



SAFETY POLICY FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

Larchmont Avenue Church (“LAC”) seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children and vulnerable adults who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the practices outlined below, our goal is to protect these vulnerable groups of LAC from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations.

I. APPLICABILITY AND DEFINITIONS

This policy applies to the following members of the LAC community: LAC employees; active Elders, Deacons and Trustees (collectively, “LAC Officers”); Sunday School teachers; youth group leaders; and faith partners.¹ These individuals, who are not subject to mandatory reporting requirements under New York law, are required to report, in accordance with this policy, actions that result in physical or emotional abuse or that endangers children or vulnerable adults. For purposes of this policy, the following definitions shall apply:

- A. **Child:** Any person under 18 years of age.
- B. **Child Abuse:** Any treatment of a child or vulnerable adult that threatens their safety or leaves them with physical or emotional scars. It may result from physical contact, sexual contact, or improper communication by any adult with authority over a child or vulnerable adult. Any activity that is abusive is still abuse, even if a child or vulnerable adult cooperates out of ignorance, innocence or fear.
- C. **Sexual Abuse:** Any sexual activity with a child or vulnerable adult - 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 or another child. Sexual Abuse may be either touch (physical) or non-touch (verbal) by a person known or unknown to the child or vulnerable adult. 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.

¹ This policy does not apply to teachers of the LAC Preschool or other childcare workers who are subject to the mandatory reporting requirements under New York law.

- D. **Vulnerable Adult:** Any person eighteen-years-old or older whose ability to protect themselves from physical or emotional abuse, neglect or exploitation is significantly impaired through physical or mental disability or illness.

For the purposes of this policy, when the term “child abuse” is used it will include child abuse or sexual abuse relating to a child or vulnerable adult as defined above.

II. RECEIVING INFORMATION ABOUT CHILD ABUSE AND RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE

A. Receiving Information about Child Abuse

Information about child abuse which comes to the attention of LAC employees, Officers, Sunday School teachers, youth group leaders, and faith partners 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. Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

Church employees, LAC Officers, Sunday School teachers, youth group leaders, and faith partners are required to promptly report any situation where there is an incident of abuse or neglect that is alleged to have occurred at the church or during church-sponsored programs or activities, or reasonable cause to suggest that a child may have been abused by a church staff member, Sunday School teacher, or other church volunteer. Other church volunteers are strongly encouraged to report where there is reasonable cause to believe there has been an incident of abuse or neglect that is alleged to have occurred at the church or during church-sponsored programs or activities.

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.
5. LAC's insurance company will be notified, and the incident report along with any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.

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. To the extent permitted by law, the identity of the accuser and the accused shall 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 5.

III. POLICIES FOR CHURCH-RUN PROGRAMS

A. Screening Requirements for Sunday School Teachers, Youth Group Leaders and Faith Leaders

1. Sunday School teachers, the children's choir director, youth group leaders, and faith partners will be required to sign a Sexual Misconduct Information Form (such as Form B, attached) and to undergo a basic background check. Session reserves the right (in consultation with [Clerk of Session]) to waive the requirement for long-time members who have served as volunteer Sunday School teachers in the past.
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.

B. Training Requirements for LAC Employees, Officers, Sunday School Teachers, Youth Group Leaders, and Faith Partners

1. Certain categories of individuals covered under this policy must undergo periodic training on LAC's child protection and vulnerable adults policy:
2. Church employees must complete [on an annual basis] Praesidium's "Safe Environment: Employee Sexual Harassment Training."
3. During their term on Session, church Elders must complete the PRC's Church Leadership Training: Protecting Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults.
4. Sunday School teachers, youth group leaders and faith partners must also complete the PRC's Church Leadership Training: Protecting Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults.

C. Additional Requirements for Youth Group Leaders, Faith Partners, and Other Volunteers with Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults

1. Except as described in Section III.C. 2 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 Sections III.A-B above.
2. 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.

D. Requirements of Parents/Guardians and other Caregivers in Church Activities

1. Parents/guardians or other caregivers 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/guardians are required to sign a permission slip.

3. Parents/guardians or other caregivers 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/guardians or other caregivers to supervise their children at church when the children are not participating in a church-related activity.

IV. SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

- A. Teachers will not allow children through first grade to leave the classroom, however temporarily, unaccompanied.
- B. 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.
- C. Reasonable efforts 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.
- D. 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.
- E. 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 Sections III.A-B above.

V. ACCIDENTAL INJURIES TO CHILDREN

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

- A. For minor injuries, scrapes and bruises, the responsible adult will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as reasonably appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
- B. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian should immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.

- C. Any injury, action, illness or mishap involving a child or youth under our care or supervision must be reported by the staff member, Teacher or volunteer to the church office within 24 hours of the incident.

Form A
CONFIDENTIAL
INCIDENT REPORT FORM

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) or 843-302-2511

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: _____