

**Larchmont United Methodist Church**  
**Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedures**  
**Approved by the Trustees, November 10, 2014**  
**Approved by the Administrative Council November 24, 2014**

**I. Purpose**

1. To help Larchmont United Methodist Church (hereafter LUMC) provide a caring and secure environment for children and youth in all phases of church ministry.
2. To help LUMC reduce its legal risk and liability exposure.

**II. Code of Virginia Basis**

Section 63.1-248.3, Code of Virginia {revised} states that, *Any person licensed to practice medicine or any of the healing arts, any hospital resident or intern, any person employed in the nursing profession, any persons employed as a social worker, any probation officer, any teacher or other person employed in a public or private school, kindergarten or nursery school, any person providing full-time or part-time child care for pay on a regular planned basis...and any person associated with or employed by any private organization responsible for the care, custody or control of children who has reason to suspect that a child is abused or neglected shall report the matter to his or her supervisor immediately and then to the local department of the county or city where in the child resides or wherein the abuse or neglect is believed to have occurred or to the Department of Social Services. (1-800-552-7096)*

**III. Definitions**

- A. Staff—Clergy or paid church staff, to include nursery employees
- B. Child/Youth or Minor—Any person who has not reached his/her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- C. Adult—Any person who has reached his/her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- D. Volunteer—Any unpaid person engaged in or involved in activities and who is entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors or adults. All volunteers must be a minimum of 18 years of age.
- E. Volunteer Aide—Any unpaid person engaged in or involved in activities and who assists an adult (paid or volunteer) in the care and supervision of minors. This person cannot be in charge of a group. All volunteer aides must be a minimum of 16 years of age.
- F. Program Director—Any paid church staff member in charge of a program area of the church who potentially will oversee volunteers within their designated work area. (i.e. Music Director, Youth Director, Director of Christian Education, etc.)

- G. Vacation Bible School (hereafter VBS) Shepherd—Any unpaid person designated to escort groups of children from place to place (VBS specific position).

#### **IV. Types of Child Abuse**

##### **A. Definition**

Child abuse is defined as an act committed by a parent, caregiver or person in a position of power or trust, which is non-accidental and harms or threatens to harm a child's physical or mental health or welfare. The following definitions and explanations in this section are found in the Code of Virginia (63.2-100).

##### **B. Types of Abuse**

1. *Physical Abuse* occurs when a caretaker creates or inflicts, or threatens to create or inflict, or allows to be created or inflicted upon a child a physical injury by other than an accident means or creates a substantial risk of death, disfigurement, or impairment of bodily functions, including, but not limited to, a child who is with his parent or other person responsible for his care. (22 VAC 40-705-30 A)

2. *Physical Neglect* occurs when there is a failure to provide food, clothing, shelter or supervision for a child endangering the child's health or safety. Physical neglect may include multiple occurrences or a one-time critical or severe event that results in a threat to health or safety. (22 VAC 40-705-30 B)

3. *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 that child. (22 VAC 40-705-30 E)

4. *Mental Abuse/Neglect* includes acts or omissions by the parent or caretaker, which results in harm to a child's psychological or emotional health or development. (22 VAC 40-705-30-D)

#### **V. Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse**

In an effort to create the safest possible environment within LUMC, several abuse preventions will be utilized. These measures include screening of paid and volunteer workers for past child abuse or neglect convictions.

##### **A. LUMC Volunteer Rule**

LUMC will not use anyone as a volunteer for children or youth in the church unless he or she has completed the required volunteer screening and has been interviewed by the Program Director of the area in which the person will volunteer. A Pastor or member of committee overseeing the program area may be utilized for the interview, if needed. This policy may be waived if a family has left and returned

to the area (i.e. military PCS or job transfers) provided that the volunteer completes a new sworn statement of affirmation.

#### B. Staff Screenings

All staff will have an employee file holding their screening forms. This can be housed with the regular employee record or in a separate location. These records will be kept for the duration of employment and three years after vacating the position. Staff will:

- i. Read this Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Policy and sign acknowledging understanding and intention to comply.
- ii. Complete:
  - a. A Sworn Statement of Affirmation
  - b. An Employment Application with references
  - c. A Confidentiality Statement
- iii. Submit to:
  - a. A Criminal Records Check (conducted by Virginia State Police or National Record Company)
  - b. Child Protective Services Check (conducted by the Virginia Department of Social Services)

#### C. Volunteer Screenings

A file of volunteer records will be kept in a secure location. Volunteers working directly with children or youth will:

- i. Read this Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Policy and sign acknowledging understanding and intention to comply.
- ii. Complete:
  - a. A Sworn Statement of Affirmation
  - b. A Confidentiality Statement
- iii. Submit to:
  - a. A Criminal Records Check (conducted by Virginia State Police or National Record Company)
  - b. Child Protective Services Check (conducted by the Virginia Department of Social Services)

#### D. Volunteer Aide Screenings

Volunteer aides assisting paid staff or volunteers with the supervision of children. At no time will a volunteer aide be in charge of a group of children. Aides will submit to the following screening:

- i. Read this Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Policy and sign acknowledging understanding and intention to comply.
- ii. Complete:
  - a. A Sworn Statement of Affirmation
  - b. A Confidentiality Statement

#### E. Staff and Volunteer Training

All individuals will be required to attend annual training on the topic of child and youth abuse prevention. The Board of Trustees will initiate annual training by April of each year. The committees responsible for staff, volunteers and volunteer aides will be responsible for conducting the training by July 31. A record of this training will be kept in the child protection folder. The responsible committees will alert the Board of Trustees upon completion of the annual training.

F. Records. Records will be shredded three years after the staff member or volunteer leaves their position. Staff will be required to also complete the Mandated Reporters online module and submit the completed certificate to their supervisor for proper filing. [www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cps/mandated\\_reporters/cws5691](http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cps/mandated_reporters/cws5691)

#### G. Rescreening

All staff will submit to a new protection screening every three years. Volunteers will complete a new sworn statement of affirmation annually. In the event that any paid staff or volunteer becomes subject to an investigation or convicted of a barrier crime (as defined by the code of Virginia) or a founded child abuse claim, the person will notify her/his supervisor or program director immediately.

#### H. Five Year Rule

Every supervising adult (staff or volunteer) responsible for a group of children will be at least five years older than the group that they are supervising. This same holds true for any volunteer aides and VBS shepherds. At no time will any volunteer aide be solely responsible for a group of children, regardless of the five-year rule.

#### I. Two Adult Rule

For any church sponsored activity, teachers and assistants will be assigned in teams of two or more adults. While every effort will be made to have two adults in each classroom, nursery and preschool age classrooms can utilize a volunteer aide. When this two adult rule cannot be met, a roving adult may substitute as the second adult in the classroom space, provided that the roving adult is on the same hallway and the door to the classroom is left open.

For Vacation Bible School, VBS shepherds may be utilized to transport the children from place to place, provided there is a roving adult in the building at all times. The five-year rule will still be observed with regards to the age of the shepherds and the VBS participants.

Specifically for youth fellowship, there should never be present fewer than two adults, over the age of 23. If the two adult over 23-year-old minimum age cannot be met, at least one of the supervising adults must be at least 23 years old with the second adult receiving thorough training regarding this policy prior to an event.

It is against LUMC policy for any staff or volunteer to enter into a personal relationship with youth. Inappropriate contact and/or communication will not be tolerated. This includes, but is not limited to: inappropriate physical contact, phone use, texting, email, social networking. The LUMC clergy, Staff Parish Relations Committee and/or program directors will determine appropriateness of contact/communication as needed.

J. Open Classrooms

Classrooms and childcare rooms will not be locked and may be visited without prior notice by church staff, parents or other volunteers.

K. Supervision

No child/youth will be in the building or on church grounds unsupervised at any time. A procedure will be developed for signing in/out all children in the fifth grade and below. On this form space will be provided for parents/guardians to indicate where they will be while the children are in a church sponsored activity, emergency telephone number, and any other pertinent information regarding the child, if indicated. With written parent permission, children first grade and older may leave the classroom to find their parent at the conclusion of the program, provided that the parent is located within the building.

L. Transportation

Any time that children or youth leave from the church for a church sponsored event, a minimum of two adults must be present in each vehicle. **The special youth fellowship rule noted above still applies.**

N. Ratios

The maximum number of children to adults shall be dictated by the ratios developed by the Department of Social Services. For appropriate class placement, all children shall have reached the appropriate age for their designated group by September 30.

Infants-16 months	3:1
16 months-24 months	4:1
2 years	8:1
3 years-5 years	10:1
6 years-12 years	12:1
12 years-17 years	15:1

While these ratios are used, they do not change the two adult rule.

O. Overnight Events

For a church sponsored overnight event, the ratio of children/youth to adults will drop to 8:1. If the group is mixed gender, there will be a minimum of two male and two female supervising adults who meet the five-year rule. Overnight events

will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Sleeping arrangements may dictate the need for more supervising adults.

## **VI. Reporting Child Abuse**

Should there be an allegation of child abuse at LUMC the following procedures will be implemented immediately:

1. Remove the child/youth from the alleged abuser and escort the alleged abuser from the church grounds.
2. Determine if immediate medical attention is needed for the child/youth.
3. The witness to the abuse will verbally notify his/her program director.
4. The witness and program director will notify the Senior Pastor.
5. The witness will call Child Protective Services (CPS) from the Senior Pastor's office and follow CPS direction on calling Virginia State Police.
6. Immediately notify the parents of the alleged victim.
7. Immediately notify the Chairperson of Trustees.
8. The Chairperson of Trustees will immediately contact the church insurance carrier.

If the allegation involves a church staff member, the Senior Pastor and SPRC will take appropriate action regarding further employment status. If the allegation involves a volunteer, continued volunteer status will be handled by the Senior Pastor and program director, with guidance from SPRC, if needed or requested.

Observe confidentiality for both the alleged victim and the accused until the investigation is complete and appropriate action has been taken.

From the initial complaint through the conclusion of the investigation, all information shall be documented in writing and made available to the appropriate authorities as needed. At the conclusion of the investigation the file of written documentation shall be placed in a secure location and archived for a minimum of seven years.

## **VII. Review of the Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Policy**

A review of this policy will be initiated by the Board of Trustees at least every three years. Updates and changes will be made based upon changes in the following documents, but not limited to: Virginia United Methodist conference, church insurance carrier, code of Virginia, Department of Social Services Standards of Licensed Childcare. Those reviewing and amending this policy should be stakeholders in the welfare of the children and youth served by LUMC. Invitation to review should be extended to: Senior Pastor, Director of Christian Education, Youth Director, Chairperson of Trustees, Chairperson of SPRC and anyone else deemed appropriate within the church.

## VIII. Attachments

1. Sworn Statement of Affirmation
2. Child Protective Services Form
3. Confidentiality Agreement

## IX. References

*Guidelines on Local Church Adult Chaperones with Children/Youth/Vulnerable Adults attending Events Sponsored by Boards/Agencies/Commissions of The Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church.* Virginia Conference Protection Policies, Rev. 5/24/13

<http://www.vaumc.org/ncfilerepository/children/ApprovedProtectionPolicy.pdf>

*Code of Virginia.* <https://leg1.state.va.us/000/src.htm>

*Barrier Crimes for Child Day Programs.* Code of Virginia, Rev. 05/13.

[http://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/licensing/cdc/intro\\_page/background\\_investigations/guidance\\_procedures/barrier\\_crimes.pdf](http://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/licensing/cdc/intro_page/background_investigations/guidance_procedures/barrier_crimes.pdf)

*Standards for Licensed Child Day Centers.* Department of Social Services of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Rev. 1/1/2012

[http://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/licensing/cdc/intro\\_page/code\\_regulations/regulations/standards.pdf](http://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/licensing/cdc/intro_page/code_regulations/regulations/standards.pdf)

*Child Abuse Prevention Policies and Procedures.* Community United Methodist Church, Rev. 09/10

[http://www.cumcvb.org/uploads/5/7/7/0/577022/child\\_protection\\_policy.pdf](http://www.cumcvb.org/uploads/5/7/7/0/577022/child_protection_policy.pdf)

Melton, J., 2012. *Safe sanctuaries: reducing the risk of abuse in the church for children and youth.* Discipleship Resources: Nashville, TN. ISBN: 978-0-88177-543-3

LARCHMONT UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
STAFF/VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

1. I agree to abide by the policies and procedures as detailed in Larchmont United Methodist Church Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Policies and Procedures document. Please initial\_\_\_\_\_
2. I understand that through the course of my service at Larchmont United Methodist Church, I may learn certain facts about volunteers, staff, children and families. I agree to respect the confidential nature of these facts. Please initial\_\_\_\_\_
3. I agree to bring any problems or conflicts that are beyond the scope of my service to the immediate attention of the appropriate leadership. Please initial\_\_\_\_\_
4. As a mandated reporter, designated by the Code of Virginia, I understand and agree to report any suspected cases of child abuse to neglect to the Senior Pastor or appropriate program director, immediately. I further understand that it is not my responsibility to investigate any suspected cases of abuse or neglect on my own. Please initial\_\_\_\_\_

Signature\_\_\_\_\_Date\_\_\_\_\_

Year 2 Signature\_\_\_\_\_Date\_\_\_\_\_

Year 3 Signature\_\_\_\_\_Date\_\_\_\_\_