



PRINCE of PEACE

lutheran church

Child Protection Policies

*We might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from him
a safe journey for ourselves, our children...*

Ezra 8:21

*Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock,
in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God,
which he obtained with his own blood.*

Acts 20:28

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Child Protection Policy
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Prince of Peace Lutheran Church – Carrollton, Texas

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Purpose

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church (POPLC) is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children and their families to further their relationship with God. It is the responsibility of every worker to act in the best interest of all children in every program. In the event you have cause to believe a child's physical, mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect, you must report it immediately to a Prince of Peace staff member. Our church employees are mandated reporters to the State of Texas in regard to abuse of children.

Definitions

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

“Youth worker” includes both paid and volunteer persons, who are under the age of 18, who work with children.

“Supervision” are adults who are directly responsible for the well-being of children in their care.

Child abuse includes the following: (1). The actual infliction, the threat to inflict or create, or the permitting of another to inflict or threaten to inflict or create a physical or mental injury upon a child, by other than accidental means, or the creation of a substantial risk of death, disfigurement, or impairment of bodily or mental function. And (2). The refusal or any willful omission to provide care necessary to the health of a child, or the abandonment of a child, in one's care.

Child sexual abuse is defined as and includes: (1). The commission or permitting of any act of sexual exploitation or any sexual act upon a child, in any organized ministry, whether at the church or away from the church, if the event is an official church event, conducted on behalf of the church with all prior approvals. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child. (2). Child sexual abuse can be violent or non-violent. Child sexual abuse can involve fondling or other forms of unacceptable physical touching or behavior. Other forms of abuse can include, but are not limited to, verbal comments, any exposure to pornographic materials, inappropriate internet activity, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, or allowing children to witness sexual activity.

General Policies & Procedures

- No child will ever be left unsupervised.
- Supervision of children requires two workers; this is for the protection of the children as well as the worker.
- All workers 18 and above are background checked every 2 years.
- No form of physical discipline is acceptable. Should you require assistance with a child exhibiting unacceptable behavior, contact another worker, the Kid's Connect Coordinator, Youth Connect Coordinator, or the Connect Pastor.

- Verbal interactions with children should be positive and uplifting. Workers should not speak to children in a way that is or could be construed as harsh, threatening, intimidating, derogatory, demeaning or humiliating. In addition, workers are expected to refrain from using inappropriate language with the children and other workers.
- If a child proves to be disruptive in behavior, then with the advisement of the Kid's Connect Coordinator, Youth Connect Coordinator, or the Connect Pastor a parent/guardian may be asked to come in to help supervise the child. The parent/guardian may be asked to remove the child for the remainder of the event.
- All activities, games, and devotions should be age-appropriate and will not be degrading, dangerous, violent, sexual, or contain bathroom humor.
- We wish to promote an environment where appropriate affection is provided for the purpose of nurturing children. To avoid even the appearance of inappropriate behavior, all who serve will follow these guidelines:
 - Touching that occurs on the child's shoulders, arms, hands, upper back or head.
 - Holding and comforting a child who is need of assistance.
 - Sideway hugs to greet or comfort school age children or older.
 - Fist-bumps or high fives.
 - Gently and calmly holding the shoulder when redirecting a child's behavior.

Worker Requirements

We believe God has called every individual to serve the church in some fashion, but we do acknowledge there needs to be requirements for individuals wishing to serve as a worker with children. This is to ensure adequate care for the children of POPLC.

To serve as a worker with children the individual must:

- Be an active believer in Jesus Christ and a member of POPLC.
 - In some cases (i.e. VBS) this policy can be waived if the worker is not teaching theology or the Bible. But the worker must agree to adhere to the doctrines of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. This exception is restricted to temporary workers only.
- Pass applicable background checks as required by the State of Texas and these child protection policies.
- Have a clear role description and direction from their supervisor (i.e. Kids Connect Coordinator, Youth Connect Coordinator, Connect Pastor).
- Conduct an interview with a supervising worker.
- Participate in a formal training which includes:
 - Best practices in caring for children.
 - Child protection training and adoption of the Child Protection Policies.
 - First-Aid and emergency training.
 - Theological training required for the worker's role.

Youth Workers

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church will be utilizing youth workers who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following policies apply to teenage workers:

- Minimum Age: Workers may specify a minimum age requirement for youth workers on an event-by-event basis.
- Youth workers will be under the supervision of an adult.
- All *Child Protection Policies* apply to youth workers.

Restroom Policy

Pre-Kindergarten or Younger

Preschool and younger children may need help in the restroom. While a child is in the restroom, a worker will stand outside the door. Prop the door open with your foot so you can hear if the child needs help. If it is necessary to enter the restroom to provide assistance, another adult will be called over to observe, or the door can be left ajar so another adult can see the attending adult.

Elementary and Up

Elementary children may enter the restroom unattended, though it is advisable to have a youth or adult worker just outside the door. It is also recommended that the worker check the restroom before letting the child enter. Elementary children who ask to be dismissed during the event will be under the supervision of another worker within the area who will also ensure they return safely to their classroom. Workers should not leave their class unsupervised to accompany children to the restroom.

See “Handling of Bodily Fluids” on page 07 for restroom accidents.

Sickness and Injury of Child

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church aims to provide a healthy environment for all families and children. Therefore, it is imperative that parents bring only healthy children. If a child becomes ill during their time with us, parents will be asked to remove the child for that day.

Children will be refused participation when showing any of the following symptoms:

- Fever: Fever within the previous twenty-four hours.
- Vomiting and/or diarrhea within the previous twenty-four hours or twice during their time with us.
- Childhood Disease Symptoms: Any symptoms of childhood diseases such as scarlet fever, measles, mumps, chicken pox or whooping cough.
- Runny nose with any colored discharge.
- Sore Throat
- Any unexplained rash.
- Any skin infection.
- Pink eye and other eye infections.
- Head Lice. Child should be free of nits.

If a child should become sick while under the care of a worker, the following procedures will be used:

1. When a child is ill, the worker will take the child to the supervising worker.
2. Contact parents. If, after assessing the child's needs, it is determined the parents should be notified, the supervising worker will contact the parents explaining the situation to them.
3. If the child is sent home, the supervising worker will be responsible for completing an incident report and submitting it through the responsible staff member.
4. The incident report will be filed with the Director of Operations by the responsible staff member.

If an injury should happen while a child is in POPLC's care, the following actions should be taken.

1. Everyone should remain calm.
2. Following all First Aid and CPR/AED training and safety procedures, the worker responding should assess the seriousness of the injury.
3. If it is determined that the injury is serious enough, call 9-1-1.
4. Based on the severity of the injury, parents should be contacted immediately or notified upon child's pickup.
5. If a parent is notified of the injury, the supervising worker will be responsible for completing an incident report and submitting it through the responsible staff member.
6. The incident report will be filed with the Director of Operations by the responsible staff member.

Handling of Bodily Fluid:

1. Disposable gloves should be worn whenever handling anything soiled with bodily fluid.
2. Take the child to the restroom and assist as necessary.
3. At the end of the event, give the parents the bag of wet or soiled.

Adult and Child Identification/Unidentified/Threatening Adult

- Any worker is responsible for addressing all unidentified adults that appear at the event. They will attempt to help them find where they need to be and will explain that the event is off limits to anyone not a worker or parent/guardian. However, should an unidentified adult enter a classroom, a worker or staff should approach the adult, escort him/her out of the room and request information or offer assistance.
- If any adult displays unusual behavior, is incoherent or belligerent, the worker should immediately call for support and backup. Keep the adult displaying unusual behavior separated from the children and remain calm.
- If threatening or hostile behavior is escalating and cannot be diffused, send someone to call 911 immediately.

Caring For Children Who Have Special Needs

Jesus Christ calls all children to him to ensure the safety, inclusion, and well-being of children with special needs within our church community the following policies are to be adhered to by all workers involved in the care of children with special needs, including those with physical disabilities, developmental disorders, learning differences, and sensory impairments.

- Prince of Peace, in conjunction with parents, will ensure children with special needs are included in all activities and provided with appropriate support within the ability of Prince of Peace.
- Workers will provide a safe environment for all children as well as those with special needs.
 - Ensure the play area is safe and accessible for all children. Remove any potential hazards and provide necessary safety equipment.
- If a worker experiences challenges with children who have special needs, they will consult with the Kid's or Youth Connect Coordinator and work with the parents to develop a strategic care plan to ensure proper care for the child and information for the worker.
 - If the church cannot provide the care needed for the child, a parent can be asked to assist in participating in Kid's and Youth Connect.

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

Workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under their care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child, from any source, this should be reported immediately to a Prince of Peace staff member and actions, including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law, should be taken.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent/guardian of the child and the Senior Pastor will be notified.
2. The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation.
3. Civil authorities will be notified, and Prince of Peace Lutheran Church will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse of the State of Texas. Prince of Peace Lutheran Church will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. POPLC insurance company & Legal Counsel will be notified, and we will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
 - a. The supervising worker will be responsible for completing an incident report and submitting it through the responsible staff member. The incident report will be filed with the Director of Operations by the responsible staff member.
5. POPLC Church Council shall select a spokesperson who will be responsible for addressing the media concerning any incidents of abuse or neglect. We will seek the advice of legal counsel before responding to media inquiries or releasing information to the congregation. All other representatives of the church should refrain from speaking to the media.
6. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.
7. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children.

Dress Code for Events

As Christians we use our bodies to reflect and honor Christ, at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church all workers and children are expected to dress in a way which is respectful and honoring Christ.

- Clothing should fit and cover an individual's body.
 - Short-shorts, low-cut shirts, crop-top (showing midriff), skintight or sagging pants should not be worn by children or adults.
 - Swimwear and night clothing/pajamas must be appropriate and modest covering necessary body parts as deemed by the worker/parent/guardian.
- No clothing advertising alcohol, drugs, racism, violence, or sex will be allowed.
- If a child attends an event with unacceptable clothing or is not fully clothed, a worker of the same gender as the child will have the child change. And if needed, communicate with the parent/guardian to bring or provide a change of clothes or pick up their child.
- If a worker is wearing unacceptable attire, it is the responsibility of fellow workers of the same gender to make the worker aware of the infraction and work to provide alternative clothing.

Social Media and Communication with Children

Connecting with children who have access to electronic communication should be kept professional. The goal of building relationships should be primarily done at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church. Communication with children should be guided by the following policies:

- All records of communication must be logged. Either through text message or a document which details the conversation. At no time should a worker delete any conversation with a child.
- Any written or digital communication with a child should include the copy of a parent/guardian unless they have given written permission otherwise.
- All pictures of children should be shared on official Prince of Peace Lutheran Church pages/groups with a photo release from the parent/guardian on file.
- Social media contact should be kept professional. Liking photos, commenting on posts, etc. should be for the purpose of building relationships.
 - Workers should not use communication via social media which intentionally deletes information (i.e., snapchat).
 - Workers should not post pictures of children on personal social media accounts without written approval from the parent/guardians.
- Meeting with students outside of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church should include communication with parent/guardian, informing them of the location where you are meeting, when to drop children off, and when to pick them up. All meetings must be in a public place.

Overnight and Off-Site Events

Overnight and off sight events become increasingly popular as children age into teenage years. These events are important to widen the horizon of children and venture into independence. To protect both the worker and children the following polices are to be followed:

- Medical/Liability release, copies of insurance cards, and permission forms for each individual event must be completed by parent/guardians of children.
 - Events over three hours will require copies of identification to be provided in case a child needs to be placed on an airplane for emergency purposes.
 - When traveling both hard and soft copies of all forms will be on hand.
- When an offsite event occurs then the worker will name an 'Home base person' to help with communication and to have on hand all details in case of an emergency.
- Overnight events must adhere to the following policies:
 - Male and Females will be divided into separate rooms.
 - Opposite genders are not allowed into sleeping quarters or bathrooms at any time.
 - Workers and children will not share beds unless they are related and all parties' consent.
 - When accommodation can be provided (ie hotel-style rooms) then workers should be provided with their own space shared only with other workers.
 - Schedule should allow at minimum 6 hours of sleep for children and workers.
 - Children should be provided with appropriate sleeping accommodation by workers and/or parent/guardians.
 - Bedding, mattress, air-mattress, pillow, etc.
 - Children and workers must abide by all quiet time and lights out guidelines given for an event.
- If a child's behavior becomes unmanageable, disrespectful, violent, or illegal, the workers reserve the right for the child to be sent home at the parent/guardian's expense.
- A detailed schedule of events must be communicated to parents beforehand and any deviation from the assigned should be discouraged. If a change in schedule is required, communication with parents/guardian should be made as soon as possible.
 - If at any time a child may not have access to a communication device with must be communicated to the parents and why.

Transportation

- Parent transportation to/from event is preferred.
- If a worker is needed transport children, due to distance, parental/guardian's schedule or other reason the following policies must be respected:
 - Written parental/guardian permission for the transportation of their child.
 - Text should include where the child should be transported, date of transportation, and who is authorized to transport the child.
 - Verbal approval is not sufficient.
 - The rule of three must be followed as stated above with two adults. At no time should a worker transport a child alone.
 - In the case of an exception, a letter from the parent/guardian allowing the transportation to the worker and approved by the Senior Pastor.
 - Workers must transport the child directly to the child's home, church, or event location with no detours or unapproved stops.
 - Children will not be released to ridesharing services without written approval from parent/guardian.

- Except for siblings, children will not be released to a child with a driver's license without the written permission of the parent/guardian.
- Driving Distance for fatigue and safety,
 - When driving over 8 hours away then two drivers for every vehicle will be provided.
 - Ten hours is the maximum number of hours that can be driven in one day without stopping for the night.

Security Cameras

Utilization of security cameras are for the protection of both the child and the workers.

- Public signs notifying the use of security cameras will be displayed.
- Security cameras are utilized in every classroom where workers regularly interact with children.
 - For special events (i.e. VBS) rooms may be used without security cameras, in such cases the two adult rule is sufficient.
- Security footage should be used for internal purposes only.
 - At no time security footage will be released without written approval from the Senior Pastor.
- Access to security cameras (live and recordings) shall be overseen by the Director of Operations.
 - Any access to recorded footage requires an incident report and addressed within 24 hours.
 - In cases of emergency, the Senior Pastor or Director of Operations can delegate access as needed.
- Security Cameras does not nullify the required two-adult rule.

Training

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church will provide training on this child protection policy and offer First Aid and CPR/AED to all who are working with children under the age of 18. POPLC will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All workers are required to attend these training events. All workers must sign and date this policy confirming that they have read and understood the Child Protection Policy.

Other events or camps may mandate other training policies are needed and POPLC will follow all policies as outlined by hosting organization or state.

Adoption

I fully understand and agree to uphold all the child protection policies of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church. I will do my best to honor, protect, and provide physical, spiritual, and mental care for God's children who are in my charge. I agree to report any infraction of this policy to a staff member of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, in writing.

Name

Signature

Date