

Children and Youth Protection Policy

"All your children will be taught by the Lord, and great will be your children's peace." Is. 54:13

At Good Shepherd our desire is that every participating child and youth experiences the true Father-heart of God through our workers. We recognize that for many children and youth this may be their only opportunity to experience God's love and mercy and instruction in a tangible way. While this policy is intended to prevent hurt and abuse to the children and youth God sends us, above all else we must not lose site of our mission to minister the very Father-heart of God to these children and youth in all that we do.

Statement Regarding Abuse:

We recognize the seriousness and sinfulness of any kind of abuse, whether sexual, physical or emotional. Children and youth are much more vulnerable to abuse than adults are. Abuse violates the very image of God. Abuse causes serious damage to the mind, body, and spirit of the one abused. Abuse also causes harm to the mind and soul of the abuser.

We seek to make the Good Shepherd environment a safe place for all who worship and fellowship with us, especially for children and youth. We attempt to prevent abuse by adopting safeguards and will address allegations of abuse seriously. Where abuse does occur, we will seek and support healing measures for the abused and the abuser.

Our desire is to follow the way of Jesus who addressed evil clearly with the ultimate goal of bringing wholeness and healing to all.

The Scope of the Protection Policy

Child abuse is defined as serious physical or mental injury which is not explained by the available medical history as being accidental (sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or serious physical neglect of a child under 18 years of age), if the injury, abuse, or neglect has been caused by the acts or omissions of the child's parents or by a person responsible for the child's welfare, or any individual residing in the same home as the child, or a paramour of the child's parent.

We want to make sure that all children and youth workers at Good Shepherd, whether volunteer or staff, are educated as to the protection of all children and youth

under the age of 18 while participating in a Good Shepherd sponsored program for children or youth.

Parents are always welcome to accompany their children in any Good Shepherd sponsored activity.

Prevention and education

To protect the children and youth under our care, the following guidelines have been established for all adults over 18 years of age who desire to work with children and youth at Good Shepherd.

1. They are required to be a member of Good Shepherd and to have attended the church regularly in the six-month period immediately prior to serving in any children's or youth ministry.
2. They must complete and sign a Service Application Form, including submitting names of persons who may be asked to provide a personal reference. A personal interview may also be requested.
3. They must be trained in the Good Shepherd Children and Youth Protection Policies. Whenever the Child Protection Policy is updated copies will be made available to all participants.
4. They must complete and sign the *Pennsylvania Request for Criminal Record Check* and the *Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance*. These two documents must be on file with the Children's or Youth Pastor prior to ministering with children or youth.
5. They may serve only after receiving a letter of approval from the Children's or Youth Pastor.
6. Any person with a documented history of abuse of children, youth, or adults will not be approved to work with children or youth.

Youth under the age of 18 years

1. Youth under the age of 18 years will not be required to complete background screening checks.
2. A separate application process will be used for youth involved in children's ministries.
3. Youth under the age of 18 will only be permitted to be involved in children's ministries under the direct supervision of a person who has been approved by the Children's or Youth Pastor.

Pre-teens assisting in the nursery

1. Pre-teens (children ages 8-13) will not be required to complete background screening checks.
2. A separate application process will be used for pre-teens assisting in the nursery.
3. Pre-teens will only be permitted to be involved in the nursery under the direct supervision of a person who has been approved by the Children's Pastor.

Non-members

Good Shepherd may contract with persons who are not members for children's and/or youth ministries under the following conditions. Similar conditions may also apply to persons transferring from another church.

1. They will provide a letter of recommendation from the Senior Pastor, Children's Pastor or Youth Pastor (or someone in an equivalent position) of the church where the person is a member.
2. They will complete and sign a Service Application Form (regular or special event), including submitting names of persons who may be asked to provide a personal reference. A personal interview may also be requested.
3. They will receive a copy of the Good Shepherd Children and Youth Protection Policies.
4. They must complete and sign the *Pennsylvania Request for Criminal Record Check* and the *Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance* or provide copies of previously completed forms. These two documents must be on file with the Children's or Youth Pastor prior to ministering with children or youth.
5. They may serve only after receiving a letter of approval from the Children's or Youth Pastor.
6. Any person with a history of abuse of children, youth, or adults will not be approved to work with children or youth.

General Guidelines

1. **Parents always welcome.** Parents and guardians are always welcome to accompany their children during Good Shepherd sponsored ministry times as long as they follow the guidelines outlined in the Children-Youth Protection Policy.
2. **Two-Worker Rule.** Two approved workers (two adults or one adult and one teenager) should be present during Good Shepherd sponsored ministry times with children and youth. This includes Kids Own Worship, Nursery, and Youth Activities. NOTE: the multipurpose room is considered one room provided the double doors in the dividing wall are open.
3. **Restroom Coverage.** The Children's Pastor will implement a plan during Kids Own Worship for all children who need to use the restroom. Parents will be called to accompany preschool children to the restroom or to change diapers of nursery children.
4. **Check-in/ Check-out System.** The Children's Pastor will develop a system for all children to be checked in and out of all children's ministry activities.
5. **Parental Permission.** Before an adult takes a child off the premises alone, written parental consent should be obtained. Departmental leaders are to be notified in advance for all Good Shepherd sponsored events.
6. **Overnight Rule.** The Children's Pastor or Youth Pastor must approve all adult chaperones (supervisors, sponsors, parents, and helpers) before they are permitted to accompany children and youth on an overnight activity sponsored by Good Shepherd.
7. **Expressions of Affection.** Adults must use caution when expressing or allowing expression of affection toward children and youth.
 - ✗ Respect a child or youth's refusal of affection.
 - ✗ Be careful not to make a child or youth feel uncomfortable in your expression of affection toward him or her.
 - ✗ Be aware of where you place your hands (a pat on the bottom or bear hug could be misinterpreted by a child or an observer).
 - ✗ Any touch on private areas (those areas covered by a bathing suit) is inappropriate. Side hugs are recommended.
 - ✗ True expressions of affection contribute to a warm, healthy relationship. Don't stop loving and touching children. Simply place reasonable limits on physical interaction.

Ministry Teams and Home Groups

Child Care provided during Ministry Team meetings and Home Groups is the sole responsibility of the parents whether the meetings are in a home or in the Good Shepherd Center.

Apprenticing Children and Youth

Apprenticing children and adolescents for ministry at Good Shepherd involves a shepherding role between the child or adolescent being apprenticed and an adult or older adolescent. An apprenticing relationship may include one-to-one activities due to the coaching/counseling role that is part of apprenticing. Therefore, the two-person rule as described in the Child Protection Policy does not apply to an approved apprenticing relationship as outlined below. The following guidelines are to ensure a safe environment for apprenticing those under 18 years of age. This includes all apprenticing relationships between an adult (18 years of age and older) and an adolescent or child, or an apprenticing relationship between an adolescent (under 18 years of age) who is four years older than the child or adolescent he or she is apprenticing.

- 1. Apprenticing.** All apprenticing of children and adolescents must be done by a person of the same sex who is an approved Good Shepherd childcare worker. Such apprenticing may only be done with the knowledge and approval of the Senior Pastor or his designee. Any concerns as to a child or adolescent's safety in an apprenticing relationship should be brought to the immediate attention of the Senior Pastor.
- 2. Parental Consent.** Signed parental consent by at least one parent must be obtained prior to initiating any apprenticing relationship with a child or adolescent (Consent for Apprenticing form). This is generally done in a meeting with both the child and his or her parent(s) along with the person doing the apprenticing. The consent is valid for one year. The consent form must contain the goals of the apprenticing relationship. Parent(s) are invited to participate in identifying these goals. Parent(s) must also indicate on the form whether one-to-one activities are permitted in the apprenticing relationship.
- 3. Parental Permission.** In addition to the above, an apprentice of a child or adolescent must always obtain verbal parental permission prior to spending any one-to-one time with the child or adolescent. Parents are to be informed of the beginning and ending time of the activity, the type of activity, and the location of the activity.

Baptism of children and youth

Baptism is a highlight for all Christians. In the case of a child or youth who requests baptism but whose parent(s) do not attend Good Shepherd:

- 1.** Written parental permission must be obtained from the parent of a child under 14 years of age prior to being baptized at Good Shepherd.
- 2.** Anyone over 14 years of age may be baptized without written parental consent as long as the baptism occurs at a public baptismal service. While an adolescent seeking baptism will be encouraged to inform his or her parent(s), this is not a requirement for baptism at Good Shepherd.

Guidelines for Discipline of Children

- 1. Spanking or applying physical pain** is considered inappropriate.
- 2. Be careful in using physical restraint.** Generally, physical restraint of a child or youth should be avoided unless they are at risk of harming themselves or others (examples: darting into a busy street, raising a fist to strike another child or adult). When possible an adult witness should be present when physically restraining a child.
- 3. Appropriate forms of discipline** include verbal commands, time-out, sending a child to his/her parent/guardian, requesting a parent/guardian be present with the child in the class, or not accepting the child in class in cases of extremely disruptive behavior.
- 4. Get advice from parents** of children if you are having difficulty with poor behavior.

Guidelines for reporting abuse

- 1.** All children and youth workers are required to report any suspected abuse to an immediate supervisor or the Senior Pastor.
- 2.** The Senior Pastor or his designee will document the report on the "Report Form for Suspected Instances of Sexual/Physical Abuse."
- 3.** The worker or a supervisor taking a report is asked not to discuss the incident with anyone else other than the Senior Pastor or his designee responsible to review abuse allegations.
- 4.** The Senior Pastor or his designee will follow up on the report by interviewing the victim, reporting to Child Protective Service as deemed necessary, and notifying the parent of the victim immediately (except where such an action may endanger the child's welfare, especially in cases where the alleged perpetrator is a parent).

5. If the alleged perpetrator is a volunteer or paid staff of Good Shepherd, the Senior Pastor, in consultation with the Elder Team, will determine any disciplinary actions to be taken.
6. The Senior Pastor may seek legal counsel regarding compliance with state reporting laws and liability issues for the church.

7. The Senior Pastor, in consultation with the Elder Team, will arrange for ministry to the victim, ministry to the offender, ministry to the congregation, and ministry to the families of the victim and offender when deemed necessary.
8. Records related to the suspected abuse will be kept on permanent file.

NOTE: This policy will be reviewed and updated yearly by a person or persons designated by the Senior Pastor.

By my signature I attest that I have read and understand the "Children and Youth Protection Policy" and agree to abide by the guidelines set forth in this policy.

| | | |
|--|------------------------------|------|
| Printed Name | Signature | Date |
| If you are under 18 years of age, please print your name and have a parent or guardian sign below. | | |
| Name of minor | Signature of minor | Date |
| Parent or guardian name | Parent or guardian signature | Date |

Child Abuse Definitions

Child Abuse – is defined as serious physical or mental injury which is not explained by the available medical history as being accidental, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or serious physical neglect of a child under 18 years of age if the injury, abuse or neglect has been caused by the acts or omissions of the child’s parents or by a person responsible for the child’s welfare, or any individual residing in the same home as the child, or an intimate friend of the child’s parent.

Perpetrator – the person who is suspected of committing the abuse and can be the child’s parent, a person responsible for the welfare of the child such as a baby-sitter or day care staff person, an individual residing in the same home with the child, or a person having an intimate relationship with the child’s parents.

Serious Bodily Injury – injury that creates substantial risk of death or which causes serious permanent disfigurement or protracted loss of impairment of the function of a body member or organ.

Serious Physical Injury – an injury caused by the acts or omissions of a perpetrator that does one of the following:

- ◆ causes the child severe pain
- ◆ significantly impairs the child’s physical functioning, either temporarily or permanently
- ◆ is accompanied by physical evidence of a continuous pattern of separate, unexplained injuries to the child

Serious Mental Injury – a psychological condition as diagnosed by a physician or licensed psychologist caused by the acts or omissions (including the refusal of appropriate treatment) of the perpetrator which does one of the following: renders the child chronically and severely anxious, agitated, depressed, socially withdrawn, psychotic, or in reasonable fear that his life or safety is threatened; seriously interferes

with the child’s ability to accomplish age appropriate developmental and social tasks.

Serious Physical Neglect – a physical condition caused by the acts or omissions of a perpetrator which endangers the child’s life or development or impairs his functioning and is the result of one of the following: prolonged or repeated lack of supervision; failure to provide essentials of life, including adequate medical care.

Sexual Abuse – any of the following when committed on a child by a perpetrator:

- ◆ **Statutory Sexual Assault:** Sexual intercourse with a child who is less than 14 years of age by a person 18 years of age or older or when the perpetrator is more than four years older than the victim.
- ◆ **Involuntary or Voluntary Deviate Sexual Intercourse:** Intercourse by mouth or rectum or with an animal.
- ◆ **Sexual Assault:** Sexual involvement, including the touching or exposing of the sexual or other intimate parts of a person, for the purpose of arousing or gratifying sexual desire in either the perpetrator or subject child.
- ◆ **Incest:** Sexual intercourse with an ancestor or descendant-by blood or adoption brother or sister of the whole or half blood, or an uncle, aunt, nephew, or niece of the whole blood.
- ◆ **Promoting Prostitution:** Inducing or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution.
- ◆ **Rape:** Sexual intercourse by force or compulsion.
- ◆ **Pornography:** Includes one of the following:
 - ◆ The obscene photographing, filming, or depiction of children for commercial purposes.
 - ◆ The obscene filming or photographing of children or showing of obscene films or photographs to arouse or gratify sexual desire in the perpetrator, subject child or viewing audience.