

A CHILD SAFETY POLICY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Larchmont Avenue Church

I. DEFINITIONS

This policy applies to LAC staff, officers, and volunteers as specified below, other than teachers in the Preschool, who are subject to mandatory reporting requirements under New York law. It requires that any action that results in physical or emotional abuse or that endangers children be reported. This includes but is not limited to the abuses defined below.

A. Child: Any person under 18 years of age, or at-risk adults 18 and older who are particularly vulnerable due to limited mental function.

B. Child Abuse: Any treatment of a child that threatens the child's safety or leaves the child's life with physical or emotional scars. It may result from physical contact, sexual contact, or improper communication by any adult with authority over a child. Any activity that is abusive is still abuse, even if a child cooperates out of ignorance, innocence or fear.

C. Sexual Abuse: Any sexual activity with a child - whether in the home by a caretaker, in a daycare situation, a foster/residential setting, or in any other setting. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child, provided the child is four years older than the victim. Sexual Abuse may be either touch (physical) or non-touch (verbal) by a person known or unknown to the child. For all sex offenses, a person is deemed legally incapable of consent if they are less than 17 years of age, mentally defective or incapacitated, or physically helpless.

For the purposes of this policy, when the term "child abuse" is used it will include child abuse or sexual abuse as defined above.

II. RECEIVING AND REPORTING INFORMATION ABOUT CHILD ABUSE

A. Receiving Information about Child Abuse

Information about child abuse which comes to employees, teachers or other volunteers must be taken seriously. This includes but is not limited to the following:

- Reports by children of abuse to others
- Disclosure (direct or indirect) by the abused child
- Observations by individuals
- Conversations with other children or adults about potential abuse
- Evidence of possible abuse

B. Reporting Child Abuse

Church employees, ordained officers (*i.e.*, Elders, Deacons), Trustees, Sunday School teachers, and volunteers required to have the training described in Section III.A.4 are required to promptly report any situation where there is reasonable cause to suggest that a child may have been abused by a church staff member, Sunday School teacher, or other church volunteer. For those required to have training as described in Section III.A.4, this also includes reporting abuse as provided in that training and as described in Section III.B.4. Other church volunteers are strongly encouraged to report where there is reasonable cause to suspect abuse as described above and in Section III.B.4.

1. If child abuse or sexual abuse by anyone (including the Pastors or any ordained minister) is reported or suspected, the person making or receiving the complaint must report it promptly to the Clerk of Session and appropriate civil authorities (see #3 below).
2. If it is not possible for any reason to contact the Clerk (e.g. s/he is unavailable) or the Clerk is the accused, notify the Pastor. If that too is not possible, first attempt to contact the Associate Pastor, then notify the Chair of Personnel. The Pastor must also be notified, as long as s/he is not the accused.
3. Using the Incident Report Form (Form A attached) as a guide, the person making or receiving the complaint along with the Clerk of Session will contact the civil authorities together by calling the New York State Child Protection Hotline (1-800-342-3720; <http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/cps>). (The clerk and complainant together should first determine whether the complainant is a mandated reporter or voluntary reporter under New York State Law. (See <http://www.nysmandatedreporter.org>) Depending upon their location they will make the call together on speakerphone (available in church offices) or by using an extension telephone.
4. In addition, the Clerk or other appropriate authority, *i.e.*, Pastor, Associate Pastor, or Personnel Chair, will report the action to the child's parent or guardian (providing this will not put the child in jeopardy for additional abuse) as well as the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Hudson River.

C. Consequences and Additional Action

1. When a child is in immediate danger, if possible, secure the safety of the child first.
2. The accused person, whether staff or volunteer, may not participate in any activities involving children and youth, until the investigation by civil and/or ecclesiastical authorities is completed and the accused is exonerated.

3. The identity of the accuser and the accused must be kept confidential. The report or the suspected incident may only be referred to and discussed with the authorized people listed above in Section II.B 2 through 4.

III. POLICIES FOR CHURCH-RUN PROGRAMS

A. Screening of Teachers

1. Volunteers or staff who will serve as a Sunday School teacher, children's choir director, or who otherwise accept responsibility in a regularly scheduled program for children or youth without a staff member present ("Teachers") will be required to sign a Sexual Misconduct Information Form (such as Form B, attached) and to undergo a basic background check.
2. Any person who is known to have been convicted of, pled guilty to or no contest to, or is presently under indictment for a crime against children or youth or for sexual misconduct of any kind will not be placed in a position involving access to children or youth. Please refer to the New York State Sex Offender Registry (<http://www.criminaljustice.ny.gov/nsor/>).
3. The pastor reserves the right to clarify any information or concerns through interview or further screening. The pastor may limit access of any individual to children/youth at any time in the interest of safety.
4. The church will periodically offer in-person training that includes training in the child protection policy. If those Teachers described above are not able to attend an in-person training, they must complete an equivalent on-line program, such as *Darkness to Light: Stewards of Children* (<http://www.d2l.org>), prior to working with children, and to renew that training at least once every three years.

B. Requirements for Youth Group Leaders, Faith Partners, and Other Volunteers with Children and Youth

1. Paragraphs III.A.1 through 3 above shall also apply to those volunteers who serve as youth group leaders (volunteers who regularly work with youth with a church staff member present) or Faith Partners to youth.
2. Except as described in paragraph III.B. 3 below, at all church-sponsored events where children or youth are present with church volunteers, at least one of the volunteers or staff people present must have undergone the background check and training described in Section III.A above.

3. Meetings of church volunteers with children and youth will take place at the church or in another public location unless (a) at least three people are present, or (b) consent of the child's parent is obtained. This standard will also apply to volunteers who drive children by car.
4. Volunteers who have been trained in the child protection policy are required to report, as described in Section II.B above, if they have reason to suspect that a child or youth has been abused by anyone at that event. Those volunteers who have not received such training are nevertheless strongly urged to report any such abuse.

C. Requirements of Parents of Children in Church Activities

1. Parents must advise the Teacher if it is necessary for a child to leave before the scheduled end of an event.
2. Any time a child or youth participates in an overnight event at the church or elsewhere, parents are required to sign a permission slip.
3. Parents are responsible for all transportation of children and youth to church events off site, unless otherwise arranged by the church (for events such as a mission trip).
4. It is the responsibility of parents to supervise their children at church when the children are not participating in a church-related activity.

IV. SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

1. Teachers will not allow children through first grade to leave the classroom, however temporarily, unaccompanied.
2. Teachers will not dismiss any child/youth before the scheduled end of an event without permission. If, for any reason, a child needs to leave a program without prior permission, a staff person, parent, or authorized guardian will be contacted and advised.
3. Every effort will be made to have at least two staff members or volunteers present for all activities involving children and youth, at least one of whom will be over 18 years of age and at least five years older, and the other who will be at least four years older, than those whom they are supervising.
4. Rooms and areas used for activities for children and youth shall be made as visible as possible. Wherever possible, doors shall have an

unobstructed viewing window. Where there is no window in the door, the door shall be left open.

5. When children or youth attend overnight events, they must be accompanied by at least two adult leaders, both of whom are at least 21 years of age and at least five years older than those whom they are supervising, and at least one of whom must have been screened and trained as described in Section III.A above.

6. Any injury, action, illness or mishap that takes place while a child or youth is under the supervision of a staff member or teacher must be reported by the staff member or teacher to the church office within 24 hours of the incident.

Adopted by the Session of the Larchmont Avenue Church
March 27, 2017

1. Name of staff or volunteer observing or receiving disclosure of child abuse:
2. Child's Name/Address/Telephone
3. Child's Age/Date of Birth:
4. Date/place of initial conversation with/report of child:
5. Child's statement (give your detailed summary here or on back of this page):
6. Name/Address/Telephone of person accused:
7. Relationship of accused to child (paid staff, volunteer, family member, other):
8. Name/Address/Telephone of witness(es), if any, to the incident:
9. Reported to either Clerk of Session, Pastor(s) or Chair of Personnel (give name):
Date/Time of Report:
Summary of Report:
10. Call to child's parent/guardian
Date/Time:
Spoke with:
Summary of conversation:
11. Date/Time/Name of person reported to:
Pastor (914-834-1800 x308)
Child Protective Services (800-342-3720)
Stated Clerk of the Hudson River Presbytery (914) 941-2100

Form B

Larchmont Avenue Church
Sexual Misconduct Information Sheet

Name (please print):

ALL INFORMATION PROVIDED ON THIS FORM WILL BE KEPT ENTIRELY
CONFIDENTIAL.

Please initial

_____ I certify by signature below that I have never been convicted of, or
pleaded guilty to, any crime related to child abuse or sexual misconduct, and that
no such charges are presently filed against me.

_____ If I am unable to make the above certification, I offer the following
information or explanation:

_____ I authorize Larchmont Avenue Church to inquire concerning any civil
or criminal records, or any judicial or ecclesiastical proceeding involving me as a
defendant, related to child abuse or sexual misconduct. I also authorize those
contacted to release any and all requested relevant information to Larchmont
Avenue Church.

For this reason, please provide your date of birth: Mo/Day/Year and
Social Security No. _____

_____ I understand that information obtained in this manner may be used
to deny my acceptance as a Teacher or Parent Helper of children, youth or
adults in Larchmont Avenue Church. I hereby release the church from any and
all claims, liabilities and cause of action for the release of any information related
to child abuse or sexual misconduct.

The above information is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Signature: _____

Date: _____