



TEMPLE LUTHERAN CHURCH

Child and Youth Safety Policy

Approved December 14, 2020

Updated Effective May 6, 2021

The Child and Youth Safety Committee will review this policy and forms on an annual basis. The Committee can make changes, with the approval of the Council President and Pastor, with Council given two weeks notice prior to the effective date.

Note: Minor clarifications and information on clearances updated September 1, 2025

CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY POLICY

Statement of Purpose

Temple Lutheran Church is committed to maintaining an environment in which children and youth are nurtured and instructed in the faith and are protected from all types of abuse and neglect. Our goals are to protect children and youth in church programs, to educate workers and caregivers concerning abuse issues, and to protect staff and volunteers, as well as the church as a whole, from potential wrongful accusations of abuse or neglect. Accordingly, we will not tolerate abuse of children or youth in our interactions with them.

We recognize that children and youth are entrusted to the care of adults in many church programs, services and activities, both on and off the church property. TLC has established this Child and Youth Safety Policy to ensure, to the extent reasonably possible, that our children and youth will be free to participate in these programs, services, and activities without intimidation, coercion, or abuse of any type. The Child and Youth Safety Policy applies to all those who work with children and youth through TLC programs both on and off church property, including full-time and part-time church employees as well as volunteers, whether they be church members, visitors, or guests.

Outside organizations using TLC facilities are responsible for maintaining their own child and youth safety policies.

Definitions

- **Abuse** - a non-accidental injury or pattern of injuries (physical or mental) to a child or youth. Abuse may include any of the following:
 - **Emotional abuse** - one or more acts by an adult or other authority figure that endanger the mental health or emotional development of a child including rejection, ignoring, terrorizing, corrupting, constant criticism, mean remarks, insults, and giving little or no love, guidance, and support.
 - **Failure to act** - any failure to act that causes bodily or mental injury to a child or that causes or permits any of the above described types of abuse to occur may also constitute abuse.
 - **Neglect** - occurs when an adult responsible for the well-being of a child fails to provide for the child. Neglect may include not giving food, clothing, shelter; failure to keep children clean; lack of supervision and withholding medical care.
 - **Physical abuse** - a non-accidental injury that happens to a child. Such an injury could include a beating, burn, bruise, bite, welt, strangulation, broken bones, or death.
 - **Sexual abuse** - the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement or coercion of a child to engage in or assist another individual to engage in sexually explicit conduct. The behavior may or may not involve touching. Sexual abuse may include the following: engaging in sexually explicit conversation, verbal sexual suggestions, innuendoes or jokes, leering or ogling, intrusive touching, the use of pornography, looking at the intimate parts of a child for the purpose of sexual gratification or arousal, sexual assault

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or attempted sexual assault. Sexual abuse may consist of numerous acts over a period of time or a single incident.

- **Approved Adult** - anyone 18 years of age or older who has completed the application procedure for Approved Adults, including obtaining the required background clearances and completing the applicable training.
- **Employee** - anyone who provides services for the church and receives compensation in the form of salary, wages, and/or benefits and works on church property. Prior to starting employment, all employees must complete the Approved Adult application and provide clearances.
- **Mandated Reporter** - a person who is required to report to state authorities when he or she has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse in accordance with the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law. The applicable category for TLC is an individual - paid or unpaid - who, on the basis of their role as an integral part of a regularly scheduled program, activity or service, are responsible for the child's welfare or has direct contact with children.
- **Non-Approved Adult** - anyone 18 years of age or older present and assisting in a church-sponsored child or youth program or activity who has not obtained CPSL clearances.
- **Permissive Reporter** - individuals who are encouraged to report suspected child abuse but not required by law.
- **Trusted Adult** - anyone 18 years of age or older present and assisting in a church-sponsored child or youth program or activity who has obtained the required background clearances.
- **Volunteer** - anyone who provides services for the church, who receives no compensation in the form of salary, wages, or benefits, and who routinely interacts with children to provide for their care, education, supervision, guidance, or control.
- **Youth Volunteer** - anyone under 18 years of age who works under the supervision of two Approved Adults and who routinely interacts with children to provide for their care, education, supervision, guidance, or control.
- **Youth Ministry Program** - any children or youth-based church-sponsored program or activity
- **Youth Ministry Leader** - any employee or Approved Adult who is responsible for a youth ministry program

Appropriate Behavioral Guidelines

General Guidelines

With the goal that a nurturing Christian environment for children is maintained within the TLC community, to protect children who participate in activities sponsored by the church from sexual, mental, and/or physical abuse, and to protect TLC members from false allegations of abuse, TLC has adopted the following policy:

1. **Child Abuse Prohibited:** Those who accept the special responsibility of working with TLC's children and youth shall not violate that responsibility by engaging in child abuse defined above in "Definitions."

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2. Supervision.

1. **On Church Property:** At least one Approved Adult should be present during any Youth Ministry Program. For larger events two Approved Adults must be present. Where there are multiple rooms being used, a Trusted Adult must be present in each room. Non-Approved Adults may be present during any such activity but must be supervised by an Approved or Trusted Adult. Doors should be left open to allow easy observation of the room. At no time, should an adult be in a one-on-one situation with youth, unless parental consent has been obtained in advance.
2. **Off Church Property:** Two Approved Adults are required for any Youth Ministry Program which leaves the church property. Any other adults need to be Trusted Adults. When participating in an event sponsored by another organization, these TLC policies need to be followed, as well as those of the sponsoring organization.
3. **Expressions of Affection:** True expressions of affection toward children can be a manifestation of Christ's love for all of us. A kind word of encouragement to a child or a pat on the back can be a small but significant act for both the adult and the child. That being said, adults must use caution and common sense when physically expressing affection toward children. They should:
 1. Respect a child's refusal of affection.
 2. Never make a child feel uncomfortable.
 3. Be aware of appropriate hand placement. A child or an observer could misinterpret a pat on the bottom or a hug.
4. **Permission Slips:** Children and youth must have permission to participate in any overnight activity or any activity that takes place away from church grounds. That permission must be in writing and signed by a parent or legal guardian. It must identify the activity in which the child or youth will be participating. Permission slips are not required when all children or youth (or their parents) provide their own transportation to and from the event, which includes informal car pools.
5. **Overnight Rule:** Overnight activities involving children shall be supervised by at least two Approved Adults and only Approved Adults shall attend. If the event involves children of both genders, then there should be at least one Approved Adult of each gender.
6. **Transportation of Children:** When children and youth are transported for church activities:
 - a. It is strongly recommended that ALL employees/volunteers who drive their personal vehicles for insured activities have minimum liability limits of \$100,000/\$300,000. All drivers transporting youth must fill out the Volunteer Driver form. Forms are valid for one year.
 - b. When personal vehicles are used, the driver of the vehicle must be 18 years of age or older.
 - c. Children and youth shall be transported in groups with at least one Approved or Trusted Adult in each vehicle.
 - d. When only one child is being transported by a non-parental or non-guardian adult, there shall be two adults present, one of which must be an Approved Adult. However, parents or guardians may in writing designate on the permission form an adult they trust to transport their child without a second adult present.

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- e. For trips of more than 50 miles, the Trip Event Form must be filled out and approved by the Pastor or Children, Youth, and Family minister and one other person not attending the trip (e.g., Council President).
- 7. **Safe Ministry Communication:** Texting, e-mailing, and other forms of electronic communication have become common today among children, youth, and adults. Electronic communication can be a vital part of ministry work, but their improper use can produce serious consequences. In order to promote safety and to create a healthy environment for electronic communication between staff, volunteers, and especially among our children and youth, the following guidelines must be our safe ministry practice:
 - a. Youth Ministry Leaders are encouraged to talk to the youth about the potential harm to themselves and others in transmitting content that is illicit, unsavory, abusive, pornographic, discriminatory, harassing, or disrespectful.
 - b. Except in an emergency, any personal information pertaining to a child, such as name, phone number, e-mail address, or photographs, without the consent of the youth ministry participant and his or her parent or guardian shall not be transmitted. This applies to group texting, group e-mail, website posting, blogging, Twitter feed, or any other public method of electronic communication.
 - c. Youth Ministry Leaders will discourage students from using cell phones during ministry programs except in an emergency, to contact a parent or guardian, or to place calls specifically approved by the leader.

Electronic and Social Media

TLC has a robust website that helps it disseminate its message to members and the general public. Day-to-day communications often involve use of personal communication tools such as emails, text messages, social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.), among others. These communications include public, private, personal and professional messages. The following requirements apply to all such communications among TLC pastors, staff, volunteers, youth and children when those communications relate to TLC programs, services, and activities:

- a. No person shall post or permit to be posted any confidential information about TLC, its programs, services and activities, members or those who participate in its programs, services, or activities.
- b. All communications related to TLC activities/events must maintain a professional and appropriate style.
- c. No person shall engage in electronic communications that violate any TLC policy or any local, state, or federal law.
- d. In all communications related to TLC programs, services and activities or made during TLC activities/events, employees and volunteers should avoid the use of statements that reasonably could be viewed as derogatory, sexual, lewd, pornographic, or obscene, offensive due to the use of profanity, threatening, harassing or bullying, discriminatory, facilitating illegal activities, having the purpose to assist personal, commercial or for-profit ends, expressing political views, unauthorized or illegal distribution, reproduction or use of copyrighted materials, fraternization or otherwise crossing the line between profession and personal boundaries, or suggestive in nature.

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- e. Use/posting by TLC of photographs or videos of children and youth and of their TLC-sponsored activities will conform to the following guidelines:
 - TLC will honor the request of any parent or legal guardian who asks that her/his child not appear in any church publications or website.
 - TLC will obtain written permission from parents and/or guardians before a photo or video of a child/youth is used electronically or in print (see [Media Release Form](#)). Be aware that this policy does not apply to individuals who may post to their own personal social media photos or videos that include children.
 - TLC will not “tag” ANY children and youth in images used on social media.
 - TLC recognizes the delicate balance between desire for full participation by child and personal privacy. TLC will endeavor to work with parents and children on achieving this balance.

Application/Screening/Training

Adult Volunteers and Employees

TLC requires that adults responsible for the care, supervision, guidance, or control of children during routine interaction with children and seeking to obtain Approved Adult status complete the following application process in order to become an Approved Adult. All church employees or rostered leaders must become Approved Adults.

1. Complete the Adult Application Form.
2. Provide to the church officials copies of valid background clearances (dated within 60 months) as required by the CPSL. Refer to “TLC Adult Application Form Additional Information” for details for obtaining these clearances.
 - a. *The Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check*
 - b. *Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance*
 - c. *The Federal Bureau of Investigation Fingerprint Criminal History Background Check.*
3. Volunteers who have lived in Pennsylvania continuously for the last 10 years may complete an approved affidavit in lieu of the FBI fingerprint check (available from TLC). There is no charge for the two Pennsylvania clearances for volunteers.
 - a. Volunteers may present valid background clearances obtained for other employment or volunteer situations; employees may present valid background checks obtained for other employment, but may not use clearances from volunteer situations. In all cases, copies must be presented for review and filing.
4. Successfully complete and provide a certificate from a PA approved training course for Mandated Reporters as found on the Keep Kids Safe website: <http://www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov/resources/training/index.htm>. The University of Pittsburgh’s Child Welfare Resource Center training (<http://www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu/>) is a free course. This must have completed within the past 60 months.
5. Applications and related papers will be in a confidential file under the jurisdiction of the Pastor, Child and Youth Safety Committee Leader, or designee.
6. The three CPSL clearances and Mandated Reporter training are only valid for five years from the date of certification and will need to be renewed after that.

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7. All volunteers serve at the discretion of a Youth Ministry Leader, Child and Youth Safety Committee Leader, or Pastor.

Minor Volunteers and Employees

Under CPSL, minor employees (under age 18) who are persons responsible for a child's welfare or a person with direct contact with children through a program, activity, or service must obtain *The Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check* and *Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance*, but are exempt by CPSL from needing the FBI certification, provided that the minor and his/her parents swear and affirm in writing that the minor has not been convicted of a disqualifying crime in a location outside of Pennsylvania or placed on another state's child abuse registry. TLC has prepared a Youth Employee Affidavit form for this purpose.

Minor volunteers are not required to provide any certifications, but do need to fill out the Volunteer Form for Minors.

Mandated Reporter

A Mandated Reporter must make a report of suspected child abuse:

- If he or she has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse.
- A person makes a specific disclosure to the Mandated Reporter that an identifiable child is the victim of child abuse. Nothing requires the Mandated Reporter to have direct contact with the child in order to make a report.
- An individual 14 years of age or older makes a specific disclosure to the Mandated Reporter that the individual has committed child abuse.

A Mandated Reporter makes a report of suspected child abuse in accordance with the procedure outlined below.

Reporting/Response to Allegations

Reporting

1. Reasonable Suspicion

Reasonable suspicion that a child has been the victim of abuse, and not actual proof, is sufficient to make a report. The initiative for investigating abuse resides with the Department of Human Services and should not be carried out by the reporter.

2. Permissive Reporting

- a. Anyone - not only a Mandated Reporter - who witnesses or has reasonable suspicion that a child has been abused by anyone (including the child's family, guardians, an Approved Adult, or volunteer) may report it to the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services ChildLine and Abuse Registry (800-932-0313), or online at <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home>
- b. The reporter should then notify the Pastor of the report (or the Child and Youth Safety Committee Leader if the Pastor is unavailable or is the suspected abuser).

3. Mandated Reporting

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- a. A Mandated Reporter who witnesses or has reasonable suspicion that a child has been abused by anyone (including the child's family, guardians, an Approved Adult, or volunteer) **must by law make an immediate and direct report in the following manner:**
 - i. Electronically at <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home>, a confirmation of which will be received from the PA Department of Human Services
 - ii. Orally to the Department of Human Services ChildLine (800-932-0313). An oral report must be followed up within 48 hours.
 - iii. Paper written reports use [PA State Form CY-47](#).
 - b. After making a report to ChildLine, a Mandated Reporter is required to immediately thereafter notify the Pastor or the Child and Youth Safety Committee Leader if the Pastor is unavailable or is the suspected abuser.
 - c. After completing both a. and b. above, the Mandated Reporter must provide a copy of the confirmation received from electronic submission to the Department of Human Services, to the Pastor or the Child and Youth Safety Committee Leader if the Pastor is unavailable or is the suspected abuser.
 - d. Under CPSL, if a Mandated Reporter willfully fails to report child abuse, the penalties range from a misdemeanor of the second degree to a felony of the second degree.
- 4. All Reporters**
- a. Under CPSL, a Reporter is immune from civil and criminal liability as long as the report was made in good faith.
 - b. Under CPSL, a Reporter's identity is kept confidential with the exception of being released to law enforcement officials or the district attorney's office.

Response to Allegations

1. The Pastor or the Congregation Council President shall put TLC's insurance carrier on notice of the filing of a report of suspected child abuse.
2. TLC will cooperate with all state officials in the investigation of any reported instance of suspected child abuse.
3. The Pastor or TLC Council President will notify parents or guardians of all children involved in an alleged incident, unless the parents or guardians are the persons suspected of the abuse. The phone call or visit will be documented. This notification should remain factual and not offer opinions or thoughts about the event or how it occurred. The parent or legal guardian should be advised that any investigation of the claim will be under the auspices of the appropriate state agency.
4. The Pastor or Child and Youth Safety Committee Leader will prepare for TLC Council a **confidential**, written summary of all reports of suspected child abuse, keeping the name of the reporter confidential. The summary should include steps taken in response and should be updated as necessary. This reporting shall occur in an executive session of the council so that confidentiality can be maintained.
5. The TLC Church Council will determine whether the congregation should engage legal counsel in consultation with the insurance carrier.

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6. The TLC Church Council will authorize the Pastor or one of the Council members to act as the official spokesperson for the congregation. Only the authorized person(s) can speak for TLC to the news media, government agencies, attorneys, or others. If counsel has been appointed, assigned, or retained, any communication concerning the event should first be reviewed with counsel.
7. All other steps taken to respond to an allegation of child abuse will be approved in advance by TLC Church Council and will as far as possible be documented by TLC Church Council.
8. All communications within the congregation regarding the report of suspected child abuse shall attempt to protect the dignity and privacy of those persons affected by the report including the alleged child victim and the person suspected of child abuses while at the same time ensuring that persons in responsibility and law enforcement authorities remain fully informed.
9. TLC shall keep the Synod Bishop's Office appraised of all developments.

Additional Forms

All forms below are available as individual fillable PDFs. The Media Release Form is also available as an online form.

1. TLC Adult Application Form
2. TLC Adult Application Form Additional Information
3. Volunteer Affidavit in Lieu of FBI Clearances
4. TLC Volunteer Form for Minors
5. Youth Employee Affidavit in Lieu of FBI Clearances
6. TLC Permission Slip for Youth
7. TLC Media Release Form
8. TLC Trip Event Form
9. TLC Volunteer Driver Form