

# Child/Youth Protection Policy

## **General Purpose Statement:**

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children and youth of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations.

## **Definitions:**

For purposes of this policy, the terms "child" or "children" include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.

## **Selection of Workers:**

All employees and all persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes:

### **a. Six Month Rule**

No volunteer will be allowed to work with children until s/he has been a member or regular attendee of church for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

### **b. Written Application**

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by us. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous church affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at the Prince of Peace Lutheran Church.

### **c. Personal Interview**

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

### **d. Reference Checks**

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicants' references will be checked. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past.

Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church.

**e. Criminal Background Check**

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and for the following categories of volunteers:

- Those who will be involved in overnight activities with minors;
- Those counseling minors;
- Those involved in one-on-one mentorship of minors;
- Those having occasional one-on-one contact with minors (i.e., event chaperones and vehicle drivers)

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allow the church to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will be unable to work with children.

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Senior Pastor on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church.

**Two Adult Rule**

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open unless there is a window in the door, and there should be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation.

**Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse**

For purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action (or lack of action) which endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes:

- **Physical abuse** – any physical injury to a child which is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting. **Emotional abuse** – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- **Sexual abuse** – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- **Neglect** – depriving a child of their essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the Senior Pastor for further action including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at this church or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified
2. The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation.
3. Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report.
4. We will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists.
5. We will cooperate with any investigation of the incident by state or local authorities. In the event there is no investigation of the incident by state or local authorities, a team will be formed to investigate the circumstances of the incident. The team should act only in consultation with our insurance company and/or attorney.
6. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position with children or youth.
7. The Senior Pastor will be our spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he or she is alleged to be involved. All other workers should refrain from speaking to the media.
8. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.

### **Teenage Workers**

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to such workers:

- Teenage workers must be at least age 14
- Teenage workers will be screened as specified above.
- Teenage workers must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

### **Check-in/Check-out Procedure**

For children below grade 3, a security check-in/check-out procedure will be followed. The child will be signed in by a parent or guardian, who will receive a "child check" for the child similar to a claim check. The parent or guardian must present the "child check" in order to sign out the child from our care. In the event that a parent or guardian is unable to present the "child check," the Deaconess will be contacted. The Deaconess will be responsible for releasing the child to the care of a parent or guardian after discussing the surrounding circumstances with the parent or guardian.

## **Sick Child Policy**

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should not be dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours
- Green or yellow runny nose
- Eye or skin infections
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease

## **Medications Policy**

It is the policy of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with the Deaconess.

Prescription or nonprescription medications being administered to children or youth on overnight events (such as church sponsored camps or retreats) should be addressed individually by the parents with the appropriate staff or volunteer. Directions and permission for administering either prescription or nonprescription medications should be given in writing, and signed by the parent/guardian of the child involved.

## **Discipline Policy**

It is the policy of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with the lead staff member for that activity (i.e. Christian Education Staff Leader, Youth Staff Leader, or Pastor) if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

## **Restroom Guidelines**

Children five years of age and younger should utilize a classroom bathroom, if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, workers should escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom. They should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, then allow the children inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door and leave the stall door open as he/she assists the child.

For children over the age of five, at least one adult male should take boys to the restroom and at least one adult female should take girls. The worker should check the bathroom first to make sure that the bathroom is empty, then allow the children inside. The worker should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom.

For the protection of all, workers should never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

### **Accidental Injuries to Children**

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

### **Elevator Policy**

No adult staff member or volunteer will be alone on the church elevator with a child or youth.

### **Training**

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church will provide training on this child protection policy to all new childcare workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All staff and volunteers will be required to review the on line training resource annually, and will be encouraged to attend any live training events provided.

### **Amendment to Prince of Peace congregation's Child/Youth Protection Policy**

Revised November 2013 approved at Church Council meeting 11-11-2013

ADD:

#### **Transportation of youth:**

The key consideration for any transportation issue is the safety of our children. For the purposes of this policy "youth" refers to a young person below the age of 18 OR a young person 18 or above who is still a high school student.

*Transporting Youth to or from home to the church or an offsite church sponsored activity:*

Parents or guardians have responsibility for youth transportation to and from home to church, or directly to and from another site when the activity is held away from the church, and the group is

gathering at that site. For reasons of safety, youth transported by parents or guardians is always the preferred method of transporting youth. When youth drivers are involved, Prince of Peace recommends the following:

a. Riding in private vehicles:

All youth traveling to or from a youth event in private vehicles will wear a seat belt properly buckled.

b. Youth Drivers (High School):

Youth drivers shall not transport other youth with the exception of his or her siblings or step-siblings.

c. Valid Driver Licenses:

Drivers must be properly licensed (no suspended or revoked licenses).

d. Drugs and Alcohol:

No vehicle shall be operated by a driver under the influence of or impairment by the use of drugs or alcohol.

*Transportation of youth shall be by volunteer adult drivers or Prince of Peace staff, driven to and from the church property for an event held offsite:*

a. Riding in private vehicles:

All youth traveling to or from a youth event in private vehicles will wear a seat belt properly buckled.

b. Volunteer Drivers:

Drivers transporting youth to or from a youth event shall be at least 22 years of age, and be properly licensed (i.e. no suspended or revoked licenses). No person under the influence or impaired by the use of drugs or alcohol shall transport youth to or from Prince of Peace.

c. Vehicle Maintenance:

Children or youth will not be allowed to travel in any vehicle known to be in need of maintenance that might impact the safe operation of the vehicle.