

# **THE CHURCH OF ST. LUKE IN THE FIELDS CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

## **Purpose:**

God embraces children with love, placing their nurture and care in our hands. We believe that children should be safe from all forms of abuse and neglect. We, the Church, will be advocates for children and establish clearly defined safeguards, policies and procedures for their protection when they are involved with Church activities and Church personnel. To further our goal of being a safe and welcoming community for children, The Church of St. Luke in the Fields has established a policy to reduce the risk of child abuse or maltreatment, including sexual abuse or misconduct.

## **Definition:**

A “child” or “children” means anyone under the age of 18 years.

Child sexual abuse or misconduct includes touching or physical contact as well as non-touching/non-physical interaction between a child and another child, or between a child and an adult for any sexual purpose including sexual stimulation. This behavior is always considered forced when the interaction involves a child and an adult whether or not the child appears to have consented, because a child is not legally capable of consent.

## **Standards of Conduct:**

- Paid and volunteer adults and youth helpers shall not touch, interact with, or otherwise communicate with children in any way that is intended to be or has the effect of having a sexual purpose or result, including an encounter that is sexually stimulating. Common expressions of affection (hugs), affirmation (pats on the back), support (prayers), or physical caretaking (changing diapers, toileting, etc.) are appropriate in this community of caring Christians. *Care must be taken that expressions of affection and affirmation should not be excessive, inappropriate or imposed upon a child.* As a community, we affirm children’s right to resist unwanted contact and to define the physical and sexual boundaries. Adults interacting with children in all Church programs must respect the physical space surrounding a child and be attentive to any physical contact, gestures or visual inspections of the child, as well as conversation or exposure to text or images that could be uncomfortable or inappropriate in a sexual way, have a sexual connotation, be sexually stimulating or appear to have a sexual purpose.
- All leaders shall model respectful behavior toward people of all races, gender and gender expressions, sexual orientations, economic conditions, abilities and religions.
- Volunteer and paid staff are not to give gifts to children without the prior knowledge and approval of the parent(s) or guardian and responsible clergy.
- For all activities on or off church premises, adults working with children should ideally work in pairs or with a youth helper (a teenager in high school who assists with younger children). Visual access to classrooms (door with window or open door) is provided at all times; and parents and staff may visit at any time unannounced. If a one-on-one meeting is appropriate, for example in the case of youth confirmation sponsors, adults will notify another adult where he or she will be, and it should be conducted in an environment that is public and/or visible to other adults.

- There will be no secret organizations. There will be no meetings at locations other than the Church or a site approved by supervising clergy staff and announced in advance.
- Children and youth involved in a church-sponsored activity will be transported in groups rather than alone. Single adults should not drive a single child without the permission of the child's parent or guardian and the church staff member responsible for the program. Copies of drivers' licenses and proof of insurance are required for anyone involved in transporting children or youth, to be given to the Senior Associate or delegate before such transport. At no time will one adult take children or youth on an overnight outing by him or herself. All church related overnight events for young people and accompanying adults must be approved by the clergy staff and parents or guardians.
- Discipline entails first reprimands, possible quiet time and always notification of parents or guardians. Children will not be spanked ever, nor subject to physical contact or restraint unless absolutely necessary to protect the child or others, nor will children be disciplined in any way that deprives them of their basic rights to be safe and comfortable. Psychological and/or emotional pressure will not be used to gain a child's cooperation. Children and youth should never be coerced or shamed into any activity.
- Children will not be left alone on church property. Paid or volunteer staff will wait with the child or youth in a public place until their responsible adult arrives. Parents should pick up their children promptly. Leaders of older teens who walk or take public transportation should always note the time when a young person leaves; teens who leave alone must have their parent's written authorization to do so (obtained at the time of registration), the only exception being "The Church": Art, Acceptance and a Place to Be Yourself, which is a drop in program that does not require parental permission.

Supervision and Accountability:

- Education, friendship and worship programs for children and youth are under the supervision of the Vestry and the Rector, who shall have responsibility for implementing this policy. Members of the Vestry and related staff will seek sufficient numbers of paid and volunteer leaders to allow staffing of the programs as stated above.
- Education and programming for children and youth will regularly include an affirmation of their rights to resist unwanted contact or conduct and the people to whom they can report any threat to their physical and emotional comfort and safety. Children will be reassured that they have the right to establish boundaries and will not be treated negatively if they speak of individual concerns.
- Communication and explanation of this policy will be included annually in all training and orientation programs for volunteers working with children. All volunteers and paid staff working with children will sign an acknowledgement that they have read and understood the policy prior to beginning their work. Volunteer and paid staff are advised that they must report promptly any concerns about possible failure to comply with this policy.
- As a condition of employment, and prior to any offer of employment, any staff member called and employed by the Church of St. Luke in the Fields will be required to state whether she or he has ever been convicted of a crime involving child abuse or misconduct, and undergo a search of the Child Abuse Registry in Albany, NY.

- Background checks will be performed on all senior staff prior to hire. All staff must sign a statement acknowledging that they have reviewed and understand the policy; and all paid staff must complete the Diocesan Training for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse.<sup>1</sup>
- Parents and guardians are encouraged to make themselves aware of and familiar with persons with whom their child is in contact, be aware of and familiar with this policy, and report any concerns promptly. Employment or volunteer leadership in the church is not a guarantee for a “safe” leader.

Reporting:

- Any child or adult who has a question or concern about the behavior of adult or youth leaders may make an inquiry or complaint to the Senior Associate, the Rector or one of the Wardens. All complaints will be investigated and conclusions, including whether or not action was taken, will be reported to the complainant. A written record will be kept of all complaints and any resulting actions.
- A person who has reason to believe that abuse or misconduct covered by this policy or any related Church policy has occurred shall immediately report such information to the staff person supervising the activity and the Rector. It is St. Luke’s policy to report all allegations of child abuse or maltreatment, including sexual abuse and misconduct, to the appropriate government authority as required by law (including a written report within 36 hours). St. Luke’s will cooperate fully with government authorities in the reporting and investigation of any allegations of child abuse or maltreatment, whether by Church staff or volunteers or by the child’s family or those responsible for the child.

NEW YORK STATE CENTRAL REGISTER OF CHILD ABUSE AND  
MALTREATMENT (“Child Abuse HOTLINE”):  
1-800-342-3720  
Or in NYC 311

- The Rector will inform the Vestry that an allegation requiring reporting has been made and reported. Those persons involved in the investigation should hold relevant information in confidence, subject to such disclosures as are required by church procedures or required by law. As appropriate, the Rector also will inform the Bishop.

**CHILD PROTECTION EMERGENCY PLANS**

The Church of St. Luke in the Fields has taken steps to inform and train paid and volunteers for the event of an emergency. *If such an emergency were to occur during Sunday School, most likely parents would be close enough to take responsibility for their children immediately.* However in the case of other programs for children and youth, and to be prepared, we have developed the following procedures and safeguards:

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<sup>1</sup> Violation of this policy by any paid staff shall be ground for immediate disciplinary action, including among other actions termination of employment. Violation of this policy by any volunteer (adult or youth) working with children shall be grounds for immediate disciplinary action, which may include among other actions termination of the volunteer’s involvement in the program.

### **Fire Drills**

The Sunday School/Nursery, and the Go St. Luke's Summer Program will hold at least one fire drill during the year. All groups will meet in front of the church on the Hudson Street sidewalk: groups in the Parish House will exit out the front door and gather in front of the church, groups in the church building will exit through the most immediate door (Laughlin Hall or back door) and follow the sidewalk to the front of the church. Groups in the school building will exit through the dining room into the Garden, or if blocked out the back onto Greenwich Street, and gather in front of the church. The Fire Drill procedure will be used for any emergency that requires evacuating the buildings. Staff will bring attendance books with them, and take attendance at the assembly point. As parents/caregivers pick-up children, please remember to sign them out.

### **Shelter in Place**

If for some reason we are required to stay inside for any length of time (most often as a result of police activity), the Parish House groups will gather in the Parlor, the church building groups will gather in the Choir Room, and the school building groups will gather in the Gym. Small supplies of provisions (water & snacks) are available from the closet in Laughlin Hall. Staff will bring attendance books with them and take attendance at the assembly point. As parents/caregivers pick-up or join children, please remember to sign them out.

### **First Aid/Medication**

First Aid kits will be available in each building; CPR and basic first aid training will be offered to teachers. First Aid kits do not include medication and Church volunteer or paid staff will not administer medication to children. If a child requires medication during a program, a parent/guardian must return to administer it.