



ZION'S STONE CHURCH
Lutheran and United Church of Christ
45 Cemetery Road
New Ringgold, PA 17960
(570) 386-5111



SAFE CHURCH – Child Protection Policy

General Purpose Statement

Zion's Stone Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the following practices, our goal is to protect the children of Zion's Stone Church from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms "child" or "children" include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term "worker" includes both paid and volunteer persons who work with children.

Selection of Workers

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

a) Two Month Rule

No applicant will be considered for any position involving contact with minors until she/he has been involved with Zion's Stone Church for a minimum of two (2) months. The time of interaction and observation of the applicant allows for a better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children. This time period can be waived if the applicant has a prior relationship with the Church.

b) Application

All persons or volunteers seeking to work with children must orally or verbally express interest to a member of the respective internal organization. Application will require that an individual sign a disclosure statement (Appendix A1), the signature of which must be witnessed by a member of the internal organization to which the individual is applying. This disclosure will then be kept on file in the Zion's Stone Church office.

All individuals seeking a position of employment to work with children will be subject to standard hiring practices in addition to the signing of the above mentioned disclosure statement.

c) Interview

Upon completion of the application process, a face to face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

d) Reference Checks

In the event that the applied for position is a paid position, at least two of the applicants references will be checked. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organization where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at Zion's Stone Church.

e) Criminal Background Check(s)

A Pennsylvania criminal history report and certification from the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services is required for all employees (regardless of position) and for the following categories of volunteers:

- Those who will be involved in our Sunday School program.
- Those who will be involved with our Youth Group.
- Those involved in one-on-one mentorship of children; and
- Those having occasional one-on-one contact with children (such as vehicle drivers)

An FBI Criminal History report will be required for any prospective paid employee or volunteer. If a prospective volunteer has been a resident of Pennsylvania for the 10 years prior to the application for volunteer service, this check can be waived. In the event that the FBI check is waived, the volunteer will be asked to sign a document attesting to the fact that they have been a Pennsylvania resident for the 10 years prior to application (Appendix A2).

Before any background check is run, prospective paid workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing the Church to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will be unable to work with children.

Volunteers are encouraged to submit their own background checks and remit results to the program administrator for filing at Zion's Stone Church. When possible the cost of background checks for volunteers should initially be borne by the volunteer, but reimbursement can be obtained if so desired. If resources such as internet or credit cards

are required for submission of the background check, the volunteer should contact the program administrator.

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the officers/directors of the pertinent affiliated organization (i.e. Youth Group Organizers, Sunday School Administrators, Church Board, etc.) on a case by case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application/disclosure form will also be a disqualifying event.

Any disclosure statements, certifications of residence and background check results will be maintained in confidence on file at Zion's Stone Church.

Two Adult Policy

It is our goal that a minimum of two adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. However, some youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open (or comply with stipulations in the open door policy) and strive to have no fewer than three (3) students with the adult teacher.

Transportation during youth activities is permitted with only one adult in the vehicle, however, the 3 children to one adult ratio should be observed whenever possible.

Open Door Policy

All classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

Teenage Workers

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for "babysitters" (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under the age of 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- Must be at least age 13
- Must be under the supervision of an adult and should not be left alone with children (except in emergency circumstances)

Discipline Policy

It is the policy of Zion's Stone Church not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting or

other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with the Pastor of the Congregation if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- Physical abuse – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns and biting.
- Emotional abuse – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- Sexual abuse – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest and pornography.
- Neglect – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as inadequate food, water, shelter and medical care.

Childcare workers or volunteers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at Zion’s Stone Church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the Pastor of the Congregation or a member of the Church Board for further action including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at Zion’s Stone Church or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. The individual alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation.
3. Civil authorities will be notified, and Zion’s Stone Church will comply with the state’s requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. Zion’s Stone Church will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
5. The Pastor of the Congregation will be our spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he or she is alleged to be involved. We will seek the

advice of legal counsel before responding to media inquiries or releasing information to the Congregation. All other representatives of the Church should refrain from speaking to the media.

6. Any pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.
7. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position with children or youth.

Approvals/Revisions

We, the undersigned, certify that the necessary approvals of the Congregation Council have been granted on this _____ day of _____, 2015.

_____ - Pastor

_____ - Church Board President

_____ - Church Board Vice-President

_____ - Church Board Secretary

_____ - Church Board Treasurer

Revision	Date	Description
00	04/13/15	Original
01	05/23/15	Removed Pastor name from header

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

APPLICATION FOR PROVISIONAL EMPLOYMENT IN A CHILD-CARE SERVICE

Required by the Child Protective Service Law,

23 Pa. C.S. Section 6344 (relating to information relating to prospective child-care personnel)

I swear/affirm that I have mailed or filed the applicable requests for clearance to the Pennsylvania State Police, Pennsylvania State Police and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

I swear/affirm that I have not been named as a perpetrator of a founded report of child abuse or as an individual responsible for a founded report for a school employee as defined by the Child Protective Services Law.

I swear/affirm that I have not been convicted of any of the following crimes or the attempt, solicitation or conspiracy to commit any of the following crimes under Title 18 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes or equivalent crimes in another state or under Federal law:

- Chapter 25 (relating to criminal homicide)
- Section 2702 (relating to aggravated assault)
- Section 2709.1 (relating to stalking)
- Section 2901 (relating to kidnapping)
- Section 3121 (relating to rape)
- Section 3122.1 (relating to statutory sexual assault)
- Section 3123 (relating to involuntary deviate sexual intercourse)
- Section 3124.1 (relating to sexual assault)
- Section 3125 (relating to aggravated indecent assault)
- Section 3126 (relating to indecent assault)
- Section 3127 (relating to indecent exposure)
- Section 4302 (relating to incest)
- Section 4303 (relating to concealing death of a child)
- Section 4304 (relating to endangering welfare of children)
- Section 4305 (relating to dealing in infant children)
- Section 5902(b) Felony (relating to prostitution and related offenses)
- Section 5903(c) (d) (relating to obscene and other sexual material and performances)
- Section 6301 (relating to corruption of minors)
- Section 6312 (relating to sexual abuse of children)

I have not been convicted of a felony offense under Act64-1972 (relating to the controlled substance, drug device and cosmetic act) committed within the past five years.

I understand that I must be dismissed if I am named as a perpetrator of a founded report of child abuse within the past five (5) years or have been convicted of any of the crimes listed above.

I understand that my employment/volunteer status may be terminated if I have been named as the perpetrator of an indicated or founded report of child abuse or as an individual responsible for the injury or abuse in a founded or indicated report for a school employee.

I understand that my employment/volunteer status may be terminated if I have been convicted of a felony offense or have been convicted of a crime involving child abuse, child neglect, physical violence or moral corruptness.

I hereby swear/affirm that the information as set forth above is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. I have read and understand the foregoing. I understand the penalty for false swearing is a misdemeanor of the third degree pursuant to Section 4903(b) of the Criminal Code.

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix A2

**AFFIRMATION OF CONTINUOUS RESIDENCE IN PENNSYLVANIA
FOR VOLUNTEERS IN LIEU OF FBI CLEARANCE**

I swear/affirm that I have been a continuous resident of Pennsylvania for the 10 years preceding today's date.

I have provided the results of a Pennsylvania State Police Background Check and a Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance to the director/president of the organization with which I am seeking to volunteer at Zion's Stone Church.

I swear/affirm that I am not disqualified from service under 23 Pa. C.S. Section 6344.2 in that no cause exists under Pa. C.S. Section 6433(c) for denying my participation as a volunteer in any organization at Zion's Stone Church.

I agree that I must inform the director/president of the organization with which I am seeking to volunteer at Zion's Stone Church of any change in the above circumstances within 24 hours of such change occurring.

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____