

Reformation Lutheran Church Safety Policy for Children and Youth

**Christian Education Ministry
Reformation Lutheran Church
102 West Rose Tree Road
Media, PA 19063**

Updated 8/1/2025

Table of Contents

Safety for Children and Youth.....	3
Code of Conduct for Volunteers and Staff.....	5
Mandated Reporting Procedure	6
Emergency Instructions.....	11
Volunteer Agreement.....	12

Safety for Children and Youth

Jesus said, “Let the children come unto me...”

It is with this same welcoming spirit that Reformation values its ministry to children and youth and endeavors to be a vital link within the larger network of family, school, and community support for our children. We recognize that within our society there are those who can become risks to our children. In order to make every effort to protect our children and provide a safe environment at Reformation and to protect our staff members and volunteers, we have developed a **Code of Conduct** that every adult working with minors is responsible for knowing and adhering to.

While no guidelines or procedures can guarantee the safety and well-being of every child, they are designed to maximize the safety and security of those involved in our ministry. They reflect our high regard for our children, the kind of love, concern and care that Jesus exhibited, and a desire to do everything possible to make our facility safe and to make those who work with children sensitive to their protection.

We will strive to ensure that capable, responsible, ethical leaders minister to our children. These policies are intended to establish clear standards of oversight and care to all children and youth who attend our church programs. Through such intentional efforts, we hope that parents and youth will be able to see Jesus’ words lived out in the ministry of our congregation.

Inventory of Children and Youth Programs

Reformation engages with children and youth, ages 0-17, in a variety of ways. The following index will be maintained and updated annually for all school and church programs. New programs will be proposed in writing and approved by the Church Council and/or the Reformation School Board. A contact for each program will be named.

Reformation School

Stay and Play Program

Nursery School Program

Contact: Marion Boas, Director, schooldirector@relcmedia.org

Reformation Church

Small Stars (Ages 0-3)

Confirmation (Ages 12-13)

Sunday School (Ages 3-11)

Breakfast Club (Ages 14-17)

Vacation Bible School (Ages 3-10)

Youth Group (Ages 12-17)

Contact: Pastor Eileen Ruppel-Doan, pastoreileen@relcmedia.org

Zero Tolerance Policy Notice

Reformation Evangelical Lutheran Church has zero tolerance for abuse and will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of minors in any of its programs. Any mistreatment or abuse by an employee or volunteer will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or volunteer service and cooperation with law enforcement.

Reformation has zero tolerance for abuse, mistreatment, or sexual activity between children and youth within our church and school. This organization is committed to providing all children and youth with a safe environment and will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one child/youth by another child/youth. Conduct by minors that rises to the level of abuse, mistreatment, or sexual activity will result in intervention or disciplinary action, up to and including, dismissal from children, youth, and family programs and/or Reformation school programs.

In addition, Reformation will not tolerate any behavior that is classified under the definition of bullying, and to the extent that such actions are disruptive, will take the necessary steps to eliminate such behavior.

Reformation takes every allegation of abuse seriously and will cooperate fully with Childline and state and local authorities.

Behavior Expectations for Children and Youth

A copy of these expectations will be made available to parents at relcmedia.org/childsafety.

- We will encourage students to respect one another. We will strive to provide a safe, loving, caring environment and help youngsters to develop the social skills that are essential for positive learning experiences.
- If a student exhibits unacceptable behavior, one of the adults will talk with the student, stating what is inappropriate and redirect them. After several attempts at redirecting and the student does not change the behavior, that student will have a “time out” period based on the age of the student; one minute per age of child. Parent(s) will be informed of this action.
- Communication is essential. Parent(s) and Adult Instructors need to decide what is best for the student and the class.
- All words and actions will be positive, constructive, encouraging and non-threatening. The use of abusive language, including but not limited to obscene, profane, sexual, or derogatory language directed to any other participant, volunteer, or staff person, will not be tolerated.
- We are all on the same team and desire all students to benefit from the programs we offer that teach of God’s loving care.

Code of Conduct for Volunteers and Staff Working with Children and Youth

Volunteers

All adult volunteers working with children and youth (anyone under the age of 18) at or with Reformation Lutheran Church must be a member or associate member of the congregation and must be at least 18 years old or older. No volunteer will be considered for any position involving contact with minors until they have been involved with Reformation for a minimum of six months unless otherwise specifically approved by the leadership. Volunteers will complete a Volunteer Agreement form, State Police Background Check, and Child Abuse Clearance prior to working with children and youth.

Volunteer Training

Volunteer and staff training will be provided to all individuals working within any of the programs named above. This includes volunteers and staff working with any of the above named programs. Training includes, but is not limited to, distribution of policies, procedures and forms, online Praesidium courses or equivalent, and mentor training in person or by Zoom.

Background Checks

All volunteers and staff members working with minors will be required to have background checks completed and kept on file at Reformation Lutheran Church, completed every 2 years in compliance with state law. The following reports are required of all staff and volunteers working with minors:

- Criminal History from the Pennsylvania State Police
 - epatch.state.pa.us/Home.jsp
- Child Abuse History Clearance from the Department of Human Services
 - compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home

All staff members, as well as volunteers who have not been legal residents of Pennsylvania for at least the past ten consecutive years, are also required to have an FBI Clearance.

Individuals who have completed these checks with another employer or organization (such as a school or scouting) may provide certified documentation of these reports to Reformation. These checks are free for volunteers. Volunteers need to complete these checks and return them to the church office prior to serving. Reformation will cover the costs of all background checks.

What constitutes a disqualifying offense will be determined by a pastor together with the Council President and/or the Mutual Ministry team on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Staff and adult volunteers will immediately notify Reformation leadership of new arrests and/or convictions that occur in the time between clearances being collected or renewed.

Mandated Reporting

All volunteers and staff members working with minors are considered to be mandated reporters by the state of Pennsylvania. Volunteers and staff working with children and youth will be expected to complete online Praesidium or equivalent courses related to prevention and reporting of abuse, and to cooperate fully with Childline and/or state and local authorities in the event of an allegation or report of abuse. A signed acknowledgement is required for staff and volunteers stating they have received appropriate training on identifying and reporting child abuse.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at this church or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The volunteer will immediately make a report to ChildLine in accordance with Pennsylvania State Law. (Reports to ChildLine can be made by phone, **1-800-932-0313**, or online, www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/)
2. The reporter will follow up with a pastor of Reformation following the report to Childline. Confidentiality will be maintained at all steps of the process to protect the reporter.
3. The leadership of the congregation (pastors, staff, and Council) will take appropriate follow up actions including dealing with the insurance company, the media, and seeking legal counsel for the congregation. All other representatives of the church should refrain from additional action regarding these matters.
4. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.
5. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth.

Additional information regarding recognizing child abuse is also included at relcmedia.org/childsafety. Internal grievances and concerns not involving an allegation of abuse will follow the above protocol beginning at step number 2 and may additionally involve a member of the respective leadership and/or church Council. Anonymous concerns may be reported in writing.

Adult Coverage

Adults will follow, at a minimum, a 2:1 ratio of adults and minors; no less than two adults will be present with one minor, or one adult may be present with two or more minors at any given time. Children and youth are never left unsupervised. Children should be accompanied to the bathroom but not into the stall. If circumstances create a 1:1 adult and minor ratio, the adult will immediately seek out an additional adult to accompany them when possible. If no additional adult is available, the adult will open doors or move the activity so that the adult and minor are visible to others. An activity may be cancelled if the number of leaders is insufficient.

Adult Behavior Expectations

All staff and volunteers will provide an environment that is safe for all participants. No weapons, firearms, laser pointers, fireworks, or objects that could harm others are permitted at classes, meetings and events sponsored by the church. Drugs, alcohol, and tobacco are prohibited at all children and youth classes, events and meetings. Special exceptions for tobacco use may be made for adults on break. Adults will adhere to the following list of acceptable and unacceptable physical interaction with minors:

- Unacceptable behavior for dealing with children and youth:
 - Any form of sexual or unwanted contact.
 - Kissing.
 - Private massages.
 - Lying down or sleeping beside a child or youth.
 - Tickling or wrestling.
 - Hugging from behind.
 - Showing affection in isolated areas such as closets or private rooms.
 - Comments of a sexual nature that relate to physique or body development.
 - Patting on the thigh, knee, or leg.
 - Inappropriate or lengthy embraces.
- Acceptable forms of affection:
 - Holding hands during prayers or when a person is upset.
 - Side hugs.
 - Holding hands while walking small children.

- o Handshakes.
- o High fives and fist bumping.
- o Verbal praise.
- o Arms around shoulders.
- o Gentle pats on the back or shoulder.
- Minors have the right to say “no” and/or remove themselves from adults in situations that cause them to feel uncomfortable or unsafe. Minors have the right to report inappropriate behavior using the same or similar process named above.

Communicating with Minors and Technology Use

Adult volunteers and staff will not be permitted to communicate one-on-one with children and youth outside of church and school programs. Exceptions may be made only if a parent or guardian is included in communications, such as: group emails, group text messages, or shared outings with a parent present. Group messages from one adult to a class or group of youth are acceptable but another adult must also be present in the shared communication. Adult staff and volunteers will not “friend” or “follow” children or youth on social media or accept friend requests from children and youth on social media.

While supervising children and youth, adults will not use cell phones except for program related tasks and emergencies, including but not limited to: communicating with parents in the event of an emergency, using timers or other tools for the purpose of keeping track of time, tracking attendance, etc.

Gift Giving

In some circumstances, Reformation or its volunteers will present a gift to a child or youth, including but not limited to: Confirmation, First Communion, or Baptism gifts; Bible presentations; other milestone gifts. Adult staff and volunteers may present gifts to minors only in a public setting and/or with another adult present.

Classroom Security

Classroom doors will be locked from the outside and will remain closed during class time. With advance notice, parents may observe classroom activity. Parents, guardians or others with consent to drop off or pick up a child from a program must follow the check-in and check-out procedure with the teacher or leader of the program. Children under the age of 12 will be monitored in their activities at all times. Youth over the age of 12 will be monitored and/or in an authorized and supervised area of the building at all times. Random and periodic additional supervision of programs may be conducted by leadership.

First Aid

At the start of an event, all staff persons and volunteers who are first aid certified should be identified. An up-to-date first aid kit will be available. For minor injuries, first aid will be provided and the parent/guardian informed. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple first aid, the parent/guardian and the immediate supervisor will be summoned. If warranted, an ambulance will be called.

Discipline

Inappropriate conduct (such as bullying) by a child, children, and/or youths will be addressed, and the parent/guardian may be notified. Physical discipline is never an option, and harassment or threats will not be tolerated. Volunteers should consult with the leader of the activity if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

Registration

All registration forms for Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, and special Youth events will include:

- Medical information (such as allergies) that is important for teachers and leaders to know.
- Permission to enable activity leaders to seek medical treatment in the case of an emergency.
- An image release to allow photos to be posted on the bulletin board, the web, newsletter and/or newspaper documenting church events.
- Names of those who have permission to pick up the child.
- A document entitled, “Behavior Expectations” (page 4) will be made available to parents/guardians when they register their child(ren). A signature will be required indicating that they have read and understand the expectations.

Trips and Overnights

The registration materials and processes for each trip will be handled in consultation with the Chairs of the Youth and/or Christian Education ministry teams. All provisions for child and youth safety for on-site activities will apply to any off-site, overnight event. This includes expectations of adult coverage for youth and youth and adult behavior expectations. A ratio of one adult to 7 youths is recommended. This ratio applies for each gender, due to separation of genders for sleeping arrangements. All other responsibilities and requirements of adult chaperones for trips will be addressed in the corresponding adult covenants and volunteer agreement.

Reformation Lutheran Church believes that youth events and trips provide valuable opportunities for education, fellowship, service and worship. Without the leadership and mentorship of adult chaperones these opportunities would not be possible.

In order to ensure that church activities for our youth are safe and meaningful experiences for all who participate, we ask that all chaperones read and agree to follow these guidelines prior to providing leadership for these events. In doing so, all chaperones are covenanting to live in a way that supports, encourages, protects and serves our youth. Through their participation, Reformation’s chaperones reflect God’s love for all people and welcome children as Christ himself welcomed them.

Safety

All youth event/trip chaperones must be adult members or associate members of Reformation Lutheran Church, Media, PA. Throughout the trip or event, all chaperones should follow the leadership of all trip or event leaders and/or members of Reformation’s staff. The primary leader from Reformation will make all final decisions and coordinate the group’s participation.

All youth and adults are expected to follow the safety procedures and policies set forth by Reformation’s Child Safety Policy. All adult chaperones must complete either safety training or the safety policy self-study. Documentation of completion must be on file at Reformation prior to the beginning of a trip or event.

Adult chaperones are never to be in a situation where they are alone with any one youth under the age of 18. If a youth participant needs to be taken somewhere, another youth or adult must accompany the chaperone and the youth. Any trips with youth off-site of the event must be confirmed with the primary leader(s) of the trip and/or event.

Supervision

All chaperones are expected to provide supervision for the youth participants. Chaperones must be available to the youth participants and not become distracted by other activities. Care and safety of the youth is the primary responsibility of the chaperones. Being present and attentive to the youth is essential.

Chaperones must be knowledgeable about behavior expectations and willing to take appropriate steps to ensure the safety and security of all participants. If youth participants act in a way that is potentially harmful, the chaperone should take appropriate steps to correct the behavior and should notify the trip or event leader(s) of the situation and discuss any needed follow-up action.

Chaperones need to be able to assess possible safety issues and manage alternative actions in order to properly address these situations. This includes being aware of procedure and care for any emergent situations, including knowledge of the location of first aid kits, AEDs, and emergency personnel. Chaperones who are first-aid trained should make the leadership team aware.

Transportation

All drivers must possess a valid driver's license and possess insurance for any personal vehicles used for transporting youth participants. All drivers transporting youth under the age of 18 must be at least 25 years of age. All passengers must be in a seat and using a seat belt. All traffic and state laws must be followed by all drivers.

When traveling with multiple vehicles in a caravan style, all drivers should try to ensure that the group continues to travel together.

Reformation will obtain and maintain on file a copy of all drivers' licenses for each trip. Copies will be destroyed upon the trip's completion.

When rental vehicles are used for an event/trip, all drivers will follow the rental agency protocol to be added as registered drivers for the vehicles.

Lodging

All participants must sleep in assigned sleeping areas. Chaperones should never share a bed with a youth participant. When possible, a chaperone should take any semi-private sleeping area. If hotel rooms are being used for lodging and a room is only occupied by youth, a chaperone will be designated to check-in with the youth that are being roomed separately. When common shower rooms are being used, times should be designated for individuals under 18 years of age and separate times for individuals above 18 years of age to shower.

Reformation Emergency Instructions

Preparing for an emergency exit:

1. **Carry your cell phone with you.** Always have your cell phone charged and ready when you are in the classroom so that calls can be made to parents in case of an emergency.
2. **Know the two exits closest to you.** In case of a fire or some other hazard blocking your primary exit, be prepared to take your students to the alternate exit.

When there is a fire or other emergency, you will hear the alarm sound.

Age 3 – Grade 12: Instruct students to line up at the door. Count heads. Take a cell phone with you. Place one adult at the head of the line and one adult at the end of the line. Tell them, “Follow the leader (adult’s name) and walk, don’t run.”

Adults (including parents with babes-in-arms): Instruct adults to exit the building at the closest exit to them, away from the fire or other hazard.

All classes are to meet at a safe distance away from the building in either of the parking lots located on the sides of the Church.

Staff members will check bathrooms and hallways to assure that all people have exited the building safely.

Ages Infant – Grade 12: Call name of each student.

If student is not accounted for, notify a staff member

Do not go back inside the building!

Once you are safely out, do not go back in.

Stay with your class. Only staff may go back inside the building

Once the “All Clear” has been given by one of the Staff, you may return inside the building.

Again, follow the adult leader and walk, don’t run

In the event of an emergency that does not allow re-entry, stay with your class until each student has been picked up by their caregiver. Report to the staff once all of your class has been dismissed to the caregivers. Do not leave without reporting to the staff.

Intruders/Lockdown procedure

If there is a hostile intruder or other reason for a lockdown the following procedure should be followed:

- Shelter in the room or classroom you are in, lock doors to prohibit entrance to the room, turn off the lights and move away from any doors or windows. Try to remain as quiet as possible and check attendance.
 - Note: Classrooms remain locked and closed when classes are in session.
 - Flashlights and lanterns can be used in the lower level classrooms to guide children to the corner.
- Call 911 immediately.
- Use cell or landline phones to communicate with other classes only when it is safe to do so.
- Remain in place and await further instruction from designated staff or police.

Sources

National Penn Insurance

800 Route 113, Souderton, PA 18964

Account Manager: Lynne Whitham, 215-703-4319, lynne.whitham@nationalpenn.com

SEPA Synod Office

7241 Germantown Ave, Philadelphia PA 19119

Youth Ministry Specialist:

Advisor to the Bishop for Fitness for Ministry: The Rev. Dr. Dolores E. Littleton, LMFT

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Administration for Children and Families

Child Welfare Information Gateway (www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/signs.cfm)

Policy Revisions

The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis and approved by the congregation Council.

**Reformation Lutheran Church
Volunteer Agreement**

For Reformation's full Child Safety Policy, visit relcmedia.org/childsafety.
To make a report of suspected child abuse immediately, call Childline: **(800) 932-0313**

Legal Name:

Address:

Email:

Phone:

Volunteer Area (*circle*): Sunday School Confirmation Youth Group Vacation Bible School

Screening Questions (*circle yes or no*)

1. Have you been a legal resident of Pennsylvania continuously for the last 10 years? Y N
2. Have you ever been accused, charged, alleged to have or have you ever committed any act of neglecting, abusing, or molesting any minor or vulnerable adult? Y N
3. I agree to abide by the code of conduct outlined in Reformation's Child Safety Policy. Y N
4. I have applied for and/or submitted State Background Check and Child Abuse clearances. Y N
5. **I understand that I am a mandated reporter** of suspected child abuse in the state of Pennsylvania and agree to follow the procedure for reporting, available in Reformation's Child Safety Policy and online at relcmedia.org/childsafety. Y N
6. I have other questions or concerns to disclose and would like to speak to a Pastor. Y N

Signature

Date