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Introduction

As Christians, we are called to offer hospitality, while simultaneously providing safe haven to those God has entrusted to our care, especially children, youth, and the differently-abled. Yet due to our sinful nature there exist those situations under which abuse can and does occur – for both children and adults. Abuse in any form – physical, emotional, spiritual, or sexual – is not acceptable, yet it cuts across racial, cultural, sociological and economic boundaries equally. It occurs in both rural and urban settings, in congregations both large and small.

In recent years, the church, of necessity, has looked more closely at efforts to prevent abuse in order to be true to its mission. Media attention has focused on child abuse cases, some involving church staff. Since the late 1980's, churches have successfully been sued for failing to deal effectively with child abuse by church staff and for failing to provide the kind of safe sanctuary long associated with our houses of worship.

Though it is impossible to completely eradicate abuse, instituting policies for the screening of staff and volunteers, and implementing safe practices, provide some safeguards, while simultaneously providing protection for staff and volunteers against unjust accusations. In fact, the existence of screening policies may serve as a deterrent of abuse.

Through our baptism, we are called to provide nurture and guidance in the ways of faith, by modeling mature adult behavior, and by providing voice and protection for those who may not be capable of doing so on their own. At the same time we are called to minister to the sinner as well.

Please note that this document is intended to assist your congregation in the development of a child protection policy. This document contains the recommendations of the Upper Susquehanna Synod for its congregations, as well as providing an example policy which may serve as a resource as your congregation designs its own policy. The example provided is meant to be a guide as you wrestle with the issues inherent to the topic. Every congregation should design a policy that can be applied to its particular setting; therefore, do not include items which cannot or will not be enforced. For additional ELCA information regarding policy development, visit <http://archive.elca.org/safespace/> and <http://archive.elca.org/legal/congregations/safeguarding.html>.

Recommendations of the Upper Susquehanna Synod

1. Every congregation should develop a child protection policy appropriate to its own setting.
2. Every congregation should arrange appropriate training for staff and volunteers on a regular basis. This includes: youth leaders, confirmation leaders, choir directors, Sunday School and pre-school/nursery school teachers and assistants, leaders for the differently-abled, pastor, and staff. This may be accomplished with other congregations. Assistance may be sought from the synod staff.
3. The congregation's Mutual Ministry Committee, Congregation Council, and pastor, should have the responsibility for implementing and enforcing guidelines and procedures, including the training of employees and volunteers, maintaining confidential records, implementing a screening process, and determining the frequency of these screenings.
4. All personnel should hold one another accountable, and report any inappropriate contact to his/her program leader, and pastor, and that inappropriate behavior be immediately confronted and investigated.
5. All legally reportable incidents must be documented. If the incidents are of a criminal nature, they must be reported to the appropriate civil authorities, and to the congregation's insurance carrier, immediately.
6. Congregations may produce additional guidelines specific to Sunday school, Sunday morning nursery, youth, or pre-/nursery school programs.
7. Children using the Sunday morning nursery should be signed in and out by a parent, or parent designate, and be released only to the specified individuals.
8. The child-to-staff ratio for off-site events should not exceed 10:1.
9. Training in CPR and First Aid should be provided for all those who regularly work with children, youth, or the differently-abled.
10. Congregational employees with a significant likelihood of contact with children, and others who are employed in congregational child care (including child care facilities located on church property), are legally required to obtain state child abuse history and criminal record clearances, and FBI clearances. Clergy meet the definition of those having "significant likelihood of contact with children," and are expected to receive such clearances. It is also recommended that other paid staff do so, even if they do not work directly in child care, since the benefits are great when compared to the consequences of a problem.
11. State clearances should be required for congregational volunteers who are likely to have contact with children in the form of care, guidance, supervision or training. FBI clearances should be obtained for the same such volunteers who have lived, or spent a significant amount of time, in another state. Congregations may consider requiring FBI clearances for volunteers who have lived in-state.

Children in the Body of Christ
A Bible Study for the Church
Rev. Louise Reynolds, USS, ELCA

“Then he took a child, and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me, welcomes not me, but the one who sent me.” (Mark 9:36-37, NRSV)

Rationale for Christian Churches’ Child Protection Policies

Scripture consistently describes God’s love for the most vulnerable persons among us, and reveals God’s will that his people take seriously the commission to care for them. Perhaps the greatest gift ever entrusted to humanity is God incarnate, as a human infant, totally helpless and entirely dependent upon the love and care of parents and community, as are all infants.

God spoke to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you” ((Jeremiah 1:5, NRSV). So Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ who was with God from the beginning, was born according to the ancient, divine plan, to bring salvation to all people. God gave us himself in a form we could care for and love, and as we care for and love every child, we receive God anew.

The Psalmist recounts the joy which is found in the home of a family who is faithful to God, promising that, “your children will be like olive shoots around your table” (Ps. 128: 3b, NRSV), implying that they are tender, in need of careful nurture and have the potential to grow to a great age, bearing much fruit.

Jesus praised the innocence of children and blessed those who were brought to him, rebuking the disciples who would send them away, saying, “... it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs,” (Matt. 19:14, NRSV).

Children are a precious trust from God. As the Church of Christ, His body on earth, we pledge ourselves to tenderly protect, teach, guide, and care for, every child who comes to us in Jesus’ name.

Resources: Study Bibles, Bible Dictionary, One Volume Bible Commentary (such as Harper’s)

Suggested Passages for Bible Study:

Genesis 4:1	Matthew 19: 13-15
Genesis 17: 1-8	Mark 9: 33-37
Deuteronomy 10: 12-22	Mark 10: 13-16
Deuteronomy 11: 13-21	Luke 1 and 2
Psalms 127	Luke 9: 46-47
Proverbs 17: 1-8	Acts 2: 38-39
Jeremiah 1:1-8	James 1: 27

Bible Study Questions:

What does this text say about God's will toward children?

What does this text tell us about to whom children belong?

What is the context of this passage?

How does the context relate to children? What is presumed about children in this context?

How does this relate to what we presume about children today?

Going Deeper:

What can we learn from this text about how we should regard and treat children?

Discussion Following Study:

What actions can we take to insure that the children whom God has entrusted to us will find God's love and care in this congregation?

Child Protection Policy Worksheet

In all denominations, incidents of abuse of children and youth have been reported. A Child Protection Policy serves to help protect youth, adults that work with them, and the church itself from harm and allegations of harm. It is impossible, of course, to prevent all instances of abuse, even with the best guidelines and policies. Churches are often seen by abusers as places where it is easy to come into contact with children and youth. Trust is assumed, and most churches welcome those who would like to minister to young people. The purpose of the policy is to make everyone aware of the need and expectations regarding those who work with youth, and to place roadblocks in the path of those who might abuse positions of trust.

Any policy is based on the knowledge that there are a range of policy options, from restrictive (no-touch), to less restrictive (safe-touch). This policy seeks to balance ministry needs against the need to keep children and youth, those who work with them, and the congregation itself, in a position of safety. Regarding each of the procedures, a congregation may decide to set in place a more or less restrictive policy.

This worksheet provides an explanation for each element of the example child protection policy, which is in the next section.

I. Mission Statement

The Mission Statement is the basis of the policy, expressing the broad goals of the church. It may contain the Mission Statement of the Church, as well as its Mission Statement in regard to ministry to and with children and youth.

II. Policy

The Policy expresses the broad elements of the policy – how the church intends to carry out the goals of its Mission Statement. This policy includes several elements: the “Safe-Touch” feature, education, involvement of parents/guardians, congregational backing, and advertisement of the policy to the community. All of these elements must be addressed for the Policy to be effective. The question of who is covered by this policy should also be addressed. In this policy, eighteen years of age is defined as a minimum for being considered an “adult.” There is also a restriction regarding the age difference between youth and their supervisors, to help eliminate peer supervision. A young teen would not be considered an “adult” for Supervisory purposes in the nursery, although they could be a “helper.” Neither could a nineteen-year old be a Supervisor for high school youth.

III. Confidentiality

The ability to keep appropriate matters confidential is essential to ministry, and is an important aspect of implementing a child protection policy. Confidentiality helps victims and their families to know they can trust those in positions of responsibility.

IV. Procedures

The Procedures are the specific elements of the program which carry out the policy. All of the asterisked items are necessary. They can be more restrictive, but not less.

1. * Are application forms, including references, checked? Should any other volunteers have background checks (one insurance company suggested background checks of all members!)? Be sure, as you think of your policy decisions, to include groups also that use the church facilities or are sponsored by the church (scouts, summer recreational programs, etc.), including those in which children/youth/mentally-challenged are involved, although the ministry is not directly aimed at them (intergenerational activities, etc.). Who should initiate the background checks [this is important in determining ownership of records]? Who will pay for processing of the necessary forms?
2. * What is an appropriate waiting time for members to work with children? Should non-members be allowed to work with children? Can non-members assume leadership positions and, if so, with what restrictions? Should those who do not have children in the group be allowed to lead groups? Can those not qualifying for leadership positions assume assisting roles?
3. * The general rule of “two adults” provides several safety features for both adults and children. There is another observing adult present, and in case of emergency, one adult can go for help while the other is present for the children/youth. Are there any qualifications for the “two adults” rule?
4. * Children should never remain unsupervised. Should the system be a “buddy” system, or always include the whole group? What other rules might be important for children/youth to follow?
5. * “Corporal punishment” (striking children/youth) is unacceptable in the church and presents legal problems as well. Abusive, demeaning or sexually-oriented language is also impermissible. Are there any other kinds of actions or language which should be prohibited, both to adults and children, or standards that should be set regarding actions or language?
6. * Many churches are installing parent alert systems for their nurseries. What is the balance of privacy needs of children/youth and oversight needs by adults?
7. * This procedural rule deals with the understanding that secrecy enables abuse. Keeping things out in the open and in the light is the best way to keep abuse from happening.
8. * Who are the people to whom abuse/inappropriate behaviors should be reported?
9. How are allegations to be handled in the Church? How does this policy coordinate with other relevant policies of the Church?
10. There should be no time when children/youth are left alone. What procedures need to be put in place to make sure this policy is enforced? How will the congregation make sure there are no “hidden corners” in the building?
11. How does the congregation deal with minor vs. major violations? What is a “minor” or “major” infraction? Who does reporting to police, etc., if that becomes necessary? Should it be the same person, so there is consistency? Should it be one person who is responsible for representing the congregation?
12. What is the law regarding reporting of abuse? How should those handling the reports act regarding allegations and ministry to both the accused and accuser(s)? What are their responsibilities?

13. Regarding confidentiality concerns, how should reports and documentation of abuse be handled?
14. What is the “follow-up” procedure of the congregation? How does the congregation ensure a “fair hearing” and continue ministering to both the accuser and accused?
15. To whom do these policies apply, and how will they be informed and “sign off” of the policy?
16. Are there any other concerns (i.e. transportation, off-site programs) that come under this policy? What forms are necessary, and where are they available? This policy addresses two important items – those providing transportation, and permission by parents/guardians for off-site programs.

Approvals, Dates and Signatures: It is important that the Pastor and Council President, at least, sign off on the policy, representing the leadership of the congregation. Their signatures, along with the approval of the Congregation, present a united front for the implementation of the policy, and help insure that all of its provisions will be kept in force. The dating of the document also ensures that it will be viewed as a policy in force, as well as provide a reference point for the congregation when reviewing its policies. All policies of the congregation should be reviewed on a regular basis. It is best if one group (ex. Personnel Committee, Executive Committee) be given this task, to make sure that policies of the Congregation do not conflict, but support, one another.

The Policy should be signed by all those who come under the Policy. This ensures that they know the Policy and agree to it. It also provides written proof of the same, in case the Policy is violated.

**An Example of a Child Protection Policy
(based on the worksheet found in the previous section)**

I. Mission Statement

_____ Lutheran Church seeks to proactively protect all children and youth involved in the ministries of this congregation, adults working with them, and the congregation itself from harm and accusations of harm. To that end, these policies and procedures are presented as elements of a “safe-touch” program. The program is intended to address both elements of prevention and education regarding inappropriate behaviors during church-related activities.

We, the congregation of _____ Lutheran Church, support the following policy for working with youth, in keeping with the mission statement of the congregation.

II. Policy

A “safe-touch” element must be part of the educational program of the congregation and integrated into its curriculum in all age groups. Informative materials must also be available to parents/guardians on prevention, safe-touch, and other issues relevant to sexual and physical abuse. There must always be two adults present when working with children/youth and parents/guardians must be encouraged to become involved as much as possible in all children/youth activities. An “adult,” for purposes of this Policy, is someone eighteen years of age or older. There must be at least a five-year age difference between Adult leaders and the youth they are supervising.

The congregation and its leadership must be informed of the policy as well as the need for such, at least annually. A presentation of this policy must be included in the new member orientation by the Pastor.

A statement must be released to the community annually regarding the establishment of this policy. This policy shall apply to activities within the church, as well as those church activities that take place outside its doors.

III. Confidentiality

It is expected that workers and volunteers of the congregation, follow the highest standards of confidentiality. Parents must feel confident that stories about their children are not repeated in or outside the church setting. **Limits to Confidentiality:** Workers involved with ministry to children/youth or disabled, must report to the supervisor/leader and pastor, any minor’s threats of harming himself/herself or others, or of reports of abuse.

IV. Procedures: *All asterisked (*) items must be part of the policy. Non-asterisked items must be addressed by the policy. See the Youth Policy Worksheet for further discussion of these items.*

1. * Paid workers and regular volunteers, over the age of 14, working with children/youth and/or the mentally challenged, must complete a job application form, available from the office, and have a Criminal Background and “Child Line” check completed. If they will be transporting children/youth, a Driving Record check will also be made. This will be done by the Personnel Committee. Forms are available from the Church Office. An FBI Fingerprint Card is required if the applicant has been a resident in another state.

2. * New members of the church must have a six-month waiting period before assuming a leadership role with children/youth. They may assume an assisting role, but not in conjunction with their spouse, another member of their immediate family, or their significant other.
3. * If it is impossible to have two adults present, i.e. Sunday School classes, then the entire classroom must remain visible from the public areas, and the doors remain unlocked and the superintendent of the Sunday School or other responsible adult must be in the area. Under no circumstances is an adult and child/youth to be alone together unless the adult is the parent/guardian. The only one-on-one activities permitted are public activities.
4. * When children/youth are having activities, a buddy system must be initiated such as each child having a partner for all activities.
5. * Under no circumstances is anyone, adult or youth, to strike, or use abusive, demeaning, or sexually-oriented language with a child/youth. Leaders have an obligation to monitor activities among children and youth in their care, and to report inappropriate behavior to the pastor and to the parents of the children involved.
6. * The privacy needs of children, youth and adults must be respected at all times, especially when dressing, undressing or using the bathroom. Parents/guardians of small children shall be called, if possible, to attend to the needs of their own children.
7. * There shall be no hazing, secret keeping, nor secret gatherings of any sort, involving children or youth in the congregation.
8. * Any violation of these policies or inappropriate behaviors must be reported immediately (within 24 hours) to the Pastor, the appropriate Committee Chairperson, or the Council President. Always err on the side of safety.
9. Discipline shall be administered in accordance with the constitution of this church, with reference particularly to the sections on Discipline of Pastors and Discipline of Members (*usually sections C9 and C15*).
10. Random walk-arounds will be done in all areas of the buildings when children are present, by the Superintendent of the Sunday School, adults in charge, or their designee. Under no circumstances will youth/children be left in the building alone.
11. Minor violations, such as off-color language, must be taken up with the persons involved by the appropriate group leader, i.e. Youth Group Leaders. More serious offenses such as physical assault, sexual contact or personal property damage must be reported to the adults in charge or, if they are involved, to the pastor. All infractions, major or minor, must be reported to the Pastor in a timely manner. Infractions that need to be reported to the local authorities will be done so by the Pastor. If attempts to contact the pastor are unsuccessful, the adult in charge should contact the local authorities and contact the pastor as soon as possible.
12. Allegations of abuse are to be taken seriously. Information regarding possible sexual or physical abuse is confidential and those reporting abuse are protected by law. Those who have incidents reported to them should listen openly and non-judgmentally. Minister to the victim first, document everything, and report to the Pastor in writing, including the names of any witnesses. Any release of information must be done by the Pastor.
13. All documentation is considered confidential and will be maintained in a secured area with limited access.
14. Without regard to any allegations made, the accused must be separated from the accuser by the adult in charge. This must be done immediately. In the case of serious allegations, the accused are also not to have contact with other youth/children in the congregation until the investigation is

Guidelines to use in Interviewing Applicants Having Contact with Children and Youth

What to look for:

Applicants with a clear explanation of why they want to work with children and youth.

Applicants who have demonstrated maturity and interpersonal skills over the long-term in their life experiences.

Applicants who are open to differences in people, flexible in dealing with people, and who have a sense of humor.

Applicants who understand the need for screening and supervision, and who react to it positively, rather than defensively.

Some Suggested Interview Questions

Start the interview with a reminder that “information will not be disclosed to unauthorized persons.” Begin with light questions and ask more personal ones as the applicant relaxes.

1. Tell me about your family when you were growing up.
2. What were your family’s religious beliefs when you were a child?
3. Tell me about your hobbies and interests outside the church.
4. What is the biggest problem in children’s (youth’s) lives right now? (Look for coherent, well-reasoned answers that demonstrate the applicant has thought about kids problems.)
5. Give a brief timeline of your life. (Follow up with questions to address where they grew up, their childhood, education, work experience, churches they have attended/belonged to, job and residence changes, etc.)
6. Tell me about other work you have done with children/youth/disabled.
7. Is there anything else I should know about you that might affect how you work with children at _____ church?

Red Flags

Red flags alone do not mean that an individual is a potential danger to children, but they are possible indicators that an individual may participate in unhealthy relationships with children or even be a potential perpetrator. Red flags are signals for the program leaders to consider the applicant more carefully, to look a bit deeper into his/her background, and to be especially careful in making decisions to approve or disapprove the applicant. Red flags may include:

A specific interest in a certain age group or gender. Perpetrators sometimes fixate on children the same age they were if/when they were abused.

Over-involvement with children and youth. Excessive activity with youth may indicate a person is fixated on youth, lacks adult outlets for recreation, or is seeking access to youth in a variety of

programs. Use caution with individuals not from the congregation, who come forth seeking to be involved in child or youth activities.

Lack of adult relationships. Healthy workers have adult relationships for friendships, and when appropriate, for romantic reasons. They do not need to turn to youth to meet their basic needs for relationships.

Lack of adult interests. Interest in adult hobbies and in adult groups shows that youth workers have balanced lives that are not overly concentrated on children.

Instability in work and life. Look out for persons who have moved or changed jobs frequently and do not have plausible explanations for it. Perpetrators often move from place to place as people become suspicious or to seek out new opportunities to abuse children. Instability in work may mean that an applicant may have a drug or alcohol issue.

Gaps in a person's life history. An unexplained gap in a resume or history could signal that the applicant served a prison term or is covering up a difficult time in his/her life, and warrants further investigation.

A history of family instability. A person who experienced abuse or family problems while growing up, may have unresolved emotional issues. These issues may interfere with their ability to work with children. Also, child abuse often occurs in unstable families who face issues such as: alcohol and/or drug abuse, mental illness, extreme poverty, etc.

Stressful events in the applicant's recent past. Events such as the death of a close family member, divorce, marital problems, unemployment, etc, often lead to stress. Has the stress led the applicant to act in unhealthy ways?

Evasive or misleading answers. Dishonesty is an indicator that a person is not trustworthy enough for work with children and may be hiding vital information.

Rigidity in belief or doctrines. Applicants may have strong beliefs, but they should demonstrate flexibility in dealing with different points of view and acceptance of people as they are. A larger-than-expected proportion of perpetrators come from rigid, highly orthodox backgrounds that encourage a one-dimensional perspective on important issues. Be cautious with applicants who have an overly-strong personal agenda with kids. Look for statements such as, "I want to train children to believe in God just like I do.", or "Children today are spoiled, so I want to teach them the strong discipline that I grew up with."

A Procedure for Reporting

If the allegations are against any rostered person (Diaconal Minister, Deaconess, Associate in Ministry or Ordained Ministers), the Bishop of the Upper Susquehanna Synod will be contacted immediately. The synod will become actively involved in situations alleging misconduct against a rostered leader.

When it becomes necessary to report suspected child abuse, the protection of children must be the most important concern. It is the legal responsibility of any person charged with the care of children to report all cases of alleged child abuse they observe, and further, to report visible signs of alleged abuse. Failure to do so could lead to liability on the part of the church, the observer, or both. _____ Lutheran Church has determined that it is the responsibility of the program staff to report all cases of suspected abuse to the proper authorities. While the confidentiality of the minister/parishioner relationship is very important, reporting reasonable suspicion of child abuse has the potential for helping individuals receive help for a previous problem and may prevent further harm to a child, that individual, or others.

Reasonable suspicion means that there is credible evidence, or a discrepant or inconsistent history of explaining a child's suspected abuse. A report based on reasonable suspicion does not require proof that abuse or neglect has actually occurred or that the reporter witnessed the incident in question.

Upon receiving information of abuse, the adult in charge will report immediately to the pastor or church council president, who will then call **Childline (1-800-932-0313)** and the local Children and Youth Services/Office. **DO NOT INTERVIEW OR QUESTION THE CHILD.**

If the abuse occurred on church property, or during a church activity by church staff, the pastor, or volunteer, the alleged perpetrator should be removed from leadership in the congregation and from all further contact with children until the incident report has been resolved. This will be dealt with in as discreet a manner as possible. He/She should not be banned from worship or other adult church ministries.

Follow-up Care

The effects of child abuse can have a tremendous impact upon a congregation. Child abuse hurts the victim, physically, sexually, and/or emotionally, but also creates irreparable loss of trust in those church members who have been entrusted with the child's care.

Whether the perpetrator is a Pastor, a youth leader, a Sunday School teacher, a fellow member, whom we thought we could trust, or even a relative; we as Christians are taught to love one another, and to love requires us to trust one another.

We bring our children to church each Sunday, thinking our children are safely in the hands of competent adults who will look out for the safety of our children, and be good models of Christian values. Likewise, we may drop them off at youth events, choir, camp, or other activities, thinking they will experience wholesome activities that will help them to grow in faith.

For many young people who have been brought up in the Lutheran Church, we are taught by our parents to have respect for the Pastor, Sunday School teachers, music teachers, and others that are part of our Christian growth. Therefore, if a youth group leader or someone in church authority – often someone we know – abuses us, we quickly distrust anyone affiliated with the “church.” Pastors are often revered as “Men or Women of God.” Youth leaders may be a person they [the child] confide in, or someone the child has connected with closely. In some instances, the perpetrator may be a relative, since members of many small congregations are related to one another.

Once this trust is broken, it may never be repaired. In some situations, the victim and his/her family are no longer active in the congregation, or have left the church, and out of embarrassment or self-protection, have not shared what has occurred. The next Pastor, the next youth leader, or the next choir director is viewed with skepticism, and trust may never develop. Even if the perpetrator leaves the congregation, some members may be reluctant to allow their children to participate in church activities, wondering if their child may have also been a victim.

If the perpetrator is a family relative or close friend, the victim may not want to share the incident until years later, thinking that they have done something wrong, especially if the perpetrator is threatening or intimidating. Perhaps families will blame church councils and others in authority for not establishing safeguards that may have prevented this type of abuse from occurring. Other families may leave the congregation, embarrassed to belong to a congregation in which the perpetrator abused or molested children. In some cases, attendance may drop, and the congregation split when word gets out that an incident occurred within their congregation.

In addition, the community image or reputation of the congregation is likely to be affected by such an incident, from which it may take the congregation generations to heal. People will say, “Remember the incident that happened in that congregation back in 2004?” A tarnished image may be alleviated by having in place, policies that reduce the likelihood of such incidents of occurring in your congregation.

And what about the deep psychological and emotional damage that has occurred to the victim, their family, and the church when this type of incident occurs? First, the alleged perpetrator must be removed from the premises, so no further contact is made with the victim or potential other victims. This should occur as soon as information regarding an incident is received by the Pastor, Congregation Council president, or other governing authority. The victim may not report the incident until years later, but corrective action must be taken. This requires contacting police, child welfare authorities or social services, as well as the Bishop in cases involving rostered leaders.

Second, the ministry of presence should be made by the Pastor, or Congregation Council president through a visit to the family. Perhaps the victim and his/her family want to be 'left alone', but they have been hurt, and need support. Reassure them that Jesus blessed the children and never hurt them, and that Jesus is hurting *with* them. Be sensitive to the child's family wishes. The family may wish to protect their child by not releasing any information, and in keeping the child's identity private. Substantiated allegations should be shared with the congregation, as soon as possible following the incident, fully respecting issues relating to confidentiality.

Third, be prepared to administer long-term care. Victims of abuse often show outward signs of withdrawal, poor school performance, suicidal ideas or behaviors, low self-esteem, fear of future relationships with boys or girls, lack of trust for adults, or symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (recurrent nightmares, flashbacks, etc.). Offer the resources of professional counselors, who can provide therapy to the victim and the family. The congregation should, if necessary, offer to pay for counseling sessions, as part of the healing process. As follow-up, the Pastor or Congregation Council president should meet with the family as needed. These meetings should take place in a mutually agreed upon setting.

The Pastor or Congregation Council president should also meet with family of the alleged perpetrator. Often in small, rural churches, there is a good possibility that the alleged perpetrator's family is active in the congregation. They may serve on church council, or be involved in Sunday school, choir, etc. The victim's family may have anger and distrust toward the alleged perpetrator as well. This may require reconciliation skills. Jesus calls us to love and forgive, but in cases of abuse, it is never easy to either love or forgive. Again, regular visitation and ministry of presence is vital to the healing process, which may take years.

Finally, it is important that the congregational leader take any necessary steps required to address and resolve personal issues related to ministry throughout the incident. Remain in communication with the synod office, and seek the outside assistance of a counselor if signs of stress develop as a result of the incident. Allegations against rostered leaders are to be handled through the office of the Bishop of the Upper Susquehanna Synod.

Appendix & Forms

List all churches you have attended in the past five years:

Name of Church	Address	City	State	Zip
Name of Church	Address	City	State	Zip
Name of Church	Address	City	State	Zip

In what type of ministry are you interested?

What are your gifts, training, experience or other factors that have prepared you for this work?

List the last five employers for whom you have worked (include present employment). Include both part- and full-time employment.

Name of Employer	Phone	Dates Employed	Title/Duties

List four references that can be contacted. References can include people who know your gifts, training and experience with children/youth, past or present coworkers, members of the congregation, and people who have known you for a considerable length of time. Do not include relatives.

Name of Reference	Telephone	Years Known	Relationship

References (cont.)

Name of Reference	Telephone	Years Known	Relationship
<hr/>			
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Have you ever been convicted of, or plead guilty to a crime? If so, give dates and explain the circumstances.

Have you ever been reported to a social service agency, law enforcement authority, child abuse registry, or similar organization regarding abuse or misconduct involving children less than eighteen years of age? If so, give dates and explain the circumstances.

Have you ever been fired or relieved of your duties by a church, denomination, or other organization? If so, give dates and explain the circumstances.

Is there any circumstance in your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the supervision, guidance and care of minors?

I affirm that the information contained in this application is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. Any deliberate attempt to mislead or provide misinformation will result in a determination that I am not qualified to work with children/youth in this congregation.

I authorize the church to contact any references listed in this application for verification of fact, and information regarding my character and fitness for work with children/youth.

I agree to be bound by this congregation's Youth Policy, and to all other policies of this congregation.

Applicant's Signature _____ Date _____

Authorization for Release of Information

Form B

I, _____, authorize _____
Lutheran Church to perform a Criminal Background Check and Child Abuse History Clearance
on myself.* I give permission for these documents to be kept in a confidential file with my
Application and other records.

Signed _____ Date _____

**Including FBI criminal history check if required.*

Auto Safety Certification

Form C

This form is intended for workers who have a regular responsibility to transport children/youth. Only persons twenty-one years or older with a valid driver's license and auto insurance may transport others as part of church activities. As with other youth work, drivers must be at least five years older than the youth they transport. All information on this form is confidential.

Y N Are you currently a licensed driver? Please allow staff to copy your license.

Y N Do you have personal auto insurance in force? Please allow staff to copy your insurance card.

Y N Have you been ticketed for a moving violation within the past two years? If your answer is "yes," please explain the nature of the violation.

I agree to notify the pastor immediately if my driver's license is suspended or revoked, if I am ticketed for a moving violation, or am cited for a DUI or DWI violation. I will also notify the pastor immediately if my insurance is canceled or not renewed. I understand that these notifications are required even if not related to church work. The church will not release this information to unauthorized persons. I also authorize the congregation to check the truthfulness of these statements.

I agree to transport persons only in passenger seats equipped with appropriate seat belts and/or child safety seats, if applicable. I agree to require seat belt/child safety seat usage at all times. I agree to transport persons only in vehicles that are in safe operating condition. I agree to follow the congregation's Youth Policy, as well as any other applicable policies of the congregation.

I have truthfully and accurately responded to the questions above. I will immediately inform the congregation if any of the above information should change.

Signature _____ Date _____

Parental Authorization for Off-Site Events

Form D

Written permission is required for all off-site activities for children/youth. This form will be carried with the adult supervisor on each trip.

I, _____, am the parent/legal guardian of
Name of Parent or Guardian

_____, and consent to their attendance at
Child's Name

_____ on _____
Event Date and Times of Event

My child may be driven by an insured adult and will be restrained while in the vehicle by a seat belt. I authorize emergency treatment as necessary in the event that I cannot be contacted immediately, should the need arise. If my child misbehaves, I authorize the adult supervisor to contact me, and I will pick up my child from the activity. Adult Supervisors cannot give medications or medical treatment, other than that which may be deemed necessary in an emergency, and will not be held liable.

Emergency Phone Number _____

Emergency Contact _____ Phone Number _____

Health Insurance Provider _____

Policy/Group Identification Number _____

Known Allergies and Physical Restrictions:

Parental Restrictions:

Signature _____ Date _____

Incident Report Form

Reason for report _____

Date of Incident _____ Location/class _____

Title/Person Reporting _____

Name(s) and Age(s) of Minor(s) _____

Child's Words Verbatim (DO NOT INTERVIEW OR QUESTION CHILD. SIMPLY STATE
WHAT WAS TOLD TO YOU.) _____

Briefly describe what happened: _____

What action did you take? _____

Has the incident been resolved? _____ Yes _____ No Explain: _____

Were there any witnesses? _____ Yes _____ No Names & Contact information: _____

Signature of witnesses (if possible): _____

Report submitted by: _____

PENNSYLVANIA CHILD ABUSE HISTORY CLEARANCE

<p>COMPLETE SECTION I ONLY. PRINT CLEARLY IN INK. ENCLOSE \$10.00 MONEY ORDER ONLY. PAYABLE TO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE. DO NOT SEND CASH OR PERSONAL CHECK.</p> <p>SEND TO CHILDLINE AND ABUSE REGISTRY, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE, P.O. BOX 8170 HARRISBURG, PA 17105-8170</p> <p>APPLICATIONS THAT ARE INCOMPLETE ILLEGIBLE OR RECEIVED WITHOUT FEE WILL BE RETURNED UNPROCESSED. IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS CALL 717-763-6211</p>	<p>CHILDLINE USE ONLY</p> <p>DATE RECEIVED BY CHILDLINE</p>
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SECTION I APPLICANT IDENTIFICATION

IN THIS SPACE PRINT APPLICANT'S FULL NAME AND ADDRESS (DO NOT USE INITIALS)

<p>NAME</p> <p>STREET</p> <p>CITY, STATE ZIP CODE</p>	<p>SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%;">AGE</td> <td style="width: 33%;">DATE OF BIRTH</td> <td style="width: 33%;">DAYTIME PHONE NO.</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">SEX <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F</td> <td>COUNTY YOU LIVE IN</td> </tr> </table>	AGE	DATE OF BIRTH	DAYTIME PHONE NO.	SEX <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F		COUNTY YOU LIVE IN
AGE	DATE OF BIRTH	DAYTIME PHONE NO.					
SEX <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F		COUNTY YOU LIVE IN					

PREVIOUS NAMES USED SINCE 1975 (Include Maiden Name, Nicknames, Aliases)

(FIRST, MIDDLE, LAST)	(FIRST, MIDDLE, LAST)
-----------------------	-----------------------

PURPOSE OF CLEARANCE (Check ONE block ONLY)

<input type="checkbox"/> CHILD CARE	<input type="checkbox"/> VOLUNTEERS-A copy of your PROCESSED "Request for Criminal Record" (Form SP4-164) must be attached. Out-of-state residents must also attach a copy of their PROCESSED FBI clearance (Form FID-255).	<input type="checkbox"/> CWEP (Community Work Experience Program Participant)
<input type="checkbox"/> FOSTER CARE		
<input type="checkbox"/> ADOPTION		
<input type="checkbox"/> SCHOOL		

SIGNATURE OF CAD REF _____ CAD PHONE NO. _____

PREVIOUS ADDRESSES SINCE 1975 (Attach additional pages if necessary)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS (List everyone who lived with you at anytime since 1975 to the present).

NAME (First, Middle, Last) Do not use initials.	RELATIONSHIP	PRESENT AGE	SEX
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			

I certify that the above information is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief and submitted as true and correct under penalty of law (Section 4904 of the Pennsylvania Crimes Code).

Applicants are required to show the Administrator the original document. Administrators are required to keep a copy of this child abuse history record on file. Any person altering the contents of this document may be subject to civil, criminal or administrative action.

APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SECTION - CHILDLINE USE ONLY

SECTION II RESULTS OF HISTORY CHECK

<input type="checkbox"/> APPLICANT IS NOT LISTED IN A REPORT OF CHILD ABUSE OR A REPORT FOR SCHOOL EMPLOYEE.	<input type="checkbox"/> APPLICANT IS LISTED IN A REPORT OF CHILD ABUSE OR A REPORT FOR SCHOOL EMPLOYEE (SEE BELOW).
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STATUS OF REPORT	DATE OF INCIDENT	STATUS OF REPORT	DATE OF INCIDENT
1.		3.	
2.		4.	

_____ VERIFIER DATE	_____ VERIFIER'S SUPERVISOR DATE
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004500

CY 113 12/99

Obtaining Child Abuse, Criminal, and FBI Clearances

Under current PA law, anyone operating or working in child care facilities or services (including those operated by churches) is under the jurisdiction of the PA Department of Public Welfare and must get an FBI criminal history record check, a child abuse history record check, and a Pennsylvania State Police criminal history record check.

A criminal record request may be made online at <https://epatch.state.pa.us>

The Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance may be obtained by calling the Department of Public Welfare at (717) 783-6211.

Instructions regarding obtaining an FBI check (FD-258), and its current cost, can be found at www.fbi.gov/hq/cjisd/fprequest.htm.

Persons requesting FBI clearances will be instructed to go to an authorized location in their geographic area for actual fingerprinting, done for an additional cost. As a way to reduce the expense of obtaining fingerprints, state and local police stations may be willing to do the fingerprinting and can be qualified to do so on a case by case basis. Check with the police in your area.

The Language of Prevention: A Glossary of Terms

Technical definitions used for clinical purposes may differ. Legal terms may vary by jurisdiction.

Abused or neglected child – a child whose mental or physical health is endangered or threatened by the actions or failure to act by people responsible for the child’s care.

Boundaries – Property boundaries are the limits or dividing lines between pieces of real estate. People have boundaries also, that guide our physical and emotional relations. Personal boundaries are like fences, separating appropriate behavior from inappropriate behavior. The lines change according to the child’s age and the relationship between the child and the adult. In a physical sense, boundaries govern appropriate behavior. Any child with weak boundaries is more vulnerable to sexual molestation or abuse. Healthy boundaries enable a child to recognize and reject inappropriate behavior.

Child abuse – verbal, physical, emotional or sexual abuse of an infant, pre-schooler, child, youth, or minor

Child maltreatment – harm to a child by a caretaker or another person who may come into contact with the child. This includes acts of commission (assault) as well as acts of omission (failure to protect). In other words – physical, emotional, or sexual abuse or neglect.

Child molester – a person who has sexually violated any child.

Child protection services – a generic name for agencies of municipal or state government that investigate child maltreatment and provide services to victims and families. May also be called, “social services, human services, child welfare, Children & Youth”, or similar names. Child protective services work closely with law enforcement and the courts. Most child protective staff people have in-depth social work and family counseling training.

Child sexual abuse – includes, but is not limited to any contact or interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for sexual stimulation of the adult person or of a third person. The behavior may or may not involve touching. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered forced whether or not consented to by the child. Also referred to as ***molestation***.

Children, youth, or the mentally challenged – all children of school age, generally anyone less than 18 years of age. This category includes persons over 18 years of age who are not able to fully protect themselves from exploitation or give consent for sexual activity (due to intellectual or physical impairment).

Criminal background check or ***CBC*** – procedure used to check the background of adult volunteers for criminal activity, including child abuse

Denominational organization – diocese, synods, conferences, or similar associations of churches that may have policies that interact with an individual church’s policies and guidelines.

Emotional abuse – may take two forms:

Failure to provide love, emotional support, and adult guidance (an act of omission), or

Conduct that threatens a child’s self-esteem and emotional development, such as humiliating, insulting, or belittling a child (an act of commission)

Grooming – a pattern of behavior by a perpetrator which makes a child more vulnerable to molestation or prevents a child from reporting molestation. Often the abuse occurs only after considerable contact with the perpetrator that allows the perpetrator to evaluate and increase the vulnerability of the victim.

Example: a perpetrator involves a teen in viewing pornography and consuming alcohol as an introduction to sexual activity. Later the perpetrator threatens the child by saying things such as, “Don’t tell anyone or you will be in more trouble than me for drinking and having those magazines.”

Mandatory reporting - any individual, who has reason to believe that a child is a victim of child abuse or neglect, must make a report to the pastor, or their congregation council president.

Molestation – see child sexual abuse

Neglect – failure of a caretaker to provide for a child’s basic needs or to prevent harm to the child.

Pedophile and hebephile – Pedophile is a clinical diagnosis of a person with a compulsive sexual desire for children who have yet to reach the age of puberty. Hebephile is similar to a pedophile except the desire is focused on adolescent children. The sexual desire must have lasted at least six months and be strong enough to cause significant stress on the individual or cause the individual to act.

Physical Abuse – non-accidental injury to children caused by the acts of parents or others

Preferential child molester – perpetrator who actively plans to molest children and works to gain access to them. Preferential molesters will typically abuse children repeatedly and will assail hundreds of children throughout their lifetime.

Program or ministry leader – persons who direct one component of the church’s ministry to children. This category includes: Pre-school director, Children’s/Christian Education Director, Children’s and Youth Choir Director, Youth Group Leaders, Superintendent of Sunday School, etc.

Red flag – an informal term for any indication that an individual may not be well suited to caretaker roles with children or youth. A red flag raises suspicions and causes program leaders to look more closely at an individual’s qualifications or behavior. (*See further discussion in “Guidelines for Interviewing Applicants.”*)

Risk management – a field of management in which an organization or business evaluates the risks it faces and minimizes or transfers risk in order to protect the effectiveness of the organization. Risk management usually includes the purchase of insurance as a part of the overall process.

Rostered leaders – diaconal ministers, deaconesses, Associates in Ministry and clergy

Sexual abuse/assault/exploitation – any act of sexual intimacy lacking mutual consent and involving force or threat of force. This includes situations in which the victim is unable to give consent due to age, intellectual, or physical impairments, or other incapacities. Note that this definition applies regardless of the ages of the victim or victimizer (i.e. adult-adult, adult-child or child-child)

“Pre-schooler”, “child”, “children”, “youth”, and “minor” shall be defined as any individual under the age of eighteen (18), or whose mental capacity is that of a minor.

Worker – any adult who serves as a volunteer and/or paid individual given the responsibility of working with or caring for minors.

Teenage worker or Assistant- any worker 14 -18 years of age, enlisted to assist with the care of minors.