

ARCOLA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

I. Purpose

Arcola United Methodist Church seeks to establish reasonable procedures to reduce the risk of physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children as they participate in church ministries, and to ensure that any misconduct allegation is treated seriously and with regard for the rights of the alleged victim and the accused.

II. Commonwealth of Virginia Statutes

Section 63.2-100 of the Code of Virginia defines an abused or neglected child. Selected relevant portions of the statute are included below for reference only, but should in no way substitute for direct reference to the full statute. An abused or neglected child is defined, in part, as one who is less than eighteen years of age,

A. "Whose parents or other person responsible for his care creates or inflicts, threatens to create or inflict, or allows to be created or inflicted upon such child a physical or mental injury by other than accidental means, or creates a substantial risk of death, disfigurement, or impairment of bodily or mental functions, including, but not limited to, a child who is with his parent or other person responsible for his care either (i) during the manufacture or attempted manufacture of a Schedule I or II controlled substance, or (ii) during the unlawful sale of such substance by that child's parents or other person responsible for his care, where such manufacture, or attempted manufacture or unlawful sale would constitute a felony violation of § 18.2-248;"

B. "Whose parents or other person responsible for his care neglects or refuses to provide care necessary for his health. However, no child who in good faith is under treatment solely by spiritual means through prayer in accordance with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination shall for that reason alone be considered to be an abused or neglected child.....;"

C. "Whose parents or other person responsible for his care abandons such child;"

D. "Whose parents or other person responsible for his care commits or allows to be committed any act of sexual exploitation or any sexual act upon a child in violation of the law;"

E. "Who is without parental care or guardianship caused by the unreasonable absence or the mental or physical incapacity of the child's parent, guardian, legal custodian or other person standing in loco parentis;"

F. "Whose parents or other person responsible for his care creates a substantial risk of physical or mental injury by knowingly leaving the child alone in the same dwelling, including an apartment as defined in § 55-79.2, with a person to whom the child is not related by blood or marriage and who the parent or other person responsible for his care knows has been convicted of an offense against a minor for which registration is required as a violent sexual offender pursuant to § 9.1-902....."

An act of child abuse may be committed by any person responsible for the care of another individual who is less than eighteen years of age. It does not matter whether the person caring for the child under the age of 18 (hereinafter referred to as a "Child" or "Children"), is a compensated or a volunteer worker. It does not matter whether the person routinely is entrusted with the care of children or whether such individual only occasionally comes in contact with children. It does not matter whether the person was entrusted with the care of a child for an hour or only a moment. It only matters that a child was abused or neglected by the person who, on the occasion in question, was responsible for the child's care.

III. Types of Child Abuse

The Virginia Department of Social Services' Child and Family Services Manual (July 2011) (hereinafter "Manual") details statutory and regulatory definitions of abuse and neglect. The definitions provided below have been taken from that Manual. In some instances, only portions of the definitions deemed particularly relevant are included. Thus, the definitions provided below are for reference only and should in no way substitute for direct reference to the full Manual and/or statutory or regulatory authority.

A. Physical Abuse

"Physical abuse occurs when a caretaker creates or inflicts, threatens to create or inflict, or allows to be created or inflicted upon a child a physical injury by other than accidental means or creates a substantial risk of death, disfigurement or impairment of bodily functions,..." Types of physical abuse include, but are not limited to, asphyxiation; bone fracture; head injury; burns/scalding; cuts, bruises, welts, abrasions; internal injuries, poisoning; sprains/dislocations; gunshot wounds; stabbing wounds; bizarre discipline. (See Manual for explanations/definitions of each type of physical abuse).

B. Physical Neglect

"Physical neglect occurs when there is the failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, or supervision for a child to the extent that the child's health or safety is endangered. This also includes abandonment and situations where the parent or caretaker's own incapacitating behavior or absence prevents or severely limits the performing of child caring tasks pursuant to Section 63.2-100 of the Code of Virginia. This also includes a child under the age of 18 whose parent or other person responsible for his care knowingly leaves the child alone in the same dwelling as a person, not related by blood or marriage, who has been convicted of an offense against a minor for which registration is required as a violent sexual offender Physical neglect may include multiple occurrences or a one-time critical or severe event that results in a threat to health or safety." Types of physical neglect include, but are not limited to, abandonment, inadequate supervision, inadequate clothing, inadequate shelter, inadequate personal hygiene, inadequate food and malnutrition. (See Manual for explanations/definitions of each type of physical neglect).

C. Sexual Abuse

"Sexual abuse occurs when there is any act of sexual exploitation or any sexual act upon a child in violation of the law which is committed or allowed to be committed by the child's parents or other persons responsible for the care of the child pursuant to Section 63.2-100 of the Code of Virginia." Types of sexual abuse include, but are not limited to, sexual exploitation, sexual molestation, and intercourse or sodomy. (See Manual for a detailed listing and explanations/definitions of each type of sexual abuse).

D. Medical Neglect

“Medical neglect occurs when there is the failure by the caretaker to obtain and or follow through with a complete regimen of medical, mental or dental care for a condition which if untreated could result in illness or developmental delays.....” “Medical neglect includes the caretaker failing to obtain immediate necessary medical, mental or dental treatment or care for a child. Medical neglect also includes when the caretaker fails to provide or allow necessary emergency care in accordance with recommendations of a competent health care professional.” (See Manual for a detailed listing and explanations/definitions of each type of medical neglect).

E. Mental Abuse/Neglect

“Mental abuse or neglect occurs when a caretaker creates or inflicts, threatens to create or inflict, or allows to be created or inflicted upon such child a mental injury by other than accidental means or creates a substantial risk of impairment of mental functions. Mental abuse or mental neglect includes acts or omissions by the caretaker resulting in harm to a child’s psychological or emotional health or development.” “Mental abuse or mental neglect may result from caretaker actions or inactions such as: overprotection, ignoring, indifference, rigidity, apathy, chaotic lifestyle, or other behaviors related to the caretaker’s own mental problems.” (See Manual for a detailed explanation of mental abuse or neglect).

IV. Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse

In an effort to create the safest possible environment within Arcola United Methodist Church, several abuse prevention measures will be utilized as detailed below. These prevention measures include conducting background checks of paid staff and adult volunteers for past child abuse convictions every five (5) years or more frequently if warranted, biennial protection policy and procedure review and acknowledgement, use of the two-adult rule, standards of appropriate classroom discipline and open classrooms.

A. Staff and Volunteer Screening

1. Every employee of Arcola United Methodist Church and all adult volunteers who work with children will be required to complete the following steps prior to serving, and at the subsequent time periods indicated for so long as they continue to serve:

a. Read the Arcola United Methodist Church Child Protection Policy and Procedures (hereinafter “CPPP” or “Policy”), sign the statement at the conclusion of the Policy indicating that, among other things, he/she has never been convicted of child abuse, and agree to abide by the Policy. Anyone who has had a child abuse conviction, as well as anyone refusing to sign and/or abide by the Policy, will not be permitted to work or volunteer with children. Every employee and adult volunteer shall be required to read, sign and agree to abide by the CPPP biennially or more frequently if changes to the CPPP warrant.

b. Undergo a background check. Following the initial background check, subsequent background checks will be conducted every five (5) years or more frequently if warranted; and

2. Nothing herein shall be construed to preclude unscreened adult or youth family members of children engaged in youth or children’s activities from informally assisting the screened adults who are leading an activity, at the request of the screened adults, so long as such family members are supervised/monitored at all times by a screened adult; e.g., youth

group leaders ask parents to set up or bring food for a dinner or ask parents or youth to assist with games for a large group.

3. Every youth volunteer ages 12 – 17 who works with children will be required to complete the following steps prior to serving, and at the subsequent time periods indicated for so long as they continue to serve:

a. Read the CPPP, sign the statement at the conclusion of the Policy indicating that, among other things, he/she has never been convicted of child abuse, and agree to abide by the Policy. Any youth who refuses to sign and/or abide by the Policy will not be permitted to work or volunteer with children. Every youth volunteer shall be required to read, sign and agree to abide by the CPPP biennially or more frequently if changes to the CPPP warrant.

4. Any individuals already serving as Arcola United Methodist Church employees, adult volunteers or youth volunteers at the time of adoption of this Policy shall complete the applicable screening steps listed above within three (3) months of the adoption of this Policy or sooner if practical. Such existing employees and volunteers shall not have their service interrupted in the interim as a result of enactment of this Policy.

B. Two-Adult Rule

1. General Rule

Employees or volunteers will be assigned in teams of two unrelated adults or more for all children's activities. For these purposes, "unrelated adults" are those who are not related by birth or marriage.

Exception: One adult may teach or supervise children or youth in activities conducted where others can readily observe; e.g., in rooms in the same hallway where there are either windows in the doors or doors are left open and additional supervisory personnel are present in the area. These additional supervisory personnel will perform spot checks of all activities.

No child may leave a classroom or supervised area alone. Children may go to the bathroom, drinking fountain, and run errands for the teacher, etc. in pairs. Parents/Guardians must pick up all students fifth grade and under in their classrooms or supervised area immediately after church or an event is over.

2. Off Campus Rule

If a church sponsored group leaves the premises, two or more unrelated adults must be present.

Exception (a): One adult may supervise children or youth during church sponsored, off-campus activities in a public place where others can readily observe; e.g., restaurants, bowling lanes, sports arenas, TopGolf. Examples of public places where the ability of others to readily observe would be deemed not to exist and therefore this exception not apply would include Camp Highroad, Escape Room, etc.

Exception (b): One screened adult may drive children or youth during church sponsored activities provided there are at least two children or youth present in the car at all times. This exception applies only during the drive to/from the activity.

The general off campus rule above, as well as Exception (a), shall apply upon arrival at the destination.

3. Overnight Stays

If any group stays overnight at the church or other venue, two or more unrelated screened adults must be present and if the group is mixed gender, there must be at least one male adult and one female adult present.

Female staff will supervise female youth in their sleeping quarters and male staff will supervise male youth. In situations where one large sleeping area is provided, groups of mixed gender should sleep in separated areas. Two adults must be present in all sleeping areas.

C. One-on-One Mentoring or Consultation

Any one-on-one mentoring or consultation between an adult and a child will be conducted in a room or area that is in plain view of others. Where professional, one-on-one, confidential counseling occurs on the church campus between an adult and a child, such confidential counseling shall be conducted in a room with an active security camera.

D. Classroom Discipline

All employees and volunteers who work with children will use the following discipline measures. If a child is behaving inappropriately, the employee or volunteer will tell the child specifically what he/she is doing that is not acceptable and state what the expected behavior is, e.g., "We do not throw blocks. We use blocks for building." If this measure is not effective, the child will be guided to another activity. If inappropriate behavior continues, the child may be placed at a table to work alone away from the other students. No physical punishment or verbal abuse, e.g., ridicule, are to be used at any time. If isolating the child within the classroom becomes necessary, the situation will be discussed with the leader of the event and with the child's parents or guardian as soon as possible. If the child's disruptive behavior continues after these steps have been taken, the child may be removed from the room, in which case the child shall be taken to his or her parent or guardian. If the parent/guardian is not present or is unavailable, then the child shall be taken to the leader of the event.

E. Open Classrooms

Classrooms or child care rooms may be visited without prior notice by church staff, parents, or other designated volunteer church workers, at any time. Brief observations of child care rooms and classrooms of children under 18 are conducted by the staff or the primary leader during all activities.

F. Community Groups (e.g., Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, American Heritage Girls, AA, the Dulles South Food Pantry, etc.)

Where community groups which have children under the age of 18 who wish to use the Arcola United Methodist Church facilities or any part thereof (including its outdoor facilities), prior to such use, not less than two leaders of the community group will be required to read the CPPP, agree to abide by the Policy, and sign the statement at the conclusion of the Policy indicating that, among other things, he/she has never been convicted of child abuse. In addition, such community groups must have two or more leaders present during each

use of church facilities who have read, signed and agreed to abide by this Policy. Church facilities, including outdoor facilities, will not be available for use by any groups whose leaders refuse to read, sign and agree to abide by the Policy.

V. Reporting Child Abuse

Should there be an allegation of a child abuse occurrence at Arcola United Methodist Church, the following procedures shall be followed:

- A. Any allegation of child abuse shall be treated seriously.
- B. Immediately begin documenting all procedures that occur in handling the allegation.
- C. Immediately notify the Pastor, the Director of Administration and the Director of Grow of the substance of the allegations. As many members of the Church Council as are immediately accessible shall be convened either in person or by telephone and the allegations shall be evaluated initially to determine whether there is a reason to suspect that child abuse may have occurred. The function of the Church Council at this stage is not to conduct an investigation, but to determine, based upon the allegations and the information then in the possession of the Church Council, whether a reason to suspect exists. In making such a determination, the Church Council shall avail itself of such counsel as it deems necessary and as is immediately available, including, but not limited to, consultation with an attorney, with a representative of the church's insurance company, with the district superintendent, and anonymously with the Virginia Department of Social Services. If the allegations involve the Pastor or any family member of the Pastor, the Director of Administration, the Director of Grow and the Chairperson of the Staff-Parish Committee shall be notified immediately, and the Director of Administration shall immediately notify the District Superintendent who shall direct the next steps taken by the church in responding to the allegations. The provisions of this Policy shall continue to apply except as the District Superintendent directs that other steps be taken.
- D. If it is determined that there is a reason to suspect that child abuse may have occurred, then the following steps shall be taken:
 1. Immediately notify the Virginia Department of Social Services of the allegation. (1-800-552-7096).
 2. Immediately notify a parent or guardian if it is not known that they have previous knowledge unless the Virginia Department of Social Services directs otherwise in a case where the parent or guardian is the accused.
 3. Immediately notify the church's insurance company. (NGC Insurance Agency, Inc., Agent Bonnie Forshee at (703) 554-1342).
- E. Immediately notify the District Superintendent. (703-830-7200).
- F. Do not confront the accused with the allegation. If the accused has assigned duties within the life of the church and the ministry director determines that the steps outlined in paragraph V (D) above are appropriate, that person must be temporarily relieved of their duties until the investigation is concluded.
- G. The Pastor should extend whatever care and resources are necessary to those impacted by the allegation, but under **no** circumstances should the Pastor or any church leader or

member investigate the allegation. In providing care to the principals (alleged victim and the accused) and their families, the Pastor or church leader, should under **no** circumstances be drawn into a discussion of the truth or falsity of the allegation which could contaminate the investigation. Do not assign blame or take any steps that involve establishing or refuting the allegation.

H. It is appropriate to show care and comfort for the alleged victim. This should be the pastoral objective from the moment the allegation is received or otherwise made known.

I. Observe confidentiality for both the alleged victim and the accused until advised to the contrary by the ministry director.

J. Pray for the church and all persons affected by the allegation.

K. There shall be a single spokesperson designated for the Church. The single spokesperson shall be the Pastor or his/her designee.

VI. Policy Review

The Child Protection Policy and Procedures of Arcola United Methodist Church shall be reviewed as determined by the Director of Administration.

VII. Signature and Agreement to Abide By Policy

I have read and understand the foregoing Child Protection Policy and Procedures of Arcola United Methodist Church. I agree to abide by these policies and procedures. I have no convictions for child abuse nor have I ever had a conviction for child abuse expunged. I hereby authorize any references or churches that I might provide to Arcola United Methodist Church to provide Arcola UMC with any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my work with children and/or students.

Print Full Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____