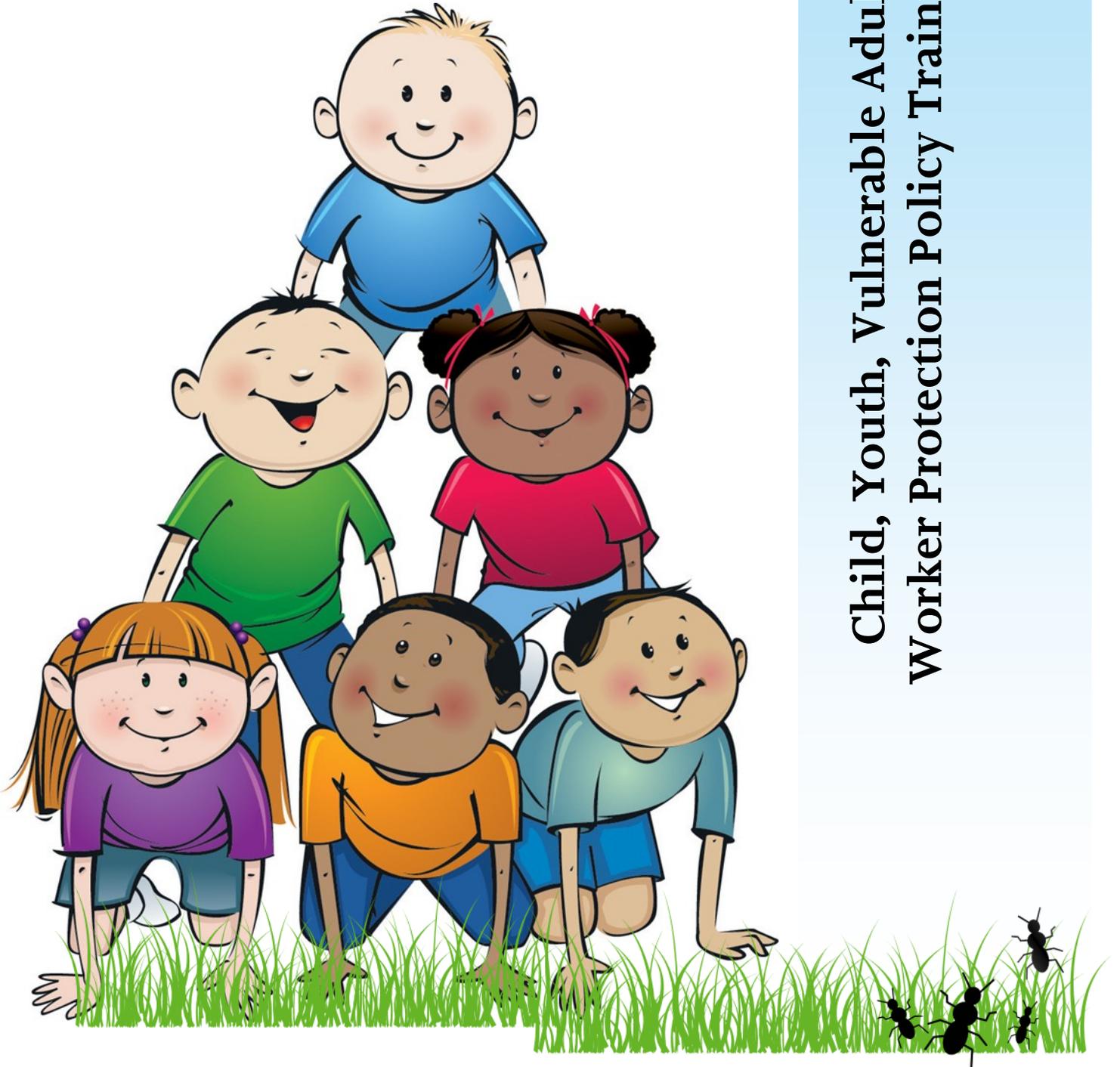




# Child, Youth, Vulnerable Adult Worker Protection Policy Training



## **The Abuser**

Abusers often look for volunteer opportunities in order to gain access to victims. They view ministry as an "easy target" because there is a built-in culture of trust.

An abuser of children often begins with friendly, appropriate touching that becomes more intrusive. The abuser often "grooms" the child. What is "child grooming"? It is any action deliberate action that is taken with the distinct goal of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual abuse with that child.

## **Why the Need for a Safe Child Policy**

There are 70 allegations of child abuse reported in church each week. The most effective response to child abuse is a prevention policy. It is common knowledge that children are victimized by people whom they know and trust, and we are also very much aware that the church is not immune to the potential for abuse or neglect. This is why Messiah has a Safe Child Policy. The ELCA encourages all churches to have this type of policy and provides a training for four of Messiah staff, as well as the materials for us to use.

It is the desire of our ministry at Messiah that we are a safe and nurturing place for children and adult to attend any of our activities. This policy represents Messiah's commitment to protect our children and adults and provide them with a safe place in which to grow in their faith. Hopefully this will not only reduce, but eliminate, the opportunity for abuse to occur within MLC activities.

## **Those Required to Take This Training**

This policy will apply to ALL volunteers and compensated workers who work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults at Messiah.

## **Summary of Information**

Some of the items to be covered are:

- The "good touch"
- Types of child abuse, statistics, and red flags
- Purpose of policy
- Important definitions
- Screening, training, and expectations of volunteers
- Best Practices for volunteers
- Procedures for reports of abuse and/or neglect

## **The "Good Touch"**

So often when one considers volunteering and then sees the words "abuse and/or neglect", there is an immediate fear of any type of touching. This is NOT the reason for this policy!! It is imperative that our congregation NOT lose the importance of the "good touch". We very much need to continue to nurture and express Christian love in appropriate ways with those children and vulnerable adults connected to Messiah. When a child is upset, it's that kind word or warm hug that can be the most comforting. Be cautious, yes, but do not forget that the good touch is just that—good!

## **The "Bad Touch"**

Bad touches are those that "hurt us." Examples of bad touches are kicking, hitting, biting, or anyone touching the private areas under a child's swimsuit area.

## **The Reality of Child Abuse and Neglect?**

The statistics surrounding child abuse and/or neglect are staggering! Those statistics that follow are always changing, unfortunately, too often to the negative, not positive. Following are some of those staggering statistics:

## **Some Shocking Statistics:**

- There are approximately 8,219 cases of child abuse daily.
- That is 343 per hour or 6 per minute.

- About every 10-13 **seconds** another child will be abused.
- **5** children will die from abuse today!
- 48% of abused children are boys.
- 52% of abused children are girls.
- 45% of abused children are classified white in race.
- 22% of abused children are classified as African American.
- 22% of abused children are classified as Hispanic.
- 1 out of every 3 girls will be sexually assaulted by the age of 18.
- 1 out of 7 children are abused.
- There are 70 allegations of child abuse reported in churches each week.
- 96% of rape victims under 12 knew their abuser (National Center for Victims of Crime)

#### **Dramatic Increases:**

- Abuse and neglect has increased 134% since 1980.
- Physical abuse has increased 84% since 1980.
- Sexual abuse has increased 350% since 1980.
- Emotional abuse has increased 353% since 1980.
- Child neglect/abuse has increased 320% since 1980.

#### **In Greene County (2011 statistics):**

- 36% of referred allegations were from chronic abuse.
- 24% of those allegations were from drug/alcohol abuse.
- 21% of those allegations were involved protective custody issues.
- 42% of the 165 cases had a report of polysubstance usage.

These statistics demonstrate the need for all of us to be keenly aware of the abuse/neglect problem.

#### **Types of Abuse to be Discussed**

The four categories of abuse are: **physical, sexual, emotional, and neglect**. The definitions being given are only brief descriptions. They are being defined as a means to clarifying the terms used in our policy.

#### **Definitions**

##### **Accident**

When an unintentional act occurs and a child is hurt

##### **Adult**

Any person age 18 and over

##### **Caregiver**

Any compensated or volunteer worker

##### **Child**

Any person under the age of 18

##### **Compensated Worker**

Hourly, salaried, part-time, or full-time employees who work with children at an church-sponsored activity

##### **Incident**

When an action is observed that does not require reporting to Missouri State Department of Social Services, Children's Division, but does require attention

##### **Mandated Reporter**

Under Missouri Law: physicians, medical examiners, coroners, dentists, chiropractors, optometrists, podiatrists, residents, interns, nurses, hospital or clinic personnel engaged in examination, care, treatment or research of persons, any other health practitioner, psychologists, mental health professionals, social workers, day care center workers, other child care workers, juvenile officers, probation and parole officers, jail or detention center personnel, teachers, principals, or other school officials, ministers, Christian Science practitioners, peace officers, law enforcement officials, or other persons with responsibility for care of children are mandated reporters. When he/she has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been or may be subjected to abuse or neglect, or observes a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances which would reasonably result in abuse or neglect, that person shall IMMEDIATELY report or cause a report to be made. Missouri In-State 1-800-392-3738, Out of Missouri, 1-573-751-3448. Prevent Child Abuse America, 1-312-663-3520.

## **Mandated Reporter or Designated Agents at Messiah Lutheran Church**

Faith Community Nurse, Youth & Family Minister, MLCFDC Center Director. Those staff members designated to monitor response to allegations of abuse and neglect.

### **Probable Cause**

Means available facts when viewed in light of surrounding circumstances would cause a reasonable person to believe a child was abused or neglected. This report does NOT require proof, but rather is a request for an assessment of the condition of a child.

### **Suspected Abuse**

When one sees, has been told of, or suspects a child has been abused in some way

### **Volunteer Workers**

Any non-compensated individual who works with children at any church-sponsored activity

### **Vulnerable Adult**

Any adult requiring direct adult supervisor as a result of mental or physical limitations

## **Screening, Training, and Expectations of Volunteers**

There are several steps to complete prior to beginning your volunteer work.

1. All volunteers working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults must first complete the **Volunteer Application** form. This form is then submitted to the Designated Agent. That agent is the one responsible for the appropriate record keeping.
2. The applicant may be required to submit references, and these references will be checked using the **Reference Check Form**. This form will become part of the volunteer's file.
3. An interview or initial meeting will be conducted by the staff member who will be providing support and supervision for the ministry for which you volunteer.

4. After the first three steps have successfully been completed, the volunteer will receive training appropriate to the area for which he/she has volunteered. This training will be given by the designed staff person.
5. ALL persons working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults must attend a Children and Youth Ministry Training session every two years. These will be offered 3-4 times a year in a group format. It will be possible to arrange individual completion of this requirement.
6. As an applicant, the volunteer will be required to sign a written acknowledgement stating he/she has received and reviewed a copy of the "Messiah's Child, Youth, Vulnerable Adult and Worker Protection Policy.
7. All volunteers and compensated workers in an on-going role shall be screened by a background check through **The Family Care Safety Registry** for the purpose of obtaining information regarding criminal history or abuse findings. Such positions include, but are not limited to: nursery volunteers, Sunday School teachers, mission trip chaperones, Shepherds, and volunteers in MLCFDS. Background checks will not necessarily be obtained for volunteer workers working on a one-time project/special event, IF it is ensured that the volunteer/compensated worker will NOT be alone with a child at any time during said project. These background checks will be re-checked or updated every two years, and the church holds the right to run additional checks as they see fit.

## **Those Not Able to Serve in Volunteer Roles**

Any adult member of the congregation, volunteer, or compensated worker has been convicted of a crime against a child or a violent crime against another adult, shall NOT provide service in any church-sponsored activity or program for children, youth, or vulnerable adult.

Those who have been convicted of either sexual or physical abuse can be forgiven for, and cleansed of their sin. However, sin does have consequences, and while such persons may serve in certain other areas of ministry at Messiah, they will be prohibited from serving in the children's, youth, and special needs ministries.

### **The 3-Month Hospitality Policy**

The policy which follows is meant for the volunteer who has been attending Messiah for less than three months. The volunteer must:

- Be assigned to a position supervised by a "cleared" person, OR
- Be given a non-child-contact task until the three-month period is satisfied and the appropriate training and screening has occurred.
- May assist in a one-time large event/setting where they will not provide direct care to children. This is prior to the completion of the three-month period.

### **Best Practices**

#### **Working with Children (in general):**

- 3-month membership required
- Complete Volunteer File and Training
- 2 or more staff/volunteers with group of children at all times
- Individually meet with youth at "high traffic/public" locations
- Volunteers of both genders for overnight or travel programs
- Maintain ideal ratios:
 

1:4	birth-2
1:8	2-3
1:10	4-kindergarten
1:12	1 <sup>st</sup> -5 <sup>th</sup> grade
1:15	6 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> grade

#### **Working with Children Birth-5<sup>th</sup> Grade:**

- When possible, child takes care of own bathroom needs. If assistance is needed, another adult or caregiver should be present if at all possible.
- Volunteer should feel comfortable contacting

parents in these situations to assist in child's care. Staff members may also be asked to assist.

- Children younger than 1<sup>st</sup> grade will ONLY be released to parents or guardians by their teachers. Anyone else picking up children will be required to have authorization to pick up the child.
- A positive discipline approach will be practiced. Limits should be clear, consistent, and age appropriate and should be established to help the children function appropriately.
- Adult caregivers will work closely with parents and/or guardians to address any behavioral concerns.
- Volunteers are encouraged to use positive reinforcement, redirection, and offer the child choices. Time out is only to be used in an instance necessary to keep the child or other children safe.

#### **Working with Children 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Grade:**

- A positive discipline approach will be practiced. Limits should be clear, consistent, and age appropriate and should be established to help the children function appropriately.
- Adult caregivers will work closely with parents and/or guardians to address any behavioral concerns.
- Communications with children can be made through text, email, and social networking sites.
- An effort should be made to copy parents and/or Youth & Family Minister with any of these types of communications.
- An effort should be made to make these communications to the "group" as opposed to "individual".
- ALL forms of hazing are prohibited at ALL MLC activities. Bullying, verbal assaults, taunts, or pressuring are not allowed. Theft, drugs, and alcohol have no place at any MLC youth event.

### **Guidelines for Windows and Open Doors**

- Always make sure room in which you are working has windows and/or windows in the door.
- If there are no windows, make sure to keep the door open.
- Always have a "floater" volunteer, shepherd, or

staff member who will monitor the hallways, bathrooms, playground, and classroom during events. They can also provide support to volunteers as well as an additional layer of protection.

- If no window is available, you might elect to hold the "private meeting" in a not-so-private place. An example of this would be around picnic tables in the playground vs. being alone in a classroom.

### Guidelines for Overnights

- If there are both genders attending the overnight, then there should be chaperones or caregivers of both genders.
- For camps, retreats, or similar activities, two adult caregivers should work as a team. When possible, the adults should be housed separately from the youth.

### Guidelines for Off-Site Trips

Before departure:

- Give contact info, start/stop times of event, location of event, program content, lodging info, etc.
- Get all written and/or documented contact information from parents
- Complete Medical Release and Information forms
- Have at least 2 children or an additional adult ride in personal vehicles

### Transportation and Youth

- **NEVER** let youth drive from church to off-site location
- Meet at location or transport with adult drivers
- An adult should never drive a vehicle with just one youth

### Guidelines for Reporting Suspected Abuse

- Upon observing or suspecting abuse, the caregiver shall immediately:
- Make sure child's safety and comfort are secured
- Make sure the suspected abuser is safely away

from the child/children

- Report any policy violations or concerns of abuse/neglect promptly to the Designated Agents. To preserve confidentiality, it is important to discuss the incident initially only with these two individuals.
- This staff person will help you complete the **Mandatory Reporting Checklist** to determine the next best steps.

### Avoid Being Hotlined!!

- Follow the policies and procedures of your facility
  - \* Helps ensure you do not lose a child or neglect his/her needs
- Keep personal life out of the job setting
  - \* Helps prevent loss of control that could lead to abuse and/or distraction that could lead to neglect
- Respect boundaries, both physical and emotional, of children
  - \* Protects you against allegations of sexual or emotional maltreatment
  - \* Example: Some children do not like to be hugged or held. An innocent hug might feel like a bad touch to that particular child.
- Document everything, specifically, in a timely fashion
  - \* Protects you, especially if anonymous hotline caller
  - \* Document times and dates
  - \* Document accidental injuries that occur while children are in your care to help further protect you from later accusations
  - \* Use past documentation to determine if child has history of unexplained or poorly explained injuries
- Know the history of the children with whom you work
  - \* Helps identify patterns of unexplained injuries
- Document changes in care and reasons for it
- Protects against allegations of neglect and/or lack of supervision
- Document who authorized the change in care
  - \* Protects against allegations of neglect and/or lack of supervision

**Use of cameras, imaging, and digital devices are not to be used when privacy would be expected!! Any violations of these requirements must be reported to MLC designated agents. Devices are to be confiscated and given immediately to the designated agent so that private information may not be loaded onto internet or shared in any other way.**

- \* Example: One parent tells you to stop administering a regular medication without knowledge of the other parent, you may find yourself in a bind if you do not document the request. The parent who made the request might later deny having made it if the other becomes upset.
- Have parents sign children in and out
  - \* Will protect you regarding issues of lack of supervision
  - \* Need to know for whom you are responsible at all times and whose children they are
- Report incidents, accidents, and any type of injury to the parents, regardless of severity
  - \* Helps protect you against later accusations
  - \* If parents feel you have withheld information or you didn't notice an injury, they may become suspicious or question level of supervision provided.
- Be aware of sexual harassment issues
  - \* Helps protect against allegations of inappropriate behavior in front of children
  - \* Exposing children to sexual discussions could lead to allegations of sexual maltreatment
- Count heads if moving children from one area to another or, even better, always carry a roster that includes names of children. Check "in" and "out" times.
  - \* Protects providers from accusations regarding lack of supervision
- Take care of yourself—a healthy, well-rested caretaker is going to be less likely to abuse or neglect a child
  - \* Helps prevent loss of control that could lead to abuse and/or distraction that would lead to neglect

### What to Do If a Child Tells You About Abuse

An adult's reactions to a child's disclosure is very important. Children need to know that breaking the silence about abuse is the right thing to do. If a child's disclosure is handled with support and care, the child can learn to heal and feel safe again. In addition, taking action and reporting the abuse is critical to protect the child and possibly other children.

#### **Do:**

- Believe the child
- Know that children rarely lie about abuse
- Listen to the child in a non-judgmental way
- Give the child all of your attention
- Tell the child he/she has done nothing wrong—"it's not your fault"
- Praise the child's courage in telling you
- Stay calm
- Let child know he/she is not to blame
- Tell child that telling you is the right thing to do
- Be supportive—you will do what you can to help
- Ask open-ended questions like "What happened?" or "Who did it?"
- Let the child use his/her own words to tell story—assess child's safety
- Assure privacy—NEVER promise to keep what you're told a secret
- Report the abuse

#### **Do not:**

- Show feelings of shock or horror to the child
  - \* Makes them feel guilty or ashamed
- Interrogate the child
  - \* Makes child retell the whole story
  - \* Leading questions may hinder prosecution
- Correct a child's words about what happened or the names of body parts
- Make promises you may not be able to keep, such as "I promise this will never happen again."

### Summary of Safe Child Training

- Annual update of policy
- Re-check of background every 2 years
- Completion of 1-hour of training
  - \* Safe Child Policy Training and Policy Refresher Trainings offered quarterly
  - \* Opportunities for child or youth topical trainings
  - \* List of acceptable trainings available in church office

### Summary of Discipline Basics

- Redirect or distract
- Use positive words
- Establish rules and expectations
- Encourage child to make choices
- Tell parents the good, the bad, then the good (Sandwich Rule)
- Involve church staff when necessary

**S** Be aware of surroundings

**M** Be mindful of manipulators

**A** Be aware of what to avoid

**R** Be ready to report issues

**T** Be timely about telling

Child abuse harms victims, families, and youth serving organizations.

### Volunteer Resources

**Child Policy Designated Agents:** Marcie Rosenkoetter, Parish Nurse

Hannah Demaree, Director of Christian Discipleship

### **In your packet:**

Policy and supporting materials  
Avoid Being Hotlined sheet  
Report of accident, injury sheet  
Documentation images  
417-864-SAFE card

The **Nursery Volunteer Handbook and Nursery Brochure** also provides additional information for volunteers who provide assistance in the nursery.

# MANDATORY REPORTING CHECKLIST

Hotline Number 800-392-3738

Mandated Reporter's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Source of information (e.g. observation, child's disclosure, third-party report) \_\_\_\_\_

Did you identify yourself when you made the call as a mandated reporter?    Yes    No

Brief description of call: \_\_\_\_\_

Call to child abuse hotline was made                      Date & Time \_\_\_\_\_

Hotline Worker's name or ID \_\_\_\_\_

Hotline response \_\_\_\_\_

Information collected and forwarded to child abuse hotline:

\*Note: You have to call even if you don't have all of the information below!

- Child's name
- Child's address
- Name, address, and phone number of caretaker(s)
- Child's age/date of birth
- Child's gender
- Child's race
- Nature and extent of injuries, abuse, or neglect
- Evidence of other previous injuries, abuse, or neglect
- Name, age, and address of person responsible for injuries (if known)
- Family composition (siblings and other members)
- Name and address of person making report
- Occupation of person making report and where he/she can be reached
- Is it possible that the alleged perpetrator is going to have access to the child in the next 24 hours?

**Note:** *Attach additional notes or other documentation pertaining to call to this form*

Call to child abuse hotline **WAS NOT** made:

Reason why:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_





Notes and/or Questions???? Jot them down here.

Our contact information:

Marcie Rosenkoetter  
marcie.rosenkoetter@messiahmo.org  
417-881-2192

Hannah Demaree  
hannah.demaree@messiahmo.org  
417-881-2192

