

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.