Parma Lutheran Church

**PARMA LUTHERAN CHURCH Policy for the Protection of Children**

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**PARMA LUTHERN CHURCH**

**POLICY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN**

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**PARMA LUTHERAN CHURCH**

**POLICY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN**

1. **INTRODUCTION**

It is the goal of Parma Lutheran Church to welcome children into our church, provide opportunities for their faith development and Christian Education, and to keep them safe while they are here. This policy is aimed at creating awareness in our congregation that we must take responsibility for the safety of the children and families that we serve. Although we are fortunate that we have not had any incidents of child abuse, we need to proactively reduce the risk of child abuse in our church by implementing written policies and procedures. This policy equips our congregation to become a safe haven in which children can learn and grow. We accept the responsibility to recruit people with the gift of caring for children, and also to protect those workers from false accusations. It is our responsibility to oversee all programs involving children to make sure the environment is safe, and to have a plan of response in place should an accusation arise.

1. **PURPOSE**

Parma Lutheran Church’s purpose for establishing this Policy for the Protection of Children, accompanying procedures, and behavior standards is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth.

1. **STATEMENT OF COVENANT**

The congregation of Parma Lutheran Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, volunteers, and staff who participate in ministries, activities, and events sponsored by our church. The following policy statements and behavior standards reflect our congregation’s commitment to preserving this church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who would enter - and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others. As a Christian community of faith committed to ministry to and with children, we pledge to conduct all our ministries, activities, and events in such a way that assures the safety and spiritual growth of all children and youth entrusted to us. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers and we will be responsible in overseeing our programs and events. We will equip our staff and volunteers so that they are able to minister to children in Jesus’ name. We will report and respond to all suspected incidents of abuse as is required by state law and our moral conscience. We will be prepared to minister to the families of both the abused and the perpetrator. Therefore:

* No adult who has been convicted of child abuse (either sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, or ritual abuse) will be allowed to work with children or youth in any church-sponsored activity.
* All adult volunteers serving with children or youth must have been active members involved in the life of our congregation for at least six months before beginning a volunteer assignment.
* Adult volunteers with children shall observe the “Two Adult Rule” at all times so that no adult is left alone with children or youth on a routine basis. Adults are defined as a person who is at least 21 years of age, and also at least 5 years older than the oldest child under their supervision.
* Adult volunteers with children and youth shall attend regular training and educational events provided by the church to keep informed of church policies, state laws regarding child abuse, and to develop their skills for the ministry in which they serve.
* Adult volunteers shall immediately report to their supervisor any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate. The supervisors are as follows: the Pastor, the Director of Education & Family Ministries, and the Director of Youth & Young Adult Ministries.
1. **PROCEDURES**

We adopt these **minimum** standards for our ministries with children and youth.

**1. Screening and recruiting**

1. All workers with children and youth will have completed an application listing standard contact information, their gifts for that ministry, and three unrelated references.
2. All workers will be interviewed by the Pastor, the Director of Education & Family Ministries, or the Director of Youth & Young Adult Ministries before they begin program delivery. References will be contacted before they begin program delivery.
3. All workers will demonstrate an active relationship with this church of at least six months before being allowed to supervise children.
4. All workers will be asked to sign a form consenting to a criminal background check, sign a statement of non-conviction, and sign a behavior standards covenant.
5. All forms and reference reports shall be kept as a part of an applicant’s confidential personnel file. All forms shall be kept in a locked file on the church premise. Access will be limited to the applicant, the Pastor, the Director of Education & Family Ministries, and the Director of Youth & Young Adult Ministries.

**2. Supervision**

1. It is our goal to have two unrelated adults in each classroom or program delivery area. If this is not possible, there will be a roving teacher or other appropriately authorized adult who moves amid the classrooms during the program period.
2. No person shall supervise an age group unless they are at least five years older than the oldest student.
3. No person under the age of twenty-one shall be considered as one of the two adults.
4. Each room will have a window or the door will be left open at all times.
5. Training shall occur at least once a year and workers shall be trained to recognize the signs of abuse.
6. Registration materials for activities in which children are outside direct supervision of their parents or guardians shall require signed written permission forms that include pertinent health information in order to participate.
7. If the participants are old enough to understand, they shall sign a covenant of participation listing rules for all activities, trips, overnights, etc.

**3. Reporting**

1. Upon receiving information of abuse or suspected abuse, the adult will report immediately to one of the following persons: the Pastor, the Director of Education & Family Ministries, or the Director of Youth & Young Adult Ministries. They in turn will notify the appropriate civil authorities in Cuyahoga County at (216) 696-KIDS.
2. If the abuse allegedly happened on church property by church volunteers or staff, they shall immediately be removed from contact with children until the incident reported has been resolved. This should be handled in a discreet manner and they shall not be banned from other church ministries.

**4. Responding**

1. A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of child abuse will be initiated. All allegations will be taken seriously, nothing will be covered up.
2. The Pastor, or his designee, is the only person authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. All requests for statements should be directed to the Pastor.
3. If the allegation is against a staff person or Pastor, the Northeastern Ohio Synod will be contacted immediately by the President of the Congregation.
4. Pastoral support will be available to all persons involved in the incident as indicated.
5. **REVIEW & REVISION**

This policy will be reviewed yearly by the Executive Committee at Parma Lutheran Church, and updated as necessary.

1. **EFFECTIVE DATE**

This policy is effective November 1, 2009.

*Revised July 1, 2010 Revised March 12, 2011*

1. **FORMS**
2. Volunteer Application/References/Statement of Non-Conviction Form
3. Volunteer Background Investigation Consent Form
4. Behavior Standards Covenant Statement for Workers With Children & Youth Form