

# **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY OF ST PETER LUTHERAN CHURCH, MECHANICSBURG, PA**

## **Mission Statement**

This congregation's ministry with children and youth begins by providing a safe environment with caring and effective leaders. In order to provide this safe environment, the congregation binds itself to the guidelines described in this policy.

## **Committee Responsibility**

The Child Protective Policy Committee (CPPC) is committed to implementation and compliance with this Child Protective Policy. See attached Committee description.

## **Clearances Required**

Under Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Law, House Bill 1276, effective July 1, 2015, any adult over the age of 18, whether paid or volunteer, responsible for the welfare of a child or having direct contact with children will need clearances. A child is defined as a person under 18 years of age. Pennsylvania Law, Section 6303, defines direct contact with children as "the care, supervision, guidance or control of children or routine interaction with children.

## **Approved Adult**

In order to protect the safety of our children, youth and adults, all employees and volunteers will be screened as to their acceptability for working with children and youth. They will be required to follow the guidelines set forth in this Child Protective Policy. Application forms to become an Approved Adult are attached to this document. All Approved Adults are mandated reporters as required by law and shall follow the guidelines set forth in this policy for reporting abuse or suspicions of abuse.

To be an Approved Adult working with children and youth the following criteria must be met:

1. Have experience working with children or demonstrate ability to learn how to work with children, and are called by God to do God's work.
2. Provide written authorization to obtain, or obtain personally, a Criminal Record Check, Child Abuse History Clearance, and FBI Clearance (if needed). *Note; the FBI fingerprint clearance through the PA Department of Human Services is only required if a volunteer has lived outside the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in the last 10 years.* Volunteers who have been a continuous resident of Pennsylvania for the past 10 years must swear or affirm in writing that they are not disqualified from service based upon a conviction of an offense under PA Law Section 6344.
3. As of July 24, 2015, there are no Commonwealth of Pennsylvania fees for Pennsylvania Criminal Record Check or the Child Abuse History Clearance. There is a \$27.00 fee for the FBI Clearance if required per item number 2 above, for which fingerprints are required and clearances will be paid for/reimbursed by the church unless the individual offers to cover the cost.
4. Beginning August 25, 2015, prospective volunteers (Mandated Reporters) must submit clearances prior to the commencement of service. All volunteers will be required to obtain clearances every 60 months. Timeframes for renewed clearances are based upon the date of each individual clearance".<sup>1</sup>
5. Volunteers are required to obtain clearances as follows:  
Within 60 months of the date of the most recent clearance

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<sup>1</sup> PA Department of Human Services: Volunteer Frequently Asked Question  
Adopted Nov 2012 Revised Aug 2015 Approved Aug 2015; Sept 18, 2016

- By July 1, 2016, if the clearance is older than 60 months; or  
 By July 1, 2016, if they are approved as a volunteer before August 25, 2015, and have not received a clearance because they previously were not required to obtain clearance.
6. Provide two personal references from unrelated parties.
  7. Attend and successfully complete a Personal Interview with the Pastor. This interview will include a standard inquiry about whether in the past the applicant has abused or has been accused of abusing or physically neglecting children or youth or whether the applicant was ever a victim of child abuse.
  8. Provide documentation of long-term active church participation. If no long-term participation documentation exists, the adult must be active at St Peter Lutheran Church for 1 year.
  9. Sign a Child Protection Covenant acknowledging that the applicant understands the Child Protection Policy and agrees to comply with it.
  10. Attend a training session provided by St Peter Lutheran Church. This can be done through an online course found at [https://www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu/webapps/portal/execute/tabs/tabAction?tab\\_group\\_id=2](https://www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu/webapps/portal/execute/tabs/tabAction?tab_group_id=2)

Applications and related papers will be locked in a confidential file in the church office.

### **Mandated Reporters**

The law defines a Mandated Reporter as; “an individual paid or unpaid, who, on the basis of the individual’s role as an integral part of a regularly scheduled program, activity or service, accepts responsibility for a child.”

### **Appropriate Behavioral Guidelines**

The congregation has adopted the following guidelines to ensure that a nurturing Christian environment for children and youth is maintained within the congregation; to protect children, youth and adults who participate in activities sponsored by the church from sexual and/or physical abuse or mental injury; to protect congregation members from false allegations of abuse.

1. **Child Abuse Prohibited:** Those who accept the responsibility of working with the congregation’s children and youth shall not violate that responsibility by causing, permitting or participating in non-accidental physical injury, non-accidental mental injury, sexual abuse or serious physical neglect of children.
2. **Sexual Abuse Prohibited:** Those who accept the special responsibility of working with the congregation’s children and youth shall not violate that responsibility by having any interaction with a child where the child is being used for sexual stimulation of the adult or a third person. The behavior may or may not include touching.
3. **Two Approved Adult Rule:** At least two Approved Adults (when possible these will not be related and reside in the same household) must be present during any children’s church activity. One of the two adults may be a “roamer” who moves in and out of rooms when it is not possible to have two Approved Adults in a room. At no time should one adult be in a room with one child unless the door is open, or the door offers an unobstructed sightline of anyone in the room.
4. **Empty Room Rule:** After an activity, the Approved Adults should check rooms to ensure that all participants have vacated the room.
5. **Drop Off/Pick Up Rule:** For fifth graders and below, parents must drop off and pick up their child(ren) at the room or meeting place where the child’s activity is occurring. Sixth grade and above, parents are responsible for safe drop off and pick up of their child(ren). Parents may authorize another adult to pick up their child(ren) by giving permission in writing to the appropriate Approved Adult in charge of the activity/event. Two adults, one of which must be an Approved Adult, should

be present with children and youth until they are picked up.

6. **Permission Slips:** Children and youth must have permission to participate in any overnight activity that takes place away from church grounds. That permission must be in writing, signed by a parent or guardian who has had advance notice of the event details. It must identify the activity in which the child and youth will be participating. A list of Approved Adults who will serve as chaperones will be available at the beginning of each activity.
7. **Overnight Rule:** Overnight activities involving children shall be chaperoned by at least two Approved Adults. If the event involves mixed gender children, then there must be at least one Approved Adult of each gender, two of each gender if possible and unrelated when possible.
8. **Transportation of Children:** When children and youth are carpooled for church activities they shall be transported in groups, and the driver must be 18 years of age or older and show a valid PA drivers license and proof of insurance. The supervising Approved Adults should use good judgement in choosing drivers. Carpooling may involve the use of adults who are not Approved Adults, however an Approved Adult must accompany each adult driver transporting children unless the driver is a parent of all children being transported in that vehicle.
9. **Expressions of Affection:** True expressions of affection toward children can be a manifestation of Christ's love for all of us. A kind word of encouragement to a child or a pat on the back can be a small but significant act for both the adult and the child. That being said, adults must use caution and common sense when physically expressing affection toward children.
  - a. Respect a child's refusal of affection
  - b. Never make a child feel uncomfortable
  - c. Be aware of appropriate hand placement.
  - d. A child or an observer could misinterpret a pat on the bottom or bear hug.
  - e. Note that a body-to-body embrace, a touch on private areas (those areas covered by a bathing suit), or any type of kiss is inappropriate.
10. **Safe and Secure Setting:** Doors should be left open or a window should allow easy observation of the room. Settings and equipment used for children and youth events should be safe and appropriate.
11. **Staffing/Leader Supervision-** the following are suggested guidelines for on-site activities:
  - a. Nursery through 2 years old activities- 1:4 (1 adult to every four children)
  - b. 3-4 year old activities- 1:6
  - c. Kindergarten-5<sup>th</sup> Grade - 1:8
  - d. 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades- 1:10
  - e. Special needs- 1:2(note - helpers are not included in computing the ratio)

### **Reporting Suspected Child Abuse**

A mandated reporter who witnesses or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child involved in a childcare program or activity has been abused by anyone (including the child's family, guardians, an Approved Adult, or volunteer) must report such knowledge or reasonable suspicions to the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare Childline and Abuse Registry (800-932-0313) as required by law. The report can also be submitted through the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare Child Welfare Portal.

<https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home>. •After reporting to **ChildLine**, these mandated reporters must then notify the person in charge of their institution, school, agency, or facility

The person in charge must facilitate the cooperation of the institution, school, facility, or agency with any investigation of the report

The congregation will cooperate fully with government authorities investigating allegations of abuse. The initiative for investigating alleged abuse resides with the Department of Public Welfare and should not be carried out by the congregation. The Pastor or designee will forward the report of child abuse to the president of Congregation Council and the chairperson of the Child Protective Policy Committee.

All allegations of child abuse or serious physical neglect will be taken seriously by the pastor(s), Congregation Council, and the Child Protective Policy Committee. All reporting steps taken will be documented, including a log of phone calls, personal visits, and written reports. The Pastor and the Congregation Council president will be involved so that there can be verification of the reporting activity.

The Pastor and/or the Congregation Council president will notify the Office of the Synodical Bishop immediately about any report to the Childline and Abuse Registry about suspected child abuse.

The law imposes penalties if any person attempts to intimidate, retaliate, or obstruct an individual from reporting suspected child abuse

No more than one report to **ChildLine** of an incident is required from the institution, school, or facility.

### **Response to the Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse**

1. The Pastor and Congregation Council president will notify parents or guardians of all children involved in an alleged incident that occurred during a church sponsored event, unless the parents or guardians are the persons suspected of the abuse. The phone call or visit will be documented.
2. The Pastor or Congregation Council president who reported the alleged child abuse to Childline will provide to the Congregation Council a written report and all the steps taken afterwards.
3. The Congregation Council will notify the congregation's insurance broker and/or carrier when the reporting procedures have been initiated. The phone call or written report will be documented. If the original notice is by phone, a letter memorializing that report will also be sent to the insurance broker and/or carrier.
4. The Congregation Council will determine whether the congregation should engage legal counsel in consultation with the insurance carrier.
5. The Congregation Council will authorize the Pastor or one of the Council members to act as the official spokesperson for the congregation. Only the authorized person or persons can speak for the congregation to the news media, government agencies, attorneys, or others.
6. All other steps taken to respond to an allegation of child abuse or neglect will be approved in advance by the Congregation Council and will as far as possible be documented by them.
7. All communications within the congregation regarding the report of suspected child abuse shall attempt to protect the dignity and privacy of those persons affected by the report including the alleged child victim and the person suspected of child abuse while at the same time ensuring that persons in responsibility and law enforcement authorities remain fully informed.

### **Violations of Child Protection Policy**

Persons who admit to or pled guilty to or are convicted in a court of law of physical, mental or sexual abuse of a child may not work with children in the congregation. Persons who admit to any type of physical, mental or sexual abuse of a child, but have not appeared in a court of law may not work with children in the congregation.

Alleged violations of the policy, **other than abuse**, shall be immediately reported to the Child Protective Policy Committee chair who will report it to the Pastor and the president of the Congregation Council. The alleged violations of the policy will be investigated by the Child Protective Policy Committee that will meet with the person(s) involved. If the person(s) is found to be in violation of the policy, the Child Protective Policy

Committee, Pastor and Council president will determine what disqualification or disciplinary action, if any, is necessary.

**REFERENCE CHECK FORM**  
**St Peter Lutheran Church**

**Applicant:**

Name (Last) \_\_\_\_\_ (First) \_\_\_\_\_ (Middle) \_\_\_\_\_

**Reference:**

Reference Name (Last) \_\_\_\_\_ (First) \_\_\_\_\_ (Middle) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

What is your relationship to the applicant?

How long have you known the applicant?

How well do you know the applicant?

How would you describe the applicant's general personality?

How would you describe the applicant's ability to relate to children and/or youth?

How would you describe the applicant's leadership abilities?

How would you feel about having the applicant as a volunteer worker with your child and/or youth?

Do you know of any characteristics or circumstances that would negatively affect the applicant's ability to work with children and/or youth? If so, please describe.

Do you have any knowledge that the applicant has even been convicted of a crime? If so, please describe.

Please list any other comments you would like to make.

**Reference inquiry completed by:**

Name (Print)/ Title \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Child Protection Covenant  
For  
St. Peter Lutheran Church**

**“I.....will tend the flock of God that is in my care....willingly, as God would have me do it...” 1 Peter 5:2**

**I** accept responsibility to nurture the Christian faith and well being of the children and youth of St. Peter Lutheran Church, and to care for them as Christ cares for me.

**I** agree to support children, youth and my peers and treat them in a way consistent with the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**I** agree to obtain the legally required State and FBI Clearances prior to commencing service as a volunteer having responsibility for the care, supervision, guidance or control of children or routine interaction with children.

**I** agree to participate in training or education events provided by the church related to my assignment as required.

**I** agree to refrain from using alcohol, recreational or illegal drugs at church events or activities when supervising children.

**I** agree to practice Christian behavior in my dealings with the congregation’s children and youth by refraining from: the use of profanity, sexual innuendo, sexual harassment, berating of children, youth or peers and engaging in any type of sexual or inappropriate conduct.

**I** have read, understand and agree to abide by the appropriate behavioral guidelines of the **Child Protection Policy of St. Peter Lutheran Church.**

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## CHILD PROTECTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE- St Peter Lutheran Church

There shall be a Child Protective Policy Committee (CPPC) whose purpose shall be to provide a safe environment and to provide caring and effective leaders for the children and youth of the Congregation. Membership on the committee should include the Pastor, the Congregation Council President and Vice President, the Youth and Family Ministry Committee Chair, and the Children and Youth Education Committee Co-Chairs. The Pastor will appoint a chair of the committee. This person may be one of the four or may be selected from the membership of the congregation.

The responsibilities of the committee are:

1. Review and make recommendations to the Congregation for revising Congregation policy regarding the safety of our children.
2. Provide training for all staff and volunteers working with the children regarding child abuse (physical and sexual) and Congregation policy. Training should be presented prior to work with children.
3. Consider all applications of church members desiring to become an Approved Adult.
4. Delegate to the chair of the CPPC and the Pastor the task of reviewing all applications.
5. Obtain a "Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check", a "Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance" and, if required of the applicant, an FBI Clearance for all applicants if requested.
6. Submit a list of qualified candidates for Personal Interviews. Standard Personnel Interview forms will be completed by the interviewer and will be included in the personnel file for each candidate.
7. Monitor Approved Adults to ensure that policies are being followed.
8. Keep a file of all permission slips, which will be stored in the congregation office. Permission slips will be kept for three years following the event. If an incident of abuse is reported relating to an event, the permission slip for that event will be maintained indefinitely.
9. Keep Congregation Council apprised of all activities of the committee.
10. Submit periodic educational statements regarding the activities of the committee for publication in the church newsletter. Have a posted list of Approved Adults as a reference.
11. Determine appropriate disciplinary action or disqualification in response to a violation or violations of the Child Protection Policy.
12. Develop a checklist of all requirements for individuals desiring to be Approved Adults to facilitate the committee in making sure everything is completed.
13. In order to defend the church and Approved Adults from possible lawsuits, the church shall maintain adequate liability insurance.

St Peter Lutheran Church  
130 Nittany Drive  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055  
717-766-2701  
**Incident Report**

Name of child \_\_\_\_\_ Date of report \_\_\_\_\_

Parents/Guardians of child \_\_\_\_\_

Person(s) involved in incident \_\_\_\_\_

Date, time and location of incident \_\_\_\_\_

Description of incident \_\_\_\_\_

Were there any other witnesses? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Please comment \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_ I am a mandated reporter.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I choose to remain anonymous regarding this incident.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I have reported or intend to report this incident to criminal authorities.

THE ABOVE INFORMATION IS FREELY PROVIDED AND IS TRUE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE.

Reporter's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to child \_\_\_\_\_

I have received this report and agree to follow appropriate policy and procedures.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

St Peter Lutheran Church  
130 Nittany Drive  
Mechanicsburg PA 17055  
717-766-2701

Request for PA State Police Criminal Record Check, PA Child Abuse History Clearance and FBI Clearance  
I hereby request the Pennsylvania State Police Department to release to **St Peter Lutheran Church** and any of the congregation's agents or officials, any information pertaining to me that it may have or have access to regarding the arrest for or conviction of a crime or regarding any child abuse history. I also hereby request the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare to provide the congregation with the "Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance." I hereby request the FBI to release any information pertaining to me regarding the arrest for or conviction of a crime or any child abuse history. I hereby release the Pennsylvania State Police, the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, *the FBI*, and the congregation, including their respective agents and employees from any and all liability resulting from such disclosure.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Print Complete Name \_\_\_\_\_

Print Maiden Name (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Print all aliases \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security Number \_\_\_\_\_

St Peter Lutheran Church  
130 Nittany Drive  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055  
717-766-2701

**Personal Interview Form**

(To be completed by interviewer when interviewing an applicant seeking to become an Approved Adult)

Interview Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Final Approval Date \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewed By: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Applicant \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (home) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (work) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (cell) \_\_\_\_\_

**[The interviewer should carefully read the application completed by the applicant and ask any relevant questions raised by the applicant's answers to the questions on the application. If the answers on the application do not raise any questions, the Interviewer, at a minimum, should read each question below to the applicant and mark the appropriate response.]**

**Yes No**

Have you read and understand the St Peter Lutheran Church  
Child Protective Policy?

\_\_\_\_\_

1. Do you have any specific questions regarding that policy?  
(If so, please list below)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Have you ever been accused of and/or have a previous record  
of child abuse?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Concerning your previous experience with children, what would you say have been the  
highlights of that experience? (Please list specifics.)

\_\_\_\_\_

4. In what specific areas would you particularly like to work with children?  
(i.e. Sunday School , Youth Group, etc)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**PERSONAL INFORMATION**

*Please attach photographic identification, e.g. copy of driver's license*

(1) Name \_\_\_\_\_ (2) Date of Application \_\_\_\_\_

(3) SSN \_\_\_\_\_ (4) Driver's License (State) \_\_\_\_\_

(5) Current Residence and Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

(6) Tel (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (7) Tel(work) \_\_\_\_\_ (8) Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

(9) E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

(10) Permanent addresses you have maintained during the last five years, beginning with the most recent.

\_\_\_\_\_

**PERSONAL REFERENCES**

(24) Give the name, address, and phone number of two persons, not relatives, who have known you for at least five years.

(1) \_\_\_\_\_

(2) \_\_\_\_\_