

Finland Mennonite Church Child Protection

CHILD PROTECTION GUIDELINES

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I. INTRODUCTION

“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:14). These well-known words of Jesus give us a picture of God's love for young people – inviting, welcoming, empowering, and safe. As in so many other ways, God incarnate in Jesus shows us how to be faithful followers of Christ through our relationships. We are called to invite children to be among us. We are called to bless them. In doing so, we welcome God into our lives. For this welcome to be truly extended to children in the context of our congregations, our churches must be places of refuge and safety.

II. GENERAL CHILD PROTECTION

Child Protection Policy

Finland Mennonite Church recognizes that child abuse is a serious problem. It is often committed by a person who is a caretaker of a child or in a position of trust and authority. Child abuse is not accidental and can be physical, sexual, mental, emotional, or spiritual.

While abuse in any form can be devastating to a child, of particular concern to *Finland Mennonite Church* is child sexual abuse, which affects one in four girls and one in six boys in the United States. Because of the high levels of access and trust that are provided to workers in faith community settings such as *Finland Mennonite Church* special care must be taken to prevent and address child sexual abuse. The following policies are intended to ensure that *Finland Mennonite Church* serves young people in the safest environment possible by encouraging adults to take responsibility for their individual roles in child protection.

1. General Guidelines for Child Abuse Prevention

a. Use a Team Approach – The Two-Adult Rule

- (1) Two approved adult workers are expected to be present during any church activity involving minors, outside the exception of Sunday School. The two adults may not be husband and wife in order to meet the two adult rule. Young leaders (14-18) may assist in classrooms with adult supervision, but do not count as one of the two adults and should never be left alone with a child or group of children.

Exceptions: If a situation arises during which any of these policy guidelines cannot be reasonably met, the adults involved should accommodate the policy as far as they are able, act in accordance with the spirit of the policy and report the occurrence to the Child Protection Team or Ministry Director as soon as possible. However, it is the intent of this policy that such exceptions are rare.

b. Overnight Policy

- (1) On all overnight events, a minimum of two “Approved Adult” workers will be in attendance in accordance with the two adult rule. One-adult / one-child sleeping arrangements are prohibited, including sharing a bed in a room with other people.

c. Minimize One-Child/One Adult Situations

- (1) All interactions between children/youth and adults must be visible to others, preferably with more than one adult and more than one child present. If private conversation is required, it may occur out of earshot of others, but not out of sight. Activities will be observable and interruptible at all times.
- (2) All classrooms and other areas used by minors must have a window in the door or the door must be left open during use if this does not pose a safety risk. Open doors must be gated for classrooms of children under age 5.
- (3) At least one Facility Monitor person should be available to monitor the doors, circulate through the church and provide assistance as needed during worship and Sunday School.

d. Use Appropriate Discipline and Expressions of Affection

- (1) Use appropriate hugs and touches that are reassuring or comforting, not uncomfortable or hurtful.
- (2) Avoid total body-to-body hugs, touching in private areas or kissing on the lips.
- (3) Use warm, caring verbal comments.
- (4) Do not use demeaning or blaming comments, verbal put-downs, hurtful discipline or corporal punishment.
- (5) Use constructive, age-appropriate discipline suited to the behavior and the child.
- (6) Do not withhold food as a form of discipline.
- (7) Be aware of and sensitive to what makes a child feel uncomfortable.
- (8) Respect a child/youth's refusal of affection.

e. Obtain Parental Permission

Children and youth must have written parental/legal guardian permission for involvement in church sponsored programs or activities. Church workers will obtain the consent of the child's parent or guardian by phone if an emergency situation necessitates that an adult will be alone with that child.

f. The "Six Month" Rule

Volunteers will be permitted to work with youth or children only after they have been regular attendees of the church for 6 months. "Regular attendee" status is determined by six (6) months after the date a church mailbox is given to the individual.

g. Applicant Age Requirement

Approved volunteers who work with children or youth must be 18 years of age or older. Young leaders (age 14-18) may be approved to work as assistants to adult leaders, but not as leaders in charge of any group of children/youth or individual child/youth. All leaders must be at least five years older than the children/youth for whom they have responsibility.

2. Age-specific Guidelines

a. Nursery

1. Age: Infants-3 year olds
2. Staffing: Require 2 Approved Female Volunteers
Ratio: 1 Adult for every 5 children
3. Guidelines:
 - a. Children are dropped off by parent/guardian who fills out sign in sheet in entirety.
 - b. Parents are asked to take potty trained or training children to the restroom before dropping them off.
 - c. Keep children in the nursery until parent(s)/guardian(s) return. Release children only to parent(s)/guardian(s) and must be signed out.
 - d. If only one nursery attendant is present, ask a parent to stay until a replacement can be found.

b. Toddler

1. Age: 2-3 year olds
2. Staffing: Require 2 Approved Adult Volunteers
Ratio: 1 Adult for every 6 children
3. Guidelines:
 - a. If only one volunteer shows up, ask a parent to stay until a replacement is found.
 - b. Children must be picked up by their parents/guardians or another preauthorized person. Both teachers stay in the classroom until all children are picked up.

c. Preschool Sunday School

1. Age: 4-5 year olds
2. Staffing: Require 2 Approved Adult Volunteers
Ratio: 1 Adult for every 6 children
3. Guidelines:
 - a. If only one volunteer shows up, ask a parent to stay until a replacement is found.
 - b. Suggested: Take the entire class to the bathroom near the beginning of Sunday School so that there are 2 teachers to assist those that need to use the bathroom, to limit the occurrence of future trips.
 - c. When children need to use the restroom, outside the whole class time, send one teacher with the child.
 - d. Children must be picked up by their parents/guardians or another preauthorized person. Both teachers stay in the classroom until all children are picked up.

d. Elementary Sunday School

1. Age: Kindergarten-Fifth Grade
2. Staffing: 1 approved adult, 2 approved adults when possible, A Facility Monitor person may check in randomly and help when 2 adults are not in the classroom
 - a. Ratio: 1 Adult for every 20 children
3. Guidelines:
 - a. Teacher should use discretion when there is only one child; Keep classroom doors open and move to a public area (such as community room) for class if only one child comes.
 - b. Children use a “buddy system” when traveling throughout the building for activities such as using the restroom or locating a parent.
 - c. Must have a parent/legal guardian signed permission slips if leaving the church property.

e. Jr. High (Middle School) /Sr. High (High School) - Sunday School

1. Age: 6th-8th Grade/9th-12th Grade
2. Staffing: 1 approved adult, 2 approved adults when possible, A Facility Monitor person may check in and help when 2 adults are not in the classroom
Ratio: 1 Adult for every 10 children
3. Guidelines:
 - a. Teacher should use discretion when there is only one child; Keep classroom doors open and move to a public area (such as community room) for class if only one child comes.
 - b. Must have parent/legal guardian signed permission slips if leaving the church property.

f. Boys and Girls Club, Jr. High, Sr. High Youth Group

1. Age: 3rd-5th Grade, 6-8th Grade, 9-12th Grade
2. Staffing: 2 approved adults at all activities. If 2 approved adults are husband and wife, ask a parent to stay.
 - a. Ratio: 1 Adult for every 20 children
3. Guidelines:
 - a. Avoid one adult-one child isolation. Private conversations may happen out of ear shot, but not out of eye sight.
 - b. Must have parent/legal guardian signed permission slips if leaving the church/area where they are dropped off.

3. Definition of Terms

- Approved Adult: An adult 18 years of age or older in good standing with the congregation and has cleared the criminal and child abuse background checks, and signed a copy of the “Child Protection Covenant”.
- Child Leadership Adult: Approved Adult leaders of the Boys and Girls Club, Jr. High, and MYF Sponsors.
- Facility Monitor Adult: Approved Adult (see above) with the following responsibilities on the Sundays scheduled as Facility Monitor. If anything is of a suspicious nature, report it to church leadership.
 - During church services, wander through the building to be aware of who is where. Check the nursery that 2 approved adult volunteers are present. Notice as people move through the building, for example children who leave church service to go to the bathroom. Help people find where they need to go, Bathrooms, nursery, Sunday School, nursing mother’s room. Greet people who may be early or late for services.
 - During Sunday School time, stay in the Sunday School wing and intentionally look in on all Sunday School wing classes (both upstairs and downstairs) periodically. Monitor the halls as children are in Sunday School. (Children 5th grade and under should have a buddy or teacher with them if leaving to use the bathroom, get a drink, or find a parent). When Sunday School time is over, check that all children in the Sunday School wing classrooms have been picked up/left before leaving the hall.
 - During fellowship time, intentionally walk through the less occupied spaces. The classrooms off of the gym and the upper Sunday School wing in particular. Know who is there.

4. Background Checks

- Pennsylvania State Police or Pennsylvania Access To Criminal History (PATCH) clearance must be current and must be re-screened every 57 months for adults to remain as an “Approved Adult”.
- A Child Abuse Clearance issued by the Department of Public Welfare must be current and must be re-screened every 57 months for adults to remain as an “Approved Adult”.

- PA Criminal History and Child Abuse Clearance reports will be reviewed by the Lead Pastor and the Family Pastor. Once reviewed and clearance is determined, they will notify the Child Protection team of clearance status.

III. SECTION-1 FORMS

Form G *Finland Mennonite Church*
Children Protection Covenant

Form L *Finland Mennonite Church*
YOUTH PERMISSION/WAIVER FORM
(Boys & Girls Club, Junior High, MYF Youth Group)

Form N *Finland Mennonite Church*
Nursery Sign in and Sign Out List

Form PA **DISCLOSURE STATEMENT APPLICATION FOR VOLUNTEERS**
Required by the Child Protective Service Law 23
Pa. C.S. Section 6344.2 (relating to volunteers having contact with children)

Children Protection Covenant

For all who work with children or youth in Finland Mennonite Church
I accept the call to serve the Lord through working with children or youth at Finland Mennonite Church.

I remember how Jesus welcomed the children, took them in his arms, and blessed them.

I know that I follow Jesus' example when I value young people and commit myself to care for them with love and gentleness.

I recognize the importance of the responsibility entrusted to me.

I am passionate for leading children and youth to Christ and commit myself to guiding them in making Godly decisions in their lives.

I realize that my words and actions towards children and youth will influence their faith in God and their lives for many years to come.

I promise to be responsible in all of my attitudes and actions, especially towards the children or youth under my care.

I have carefully read and agree to adhere to Finland's Child Protection Policy.

I attest that I have never been charged with nor convicted of child abuse, contributing to the delinquency of a minor, or any other criminal conduct related to children or youth or to physical or sexual misconduct.

I attest that I will not engage in any inappropriate contact with children and youth-I will not abuse anyone physically, sexually, or emotionally. I will not engage in any unbecoming conduct.

I covenant and promise to be a good example to the children or youth entrusted to my care. I will pray and study God's word regularly, and do my best to reflect God's love to them.

I accept the responsibility of my ministries to children and youth with gladness and I will strive to honorably fulfill my responsibilities with integrity.

With prayers and encouragement from the members of Finland Mennonite Church, and with God's guidance, I am committed to serve in ministry to children and youth.

Please answer the following questions:

1. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to observe and abide by all policies regarding working in ministries with children and youth? ☐Yes ☐No
2. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to observe the "two-adult rule"? ☐Yes ☐No
3. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to participate in training and education events provided by the church related to your volunteer assignment? ☐Yes ☐No
4. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to promptly report abusive or inappropriate behavior to your supervisor? ☐Yes ☐No
5. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to inform a minister of this congregation if you are ever convicted or accused of child abuse? ☐Yes ☐No
6. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you accept the responsibility of being a mandatory reporter of suspected child abuse? ☐Yes ☐No

I have read this volunteer covenant, and I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above.

Signature of volunteer

Date

Volunteer's printed name

Form L

Finland Mennonite Church
YOUTH PERMISSION/WAIVER FORM

(for: Boys & Girls Club, Jr. High Group, & Youth Group)

Name of Youth Participant _____

Parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of youth _____

Address _____
(Street) (City) (State) (Zip)

Home Phone (____) _____ **Work Phone** (____) _____

E-mail Address _____

Age of Youth _____ **Birthdate** _____ **Grade** _____

Functions & Activities

It is my understanding that participating in the programs and activities of Finland Mennonite Church is a privilege. I acknowledge that there are certain risks associated with the activities including activity-related accidents and physical injury due to transportation-related accidents.

Release of Liability

By signing this Permission/Waiver Form, I assume all risks of the above named youth participating in the activities. I further release Finland Mennonite Church and Its ministries, leaders, employees, volunteers and agents from any claim that my child may have against them as a result of injury or illness incurred during the course of participation in the activities.

First Aid & Emergency Medical Treatment

I recognize that there may be occasions where the youth named above may be in a need of first aid or emergency medical treatment as a result of an Finland Mennonite Church accident, illness or other health condition or injury. I do hereby give permission for agents of Finland Mennonite Church to seek and secure any needed medical attention or treatment for the youth named above including hospitalization. If in the agent's opinion such need arises, in doing so, I agree to pay all fees and costs arising from this action to obtain medical treatment.

I give permission for attending physician(s) and other medical personnel to administer any needed medical treatment, including surgery and again, I agree to pay for the medical treatment.

Medical History

Special medical needs or concerns (allergies, conditions, dietary needs, medications, etc.)

Health Insurance Information – For emergency purposes, please make a copy of front and back of insurance card and attach it to this form.

(Insurance Co.)

(Policy Number)

(Medical Doctor)

(Phone Number)

Emergency Contacts

Names of persons and telephone numbers to call in case of emergency:

I represent that I am the parent/guardian of _____, who is under 18 years of age. I have read the above Permission/Waiver Form and am fully familiar with the contents thereof.

I give permission for the youth named above to participate in the activities of Finland Mennonite Church. In consideration for allowing the participation of the youth in the activities of Finland Mennonite Church, I hereby consent to the Permission/Waiver Form, including the Release of Liability above, on behalf of the youth, and agree that this Permission/Waiver Form shall be binding upon me.

Photos may be taken in the normal course of youth activities. Photos may be distributed to members of the group and may be used in church presentations.

Internet Photo permission: I give permission to Finland Mennonite Church for photos of the youth named above to be used in Internet publications. ☐ YES ☐ NO

(Signature of Parent/Guardian)

(Date)

(Signature of Parent/Guardian)

(Date)

Form PA

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT APPLICATION FOR VOLUNTEERS

Required by the Child Protective Service Law 23

Pa. C.S. Section 6344.2 (relating to volunteers having contact with children)

I swear/affirm that I am seeking a volunteer position and AM NOT required to obtain a clearance through the Federal Bureau of Investigation, as:

- the position I am applying for is unpaid; and
- I have been a resident of Pennsylvania during the entirety of the previous ten-year period.

I swear/affirm that I have not been named as a perpetrator of a founded report of child abuse within the past five (5) years as defined by the Child Protective Services Law. I swear/affirm that I have not been convicted of any of the following crimes under Title 18 of the Pennsylvania consolidated statutes or of offenses similar in nature to those crimes under the laws or former laws of the United States or one of its territories or possessions, another state, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico or a foreign nation, or under a former law of this Commonwealth.

Chapter 25 (relating to criminal homicide)
Section 2702 (relating to aggravated assault)
Section 2709 (relating to stalking)
Section 2901 (relating to kidnapping)
Section 2902 (relating to unlawful restraint)
Section 3121 (relating to rape)
Section 3122.1 (relating to statutory sexual assault)
Section 3123 (relating to involuntary deviate sexual intercourse)
Section 3124.1 (relating to sexual assault)
Section 3125 (relating to aggravated indecent assault)
Section 3126 (relating to indecent assault)
Section 3127 (relating to indecent exposure)
Section 4302 (relating to incest)
Section 4303 (relating to concealing death of child)
Section 4304 (relating to endangering welfare of children)
Section 4305 (relating to dealing in infant children)
Section 5902(b) (relating to prostitution and related offenses)
Section 5903(c) (d) (relating to obscene and other sexual material and performances)
Section 6301 (relating to corruption of minors)
Section 6312 (relating to sexual abuse of children),
or an equivalent crime under Federal law or the law of another state.

I have not been convicted of a felony offense under Act 64-1972 (relating to the controlled substance, drug device and cosmetic act) committed within the past five years.

I understand that I shall not be approved for service if I am named as a perpetrator of a founded report of child abuse within the past five (5) years or have been convicted of any of the crimes

listed above or of offenses similar in nature to those crimes under the laws or former laws of the United States or one of its territories or possessions, another state, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico or a foreign nation, or under a former law of this Commonwealth.

I understand that if I am arrested for or convicted of an offense that would constitute grounds for denying participation in a program, activity or service under the Child Protective Services Law as listed above, or am named as perpetrator in a founded or indicated report, I must provide the administrator or designee with written notice not later than 72 hours after the arrest, conviction or notification that I have been listed as a perpetrator in the Statewide database.

I understand that if the person responsible for employment decisions or the administrator of a program, activity or service has a reasonable belief that I was arrested or convicted for an offense that would constitute grounds for denying participation in a program, activity or service under the Child Protective Services Law, or was named as perpetrator in a founded or indicated report, or I have provided notice as required under this section, the person responsible for employment decisions or administrator of a program, activity or service shall immediately require me to submit current clearances obtained through the Department of Human Services, the Pennsylvania State Police, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, as appropriate. The cost of clearances shall be borne by the employing entity or program, activity or service.

I understand that if I willfully fail to disclose information required above, I commit a misdemeanor of the third degree and shall be subject to discipline up to and including denial of a volunteer position. I understand that the person responsible for employment decisions or the administrator of a program, activity or service is required to maintain a copy of my clearances. I hereby swear/affirm that the information as set forth above is true and correct. I understand that false swearing is a misdemeanor pursuant to Section 4903 of the Crimes Code.

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Finland Mennonite Church Nursery (Form N)
Sign in and Sign Out List

Date: _____
 Completed forms to be given to church secretary each week.

First Service and Sunday School 8:30am-10:30am			Nursery Attendants: _____ & _____			
Drop Off Time	Childs's Name	Special Instructions	Drop Off Signature	Parent/Guardian Name & expected location (sanctuary, etc.)	Pick Up Time	Pick Up Signature

Second Service 11am-12:15am			Nursery Attendants: _____ & _____			
Drop Off Time	Childs's Name	Special Instructions	Drop Off Signature	Parent/Guardian Name & expected location (sanctuary, etc.)	Pick Up Time	Pick Up Signature

Revisions

Original Document: 9.10.2015

Accepted Revision: 7.7.2016

Age Specific Guidelines (page 5-7) Removal of picking up at Kids Kinnection in Toddler and Preschool Sections

Rewording of Elementary and Jr. High Guidelines A to remove absolutes

Definition of Terms (page 8) Added responsibilities under Facility Monitor Adult

Child Protection Covenant (page 11) Rewording of line: I have carefully read and “agree to adhere to”