



CHILDREN AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY
of
Grace Evangelical Congregational Church,
Schuylkill Haven, PA

Instated January, 2020

RECRUITING AND SELECTING CHURCH WORKERS

1. All paid church employees, clergy, and regular volunteers who may work with the children and youth (those under eighteen years) of Grace E.C. Church must undergo this screening process as a part of the job application procedure.

The screening process includes:

- A. A Volunteer Application
 - B. Pennsylvania State Police Request for State Criminal History
 - C. Child Abuse Clearance (supplied by Grace, completed by applicant)
 - D. FBI Criminal History *
 - E. Applicant's Statement
2. New volunteer staff will be considered only after they have been actively involved in the life of Grace E.C. Church for a minimum of six months or under pastoral discretion.
 3. Any church employee, clergy, or volunteer with criminal and/or sexual abuse convictions or under investigation for same will not be accepted to work with children or youth.
 4. All church employees, clergy, and volunteers must sign the Applicant's Statement agreeing to follow all church policies with respect to working with children and youth (page 8).
 5. All records of workers applications, references, and screening forms will be maintained by the Pastor(s) in a confidential manner in a secure location with no access to unauthorized individuals.
 6. Clearances must be renewed every 36 months from completion date of last application.

- * Volunteers only have to submit the State Criminal History and the Child Abuse Clearance, and not the FBI check if the position is unpaid, the volunteer has been a PA resident for the entirety of the previous ten-year period, the volunteer affirms in writing that s/he is not disqualified from serving due a.) to they being named in the Statewide database [pursuant to a DPW Child Abuse History Clearance] as the perpetrator of a founded report committed within the last five years; b.) whose PA State Criminal Background check or FBI check reveals a conviction for any of the crimes [as listed on pg 3 of Carter & Bodene document] at any time in the past; or c.) whose PA State Police Background check or FBI check reveals a conviction for a drug or drug-related felony in the past five years, and has not been convicted of any of the enumerated offenses, or equivalents from another jurisdiction.

*Instructions for obtaining clearances can be found on Grace E.C. Church's website: <https://graceecchurch.org/>

CHURCH WORKERS' SUPERVISION GUIDELINES

1. Use a team approach. There should be two unrelated individuals present during any church activity involving children and/or youth. It is preferable that one of the adults be over 18 years of age.
2. There are situations when an adult has legitimate reasons to be alone with a child or youth. The child or youth, whenever possible, should be the same gender as the adult. The adult must in advance of the proposed activity make every effort to receive consent from the guardian/parent of the child/youth. (Ex: Discuss toileting and diapering with parents of young children.)
3. An annual Parental Consent/Medical Release Form should be completed and kept on file for each child/youth who is participating in a church activity taking place away from church property. These completed forms must be accessible to chaperones/leaders during activities taking place away from church property.
4. Adult workers should when necessary make every attempt to meet with children and youth in a well-lighted area, in view of others.
5. Any inappropriate conduct between an adult worker and a child/youth will be reported to ChildLine as presented under Reporting of Possible Abuse (pg 4). Any violations will result in immediate termination and may result in criminal charges.
6. All adult workers should attend informational meetings that may be held related to new procedures and methods pertaining to the protection policy and screening process.
7. Adult supervision must be maintained before and after all activities until all children/youth have left. Arrival and dismissal procedures should be clear to all volunteers and parents.
8. Special procedures shall apply to all overnight activities. All adult chaperones and supervisors must be cleared in advance with a salaried member of the pastoral staff. No last-minute adult guests! The following procedure must also be cleared in advance by a member of the pastoral staff:
 - A. The specific proposed activity
 - B. The location of the proposed activity
 - C. The goal or objective to be realized in the proposed activity
 - D. The manner of transport to and from the proposed activity.

REPORTING OF AND RESPONSE TO POSSIBLE ABUSE

1. **Mandated Reporters:** All Grace EC Church children and youth ministry staff members (paid church employees, clergy, and regular volunteers) are mandated reporters. This means if any staff member suspects child abuse, they must contact ChildLine as noted in step 2 of this page.

Definition of Child Abuse: Child abuse refers to an act committed by a parent, caregiver, or person in a position of trust which is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child's physical or mental health or welfare. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Any physical mistreatment of a child including hitting, slapping or squeezing.
- Any sexual mistreatment of a child including physical and/or nonphysical contact.
- Any type of harmful neglect of a child including failure to provide adequate safety measures, care, or supervision.
- Any emotional mistreatment of a child including verbal abuse.

NOTE: neither seeing the child nor being able to identify the perpetrator is a prerequisite to making a report. You need to report if you have reasonable suspicion, you do not need to see physical signs of abuse.

2. Call the ChildLine: 1-800-932-0313 immediately (or on-line at the Child Welfare Portal, <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home>), then
3. Immediately thereafter inform a pastor (who shall facilitate the church's cooperation), then
4. Submit CY-47 (a written report located in the church office) within 48 hours.

NOTE: The mandated reporter may not talk to a pastor/supervisor before making the immediate oral report (step 2), even to discuss the propriety of making a report. If the mandated reporter is unsure whether the situation warrants a report, s/he may immediately call an attorney for advice on the spot. However, if an attorney is not reached immediately, a report must be made immediately.

5. If the pastor is the accused of the abuse allegations, reporting should be made to the Ministry Council president by the mandated reporter (after contacting ChildLine) who will then report to the Regional Conference Minister.
6. Additional informational resources defining mandated reporting and child abuse definitions are on file in the church office. All paid church employees, clergy, and volunteers (regular and occasional) who work with the children and/or youth of Grace E.C. Church should be familiar with possible indicators and symptoms of child physical and/or sexual abuse.
7. If the accused is a volunteer church worker, that person must be relieved temporarily of his/her duty until the investigation is finished. If the accused is a paid church employee, arrangements should be made to either maintain or suspend his/her income until the allegations are cleared or

substantiated; these decisions made under the direction and guidance received from the Bishop and/or Regional Conference Minister of the E.C. denomination.

8. A designated spokesperson should be recommended and empowered in order to address issues related to the media, the public, and the congregation. (Care should be taken to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.)

Special Notes:

Remember that the obligation arises when a mandated reporter has reasonable cause to believe the child is a victim of child abuse. There is no requirement that you also determine who committed it.

Depending on the circumstances, it can either be a criminal misdemeanor or felony to willfully fail to make a report, where one is mandated to make one. The law encourages erring on the side of over-reporting when in doubt.

A mandated reporter in the church context may not take a child into protective custody.

What if a cleared employee/volunteer later becomes disqualified? S/he has 72 hours to alert the pastor/supervisor in writing of such disqualifications; s/he should be removed from employment/volunteer position. If s/he willfully fails to provide the required written notice, it is a misdemeanor in the third degree.

VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

(18 years of age or older)

Name: _____ DOB: _____

First, middle, Last

Address: _____

Street

City

Zip

Phone (Day): _____ (Evening): _____

Identity must be confirmed with a state driver license or other legal identification bearing a photograph.

Do you have a current driver license? If yes, please list driver license number: _____

Have you ever been named in a Statewide database as the perpetrator of a founded report committed within the last five years? _____ Have you ever had a conviction at any time in the past? _____ (if yes, please explain: _____)

Have you had a conviction for a drug or drug-related felony in the past five years? _____ (if yes, explain: _____)

Have you been a PA resident for the entirety of the previous ten-year period? _____ (if no, an FBI check is required)

Employment/Employer: _____

Briefly state your Christian testimony:

List any callings, training, education or other factors that have prepared you for children or youth work:

*Authorization for Pennsylvania State Police Request for
State Criminal History Check*

I hereby request the PA State Police Department to release any information which pertains to any record of convictions contained in its files or in any criminal file maintained on me whether local, state, or national. I hereby release said Police Department from any and all liability resulting from such disclosure.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Print maiden name: _____

Print all aliases: _____

Date of birth: _____

Place of birth: _____

Social Security Number: _____

Today's Date: _____

Applicant's Statement

*The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references, churches, employers listed in this application to give you any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding any character and fitness for children and/or youth work. In consideration of the receipt and evaluation of this form by a salaried member of the pastoral staff of Grace E.C. Church, I hereby release any individual, church, youth organization, including record custodians, both collectively and individually, from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind or nature which may at any time result to me, my heirs, or family, from compliance or any attempts to comply, with this authorization.

*Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the Discipline of the Grace E.C. Church and by the By-Laws, policies, and Ministry Manual of Grace E.C. Church, and to refrain from any unscriptural conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of the church.

*I further state that I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THE FOREGOING RELEASE AND KNOW THE CONTENTS THEREOF AND I SIGN THIS RELEASE AS MY OWN FREE ACT. NOTE: MY SIGNATURE ON THIS FORM CONFIRMS MY UNDERSTANDING AND AGREEMENT THAT: (1) IN THE EVENT ALLEGATIONS OF CRIMINAL OR SEXUAL MISCONDUCT ARISE REGARDING MY CONDUCT WHILE I SERVE IN THE ABOVE DESCRIBED CAPACITY, THE CHURCH WILL FULLY COOPERATE WITH ANY ENSUING INVESTIGATION AND/OR PROSECUTION; AND (2) THE CHURCH WILL HAVE THE RIGHT TO ANNOUNCE THE FACTS/RESULTS OF SAME PUBLICLY IF DEEMED NECESSARY OR APPROPRIATE BY CHURCH LEADERSHIP.

This is a legally binding agreement which I have read and understand.

Applicant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness: _____ Date: _____