

Safe Church Policy Summary

East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church

See complete policy for more details.

1. The Safe Church Committee is composed of a chairperson, pastor, the Nurture Commission chair, children's primary Sunday School superintendent, one member of the Church Board, and the church Office Assistant as staff role. This committee is responsible to implement and review this policy. They will oversee clearances and yearly training.
2. General guidelines
 - Child abuse, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and sexual misconduct are prohibited.
 - Two (2) approved adults will be present at church sponsored children/youth activities. When this is not possible, all activities will be conducted in a public place and in plain view (doors open, windows clear).
 - Everyone is expected to interact in healthy ways with all children and youth in our church, and respect a child/youth's refusal of affection.
 - Parents are responsible for diapering their children.
3. Approved adults are those adults who desire to work with children/youth less than 18 years of age. This includes, but is not limited to: pastors, all paid ECSMC staff, Sunday School teachers, MYF & Jr. Youth leaders & teachers, mentors, nursery workers, children's church leaders, and ushers. Youth nursery workers are exempt from needing to be approved adults as long as they are working with an approved adult.
4. Approved adults must meet the following guidelines:
 - a. Be at least 20 years old,
 - b. Attend ECSMC for a minimum of six months,
 - c. Complete a Personal Information Form,
 - d. Sign and comply with our Safe Church Covenant,
 - e. Attend a congregation-authorized training session every five years.
 - f. Obtain the following certifications:
 - 1) Report of criminal history from the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP); and
 - 2) Child Abuse History certification from the Department of Human Services (Child Abuse).
 - 3) If the volunteer has not been a continuous resident of Pennsylvania for the past 10 years, a fingerprint based federal criminal history (FBI) is required, submitted through the Pennsylvania State Police or its authorized agent.
5. Children and youth must have a completed and signed general permission and medical release form on file to participate in activities. These forms are updated yearly.
6. An additional overnight-permission form must be filled out for children/youth engaged in overnight activities. Overnight activities involving children/youth will be chaperoned by at least two approved adults.

7. When being transported for church activities children and youth shall have at least one approved adult in each vehicle. Drivers must be 21 years or older.
8. Mentoring relationships are an exception to the policy of needing 2 approved adults present for all activities with youth. This additional risk is addressed by having mentors and amigos inform parents/guardians of their activities. All mentoring with children or youth should always occur in a public place, or in the homes of mentor and/or youth. Mentors are also expected to follow all other guidelines for approved adults.
9. With regard to social media, all adults will copy parents/guardians on all electronic communications with a child, keep parents/guardians apprised of ongoing texting or phone conversations, and keep communication traceable. Photos of children or youth will not be shared on personal social media platforms without permission from a parent/guardian.
10. Under the Child Protective Services Law adults, paid or unpaid, who work with children; adult volunteers in a setting with children; or adults who come in direct contact with children in a program, activity, or service is a mandated reporter and must immediately report suspicions of child abuse or neglect. Minors are not mandated reporters.

Mandated reporters must immediately report “out” of the organization by phone to **ChildLine (1-800-932-0313)** or at www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/Public/home. After reporting to ChildLine, volunteers are required to report to a pastor or Board Chair. Detailed questioning of a child or suspected abuser should be conducted by legal authorities, not by church workers.

11. Training in safe church procedures will be provided every year. All staff and volunteers must attend a training at the beginning of their service and every five years after that. During Sunday School, children and youth will be taught healthy physical, emotional and sexual boundaries using appropriate curriculum.
12. Care for survivors: Given the prevalence of sexual abuse, our congregation assumes there are survivors of abuse in the congregation and commits to:
 - a. Caring for them, listening to their concerns and tending to their needs.
 - b. Allowing their voices to be heard in sensitive and confidential ways.
 - c. Engaging the services of professional counselors and facilitators, as needed.
13. Relating to known sexual offenders: When the congregation becomes aware that a sexual offender is currently, or would like to attend worship services at ECSMC, they will be welcome to attend services under these conditions: if they have fulfilled their sentences, if they are willing to meet with their victims if the victims request this, if they abide by the guidelines provided in Appendix C, and if the congregation is able to provide the needed supervision and accountability.

However, if the offender’s victim(s) and/or their family members are present in the congregation, it may be necessary to provide other worship and community opportunities for the offender, in order to avoid additional trauma to the victim(s), and allow healing to occur.
14. Details about the congregation’s response plan to suspected child abuse, and expectations for known sexual offenders are in the complete policy.