

Frazer Mennonite Church Child Protection Policy

Vision: FMC is a compassionate community walking with Christ toward peace and wholeness.

In extending our vision to the children in our community, we have adopted the following Protection Policy. In all circumstances where adults have church-sanctioned supervision of children this policy is to be followed.

Rationale: To provide a safe and healthy environment for children to learn about the love of God.

I. Prevention Plan:

A. Screening of Volunteers.

- All volunteers must have been regularly attending FMC for at least 6 months before being considered for a volunteer position in one of our ministries.
- All Volunteers who work with children will document receipt of the following clearances on a verification checklist. This Checklist will be kept on file.
 - PA Child Abuse History Clearance Report
 - Pennsylvania State Police Request for Criminal Record Check Form (SP4-164)
 - FBI Fingerprint Record Clearance - If the volunteer has lived within PA for the past 10 years, no fingerprinting is required; however, the volunteer must swear or affirm in writing that they are not disqualified from service based on a conviction of an offense under 6344 (see attached sheet for list).
- The three clearances must be renewed every 5 years with one exception. Those who have lived in PA for 10 years or more do not need to repeat the FBI Fingerprint Record Clearance.
- Documentation of all clearances will be kept on file in the church office.
- In addition to the clearances above, all Nursery Volunteers will complete a training session with the Nursery Supervisor.
- Childcare workers for special events such as Black Rock Retreat will need to obtain all clearances stated above as well as provide one personal reference.
- Copies of all forms and applications for clearances may be obtained from the Nursery Supervisor, Mentor Coordinator, or the Minister of Christian Formation.
- Once per year, FMC's Minister of Christian Formation will check the Megan's law listing for convicted child sexual abuse offenders who may be attending FMC or living in the vicinity of the church building.

B. Supervision of Volunteers.

- We will follow the 2 person rule. There will be at least 2 persons present at all times when supervising children.

Exceptions

- a. In the case of Sunday School classes where there is one teacher, the Sunday School Superintendent will monitor each class by checking in at least once each class session.
- b. Mentoring relationships. All mentorees will have a signed parental consent form.

C. Communicating Policy to Congregation

- The Child Protection Policy will be reviewed by the Minister of Christian Formation once per year.
- The Policy will be shared with new attendees and new members, provided to all volunteers working with children and posted on the FMC website.

II. Reporting Procedures:

- Effective December 2014 under PA law, anyone who is responsible for the care and supervision of children is a "Mandatory Reporter" of any abuse or suspected abuse of children. This includes the pastor, Sunday School teachers, nursery workers, youth leaders and mentors.
- If a mandated reporter has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse, a person makes a specific disclosure to the mandated reporter that an identifiable child is the victim of child abuse, or if an individual 14 years of age or older makes a specific disclosure to the mandated reporter that the

individual has committed child abuse that reporter must immediately file a report.

- The report needs to be done through **ChildLine** either electronically at www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis or by calling **1-800-932-0313**.
- If the child is in immediate danger the reporter should call 911.
- Anyone who feels the need of support in making the report may ask the Pastor or Minister of Christian Formation for guidance in the process.
- If the report was made verbally via the hotline, the reporter must complete a written report within 48 hours either using form CY 47 or online at www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis. Form CY 47 can be obtained from Chester County Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF) or the Minister of Christian Formation.
- The mandated reporter must notify the Pastor or the Minister of Christian Formation immediately after filing a report.
- These internal reports will be kept confidential.

Definition of abuse per Pennsylvania Law:

- Recent act or failure to act which causes non-accidental serious physical injury
- An act or failure to act which causes non-accidental serious mental injury or sexual abuse or sexual exploitation
- Recent act or failure to act which creates an imminent risk of serious physical injury, abuse or sexual exploitation
- Serious physical neglect which endangers a child's life or development or impairs a child's functioning.

For a detailed listing of Pennsylvania's Definition of Abuse see Appendix A.

III. Response Plan:

All allegations of child/youth abuse or serious physical neglect will be taken seriously by the Pastor and by the Ministry Team. All allegations will be treated in strict confidence. All reporting steps taken will be documented, including a log of phone calls, personal visits and written reports. All communications regarding the report of child abuse shall attempt to protect the dignity and privacy of those persons affected by the report while at the same time ensuring that persons in responsibility and law enforcement authorities remain fully informed.

The congregation will cooperate with government authorities investigating allegations of abuse.

The initiative for investigating alleged abuse resides with the Department of Public Welfare (DPW) and shall not be carried out by the congregation.

Additionally, these steps will be followed:

- The person suspected of abuse will discontinue his or her work with children/youth until the allegation can be properly investigated.
- If the custodial parent is the alleged abuser, his or her first contact about the allegation should come from either DCYF or the police, not the church.
- The insurance company should be contacted by the Minister of Whole Life Stewardship after the report is filed as a matter of routine practice if the alleged abuse involves a staff person.
- The Ministry Team will authorize an individual(s) to act as the official spokesperson for the congregation. Only the authorized person or persons may speak for the congregation to the news media, government agencies, attorneys or others.
- The extent to which information will be shared with the congregation will be determined by the Ministry Team.

FMC Child Protection Policy, Approved 11/15/98

Updated August 2013

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Supporting documentation can be found at KeepKidsSafe.PA.gov