



MCC CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Mechanicsburg Community Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children of MCC from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior.

Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” or “minors” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term “worker” includes both paid and volunteer persons who work with children.

Selection of Workers

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

a) Six Month Rule

No volunteer will be considered for any position involving contact with minors until she/he has been involved with MCC for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

b) Written Application

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by MCC.

c) Personal Interview

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

d) Reference Checks

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicant’s references will be checked.

e) PA Criminal Record Check

A PA State Criminal Record Check is required for all volunteers/staff over 18 years of age.

f) A Child Abuse History Clearance

A Child Abuse History Clearance is required for all volunteers/staff over 18 years of age.

g) PA Residency Affidavit

A PA Residency Affidavit is required to state the length of your residency in Pennsylvania for all volunteers/staff over age of 18 years of age.

h) FBI Fingerprinting (If Applicable)

An FBI Fingerprinting is only necessary if you have NOT lived in Pennsylvania for the last 10 consecutive years and are over 18 years of age.

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Pastor and Children's Ministry Pastor case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, indecency and any conduct contrary to anything against minors will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Someone with a history of illegal substances will be considered on a case by case basis. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

Supervision

It is our practice that a minimum of two workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. We encourage our students to be in ministry and allow those in Middle and High School to be ministering in Children's classes. Each class will be staffed with a minimum of two adults.

Open Door Policy

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Classroom windows should always remain uncovered to allow for full view of the classrooms. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

Check-in/Check-out Procedure

For children below sixth grade, a security check-in/check-out procedure will be followed. The child will be checked in by a parent or guardian, who will receive a "pick up tag" for the child. The parent or guardian must present the "pick up tag" in order to sign out the child from our care. Even if we know the parents personally, it is our policy to not let parents pick up their children without a "pick up tag." This ensures that we are providing the safest possible environment for our kids and that visitors will know we take security seriously.

Sick Child Policy

It is in our best interest to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at MCC. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours
- Green or yellow runny nose

- Eye or skin infections
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

Medications Policy

It is the policy of MCC to not administer either prescription or nonprescription medications to the children under our care at our facility. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy. Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with the supervising pastor to develop a plan of action.

Discipline Policy

It is the policy of MCC to not administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with the supervising pastor if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues. Physical force may only be used to stop a behavior that may cause immediate harm to the individual or to a child, youth or others.

Restroom & Diaper Changing Guidelines

Workers should escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom, but discourage children from using the bathroom unless it is an emergency. They should always go in a group, trying to never take a child to the bathroom alone. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door, ask the coordinator to come into the bathroom with them to supervise, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child.

For the protection of all, workers should *never* be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

Diaper changing should always take place in such a way that another worker can easily see the child that is being changed. Only female workers may change diapers or assist children with buttoning up their pants. Ideally, workers do not have to change any diapers.

Appropriate Touch Guidelines

Touch is an essential part of nurturing. Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally appropriate. 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 body-to-body hugs.

- Lap Sitting - Sitting on laps can be appropriate for children 5 and younger in public areas. Encourage children to sit next to you if older than 5 years.
- Casual Touch - Gentle contact during activities may be on children's heads, shoulders, arms and hands. Physical discipline should never be used.
- Back Rubs - Anyone working with children should refrain from giving back rubs.

Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. a. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
 - b. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
2. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

Training

MCC will provide training on this child protection policy to all new childcare workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All workers are strongly encouraged to attend these training events.

Mandated Reporter

According to law, anyone who works directly with children and youth (newborn- 18 yrs old), whether they are a volunteer or paid staff is a mandated reporter. By law, mandated reporters are no longer allowed to report "up", but are required to first report "out" to ChildLine Hotline. If you suspect child abuse, it must be reported immediately after it happens to **PA ChildLine: 1-800-932-0313**

- You may contact a lawyer first if you have questions, but you cannot delay in notifying PA Childline if you suspect any form of child abuse.
- Your call will be kept confidential and your identity will be protected.
- Give as much information that you can about the incident and the child.
- After calling, please inform the appropriate Pastor that you have made a call to ChildLine.
- The Pastor is able to help you to provide a written report for the incident which must be submitted within 48 hours to ChildLine.

What is "Child Abuse" according to PA Law?

- Intentionally, knowingly or recklessly doing any of the following:
- Causing bodily injury to a child through any "recent"(within two years) act or failure to act.

- Fabricating, feigning or intentionally exaggerating or inducing a medical symptom or disease which results in a potentially harmful medical evaluation or treatment to the child through any recent act.
- Causing or substantially contributing to serious mental injury to a child through any act or failure to act or a series of such acts or failures to act.
- Causing sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any act or failure to act.
- Creating a reasonable likelihood of bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- Creating a likelihood of sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- Causing serious physical neglect of a child.
- More information can be found at www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu

Individual Contact Outside of Church

We know (and are excited when) ministry relationships (mentoring) happen outside of the church setting. We want to protect minors from any possible inappropriate behavior as well as protect workers against any possible allegations of inappropriate behavior. When this happens, we caution the leaders to ensure that the following procedures are in place.

- Always contact the following three people when meeting with a minor
 - your church leader (i.e. pastor, or director)
 - someone in your immediate family (i.e. spouse)
 - the minor's parents (you must have **written** approval)
- All meetings (ie. lunch appointments) should be in public places.
- At no time should anyone working with children pursue a dating relationship with that student. You should always be cautious of students with "crushes".
- At no time should you be behind closed doors or in a closed off area with a student. For your protection, keep doors at least partially open.
- At no time should there be inappropriate communication (online or other) with a student.
- Driving - you should never be alone with a student in a car.

Ethical Guidelines for Leaders and Outside Ministry Events

There are situations beyond our control where we may encounter disagreement from our Child Protection Policy (CPP) and will need to be accommodating to the organization hosting our ministry. We will attempt to discern each situation outside of our control and attempt to adhere to the CPP in the best, logical, method provided.