



Antrim

Brethren in Christ Church
Children & Youth Protection Policy
24 Kauffman Road East, Chambersburg, PA 17202

The policies and procedures in this manual are designed primarily to protect the children and youth in our care and on Church property from sexual abuse, but certainly physical and emotional abuse are our concerns as well.

Rationale for having these Policies and Procedures

To Protect our Children and Youth

1. Our children are precious to us and to God. It is our responsibility to do all we can to protect them. While we certainly trust God and ask God to protect our children, we believe that God will honor and often works through safeguards and precautions, based on sound counsel, to accomplish His purpose.
2. Child sexual abuse is a very real and large problem in America.
3. The extent of psychological and emotional damage done to children and youth by sexual abuse (or any abuse) is tremendous.
4. Child molesters are attracted to institutions in which they have immediate access to potential victims in an atmosphere of complete trust, such as the church. Screening and supervision of workers and helpers with children and youth is therefore essential.

To Protect the Church, Teachers, Helpers, and Leadership

1. Litigation against churches for child sexual abuse is on the increase.
2. Negligent hiring (even of volunteers) and negligent supervision are two key issues in the court cases today involving child sexual abuse in the church.
3. We want to protect those who work with children and youth from being suspected or falsely accused of wrongful behavior toward a child.
4. State law requires individuals to report known or reasonable suspected incidents of child abuse to state officials. We need to know our responsibility before the law and have in place a reporting procedure in case such incidents occur.
5. If an accusation of child abuse is made against someone in the church, we need to know how to respond in a reasonable manner.

6. An incident of child sexual abuse could cost the church millions of dollars.
7. An incident of child sexual abuse would undermine the reputation and ministry of our church for several generations.

Outline of our Policies and Procedures

We have adopted a fivefold strategy to safeguard the children and youth of our church against sexual abuse and to protect their teachers and leaders and the church from liability stemming from allegations of abuse.

Our policies and procedures fall under five categories as follows:

1. Recruiting and selecting teachers and leaders of children and youth.
2. Supervision guidelines for those working with the children and youth
3. Supervision guidelines for children while their parents or responsible persons are on church property.
4. Reporting procedures for suspicions of abuse.
5. Responding to an accusation of abuse.

I. Recruiting and Selecting Teachers, Youth Helpers, and Leaders of Children and Youth

1. All paid church employees, including clergy, shall undergo a thorough screening process as a part of their job application procedure. Special attention shall be given to whether or not the applicant has been convicted of or pleaded guilty to a crime, especially a crime involving the abuse or molestation of children or youth. Applicants for a paid position will be required to fill out the "Volunteer Profile Form for Children or Youth Work".
2. Anyone paid or volunteer, who is going to work with children or youth in our church, must fill out the "Volunteer Profile Form for Children or Youth Work". This includes teachers, helpers, nursery workers, youth leaders, youth helpers, Christian education board members, and those who might help with youth events, such as parents of youth. Those who are currently in the above roles are still required to fill out the form.
3. Parents may act as room monitor in a youth (12 years or above) classroom once per quarter as a second adult without completing the above-mentioned requirements.
4. Guest speakers may be used with approved personnel in charge and noting that the guest speaker is not to be left alone with children.
5. Each personal reference given by the applicant shall be contacted and a summary of the reference's remarks shall be kept in the applicant's file. Likewise, churches and organizations where work with children or youth was previously, done shall be contacted; with all information kept in the applicant's file.

6. Everyone who fills out the volunteer profile form shall then be interviewed by one of the persons designated by the church to interview potential children's or youth workers.
7. Volunteers are required to have been regular attendees at Antrim for six (6) months before they can work with children or youth. We strongly encourage all to begin the process to become church members, as membership is a prerequisite for some positions.
8. Adults who have participated in, been convicted of, or pleaded guilty to either child sexual or physical abuse shall not work with children or youth in our church.
9. Each applicant must sign the bottom of the volunteer profile form agreeing to follow our church policies with respect to working with children or youth. Youth volunteers must have their parent or guardian co-sign the profile form as their witness.
10. Child Abuse History Clearance, Criminal Record Check, and FBI Criminal Check will be done on all new staff and volunteers and repeated every three years on current staff and active volunteers.

II. Supervision Guidelines for Those Working with Children and Youth

1. At least two adults must be present for youth class, youth group meeting, or other church activity involving youth. The second adult in a youth class may be a parent monitor (as defined in section 1 #3 above). It is also required that two adults be in charge of children's class, nursery, or other church activity involving children, or when this is not possible, it is permissible to have at least one adult (someone 21 or older) and a youth (someone at least 12) in charge.
2. In preschool rooms (infant nursery through kindergarten), one worker must be female. When this is not possible, an approved adult will check the room periodically. The program coordinator will make regular visits to the classrooms to insure that classrooms are properly supervised.
3. When childcare is required for a church sponsored event that is not defined as children's ministry (for example: Ladies Group meeting or an adult Sunday School Class activity) and church facilities are used, the above guidelines (Section 1 #1 & #2) for supervision must be followed. The adult or adults involved must have gone through the screening process and must insure that child protection policies relevant to the situation are followed.
4. Children are never to be dropped off in a classroom without the teacher and helper present. Generally, supervision will be provided 10 minutes before a class or program begins. Both the teacher and the helper should stay in the classroom after class until all the children have been dismissed to their parents.
5. During Sunday School and Wednesday night programs, children up to and including grade 4 must be signed in by a parent or authorized adult at the Children's Welcome Center or Nursery before they are taken or dropped off in their classroom. Identification procedures must be followed and children should only be released to a properly identified and preauthorized adult. Children in grades 5 and 6 may check themselves in at the Welcome Desk.

6. The church baby and toddler nurseries shall use an identification procedure during worship services. Children should only be released to a properly identified and preauthorized adult.
7. Diaper changing should always take place in such a way that another nursery worker can easily see the child that is being changed. Only female workers may change diapers.
8. Bathroom Policy for Children
We strongly encourage parents to take their children to the bathroom prior to each class.

Volunteers must follow these guidelines

- a) Avoid being alone with a child in the bathroom.
 - b) Never go into a bathroom stall with a child and shut the door.
 - c) Only females should escort boys or girls of preschool age.
 - d) A teacher staying in the room should stay with a group of children (two or more). If most children need to use the restroom, it may be better to go with the whole class.
 - e) Bathroom doors must be open at all times during any children's activity. (for example: Sunday School, Wednesday night programs, VBS)
 - f) If help is needed, the teacher or assistant should contact the Children's Welcome Center for help.
- A. For Preschoolers, Kindergarten, and Special Needs Children
A female volunteer should escort a group of children to the ladies bathroom. It should be the aim to always go as a group. Avoid taking a child to the bathroom alone. In an emergency, take one child to the nursery rest room where other workers are available or contact a Welcome Center assistant for additional help.
- B. For Children Grade 1 to Grade 6 (in Children's Ministry)
The volunteer must always escort two or more children to the bathroom(s) and determine whether the bathroom(s) is/are occupied. The volunteer should then remain outside the bathroom door(s) and wait for the child/ren there, and then escort the children back to the classroom. If a volunteer needs help with this procedure, they should contact a Welcome Center assistant for help.

9. Only classrooms which have a window in the door should be used for children's or youth classes or activities.
10. A Sunday School supervisor shall be available in the west wing of the church during the Sunday School hour.
11. All adult chaperons and supervisors of children and youth events shall have gone through Antrim's child and youth protection workshop and completed all required background checks.
12. Any inappropriate conduct or relationship between an adult worker and a child or member of the youth group should be confronted immediately and investigated. Someone on the pastoral staff should be notified as well.

13. A children or youth worker must obtain parental permission when initiating a time to be alone with a child or youth. The worker should notify appropriate church leadership of such meeting in advance.
14. If a child or youth initiates a conversation alone with a children or youth worker, the worker should have another adult present for the meeting, or at least be within possible eyesight of other adults.
15. At no time should a worker have a one-on-one meeting with a child or youth behind closed doors. For your protection, keep the door at least partially open.
16. Special Events/Overnight Policies:

Off-campus activities must be pre-approved by the appropriate staff person. Written consent and medical release forms are required for each child participating in off campus activities. These forms are distributed through and must be returned to the Children’s Ministry Director or the Youth Director.

When an activity involves transporting, all drivers must have a valid driver’s license and current automobile insurance. The number of persons per vehicle should not exceed the number of seat belts. When a children or youth ministry worker is driving students home, he or she must never be alone with a student. (See Van Use Policy)

All trips and outings require a minimum of two approved adult leaders. The leaders will be responsible for and assigned a group of children for the duration of the event. Staffing ratio (children per leader) as listed below must be followed.

Preschool	-	4 – 5 children per adult
Grade School	-	6 – 8 children per adult
Youth	-	8 – 10 youth per adult

All adults attending the event must go through Antrim’s child & youth protection workshop and complete required background checks.

17. Proper Display of Affection (birth – 12th grade)

Touch is an essential part of nurturing. Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally appropriate. Be aware of and sensitive to differences in sexual development, cultural differences, family backgrounds, individual personalities, and special needs. The following guidelines are to be promoted for pure genuine and positive displays of God’s love.

Hugs: One-arm side hugs or hand-to-arm hugs are positive contact. Avoid initiating full contact, body-to-body hugs, or kisses.

Lap Sitting: Sitting on laps is appropriate for children 5 and younger. Discourage lap sitting with school-age children. Rather, encourage them to sit next to you.

Casual Touch: Gentle contact during activities may be on children’s heads, shoulders, arms, and hands. Physical discipline should never be used on children or students.

Back Rubs: Anyone working with our children or youth should refrain from giving back rubs.

18. Discipline Policy (birth – 12th grade)

All interaction regarding discipline needs to be done with careful consideration of a child's dignity and self-esteem. Gentleness, respect, and understanding must guide all actions and words. Discipline will be carried out through instruction, training, and correction. Physical punishment will not be used. For additional information, see the "Classroom Discipline Policy for Grades K through 6".

19. Special Considerations for Youth Ministry (grades 7 – 12)

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

III. Supervision guidelines for children while their parents or responsible persons are on church property

1. For the safety of the children, at no time shall they be left unattended in any area of the church (for example: the library, nursery, playground, FLC) while the parents or responsible persons are in another part of the church.
2. While the parents or responsible persons are on church property for any reason (for example: attending a class, in a meeting, serving in a ministry), they must arrange to have the child(ren) with them or in the care of another adult at all times.
3. Children shall not be allowed to roam around the church unsupervised during church events. (For example: Sunday School or Wednesday nights)

IV. Reporting Procedures for Suspicions of Abuse

Reasons to make a Report

Critical to the prevention of child abuse is the reporting of suspected abuse. We encourage you to follow the below outline procedures if you suspect abuse. Don't let fear of causing an embarrassing situation or of being a tattletale keep you from reporting. The welfare of the child or youth is at stake.

Legal Definition of Child Abuse

The following definition is taken from the Pennsylvania publication "Mandated Reporters – Help Prevent Child Abuse" (Pub 336-10/95)

Child abuse, according to the SPSL (PA Child Protective Services Act) includes: serious recent physical injury, which is non-accidental, mental injury, which is non-accidental; sexual abuse; or serious physical neglect of children under the age of 18 caused by the acts of omissions of a perpetrator. "Recent" is defined as an abusive act within two years from the date Childline is called. Sexual abuse has no time limit.

Child abuse also includes any recent act, failure to act, or a series of acts or failures to act by a perpetrator that creates an imminent risk of serious physical injury to or sexual abuse or exploitation of a child under 18 years of age.

General Definition of Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is any form of sexual contact or activity with a child or sexual exploitation in which a minor is being used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator. Child sexual abuse may be violent or non-violent, and includes behaviors that involve touching and non-touching aspects.

Types of abuse that involve touching include:

- Fondling of a child's breasts or genitals
- Oral, genital, or anal penetration
- Intercourse
- Attempted intercourse
- Forcible rape
- Incest

Types of sexual abuse that do not involve touching include:

- Verbal comments
- Pornographic videos
- Obscene phone calls
- Exhibitionism
- Allowing children to witness sexual activity

Symptoms of Sexual Abuse

Church workers and staff should be alert to the physical signs of abuse and molestation, as well as to behavioral and verbal signs that a victim may exhibit. Some of the common signs are summarized below. (Sloan 1983)

Physical signs may include:

- Lacerations and bruises
- Nightmares
- Irritation, pain, or injury to the genital area
- Difficulty with urination
- Discomfort when sitting
- Torn or bloody underclothing
- Venereal Disease

Behavioral signs may include:

- Anxiety when approaching church or nursery area
- Nervous or hostile behavior toward adults
- Sexual self-consciousness
- "Acting out" of sexual behavior
- Withdrawal from church activities and friends

Verbal signs may include the following statements:

I don't like (a particular church worker)
(A church worker) does things to me when we're alone
I don't like to be alone with (a church worker)
(A church worker) fooled around with me

Procedure for Making a Report

1. Inappropriate behavior (not necessarily abuse) should be reported to the person in charge of an event and the Children's Ministry or Youth Director. In any case, the Pastoral Staff and Church Board should be notified of inappropriate behavior committed by any person in the supervision of children or youth.
2. If a child or youth comes to you with complaints of abuse of any kind, be sure to take his or her word seriously. Don't deny the problem but stay calm and listen to the child/youth. Give emotional support, reminding the child/youth that he/she is not at fault and he/she was right in telling you about the problem. Do not promise the child/youth that you will not tell anyone.
3. In accordance with Section 6313 you are to immediately report any abuse or suspected abuse to Childline 1-800-932-0313 or www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis before contacting Antrim staff.
 - A) Suspected sexual, physical, or emotional abuse that you think occurred in the church should be reported to Childline 1-800-932-0313 and then to the Children's Ministry Director.
 - B) Suspected sexual, physical, or emotional abuse, or serious physical neglect that you think has occurred outside of the church should be reported to Childline 1-800-932-0313 and then to the Children's Ministry Director.
 - C) All allegations, suspicions, and other information are to be kept confidential and reported to Childline 1-800-932-0313 and the Children's Ministry Director.
 - D) All suspicions of child abuse will be taken seriously and will be investigated. Suspicions of abuse in the church will be investigated immediately by our staff and church board.

V. Responding to an Accusation of Abuse

Our policies are designed to help prevent child abuse in our church. Though they should go a long way toward that end, there may come a time when an accusation (founded or unfounded) may be made that abuse has occurred in the church. If this does occur, we need a plan to respond to the sexual abuse accusation. If an accusation is made by someone that a child or youth has been abused in the church, we will follow this guidelines:

1. Care and support of the victim and the victim's family will be given top priority.
2. The accused will not be confronted until the safety of the child or youth has been secured.
3. The accused will be treated with dignity and support, but will be immediately relieved of his/her duties, whether a paid employee or volunteer. Maintenance or suspension of a paid employee's income until the allegations are cleared or substantiated will be up to the Church Board.
4. All accusations will be taken seriously. We will not deny, minimize, or blame until further investigation has taken place.

5. The incident should be reported immediately to our church insurance company, attorney, and denominational officials. Their assistance should be requested and advice taken.
6. The proper civil authorities should be contacted, following the guidance of our insurance company and attorney.
7. All efforts in handling the situation should be well documented.
8. The privacy and confidentiality of all involved shall be carefully safeguarded.
9. One of the pastors of our church will handle all contact with the media.
10. One of the pastors will be responsible to convey news to the congregation.

Antrim Brethren in Christ Church reserves the right to change the above policy as needed for growth and for any immediate or extraordinary situations which may arise. This Policy will be reviewed at least once a year and reflect any needed changes. Any immediate or extraordinary situations requiring resolution will be reviewed at the next weekly staff meeting.