual assault, as defined in 18 Pa. C.S. 3124.2 (relating to intentional sexual assault)

Part 2: Child Protection Team

Responsibilities

The Child Protection Team prepares, maintains and administers the Child Protection Policy. This team is made up of Parkview Mennonite Church members and appointed by the leadership team when need committee members are needed. The following are duties the Child Protection Team should assume:

1. Complete the Annual Activities Checklist
2. Meet as needed to develop/maintain the list of adults approved to work with children.
3. Oversee all the required secure recordkeeping for ordained ministry and volunteer background checks, and records of training attendance.
4. Keep records on any individual for 50 years.
5. Monitor any investigations generated by a mandated reporter to a Child Protection Agency.
6. Approve individuals to be named on the list of adults approved to work with children.

Annual Activities Checklist

The checklist below describes the annual duties of the Child Protection Team to keep the Child Protection Policy functioning. It is required that each year, a copy of this page is made, and dates are set/noted when the task is completed. Each completed annual checklist should be filed with the other child protection documentation and a copy given to the leadership team to review.

The Child Protection Team Shall...

1. Meet annually to review practices and policies. Date_____
2. Report annually to the church members at the congregational meeting. Date_____
3. Schedules and executes the Child Safety training event for volunteers. Date_____
4. Does the annual building walk-through to identify any places where inappropriate behavior could occur. Date_____
5. Files the completed Annual Activities Checklist. Date_____

Notes/Items to report:

Signatures

Child Protection Committee Member _____

Child Protection Committee Member _____

Part 3: Guidelines for Staff and Volunteers

Ordained ministry and volunteers of Parkview Mennonite Church must obtain and supply originals or copies of originals of the requested documents outlined below. These documents are to be given to the Child Protection Team for review and processing. The expiration of the needed documents are outlined below each according to their requirement.

For the protection of our children and youth at Parkview Mennonite Church, we have established the following administrative guidelines for our “certification process” for all who desire to work with our children and/or youth or who supervise those who work with children.

1. A volunteer should have a strong commitment to God and the Christian faith for at least one year and be a member or regular attendee of a like-faith church at least six months before volunteering for any position in the children or youth ministries. Volunteers who have attended for less than 6 months may be considered on an individual basis after personal references and clearances have been checked.
2. Volunteers should be at least 18 years of age. A youth (12-17 years old) may serve as a volunteer if he/she is under the direct supervision of a certified adult (18 or older).
3. We require that all **ordained ministry** complete and submit copies of these clearances outlined by Lancaster Mennonite Conference:

You must complete:

- a. PA Child Abuse History Clearance (expires every 5 years)
 - b. PA State Police Criminal Record Check (expires every 5 years)
 - c. FBI Federal Criminal History Clearance and Fingerprinting (expires every 5 years)
 - d. Attend an **Employee** level Child Safety training. (expires every 5 years)
 - e. Read and return a signed copy of the final page of the Child Protection Policy. (only upon initial onboarding)
4. We require that all **volunteers** complete and submit copies of these clearances:

You must complete:

1. PA Child Abuse History Clearance (expires every 5 years)
2. PA State Police Criminal Record Check (expires every 5 years)
3. FBI Federal Criminal History Clearance and Fingerprinting (expires every 5 years) **OR** complete a PA Residency Affidavit indicating you have been a continuous resident of Pennsylvania for the past 10 years. (never expires as long as you live in PA)
4. Attend a Child Safety training or watch the video provided by the Child Protection Team once every three years as a refresher. (expires every 3 years)

5. Read and return a signed copy of the final page of the Child Protection Policy.
(only upon initial onboarding)

The volunteer forms and record checks will be reviewed by the Child Protection Policy team. If anything incriminating is found on these reports, the volunteer will not be eligible to serve. Any questionable information on the background checks noted by the Child Protection Team will be kept in strict confidence.

Mandated Reporting

Who are mandated reporters?

Under the Child Protective Services Law, mandated reporters are:

- Adults (18 and older), paid or unpaid, who work with children or supervise staff who do.
- Adult volunteers in a setting with children.
- Adults who come in direct contact with children in a program, activity or service.

If a mandated reporter has a reasonable suspicion that abuse has occurred, they are required by law to report it to the proper authorities immediately, or as soon thereafter as possible.

A reasonable suspicion is more than “a hunch”. It is a determination that is made, based on the following factors:

- Your overall knowledge of the circumstances (who, what, where, and how)
- Your observations (the red flags, the behavior indicators and the overall demeanor of the child and alleged perpetrator).
- Your familiarity with the individuals involved (the family situation, relevant history and/or similar prior incidents).
- Your overall feelings about the incident (your gut feeling and your personal instincts). Be aware, though, of how your personal biases can and do influence your conclusions and actions.

All Parkview Mennonite Church ordained ministry and volunteers are considered to be mandated reporters, and have a personal responsibility and moral obligation to report any and all suspected abuse, under the law. Parkview Mennonite Church volunteers are mandated reporters both within, as well as outside, the church context.

“Reporting Out”

A mandated reporter must report all incidents of alleged or suspected child abuse directly to the state authorities immediately after an incident occurred, or was reported to staff or volunteers. This is considered “reporting out”. The two ways to “report out” are listed below in order of preference.

1. The preferred method of reporting out is to file a report online on the Child Welfare Portal at www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis. This method allows the fastest response time, as it funnels the information directly to the first available and most appropriate professional to handle the case.
Note: Before a report can be made, the person must pre-register on the portal (address above. After you pre-register, you can file a report directly through the portal. There is no follow up report needed if you file online.
2. The other method available to file a report of child abuse (preferably ONLY for those who do not use computers or have access to one at that time) is to call the Pa. Childline at 1-800-932-0313 immediately after the incident occurred or was reported to you. Within two days after you file your report over the phone, you will also need to follow up with a written report (CY-47 form) to Children and Youth Services in the county where the alleged abuse took place.

“Reporting Up”

After a mandated reporter files a report of child abuse to the state authorities, (reporting out), the law requires the mandated reporter to notify the designated person in charge of the institution in which the incident of abuse occurred. This is called “reporting up.”

This means that after you report an incident of alleged abuse to the authorities, you must also report the incident to a member of your church’s Child Protection Team or lead pastor. Note: If a mandated reporter reports in a situation outside of their institutional setting, there is no formal report up. However, a best practice could be to involve doing one, or both of the following:

- Let the institutional head, where the alleged abuse was noted, know you made a report.
- Ask the Childline intake person about whom to report up to.

After the volunteer reports “out” and “up,” the incident should not be discussed with anyone else. The state authorities will do the investigation and take the necessary and appropriate action from that point on.

Presence of Sexual Offenders in the Congregation

If Parkview Mennonite Church decides to allow a known sexual offender to attend services then guidelines will be established on a case by case basis which fits the situation of the offender. Permission by the supervising county office to allow the sexual offender to attend services may be required. The supervising county officer may also require training for the congregation and approval of the content of the training. Parkview Mennonite Church may require congregational training prior to welcoming the offender to the congregation. The congregation will be notified of the presence and identity of the known sexual offender. The Leadership Team will appoint a sponsor for each sexual offender who will accompany the sexual offender at all times while on the premises. The sexual offender may not have direct contact with children in any context. A covenant of understanding between the Leadership Team and the sexual offender will be drawn up and signed by both parties. Any violation by the offender of the covenant of understanding will result in termination of attendance at Parkview Mennonite Church.

Part 4: Youth Pastor/Youth Advisers Policy

Parkview Mennonite Church relates to the Martindale Mennonite District of the Lancaster Mennonite Conference.

The Martindale Mennonite District provides the youth of the district with persons who have the role of youth pastor and youth leaders. Their duties include but are not limited to, providing wholesome Christian activities for the youth.

The youth pastor and youth advisers shall abide by the policy of the congregation of which they are members.

This shall include but is not limited to:

1. Obtain all clearances as required by the Child Protection Law.
2. Receive training for mandated reporters, including the definition of child abuse, and mandated reporter requirements.
3. Be vigilant in observing inappropriate behavior during the activities and functions of the youth group.
4. When reasonable suspicion is determined, they shall report out to the authorities as outlined in this policy and then to the offender's lead pastor. Appropriate care and counseling shall be provided for the offender and the offended by the respective congregation.

Parkview Mennonite Church

Volunteer Acknowledgement of Child Safety Protection Policy

I have read, understand and agree to comply with all requirements of the Parkview Mennonite Child Safety Protection Policy.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Please print and return the Child Protection Team