

Child Protection Policy Summary

East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church

See complete policy for more details.

1. The Safe Church Committee is composed of a chairperson, a pastor, the Nurture Commission chair, children's primary Sunday School superintendent, one member of the Church Board, and the church office administrator as staff role. This committee is responsible to implement and review this policy. They will oversee clearances and yearly training.
2. General guidelines
 - Any form of child abuse is prohibited.
 - Two (2) approved adults will be present at church sponsored children/youth activities. When this is not possible, all activities will be conducted in a public place and in plain view (doors open, windows clear).
 - Everyone is expected to interact in healthy ways with all children and youth in our church, and respect a child/youth's refusal of affection.
 - Parents are responsible for diapering their children.
3. Adults who work with children/youth under 18 years of age must first be approved as per the guidelines noted in #4 below. This includes, but is not limited to: pastors, all paid ECSMC staff, Sunday School teachers, MYF & Jr. Youth leaders & teachers, mentors, nursery workers, children's church leaders, and ushers. Youth nursery workers are exempt from needing to be approved adults as long as they are working with an approved adult.
4. Approved adults must meet the following guidelines:
 - a. Be at least 20 years old,
 - b. Attend ECSMC for a minimum of six months,
 - c. Sign and comply with our Safe Church Covenant,
 - d. Attend a congregation-authorized training session every five years.
 - e. Obtain the following certifications:
 - I. Child Abuse History Certification Form (CY-113) (fee waived for volunteers)
 - II. Pennsylvania State Police Request for Criminal Record Check Form (SP4-164) (fee waived for volunteers)
 - III. FBI Fingerprint Record Checks: Employees must obtain fingerprint record regardless of duration of residence in PA. Volunteers who have not lived in Pennsylvania for 10 years are also required to get the FBI fingerprint record check if they haven't previously done so for other volunteer service or employment. Currently, FBI Fingerprint Record Check information may be obtained via IDEMIA; see <https://www.identogo.com/> to locate a fingerprint processing center near East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church.

- IV. Complete a statement to swear or affirm that they are not disqualified from service working with children {pursuant to§6344(C)}, or have “not been convicted of an offense similar in nature to those crimes listed in subsection (C) under the laws or former laws” of any other jurisdiction. (See Appendix J: Disclosure Statement for Volunteers) This Statement should be completed every 5 years as part of renewal.

Note: All employee certifications, including FBI fingerprint checks, must be obtained every 5 years. Volunteers are also required to have certifications every 5 years. Any volunteer not a resident for the past 10 years need not repeat the FBI fingerprint record check; this only needs to be done once.

5. Children and youth must have a completed and signed general permission and medical release form on file to participate in activities. These forms are updated yearly.
6. An additional overnight-permission form must be filled out for children/youth engaged in overnight activities. Overnight activities involving children/youth will be chaperoned by at least two approved adults.
7. When children/youth are transported for church activities, they will be transported in groups with at least one approved adult in each vehicle. Drivers must be 21 years of age or older.
8. Mentoring relationships are an exception to the policy of needing two approved adults present for all activities with youth. This additional risk is addressed by having mentors and amigos inform parents/guardians of their activities. All mentoring with children or youth should always occur in a public place, or in the homes of mentors and/or youth. Mentors are also expected to follow all other guidelines for approved adults.
9. With regard to social media, all adults will copy parents/guardians on all electronic communications with a child, keep parents/guardians apprised of ongoing texting or phone conversations, and keep communication traceable. Photos of children or youth will not be shared on personal social media platforms without permission from a parent/guardian.
10. Anyone who witnesses suspected child abuse must report it immediately through the [Child Welfare Portal](#) as the preferred reporting route, or alternatively call ChildLine (1-800) 932-0313) and file a paper CY-47 form (Appendix L). If a pastor is contacted first about suspected child abuse, the pastor should ensure a report is made through the [Child Welfare Portal](#). Minors are not mandated reporters. Detailed questioning of a child or suspected offender should be conducted by legal authorities, not by church workers.
11. Training in safe church procedures will be provided every year. All staff and volunteers must attend a training at the beginning of their service and every five years after that. During Sunday School, children and youth will be taught healthy physical, emotional and sexual boundaries using appropriate curriculum.
12. Care for survivors: Given the prevalence of sexual abuse, our congregation assumes there are survivors of abuse in the congregation and commits to:
 - a. Caring for them, listening to their concerns and tending to their needs.
 - b. Allowing their voices to be heard in sensitive and confidential ways.
 - c. Engaging the services of professional counselors and facilitators, as needed.

13. Relating to known sexual offenders: When the congregation becomes aware that a sexual offender is currently, or would like to attend worship services at ECSMC, they will be welcome to attend services under these conditions: if they have fulfilled their sentences, if they are willing to meet with their victims if the victims request this, if they abide by the policy provided in Appendix F, and if the congregation is able to provide the needed supervision and accountability.

However, if the offender's victim(s) and/or their family members are present in the congregation, it may be necessary to provide other worship and community opportunities for the offender, in order to avoid additional trauma to the victim(s), and allow healing to occur.

14. Details about the congregation's response plan to suspected child abuse, and expectations for known sexual offenders are in the complete policy.

updated May 2024