

Trindle Spring Evangelical Lutheran Church



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

KEEPING YOUR CONGREGATION SAFE

Revised October 2006



Table of Contents

MISSION STATEMENT	4
DEFINITIONS.....	4
CPP-SPECIFIC DEFINITIONS	5
APPROVED ADULT CRITERIA	6
APPLICATION PROCESS.....	6
FORMS.....	7
APPROVED ADULT APPLICATION	7
REQUEST FOR CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECK	7
CHILD PROTECTIVE COVENANT	7
PERSONAL INTERVIEW FORM	7
PERMISSION SLIP	7
INCIDENT REPORT FORM	7
APPROPRIATE BEHAVIORAL GUIDELINES	8
ACCOUNTABILITY	9
ALLEGATION RESPONSE PROCEDURES FOR CHILD ABUSE	10
KEEPING YOUR CONGREGATION SAFE (KYCS) COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES.....	11
APPENDIX A.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
RESOURCES	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
FORMS.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

Mission Statement

The mission of the children and youth's ministry at Trindle Spring Evangelical Lutheran church is to provide a graceful and safe environment, caring leadership, and opportunities for the children and youth of our church to learn and experience that they are loved unconditionally, are capable, worthwhile and unique.

Believing that these needs are fully met only within the context of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, it is our mission to:

- **Teach children biblical truths and principles in age appropriate ways**
- **Serve their parents as partners and resources**
- **Encourage and provide opportunities for recognition of God at work in their lives**
- **Enlist, train and support a volunteer staff who follows God's Word in the care and growth of the children**

In addition, to protect the safety of our children, paid and volunteer workers will be screened as to their acceptability for working with minors. They will be required to subscribe to our Two Approved Adult Rule, (stated on page 8) and they will follow the guidelines set forth in this Child Protection Policy (CPP). Application forms to become an Approved Adult are located in the Appendix of this document.

God as our protector will lead us in his ministry and surround us with his love. The love of working with children and being called by God to do his work is the rock we stand on. The programs of the Trindle Spring Evangelical Lutheran Church work to support the future of the children and youth in Christ's ministry. The Keeping Your Congregation Safe (KYCS) committee is committed to the policies of this manual and asks for your support.

Definitions

According to the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law (CPSL), *child abuse or exploitation* includes:

"serious recent physical injury which is non-accidental; mental injury which is non-accidental; sexual abuse or serious physical neglect of children under the age of 18 caused by the acts of omissions of a perpetrator."

According to the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law (CPSL), the definition of *child sexual abuse or exploitation* is:

"The employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement or coercion of any child to engage in any sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of any sexually explicit conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction, including photographing, videotaping, computer, depicting or filming, of any sexually explicit conduct or the rape, sexual assault, involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, aggravated indecent assault, molestation, incest, indecent exposure, prostitution, statutory sexual assault, or other form of sexual exploitation of children."

“*Sexual abuse*” refers to any interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult or of a third person. The behavior may or may not involve touching. Legally, sexual abuse has no time limit to be reported.

Sexual abuse and harassment can include the following:

- Verbal sexual suggestions, innuendoes or jokes
- Leering or ogling
- Intrusive touching, including pats, squeezes, hugs, pinches, kissing, brushing against someone’s body
- The use of pornography
- Sexual assault or attempted sexual assault

CPP-specific Definitions

A **child** or **youth** is any person considered a minor under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. A person who is incompetent is considered to be a child under this policy irrespective of his/her age.

*For the purposes of this manual, the term **child** or **children** shall be used to refer to any person from birth through 17 years of age.*

A **volunteer** is anyone who provides services for the church and who receives no compensation in the form of salary, wages, or benefits.

A **youth volunteer** is anyone under the age of 18 who works under the supervision of two approved adults.

An **Approved Adult** is anyone 18 years of age or older who has satisfied all the requirements of the Child Protection Policy and the application procedure for Approved Adults.

Approved Adults include:

- Sunday School teachers
- Vacation Bible School teachers
- Children’s Leaders
- Mentors
- Children’s choir directors
- Other adults who have satisfied all the requirements of Approved Adults, such as Nursery volunteers

Approved Adult Criteria

Approved Adults have:

- provided positive personal references;
- had experience working with children, or demonstrated ability to learn, and are called by God to do His work;
- participated in church activities and maintained an active church membership for six months or more; and
- successfully completed the Personal Interview, which did not reveal information of concern to the interviewer(s).

If a history of abuse/molestation of children, or criminal record against a person is found, these individuals may be offered opportunities to volunteer services in other areas of the church, and pastoral guidance and counseling should be offered to assist them to understand the church's responsibility to provide protection to its children and to the members of the church.

Persons who plead guilty or are convicted in a court of law of any form of physical or sexual abuse of a child will be immediately, permanently, and completely disqualified from working with children. Persons who confess to the Keeping Your Congregation Safe Committee any type of physical or sexual abuse of a child, but who have not appeared in a court of law will be disqualified from working with children.

Application Process

Trindle Spring Evangelical Lutheran Church welcomes anyone interested in working or volunteering with the children of the church. After prayerful consideration, the church will be implementing suggestions made by the Lower Susquehanna Synod in an effort to provide a safe environment for the children of the church.

The Synod recommends that those individuals who have access to children in educational and/or fellowship ministries of the church undergo a pre-established screening process before they begin working with children.

Trindle Spring Evangelical Lutheran Church requires that individuals complete the following application process if called to minister to the children of the church.

1. Complete the Approved Adult application form (see Appendix A).
2. Give church officials the authorization to obtain a National Criminal Records check and Child Abuse History Clearance from law enforcement agencies (see Appendix A). A new criminal records check is required. Previous checks from other sources are not valid for this process.
3. Have maintained an active membership in the congregation for the past six months and continue to be an active member after being accepted as an Approved Adult.
4. Be prepared to act in a volunteer capacity working with the children of the church.
5. Attend a video training session.

6. Sign a Child Protective Covenant acknowledging that you have read and understood Trindle Spring Evangelical Lutheran Church's Child Protection Policy and agree to comply with it.
7. Attend a Personal Interview with the Pastor and /or his designee. This conversation will include a standard inquiry about any previous child abuse.

Applications and related papers will be locked in a confidential file in the church office with access limited to those individuals involved in the screening process.

Forms

All forms necessary for becoming an Approved Adult, as well as permission slips for events not held at the church and incident reports are located in Appendix A. A brief description of each form follows.

Approved Adult Application

To be completed by all church members desiring to become an Approved Adult. Completed forms should be marked 'confidential' and returned to the KYCS mailbox located beside the church office.

Request for Criminal Records Check

To be completed by all church members desiring to become an Approved Adult. Completed forms should be returned to the KYCS mailbox located beside the church office. Finalized background checks will be mailed to your home address. Please return this manila colored envelope to the KYCS mailbox so a copy can be placed in your file. The original will be returned to you.

Child Protective Covenant

To be signed by all Approved Adults and returned with your application, to the KYCS mailbox.

Personal Interview Form

To be completed by the Pastor during the Personal Interview. This form is signed by you and the Pastor and placed in your file following the interview.

Permission Slip

To be completed by individuals attending events requiring such a form. Generally, permission slips should be completed by the parent or guardian of the minor child and returned to the appropriate Approved Adult sponsoring the event.

Incident Report Form

Used to report suspected incidents of alleged misconduct to the proper authorities.

Appropriate Behavioral Guidelines

To ensure that a nurturing Christian environment for children is maintained within the Trindle Spring Evangelical Lutheran Church community, to protect children who participate in activities sponsored by the church from sexual and/or physical abuse, and to protect Trindle Spring Evangelical Lutheran Church's members from false allegations of abuse, Trindle Spring Evangelical Lutheran Church has adopted the following policy:

1. **Child Abuse Prohibited:** Those who accept the special responsibility of working with Trindle Spring Evangelical Lutheran Church's children shall not violate that responsibility by causing physical injury, which is non-accidental; mental injury, which is non-accidental; sexual abuse or serious neglect of children
2. **Sexual Abuse Prohibited:** Those who accept the special responsibility of working with Trindle Spring Evangelical Lutheran Church's children shall not violate the 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 involve touching.
3. **Two Approved Adult Rule:** Two Approved Adults should be present during any children's church activity. Where possible, doors should be left open or a window should allow easy observation of the room.
4. **Empty Room Policy:** After an activity, rooms should be checked to ensure that all participants have vacated the room and that the door is locked. This will prevent situations where abuse might occur.
5. **Expressions of Affection:** Adults must use caution when allowing expression of affection toward children.
 - a. Respect a child's refusal of affection.
 - b. Never make a child feel uncomfortable.
 - c. Be aware of where you place your hands. A child or an observer could misinterpret a pat on the bottom or a bear hug.
 - d. 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 taboo.

True expressions of affection contribute to a warm, healthy relationship. Remember to place reasonable limits on physical interaction.

6. **Permission Slips:** Children must have permission to participate in any overnight activity or any activity that takes place away from church grounds. That permission must be in writing, signed by a parent or guardian. It must identify the activity in which the child will be participating. (See Appendix A.)

The Pastor or his designee may waive the requirement for permission slips where they would serve no useful purpose (for example, an activity where children would be accompanied by a parent or guardian who is attending the activity). In a situation where an adult has a legitimate reason to be alone with a child, parental consent should be obtained and the Pastor and KYCS chairperson is to be notified in advance. This may apply to the Mentor Program.

7. **Overnight Rule:** All adult chaperons must have a Criminal Record Check on file before any volunteer is involved in overnight activities or in the counseling of children. Overnight activities involving children shall be chaperoned by at least two Approved Adults.

Children must provide written permission slips from parents or guardians, prior to the event, in order to participate in overnight activities. Permission slips will list Approved Adults who will serve as chaperons. Trips with children of both genders, must have approved adults of both genders.

8. **Transportation of Children:** When children are transported for church activities they shall be transported in groups with at least one Approved Adult in each vehicle as well as one additional Approved Adult with the group. When one-child-one-adult situations are unavoidable, the adult must obtain, in advance of the event, written permission from a parent or guardian and notify the Pastor and KYCS chairperson of the arrangement.

Personal Vehicle Transportation. To transport children in a personal vehicle, the driver must be 18 years of age or older.

Rented or church-owned Vehicle Transportation. To transport children in a church-owned or rented vehicle, the driver must be 25-70 year of age (youth pastors/directors may be 21-70).

Accountability

Trindle Spring Evangelical Lutheran church's policy is to report all alleged incidents of child abuse to the appropriate government authority as required by law. Trindle Spring Evangelical Lutheran Church will cooperate fully with government authorities investigating allegations of abuse.

Allegations of child abuse shall be reported immediately to the Pastor and the President of Church Council. Alleged violations will be treated with the utmost seriousness. Allegations will be resolved, after prayerful consideration, consistent with legal requirements and Trindle Spring Evangelical Lutheran church's policy of providing its children with protection from possible abuse. See section heading *Allegation Response Procedures*.

Alleged violations of the policy, other than abuse, shall be immediately reported to the KYCS Committee chair that will report it to the Pastor and the President of Congregation Council, if deemed appropriate. The alleged violations of the policy will be investigated by the KYCS committee and meet with the person(s) involved. If the person(s) is found to be in violation of the policy the KYCS committee will determine what disciplinary action, if any, is necessary. The KYCS committee can temporarily disqualify any person(s) from working with children for repeated violations of the policy.

Reports of suspected abuse are received by the Department of Public Welfare's (DPW) Childline and Abuse Registry (800-392-0313), which is the central repository for all investigated reports. Individuals who, in the course of their employment, come into contact with children, are

mandated to report suspected abuse when seeing a child whom they suspect to be abused. In addition, any person may report suspected abuse.

Persons who plead guilty or are convicted in a court of law of any form of physical or sexual abuse of a child will be immediately, permanently, and completely disqualified by the Keeping Your Congregation Safe (KYCS) committee from working with children in the Trindle Spring Evangelical Lutheran Church. Persons who confess to the KYCS committee any type of physical or sexual abuse of a child, but who have not appeared in a court of law will be disqualified from working with children in the Trindle Spring Evangelical Lutheran Church. The KYCS committee and Congregation Council can temporarily disqualify any person from such work while such charges are investigated.

Allegation Response Procedures for Child Abuse

1. All allegations of child abuse or neglect will be taken seriously by the Pastor(s), Congregation Council, and the Keeping Your Congregation Safe committee and will be immediately reported to the ELCA Bishop. No allegation will be ignored, and no discussion of any incident will be postponed beyond the 24-hour limit defined in Pennsylvania law. All investigative and reporting steps taken will be documented, including a log of phone calls, personal visits, and written reports. Whenever possible there should be at least the Pastor and a Congregation Council member involved so that there can be verification of the activity. If the Pastor can not be found in the 24 hour period, the person who witnesses the abuse should report to the Department of Human Services directly, and should immediately notify the Congregation Council President or Vice President of the report.
2. The Pastor or Congregation Council President will notify parents or guardians of all children involved in an alleged incident, unless the parents or guardians are the persons suspected of the abuse. The phone call or visit will be documented.
3. The Pastor or Congregation Council President will arrange medical care immediately in cases of physical injury to a child. All arrangements should be documented.
4. The City Police Department will be notified immediately by the Pastor or Council President in cases of criminal activity of any type. The phone call or other type of notification should be documented.
5. The Pastor, President of Congregation Council and the chairperson of the KYCS committee will be notified immediately in all cases of suspected child abuse or neglect, and when the reporting procedures have been initiated. The Congregation Council will record the essential details of the report. The Pastor or Congregation Council member who initiated the reporting procedure will provide to the Council a written report of the incident and all the steps taken afterwards.
6. The Congregation Council will notify the church insurance carrier when the reporting procedures have been initiated. The phone call or written report will be documented.
7. The Congregation Council will arrange for legal counsel if necessary for the protection of the church.

8. The Congregation Council will authorize the Pastor or one of the Council members or appropriate legal counsel to act as the official spokesperson for the church if necessary. Only the authorized person or persons can speak for the church to the news media, government agencies, attorneys, or others.
9. 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.

Keeping Your Congregation Safe (KYCS) Committee Responsibilities

1. Review and make recommendations to the congregation for revising church 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 church policy. Video training should be presented during the six-month active membership period.
3. Accept all applications of persons interested in working or volunteering with the children of the church.
4. Obtain the necessary criminal clearances for all applicants.
5. Review applications of persons interested in working with children (by the chair of the KYCS Committee, the Congregation Council President, and the Pastor).
6. Submit a list of qualified candidates for Personal Interviews. Standard Personal 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 church office. Permission slips will be kept for three years following the event.
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. Be responsible for investigations of all allegations of violations of the Child Protection Policy.
12. Determine appropriate disciplinary action in response to a violation of the Child Protection policy.
13. Consist of six members, with two year staggered terms, plus the Pastor and Congregation Council President. Congregation Council and the Pastor will appoint members (with the approval of the Congregation Council).