

**PARMA LUTHERN CHURCH**  
**SAFE GUARDING GOD'S CHILDREN (SGGC) POLICY**

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**I. INTRODUCTION**

It is the goal of Parma Lutheran Church to welcome children and youth 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, youth, 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 and youth can learn and grow. We accept the responsibility to recruit people with the gift of caring for children and youth, and also to protect those workers from false accusations. It is our responsibility to oversee all programs involving children and youth to make sure the environment is safe, and to have a plan of response in place should an accusation arise.

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

**II. PURPOSE**

Parma Lutheran Church's purpose for establishing this Policy, 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.

**III. 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

with children and youth, 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 and youth 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:

1. 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.
2. Adults serving with children or youth must have been actively involved in the life of our congregation for at least six months, as determined by the Pastor or Executive Committee.
3. Adults serving with children or youth 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 18 years of age, and also at least 5 years older than the oldest child under their supervision, and are unrelated to each other, either by blood or marriage, and have fully completed the SGGC training.
4. If applicable, each room will have a window in the door or the door will be left open at all times.
5. Adults volunteering 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.
6. Adults shall immediately report any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate to the staff member responsible for the activity. In their absence or if the alleged incident involved the staff person, report to the Pastor. If the alleged incident involves the Pastor, it is to be reported by the Council President. In all cases, the person responsible must report the incident, per Ohio Revised Code, to the appropriate authorities. In Cuyahoga County, the number to call is (216) 696-KIDS.
7. If abuse is alleged by church volunteers or staff, the accused shall immediately be removed from contact with children or youth until the incident reported has been resolved. This

should be handled in a discreet manner and they shall not be banned from other non-children or youth related church ministries.

#### **IV. PROCEDURES**

##### **1. Screening and recruiting**

- a. Adults volunteering to serve in a supervisory role with children and youth will complete the standard application.
- b. Adults will consent to a criminal background check, sign a statement of non-conviction, and sign the behavior standards covenant.
- c. 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 and only if necessary, the Executive Committee.

##### **2. Reporting**

- a. Adults shall immediately report any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate to the staff member responsible for the activity. In their absence or if the alleged incident involved the staff person, report to the Pastor. If the alleged incident involves the Pastor, it is to be reported by the President of the Congregation. In all cases, the person responsible must report the incident, per Ohio Revised Code, to the appropriate authorities. In Cuyahoga County, the number to call is (216) 696-KIDS.
- b. If the allegation is against a staff person, it will be investigated by the Pastor. If the allegation is against the Pastor, the Northeastern Ohio Synod will be contacted immediately by the President of the Congregation.

##### **3. Responding**

- a. A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of child abuse will be initiated. All allegations will be taken seriously and nothing will be covered up.
- b. 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.
- c. Pastoral support will be available to all persons involved in the incident.

#### 4. Specific Scenarios:

1. Overnight youth trips (National Gatherings, Winter Gathering, camps, etc.):
  - a. Response: Any offsite activity or event requires following the guidelines set forth by that particular activity or event. Specifically, this includes the allowable ratio of adults to youth participants. However, to be considered an adult chaperon, the rule of 5+ years older than the oldest youth still applies along with successfully completing the SGGC training.
2. Adults in non-supervisory role of children and youth (examples: VBS kitchen workers, VBS registration table, VBS Security, adult responsible for another participating child, etc.):
  - a. Response: The key element for consideration is whether non-SGGC trained adults have *unsupervised* access to children or youth. Kitchen workers and registration table helpers will not have unsupervised access to children or youth and therefore they are welcome to volunteer without SGGC training. So long as there are always at least two trained adults in the classroom/activity area at all times, other adults are also welcome to volunteer without SGGC training, although SGGC training is strongly encouraged.
3. Youth involvement with children at church-related activities (examples: VBS, Sunday School, Nursery, Sparklers, Choir)
  - a. Response: Youth (defined as younger than 18 years old), are welcomed and encouraged to volunteer with children and youth. Since they cannot be considered a SGGC-trained adult due to their age, they are not required to complete the SGGC training, although they can be strongly encouraged to do so. They are welcome to 'lead' portions of events, again so far as they are not considered one of the two trained adults who are also present.

#### V. REVIEW & REVISION

This policy will be reviewed periodically by the Executive Committee of Parma Lutheran Church and updated as necessary.

#### VI. EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy is effective November 1, 2009.

Revised July 1, 2010, Revised March 12, 2011, Revised May 16, 2014