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CHILDREN AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

PURPOSE

Recognizing God's love and concern for children, it is our desire to reflect His love to those in our care. The following guidelines are designed to assist our church in providing a safe and nurturing environment in which we can bring our children and youth to Christ.

At Pequea, we believe it is our responsibility to:

1. Protect the children and youth to whom we minister from being physically or sexually abused while they are under our care.
2. Guard our workers from being suspected or falsely accused of wrongful behavior toward children and youth.
3. Be good stewards, not only of those entrusted to our care, but also of our assets by protecting our church against lawsuits.

As we strive to guarantee the safety of our children and workers, these guidelines are designed for their protection. Everyone who teaches, helps, or cares for children or youth under the sponsorship of the Pequea Brethren in Christ Church should follow these policies and procedures.

revised 8/2009

I. STAFFING AND SUPERVISION GUIDELINES: Birth through Grade 12

A. VOLUNTEER SCREENING PROCEDURES

“Children and Youth Ministry Workers” are individuals working with children or youth who have direct or indirect contact with minors during children and youth activities planned by Pequea BIC Church.

The appropriate staff person(s) (Pastor of Children’s Ministries, Director of Preschool Ministries, and/or Pastor of Family Ministries) must approve anyone working with children or youth. Approved workers will have completed a screening process, which includes regular attendance at the Pequea BIC Church for at least 3 months. All applicants for any position involving the supervision of minors will complete the Volunteer Profile. The staff person responsible will conduct a reference check and background check. The appropriate staff person will interview the applicant using the interview guideline. Each approved applicant will be required to sign the covenant form and attend a training session. In summary, the following steps will be taken to screen volunteers:

1. Volunteer Profile
2. Reference Check
3. Background Check
4. Interview
5. Covenant for Children's and/or Youth Ministry workers
6. Children and Youth Protection Policy Training

B. SUPERVISION

Two-deep leadership is ideal. (In nursery and preschool rooms, one worker must be female.) When this is not possible, an approved adult will check the room periodically. The program coordinator or other designated worker should make regular visits to the classrooms to insure that classrooms are properly supervised.

When church facilities are used, supervision is also required for church sponsored events not defined as children/youth ministry, (i.e. LINC, Grow Group activities, ministry team meetings). Approved workers should be present to insure that child protection policies relevant to the situation are followed. When a child is not signed into a class or children or youth event, it is the sole responsibility of the child’s guardian to care for the child. Some examples include, but are not limited to: parent brings child along for a meeting or other volunteer work where childcare is not provided by the church or child has been signed out of class.

Staffing ratios (children per leader) are within state regulations and are listed as:

Infants	4 children
Age 1 & 2	5 children
Preschool Age (3-5 yrs.)	8 children
School Age (K-12)	10 children

C. VOLUNTEER IDENTIFICATION

All volunteers working with children will be expected to wear a picture ID anytime they are in the class.

D. SPECIAL EVENTS/OVERNIGHT POLICIES

Off campus activities must be pre-approved by the appropriate staff person. Proper written consent and medical release forms are required for each child participating in activities that require off-campus transportation. These forms are distributed through the staff person that is organizing the event. When an activity involves transporting children and youth, all drivers must have a valid driver's license and current automobile insurance, and be a minimum of 21 years of age. The number of persons per vehicle should not exceed the number of seat belts. Car seat laws must also be followed.

All trips and outings will require a minimum of two approved adult leaders. The leaders will be responsible for an assigned group of children for the duration of the event.

All adults serving as workers must go through the screening process or be permitted to serve at the discretion of the staff person supervising.

E. CONTAGIOUS AND INFECTIOUS DISEASE POLICY

It is essential that all children and youth workers understand that prudent use of the church facility, use of proper hygiene and cleaning procedures, and care in interactions with children and youth are important to the health and safety of all involved.

1. **Universal precautions:** infection control guidelines designed to protect workers from exposure to diseases spread by blood and certain body fluids.
 - a. **Gloves**
Wear vinyl gloves anytime there is potential for contact with blood or other bodily fluid. This includes diaper changes, skin/wound care, etc. Use gloves only for the care of one child, then discard.
 - b. **Handwashing:** the cornerstone of infection control.
Wash hands after doing any of the following: removing gloves, using the toilet, diapering a baby or helping a child with toileting, wiping a runny nose, preparing to assist with eating or feeding, after accidental contact with blood or blood-tinged fluids.
 - c. **Waste disposal**
Properly dispose of materials exposed to blood by double bagging (use trash bags found in custodial closets) and disposing of immediately.
2. Contagious and Infectious diseases: 3 modes of disease spread
 - a. **Casual Contact (CC):** generally acceptable public behavior between people
 - i. Examples: handshakes, sharing common space, casual touching, sharing eating utensils, etc.
 - ii. Diseases spread by CC: viral infections including the flu and common cold, strep throat, ring worm, impetigo, chicken pox, conjunctivitis.
 - iii. Recommendation: Children or child workers with an illness transmittable by CC should remain at home until they are no longer contagious.
 - b. **Personal Contact (PC):** generally acceptable private behavior between individuals; includes contact with bodily fluids such as urine, feces, mucus, vomit, saliva, or blood
 - i. Diseases spread by PC: tuberculosis, herpes (cold sores), Hepatitis B and C, mono
 - ii. Recommendation: Children or child workers with an illness transmittable by PC are encouraged to use caution in their use of the church facilities, limiting PC with others
 - c. **Intimate contact (IC):** sexual in origin; not appropriate in this setting
 - i. Diseases spread by IC: HIV, STDs, Hepatitis B and C
 - ii. No special recommendations since intimate contact should, under no circumstances, occur between a child and child/youth worker.
 - iii. We will respect the privacy of children and child/youth workers, and not request disclosure of HIV status, etc.

F. MEDICATION POLICY

The Pequea Brethren in Christ Church will not be responsible for storing or dispensing any medications (prescription or over-the-counter) to children in our care. Children who require medications during ministry times may have a parent or legal guardian administer the medication. The parent or legal guardian must have possession of the medication. With prior written parental permission, medications used for situations that might not allow time for a parent to administer the medication (i.e.- epi-pen, inhaler, etc.) may be held and administered by a teacher/leader if necessary. Children may not be responsible for holding or taking their own medications while in the care of the Pequea Brethren in Christ Church.

In the event of a long-term event (i.e. field trip, retreat, etc.), medication may be administered with the following guidelines. The parent must submit in writing to the teacher or leader their request for administration of the drug, instructions for use, side effects, precautions, etc., including the parent or legal guardian's signature. The medication must be in the original container with label intact. If the medication is a prescription drug, the label with instructions must be on the container. The medicine will be carried by the leader/teacher.

The parent or legal guardian must also complete a Medication Log, which will also be completed by the teacher or leader at the time of administering the drug.

G. PROPER DISPLAYS OF AFFECTION

Touch is an essential part of nurturing. Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally appropriate. Be aware of and sensitive to differences in sexual development, cultural differences, family backgrounds, individual personalities and special needs.

H. UNACCEPTABLE ITEMS

It is inappropriate to permit children and youth to bring any weapons / paraphernalia to any ministry function unless otherwise requested by a teacher/leader. Children and youth may be asked to surrender any items deemed inappropriate for the activity attended.

I. DISCIPLINE POLICY

Consider a child's dignity and self-esteem when giving discipline. Gentleness, respect, and understanding must guide all actions and words. Discipline will be carried out through instruction, training, and correction. Physical punishment will not be used.

As teachers, it is important that we provide a classroom atmosphere that encourages good behavior.

When a discipline problem does occur, the teacher should use the following steps in the classroom. Be sure you attack the problem, not the child!

SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS:

1. Make eye contact or use appropriate touch. (Hand on shoulder, hand on head, etc.)
2. Use a "time-out" chair in the classroom. This should be away from all activity but close enough for the child to mentally participate. During this time the child is encouraged to think about his or her unacceptable behavior.
3. If a child is deliberately destroying church property, parents should be notified with a note. The note should be signed and returned by the parent.
4. Discuss with the child why his behavior is inappropriate and why he is being disciplined.
5. Physical restraint may only be used when a child or youth's behavior may harm himself or another individual.

If you have tried all these suggestions and the discipline problem persists, you need to seek help.

PROCEDURE:

1. Discuss the problem with the appropriate Pequea Church staff person for other ideas.
2. The appropriate staff person will observe and give feedback or dialogue.
 - d. Parents should be contacted by staff person and given the opportunity to observe.
 - e. Based on the severity of the situation, the child may be removed from the classroom or event prior to the above procedure, if the situation warrants.
5. A conference with the child, parents, teacher, and staff person for dialogue and decision-making will be planned. (This may result in the child being removed from activities for a specific period of time.)

II. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHILDREN’S MINISTRIES

A. DROP-OFF POLICY (Birth- 5th Grade)

Children are never to be dropped off in a classroom without the teachers present. Generally, supervision will be provided 10 minutes before a program starts.

B. REGISTRATION (Birth- 5th Grade)

1. Children must attend the class appropriate for their age, grade or developmental level as approved by the Pastor of Children’s Ministries.
2. Parents must complete all registration information requested and keep it up to date for each child (visitors included).
3. Parents are required to sign their children in each time they attend class.
4. A security number will be assigned to each child signed in. That number will be used to identify the child and his personal belongings. A receipt will be issued to the parent/guardian and the child will be released only to the person who has the receipt that matches the child's security tag. If the receipt is misplaced, the parent will need to return to the sign in area to receive a new receipt.

If there is an issue with a child that requires parental/guardian attention, a volunteer will locate the parent and request they come to the classroom. If the parent is in the auditorium, the child’s assigned security number will be viewed on the screen.

C. PARENT PICK-UP/ CHILD RELEASE AUTHORIZATION (Birth- 5th Grade)

Due to the large number of children involved in our nursery through fifth grade programs, we require that parents or the designated person come to the classroom and pick up their child(ren) within 10 minutes of the class ending. Parents must show their sign in receipt upon picking up their child(ren).

Parents are responsible for keeping children in their care before drop-off and after pick-up.

Parents/guardians are advised not to enter the classroom when picking up their child(ren) unless requested to do so. Workers will dismiss children to parents one by one.

D. DIAPER CHANGING/ CHANGING OF SOILED CLOTHING

Diaper/ soiled clothing changing should take place in such a way that another nursery worker can easily see the child that is being changed as well as the other children and workers in the room. Only female workers may change diapers if it is done in a location other than the classroom or nursery. When diaper/ soiled clothing changes occur in the restrooms, the doors must be propped open.

E. BATHROOM POLICY

We strongly encourage parents to take their children to the bathroom prior to each class.

Volunteers/ Workers should follow these guidelines:

1. Avoid being alone with a child in a bathroom.
2. Never go into a bathroom stall with a child and shut the door.
3. Only females should escort/assist boys or girls of preschool age to the bathroom.

- FOR PRESCHOOLERS AND SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN -

A volunteer should escort a **group of children** to the ladies bathroom. It should be the aim to always go as a group. Avoid taking a child to the bathroom alone. If, for some reason, this is not possible and just one child must go and the child needs assistance, the **volunteer must prop the bathroom door open**. When possible, no minors under age 16, should accompany a child to the bathroom.

- FOR CHILDREN KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 5 -

The volunteer should escort **two or more children** to the bathroom or establish bathroom buddies of the same sex.

III. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUTH MINISTRIES

A. TRANSPORTATION

1. Only “approved” youth leaders (or professional drivers hired on a paid or volunteer basis) may transport youth during special events.
2. The approval process for drivers involves providing proof of valid driver’s license and current automobile insurance for any vehicle used. Copies of these documents will be kept on file in an easily accessible location, and will be updated as necessary.

B. OVERNIGHT POLICIES

1. A minimum of two youth leaders should be present for any youth group sponsored activity or event involving an overnight stay at the location of the event. If two youth leaders assigned to supervise an overnight event are related (e.g. siblings, husband/wife), at least one other youth leader should be assigned to supervise the event.
2. All youth group sponsored events involving overnight stays should be pre-approved by the appropriate staff person or persons.
3. Signed Parent Permission forms and medical release forms should be obtained prior to the event for each child/youth participating in the event.
4. All adults supervising the event (youth leaders or otherwise, e.g. parents) are required to go through the screening process for child and youth workers (see section for details), or be permitted to serve on a temporary basis at the discretion of the staff person supervising.

C. LUNCHESES

One-on-one lunch appointments between leaders and youth of the opposite sex should only be made if separate transportation is used. Eat in public places.

D. DATING

At no time shall anyone working with youth pursue a dating relationship with a student. Staff should always be sensitive to students with "crushes."

E. OPEN DOOR POLICY

At no time should any youth ministry worker have a one-on-one meeting behind closed doors with a youth. For your protection, keep the door at least partially open.

There will always be at least one approved adult present at any youth class or activity.

IV. OUR RESPONSE TO SUSPECTED ABUSE OR ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

A. HOW IT IS REPORTED

All volunteer and paid leaders of the Pequea Brethren in Christ Church involved with children (birth - 18) shall immediately report any items of obvious concern relating to child abuse or neglect of which they have knowledge or observe within the scope of their duties to the appropriate staff person. These leaders or teachers shall report the following as well as any other indications that may suggest the occurrence of child abuse or neglect. It is not the responsibility of the reporting person nor the staff person to substantiate any allegations or suspicions.

- Has an unexplained injury - a patch of hair missing, a burn, a limp or bruises?
- Has an inordinate number of "explained" injuries such as bruises on his/her arms and legs over a period of time?
- Gives verbal testimony?
- Makes drawings in conjunction with verbal testimony?
- Alludes to incidents in writing or through prayer requests, etc.?
- Exhibits an injury that is not adequately explained?
- Complains about numerous beatings?
- Complains about others "doing things to them when others are not at home"?
- Is dirty and smells or has bad teeth or hair falling out?
- Is inadequately dressed for inclement weather?
- Wears long-sleeved tops during the summer to cover bruises on the arms?

CONFIDENTIALITY: At all times keep the information confidential. If the supervising staff person is unavailable, please contact another member of staff ONLY!

RESPONDING TO THE CHILD: When the child first comes to you, be sure to take his/her word seriously. Don't deny the problem but stay calm and listen to the child. Give emotional support, reminding the child that he/she is not at fault and that the child was right in telling you about the problem. Do not promise the child you will not tell anyone.

REPORT FORM: The appropriate staff person will assist you in filling out a Suspicion of Child Abuse Report Form.

B. INVESTIGATING A REPORT

The staff person will take the report to the Senior Pastor within 12 hours of the report. These individuals will determine what steps should be taken and whether to contact Childline (1-800-932-0313).

C. RESPONDING TO THE VICTIMS OF ABUSE AND THE ABUSER

The Staff will determine how best to minister to those involved in the allegations, both the victims of abuse and the alleged abuser. Efforts will be made to protect the child and worker while the allegation is being investigated.

***This policy shall be reviewed and updated each June
by a reconvened Children and Youth Protection Policy Task Force***

APPENDIX

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR PRESCHOOL MINISTRIES

A. HIRING PROCEDURES

Procedures stated under I.A, *Volunteer Screening Procedures*, of this policy will be followed with the following exceptions and additions:

1. Approved workers must regularly attend Pequea BIC Church or have acceptable involvement with another Bible teaching church for at least three months.
2. All applicants must complete an Application Form, in place of the Volunteer Profile.
3. Hired staff must complete a Child Abuse Clearance, Criminal Record Check and an FBI Clearance.
4. Hired staff must sign a Contract and a Covenant for Children's Ministry Workers.
5. Hired staff is encouraged to attain training in CPR and First Aid.

B. DROP-OFF POLICY

Children are never to be dropped off in a classroom or at the carport without a teacher or staff person present. Generally, teachers will open the classroom and someone will be available at the carport for the drop-off service five minutes prior to the start of class. An adult must escort children to their classroom.

C. REGISTRATION

1. Children must attend the class appropriate for their age, grade or developmental level as approved by the Director of Preschool Ministries.
2. Parents must complete all registration information requested and keep it up to date for each child. These forms will be kept in the office of the Director of Preschool Ministries.
3. Parents are required to sign their children in each time they attend class.
4. A security number will be assigned to each child signed in. That number will be used to identify the child and his personal belongings. A receipt will be issued to the parent/guardian and the child will be released only to the person who has the receipt that matches the child's security tag. If the receipt is misplaced, the parent will need to return to the sign in area to receive a new receipt.

D. CHILD PICK-UP

We require that parents or the designated person come to the classroom and pick up their child(ren) within 10 minutes of the class ending. Parents must show their sign in receipt upon picking up their child(ren).

Parents are responsible for keeping children in their care before drop-off and after pick-up.

Parents/guardians are advised not to enter the classroom when picking up their child(ren) unless requested to do so. Workers will dismiss children to parents one by one.

E. DIAPER CHANGING/ CHANGING OF SOILED CLOTHING

Refer to II. D.

F. BATHROOM POLICY

Refer to II. E.

G. FIELDTRIPS

Procedures stated under I.D., *Special Events/Overnight Policies*, of this policy will be followed with the following exceptions and additions:

1. A Fieldtrip Consent Form, in place of the consent and medical release form mentioned on page 3, should be completed for each child prior to every fieldtrip. These can be obtained from the Director of Preschool Ministries.
2. Parents are required to provide car seats for children less than four years of age and booster seats for all other preschoolers. We also request parents to install their child's safety seat into the vehicle being used to transport their child.
3. Any adult that has not gone through the screening process must work with a paid staff person and may not be left alone with children at any time.