

St. Philip Lutheran Church, ELCA Abuse Prevention Policy

**Raleigh, North Carolina
February 2003**

As members of the congregation of St. Philip, blessed with the opportunity to lend a hand in service to our youth, we promise to provide them with love, support, guidance, wisdom, counsel, opportunities for spiritual and intellectual growth, and a loving community where they are safe, accepted in all that they are and in what they do as they learn how to live in a changing world, while always keeping Christ in the center.

The most precious resource at St. Philip Lutheran Church is our children. Abuse refers to any unwanted physical, sexual, emotional, or verbal attention. Sexual abuse is sexual contact with “any person under the age of eighteen years or anyone over the age of eighteen years without mental capacity to consent, or any person when the conduct includes force, threat, coercion, intimidation, or misuse of office or position.” Physical abuse includes such activities as beating, harmful restraint, and use of a weapon or instrument that results in or could result in physical injury. Emotional abuse includes attitudes, behaviors, or repeated comments that could create lasting emotional or psychological damage. Verbal abuse is language that harasses, intimidates, and belittles a person or that person’s ideas, conduct, or appearance.

Under North Carolina law, “any person or institution who has cause to suspect that any juvenile is abused or neglected shall report the case of that juvenile to the director of the Department of Social Services in the county where the juvenile resides or is found.” Suspicions of abuse of disabled adults are to be reported to the Department of Social Services, Adult Protective Services. The report may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing. It is hoped, but not required, that the caller identify him/herself.

The following policy reflects our commitment to provide protective care for all our children, youth, volunteers, and staff who participate in our programs and use our facilities. It applies to all ministries of St. Philip Lutheran Church, its schools, and congregational organizations, and to the paid employees and volunteers who staff those ministries.

- Adults who have been convicted of either child sexual or physical abuse should not volunteer service in any St. Philip sponsored activity or program for children or youth.
- As part of the recruitment process for all paid part-time and full-time employees, regardless of the task, and all volunteer workers involved with children and youth, qualifications for the job will be set forth, and the full-time staff person responsible for children and youth (in those cases where children are involved in the ministry) or the pastor (in those cases where only adults are involved in the ministry) must be satisfied that such qualifications are met. A screening process may include securing character references and, at the congregation’s expense, securing a background report from the appropriate legal agencies.
- All volunteers working with children/youth are to be members and regular worshippers at St. Philip Lutheran Church for a minimum of six months prior to working with children or youth. Exceptions to this requirement must have the approval of the pastor or the full-time staff person who has primary responsibility for children and youth ministries.

- For the protection of all involved, two adults (not from the same family) should be present at all times when children are present for an activity. If two persons from the same family work together, another person should be in the immediate area at all times. Except when an adult is present, older youth are not permitted to supervise younger children or youth. A minimum of two adults should be present at an overnight activity. If male and female children/youth are both present, both male and female chaperons should be present. There will be separate accommodations for both sexes on overnight events. “Buddy system” should be used by staff whenever possible, but especially when working with youth of the opposite sex.
- One-to-one counseling with a student should always occur in a public place – never alone in a car or in a private place.
- Driving alone with a student of the opposite sex should be avoided at all times, especially when working with troubled teens. However, whenever adults transport children in private automobiles, record should be made noting the driver and passengers in each vehicle. Youth will not be allowed to transport other youth to and from church activities unless parents are notified and give authorization.
- There will be no secret organizations. Hazing and derogatory comments by leaders or youth will not be tolerated. Appropriate attire will be expected. Any verbal or nonverbal sexual behavior with any youth is inappropriate. Dating or going out with any youth is forbidden. Discretion must be used in dealing with all youth, especially regarding physical contact. Innocent behavior can be misinterpreted. A hug around the shoulders is not sexual abuse, but a full boy hug, stroking, massaging, or an affectionate kiss raises questions. Any overt display of affection should be made in a public setting in front of other group members. Sexual gestures or overtures a youth makes to a staff member should be reported to the youth director or pastor so that discussion can be held with the youth and parent(s). Romantic or sexual attraction between a student and an adult leader should be brought up and discussed with the pastor for prayer and guidance.
- No alcohol, drugs, or tobacco may be used when working with youth. No visiting in the room or sleeping area of a member of the opposite sex is allowed. No unauthorized departure from any event is permitted. Participate in all activities with a spirit of cooperation and an attitude of openness. Be on time to all activities. Respect other adults and youth leaders. Respect and care for those in the group as sisters and brothers in Christ.
- Privileged information will be kept confidential unless abuse is suspected, in which case the pastor and the Council President (or other person designated by the Council President) will be informed. If there is any claim of sexual abuse, legal authorities and the insurance company will be notified promptly. Supervision of compliance by those in the congregation who work with children and youth will be the responsibility of the full-time staff person responsible for children and youth ministries. All youth will be advised of the above guidelines and will be encouraged to report improper behavior to other youth leaders, pastors, or members of the youth committee immediately. Such reports will be acted upon promptly.

Abuse Prevention Policy Information Form St. Philip Lutheran Church, Raleigh, NC

This form is to be completed by any volunteer or paid worker with children or youth in accordance with St. Philip Lutheran Church's Abuse Prevention Policy. This is not an employment application form. The purpose of this form is to assist the congregation in providing a safe environment for minors by assuring the highest moral and ethical competencies possible for adults working with minors. If you do not feel comfortable in writing answers to these questions, you may speak with the pastor. Such a request does not necessarily disqualify you from working with the congregation's ministries.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Have you ever been convicted of a crime against a minor? If yes, please explain.

List other churches you have attended or where you have worked with minors, and indicate the type of work you did and dates.

List two personal references (not related to you) that know of your work with minor children, and indicate how they can be contacted.

Have you read the congregation's Abuse Prevention Policy? (circle one) Yes No

By your signature you acknowledge your answers to be true and complete, and that any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection or later dismissal. Permission is also given for contact to be made with the references, and all who offer references are released from any liability for such references made in good faith. Further, permission is given for a criminal records background check.

Signature and Date