

Child Protection Policy



Ephrata Community Church
70 Clay School Road, Ephrata, PA 17522

As of December 31, 2014, volunteers serving in any regularly scheduled program or activity involving children under the age of 18 are considered **mandatory reporters**.

- Mandatory reporting means that a volunteer must directly report “out” when child abuse is suspected. In the past, a volunteer could simply report “up,” meaning they could report to their supervisor and their legal obligation would be fulfilled. Under the new law, all volunteers are required to report “out,” directly to the child abuse hotline.
- All mandatory reporters could be criminally liable and considered a “perpetrator” if they fail to report “out.”

The basis for making a report of abuse

- See Appendix I for definitions.
- “Reasonable cause to suspect...” means that someone has more than a hunch but less than “certainty.” If a mandatory reporter has a “reasonable cause to suspect...” they are not to investigate further to confirm any actions, but simply to report “out.”
- The law does require that suspected abuse be reported even when the mandatory reporter does not know the alleged abuser(s).

Mandatory reporters (15 categories in the law)

- Mandatory reporters are defined as anyone responsible for the care of children at any regularly scheduled program or activity.
 - At Ephrata Community Church this includes:
 - All youth ministry staff and volunteers who have been given responsibility for the care of students: small group leaders, youth retreat participants, and event chaperones, etc. It would not necessarily include a parent providing a snack, if the parent is not given responsibility for the students.
 - All children’s ministry staff and volunteers who have been given responsibility for the care of children including Kid’s Ministry teachers, helpers, nursery volunteers, Kid’s Camp staff and volunteers, and any volunteers chaperoning an event.
 - All group leaders.
 - All employees.

- To report suspicions of abuse and/or neglect of children, call the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-932-0313.
 - In case of an emergency dial 911 or call your local police and then contact the Child Abuse Hotline .
- If a volunteer is arrested for or convicted of an offense that would constitute grounds for denying participation in a program, activity or service, or is named as a perpetrator in a founded or indicated report, the volunteer must provide the administrator or their designee with written notice not later than 72 hours after the arrest, conviction or notification that the person has been listed as a perpetrator in the statewide database.
 - A volunteer who willfully fails to disclose information as required above commits a misdemeanor of the third degree and shall be subject to discipline up to and including termination or denial of a volunteer position.

Volunteer screening for Ephrata Community Church

- The law requires that all staff and volunteers given responsibility for children must have a child abuse/criminal background check, and potential federal check every 60 months.
- As of January 1, 2015, all new ECC volunteers as indicated above will need to submit current clearances or complete the appropriate clearance packet, which may include a PA Residency Check, a Criminal History Check, and a Child Abuse History Clearance, before beginning any volunteer service with minors. A fingerprint based federal criminal history (FBI) is required if the volunteer has lived outside the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in the last 10 years. Ephrata Community Church administrative staff will administrate criminal and residency checks. Child Abuse History Clearances must be applied for online or by mail by the individual. Ephrata Community Church will cover the costs of background checks.
- Individuals who reside in another state or country may serve as a volunteer for no more than 30 days if they are able to affirm in writing that they are in compliance with the background checks and clearances required by their home country.
- Individuals who reside in another state or country who are volunteering for more than 30 days must be apply for clearances outlined in bullet two above.
- All new staff must immediately complete the Criminal History Check, the Child Abuse History Clearance, and an FBI Clearance. Employees must also sign the Provisional Employee Declaration form and will not be allowed to work with minors without a full-time employee present until all clearances have been submitted to Ephrata Community Church.
- Clearances must be completed before beginning any volunteer service with minors.
- National and international mission team leaders will be required to have background checks complete before any mission trip that will include minors.
- Our Child Abuse Reporting Procedures will be posted in all children’s classrooms, nurseries, and information or office areas and will include the PA Child Line 1-800 number and reporting procedures.

Child protection at Ephrata Community Church

Appendix I

Definition of child abuse:

The term “child abuse” shall mean intentionally, knowingly or recklessly doing any of the following:

1. Causing bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.
2. Fabricating, feigning or intentionally exaggerating or inducing a medical symptom or disease with results in a potentially harmful medical evaluation or treatment to the child through any recent act.
3. Causing or substantially contributing to serious mental injury to a child through any act or failure to act or a series of acts or failures to act.
4. Causing sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any act or failure to act.
5. Creating a reasonable likelihood of bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.
6. Creating a likelihood of sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any recent act or failure to act.
7. Causing serious physical neglect of a child
8. Engaging in any of the following acts.
 - a. Kicking, biting, throwing, burning, stabbing or cutting a child in a manner that endangers the child.
 - b. Unreasonably restraining or confining a child, based on the method, location or the duration of the restraint or confinement.
 - c. Forcefully shaking a child under one year of age.
 - d. Forcefully slapping or otherwise striking a child under one year of age.
 - e. Interfering with the breathing of a child.
 - f. Causing a child to be present at a location while a violation of 18 Pa. C.S. 7508.2 is occurring
 - g. (this refers to a “meth lab”)
 - h. Leaving a child unsupervised with an individual, other than the child’s parent, who the actor knows or reasonably should have known:
 - i. Is required to register as a Tier II or III sexual offender.
 - ii. Has been determined to be a sexually violent predator.
 - iii. Has been determined to be a sexually violent delinquent child.
9. Causing the death of a child through any act or failure to act.

Ephrata Community Church Child Abuse Reporting Procedures

Mandatory Reporters are any staff and any adult volunteer who has direct contact with a child or is responsible for the welfare of a child.

Mandatory reporters are required to make a report of suspected child abuse if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is the victim of abuse as defined by the law.

Any mandatory reporter who willfully fails to do so may be subject to criminal prosecution in accordance with Pennsylvania law.

Any person who, in good faith, makes a report of suspected child abuse will be free from discrimination, retaliation and civil or criminal liability related to this action.

Definitions

Child Abuse

1) Any act (or failure to act) which causes (or creates imminent risk of) intentional serious physical injury to a child under 18 years of age.

2) Any act (or failure to act) which causes (or creates imminent risk of) intentional serious mental injury or sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a child under 18 years of age.

Serious Mental Injury-

Renders a child chronically anxious, agitated, depressed, psychotic. Seriously interferes with child's ability to accomplish age appropriate developmental and social tasks. There is Reasonable fear for child's life and safety.

Serious Physical Injury-

Severe pain that significantly impairs a child's physical functioning, either temporarily or permanently.

Sexual Abuse or Exploitation-

The use, persuasion, enticement, or coercion of a child to engage in any sexual explicit conduct including filming and photographing.

Reporting Procedures

Step 1:

Immediately make an oral report of suspected child abuse via the statewide toll-free telephone number (Child Line 1-800-932-0313). [It is recommended that one of the pastors assist with the report.]

Step 2:

Immediately after making the report, contact your department or team leader.

Step 3:

The department or team leader is required to immediately notify the overseeing pastor.

Step 4:

If the overseeing pastor reasonably suspects that the conduct being reported rises to the level where law enforcement needs to do notified he or she will immediately do so.