

Safe Sanctuary Policy

Revised: April 11, 2016

Adopted: May 1, 2014

All employees, volunteers and groups/organizations using the facility of First Church of God New Cumberland (i.e. NARC, Girl Scouts, etc.) will be asked to comply with this Safe Sanctuary Policy.

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*Jesus said,
“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them.”*

Abuse occurs in all demographic, socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, and religious groups. A difference in age, gender, authoritative positions or roles, can create a differential of power. And where there is a differential of power there is a potential for abuse.

Therefore, we, the First Church of God of New Cumberland, adopt this policy and procedures to reduce the risk of abuse in our church, and to protect those whom God entrusts to our care. We seek to protect our children, youth, & vulnerable adults. We desire to guard the name of Jesus Christ, as well as our workers, and our church. We are committed to providing a safe community in which people can safely grow, learn, & serve.

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Section I – Basic Policy

- ❖ Children are our most precious gift from God, and First Church of God of New Cumberland (FCGNC) is committed to being the best possible stewards of this precious gift. Our primary purpose is to protect the children (and vulnerable adults) of our congregation. FCGNC's Safe Sanctuary Policy is a tool in fulfilling this important stewardship responsibility.

Overall Goals:

The primary goal of the Safe Sanctuary Policy is to ensure the safety of all children and vulnerable adults, in the care of FCGNC. This includes children participating in activities within FCGNC's facilities and activities at off-site locations.

Overall Approach:

The primary focus of this policy is prevention. This policy will be carried out through the following primary courses of action in which FCGNC will:

1. Establish procedures for preventing incidents of abuse or sexual misconduct and for reporting incidents or allegations of any type of abuse or misconduct.
2. Provide procedures and guidelines for the screening, education and training of all leaders and volunteers who work with youth or children in order to conduct activities and programs safely.
3. Establish procedures for limiting the liability of First Church of God of New Cumberland and its employees and volunteers.
4. Establish best practices for adults involved in all children's activities, and screen applicable adults to ensure they are approved before they are permitted to supervise or assist in children's activities.
5. Immediately terminate any inappropriate or questionable behavior, and report it to appropriate authorities.

Section II – Standards, Screening, and Training

1. Screening Policy and Standards

- ❖ Without exception, every candidate for a paid position or volunteer position having involvement with children will be screened. This screening is designed to (1) deter persons with a history of child abuse from applying for such positions, and (2) detect such persons if they do apply and (3) protect our children and volunteers.

A. Applicability:

1. Employees: All paid employees must undergo and pass the screening procedure as part of their initial job application, and at least once every five years.
2. FCGNC Volunteers: Everyone 18 years and older who volunteer to participate in FCGNC children's activities must undergo the screening procedure as a prerequisite to their approval as a volunteer and at least once every 5 years.
3. Those organizations who recurrently use FCGNC facilities for activities authorized but not sponsored by FCGNC must undergo the screening procedure as a prerequisite to using FCGNC's facilities (i.e. Kinder Musik), or agree to indemnify and hold the church harmless from any acts and/or admissions of non compliance that would arise out of said use of the facilities.
4. Non-Recurring users: When organizations apply to use FCGNC facilities on a non-recurring basis, they must certify that their organization has a child abuse prevention program in place. And agree to indemnify and hold the church harmless from any acts and/or admissions of non compliance that would arise out of said use of the facilities.

2. Screening procedures:

- There is a 6-month waiting period for new church attendees before they are allowed to have unsupervised access to youth or children as part of any of our ministries.
 - When an individual applies to be an employee, volunteer, or recurring user of FCGNC's facilities, the representative from FCGNC (Pastor, secretary, committee chair) will give them a copy of the Safe Sanctuary Policy and pertinent application forms for records checks. It is the applicant's responsibility to complete all record's checks. Reimbursement from the church will be provided when receipts are received.
1. Read our Safe Sanctuaries Policy
 2. Complete our **Church Volunteer Application**, return it to pastor
 3. Obtain a **PA State Police Clearances certificate**, return it to pastor
 4. Obtain a **Child Abuse Clearances certificate**, return it to pastor
 5. Read the Mandated Reporter FAQ sheets, and verify that you have lived in Pennsylvania for the past ten years by completing the **Mandated Reporter/PA Resident form**, return it to pastor. If you have NOT lived in PA for the past 10 years, obtain FBI clearances certificate,

return it to pastor. (**Employees must obtain FBI clearances**, and all of the above clearances PRIOR to employment.)

6. Complete Safe Sanctuary training.

❖ **Processing and Screening Applications:**

- Upon receiving all of the aforementioned clearance forms the pastor and/or the appropriate commission will decide whether the candidate may perform the subject duties. The candidate will be informed of the decision.
- All documents related to a candidate's application shall be maintained in a confidential file.

3. Standards for applicants

❖ Results of application packet will be processed as follows:

- A. Applicants Guilty of Child Abuse [by either conviction or guilty plea] these individuals shall not work with children or youth in a volunteer or paid capacity. Anyone who has been convicted or plead guilty to child abuse will not be permitted to work with children and youth at FCGNC
- B. Applicants Charged with Child Abuse: The application will be held in suspension until the matter is resolved.
- C. Any individual who has had a Child Abuse check come back with either an indicated or founded status will not be permitted to work with youth and children.

PA state law requires that people be disqualified from service if they have any violation contained in PA Title 23, Section 6344(c) details what will disqualify an employee or volunteer from service.

*****Final decision on an application will be made on a case-by case basis, but always in favor of protecting the child.**

Section III - Response to Reports of Child Abuse

1. **Secure Child's Safety:** Any inappropriate conduct or relationships involving a child or adolescent shall be confronted and stopped immediately. The first priority is to ensure the safety of the child/children.
2. **Call Pennsylvania Child Line:** The person who discerns suspected child abuse shall immediately report it to the **Child Line at 1-800-932-0313**. This central agency handles all reports of actual or suspected child abuse throughout the state, 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. **PA Title 23, Section 6313 details the procedure for reporting abuse in Pennsylvania.**

3. Notify the Pastor and Ministry Leader: In the event of actual or suspected child abuse, the person who discerns it shall report it immediately to the pastor and the leader of the particular ministry. If the pastor is not available, they shall report it to the administrative council president.

A mandated reporter making an oral report under paragraph (1) of suspected child abuse shall also make a written report, which may be submitted electronically, within 48 hours to the department or county agency assigned to the case in a manner and format prescribed by the department. The written report of suspected child abuse, which may be submitted electronically, shall include the following information, if known:

- (1) The names and addresses of the child, the child's parents and any other person responsible for the child's welfare.
- (2) Where the suspected abuse occurred.
- (3) The age and sex of each subject of the report.
- (4) The nature and extent of the suspected child abuse, including any evidence of prior abuse to the child or any sibling of the child.
- (5) The name and relationship of each individual responsible for causing the suspected abuse and any evidence of prior abuse by each individual.
- (6) Family composition.
- (7) The source of the report.
- (8) The name, telephone number, and e-mail address of the person making the report.
- (9) The actions taken by the person making the report.
- (10) Any other information required by Federal law or regulation.
- (11) Any other information that the department requires by regulation.

4. Public Information and Guidance:

- A. Child abuse incidents are very sensitive in nature. Therefore, related information is quite confidential, and it is governed by special laws and regulations.
- B. Unless advised otherwise by FCGNC's legal counsel, all requests for information regarding a reported incident shall be referred to the Child Protective Services agency in the county in which the incident was alleged to have occurred. In Cumberland County, the office is Cumberland County Children and Youth Services.

Section IV – Guidelines for Children and Youth Ministry

1. General Practices and Procedures – For all activities involving children and youth

- A. Multiple Supervisors Preferred – One adult with Safe Sanctuary clearances is required during any church activity involving children or youth. It is greatly preferred to have two or more adults with clearances. When two adults with clearances are not present, there should be other adults in the general area, and activities should be kept to an area with open visibility. During times of one on one instruction it is required that the session be conducted in a visually accessible area and that an adult be present in that vicinity.

The First Church of God of New Cumberland
323 Reno Street, New Cumberland, PA 17070

Volunteer/Employee Application Form

Name (print): _____

Address: _____

Cell Phone:: _____ Home Phone :: _____

References: List three references, including their addresses and phone numbers. A former pastor would be a useful reference. Do not include former employers or relatives.

Questions:

1. Have you ever been convicted of a crime? Yes No
If so, please explain:

2. Have you been convicted of a child abuse offense, ever Participated Yes No
in, or been accused, convicted or pleaded guilty or no contest to abuse?

3. Have you been attending NCFCOG for more than six months? Yes No

4. Answer only if you will be transporting Children and Youth:
List any traffic violations in the past five years:

Do you have a current driver's license?

Do you have auto insurance?

Insurance Company & Policy Number: _____

To the best of my knowledge and ability, I will take an active role in providing for the safety and well-being of those under my care. I have read and agree to follow the policies of this Safe Sanctuary Policy.

Signed _____ Date _____