

CARLISLE ALLIANCE CHURCH'S "SAFE PLACE" POLICY

"To state the obvious, for any ministry to children to be effective, it must—at minimum—be in a safe context. For decades, the Alliance family has sought to be at the forefront of providing and living the standards that create safe environments for children and ministry to them. [...] My desire is for our churches to be safe zones where people of all ages can gather in community."

—John Stumbo

- I. Prevalence of Sexual Abuse
 - A. 1 in every 3 women and 1 in every 5 men have been sexually abused by the time they are 18
- II. Churches May be Sued for Negligence in:
 - A. Screening/Training Workers
 - B. Event Planning
 - C. Emergency Action
 - D. Supervision
 - E. Communication
- I. Policy Applicability
 - A. Safe Place will apply
 - i. On Carlisle Alliance Church property during any activity related to Carlisle Alliance Church during which children and/or youth are not being directly supervised by their own parent/guardian. Activities related to the church include (but are not limited to) the following: Sunday morning, youth group, small groups, worship team practices, work days, financial tasks, etc.
 - ii. During Carlisle Alliance Church off-site ministry events which are designed primarily for children/youth. Examples include (but are not limited to) retreats, ministry events in volunteers' homes, etc.
 1. Definition of "ministry event": A gathering of at least 2 different leaders who are not related to each other, and children/youth from at least 3 different families, when they have gathered for ministry/discipleship purposes.
 - B. Safe Place will not apply
 - i. During off-site events which are designed primarily for adults. Examples include (but are not limited to) small group meetings in homes, etc. In these situations, supervision of children/youth is the responsibility of parents/guardians.
 - ii. During off-site gatherings of leaders and/or children/youth which do not meet the definition of a "ministry event."
 - iii. During use of the building or property by groups, organizations, or individuals outside of Carlisle Alliance Church. Examples include (but are not limited to) home school orchestra practice, Mom's club, weddings, or parties held by non-members of CAC, Upward basketball games, etc.
- II. Procedures for Recruiting Volunteers for Nursery, Children, and Youth Ministries
 - A. Potential names of volunteers will be brought to the age level Ministry Director. Ministry job description will be referenced to ensure the potential volunteer meets the guidelines. Current life situation as well as any other concerns will be discussed with the Assistant Pastor.
 - B. All prospective volunteers will have regularly attended the church for at least the past six months.

- i. Exceptions can be made in circumstances when the ministry personnel have transferred from another church of the same denomination. However, they must have been long-time members and children's or youth ministry workers in good standing. References must be received from at least three individuals, including one from their previous minister or children's ministry or youth director.
 - C. Potential volunteers wishing to work with children/youth under 18 will complete volunteer applications.
 - D. Criminal Background Checks and Child Abuse Clearances will be completed, submitted by the Assistant Pastor of Disciplemaking. Documents will be filed in a locked cabinet with access only by the Senior Pastor and Assistant Pastor. All clearances must be in file before volunteers/paid staff are able to serve.
 - E. References indicated on the volunteer application will be contacted and recorded by the Assistant Pastor. Youth volunteer applications should include one of the youth leaders as a reference.
 - F. All clearances that are required by Pennsylvania will be done every 5 years.
 - G. Additionally, a fingerprint-based federal criminal history (FBI) submitted through the Pennsylvania State Police or its authorized agent is required if the volunteer has lived outside the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in the last 10 years. This needs to be renewed every 5 years.
 - H. All volunteers must receive training in Carlisle Alliance Church's Safe Place Policy prior to serving in children's and/or youth ministries.
 - I. Every year volunteers who continue to serve are required to fill out and sign "ACT 24," a legally binding document, claiming nothing has changed in their clearances that would hinder them from serving.
 - J. Every five years, prior to renewing the clearances of the applicant, it is required for him/her to take the online course, "Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse," at www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu. At the end of the course, the printed certificate of completion is required to pursue renewing of his/her clearances.
- III. Procedures for Creating a Safe Environment for Children and Youth
 - A. Staffing and Supervision
 - i. Two Volunteer Rule
 - 1. One adult female volunteer/one adult male volunteer or
 - 2. Two adult female volunteers or
 - 3. Two adult male volunteers or
 - 4. One adult female volunteer/one female youth volunteer or
 - 5. One adult female volunteer/one male youth volunteer or
 - 6. One adult male volunteer/one female youth volunteer or
 - 7. One adult male volunteer/one male youth volunteer
 - ii. Every classroom of children grade 5 and under should have at least one teacher and one floating helper available in the ministry area.
 - iii. Teacher/Student Ratios
 - 1. One caregiver for every 3 infants (0-12 months)
 - 2. One caregiver for every 5 toddlers or preschoolers
 - 3. One caregiver for every 10 elementary age children

B. Open Doors

- i. All classroom doors should have glass windows to allow for easy viewing of the activities taking place inside. Any doors that do not have a glass window (and are being used for purposes with children) should be left open.

C. Family Protection

- i. Immediate family members who have successfully completed the volunteer application process may serve together without a third party present.

D. Volunteer Age

- i. Youth (ages 12-17) may serve if paired with an adult volunteer.
- ii. To maintain an appropriate age gap between volunteers and the children they serve, middle school youth may not serve with the elementary ministry.
 - 1. This prohibition does not apply to other Safe Place situations, such as babysitting.

IV. Early Childhood Considerations

A. Volunteer Identification

- i. ID name badges with the C&MA logo and Carlisle Alliance Church name will be available for all volunteers.

B. Child Registration

- i. Registration forms will be located at the sign in area for each ministry. These forms should be completed for any new child attending and kept on file.

C. Volunteer Registration

- i. Sign-in sheets will be utilized in nursery, preschool, and elementary ministries to record which volunteers were present and at what times. Attendance records from the previous year will be stored in a locked file cabinet.

D. Releasing Nursery, Preschool, and Elementary Children

- i. Identification bracelets will be given to parents/guardians at drop-off and must be presented in order to pick up the child. The same individual does not need to pick up the child. Volunteers may release to another adult as long as the bracelet is presented and the child is asked for by name.
- ii. If the bracelet is not presented, the parent/guardian must either locate the bracelet or in the case where it cannot be located, must provide identification to release the child to the parent/guardian.

E. Diaper Changing

- i. Suggested diaper changing procedure is posted and all materials necessary are made available to volunteers.
- ii. Any FEMALE adult volunteer is allowed to diaper children as needed.

F. Restroom Guidelines

- i. Parents are encouraged to take their children to the restroom prior to drop off.
- ii. Two volunteers should collectively take all the children to the restroom during preschool restroom breaks. The outside door to the restroom should be propped open.
- iii. Youth volunteers are not permitted to take children to the restroom by themselves.

V. Youth Ministry Considerations

- A. The ratio of workers to youth will be 1 adult to 8 youth for all youth meetings and events except for Sunday School where the ratio of workers to youth will be 1 adult to 15 youth.

- B. Within separate areas of a venue, it is recommended that youth only be allowed in an area where an adult is also present.
 - C. For small group discussions during a youth event or Sunday school, one adult may meet with a small group. Another adult must be present in the ministry area. It is recommended that in mixed gender groups, one female and one male adult should be present.
 - D. At least two unrelated adults should be present at all off-site official ministry events.
 - E. Youth workers are advised not to meet with youth under age 18 alone in the church building or at home.
 - F. Sign in/out sheets will be utilized for all youth events for both workers and youth. All parties will sign their names and indicate the times of arrival and departure. The exception is for Youth Sunday School, where attendance will be recorded each week by name of each youth and leader in attendance.
 - G. Permission of parents/guardians will be received to dispense any personal information or photos among the youth group (address, email, phone number, birthday, etc.) for ministry purposes.
 - H. Overnight Accommodations
 - i. One worker will not share a room with only one youth, even if both are of the same gender (the exception of this would be a parent and child of the same family).
 - ii. Males and females will not share the same sleeping space. If the use of a large sleeping area is necessitated in lieu of smaller segregated ones, youth should be separated by gender and placed as far from each other as possible.
 - iii. At no time should personnel sleep in the same bed as a child, youth, or vulnerable person.
 - I. Youth volunteers/paid staff may not dress or undress in the presence of any youth.
- VI. Health and Safety Guidelines
- A. Clean Hands
 - i. The suggested hand washing procedure is posted in every room containing a sink.
 - B. Well Child/Well Worker Policy
 - i. Sick children should not be accepted into the nursery or classrooms. This includes any child who:
 - 1. Has a fever (unrelated to teething) or has had a fever in the last 24 hours.
 - 2. Has thrown up in the last 24 hours.
 - 3. Has a persistent cough (unrelated to allergies).
 - 4. Has a runny nose with yellow or green mucus.
 - ii. Workers who are sick should not report to serve.
 - 1. A worker who knows in advance that they are too sick to serve should contact the ministry director or Discplemaking Pastor.
 - 2. A worker whose sickness comes at the last minute should contact their ministry director to alert them that they are unable to serve.
 - C. Medications
 - i. Volunteers should not dispense any medications. If a child needs medication, the parent should administer.
 - ii. No medications should be left in the nursery or classroom.

iii. In extreme cases of allergies/asthma, etc., medication can be left with written instructions and permission of the parent for administration. This must be arranged in advance with the Assistant Pastor for Disciplemaking.

1. Parents/guardians should be notified as soon as the medication is administered to apprise of the situation.

D. Emergencies

i. Fire escape routes will be posted in each room and will be reviewed, along with locations and fire extinguishers and exits, annually.

ii. First Aid kits will be located on each floor in the kitchen and will be maintained by office staff.

iii. A first aid kit will be made available for all off-site trips and will be stored in the church office.

E. Consents

i. For any child ages 18 and younger, all trips/activities off-site, where the church is providing the transportation, will require a consent form to participate, signed by a parent or legal guardian before participation. If not signed, the child/youth may not participate.

ii. Yearly consents may be signed, which include permission to participate in ongoing ministry activities taking place at the church building as well as consent to be transported by staff to and from events, walk home, and have personal information distributed for ministry purposes.

iii. Medical consents will be signed yearly by parents.

F. Accidents and Injuries

i. For minor injuries such as scrapes and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the parent or guardian of the injury at the time of pickup.

ii. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple first aid, the parent and/or legal guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the ministry director.

iii. If warranted, an ambulance will be called to provide transport to a medical facility.

iv. In the event of a life-threatening situation such as an asthma attack or allergic reaction, workers may administer a specific medication, as previously arranged with the Assistant Pastor for Disciplemaking.

v. When responding to any emergency, it is best for 2 workers to be present to witness care given.

1. If possible, other children/youth should be removed from the area.

vi. It will be the parent's responsibility to update medical information as needed.

vii. For any injury requiring medical attention beyond First Aid, an Accident and Injury Report must be completed and filed in the church office.

VII. Transportation

A. Those transporting anyone under the age of 18 must be 21 years or older and have a valid driver's license and current insurance.

B. Licenses and insurance cards will be copied yearly and drivers will sign a form stating that they are responsible for reporting any changing in their insurance or driving status.

C. Seatbelts must be worn at all times. The number of passengers in a vehicle should never exceed the number of seatbelts.

D. Children under the age of 12 are not permitted to ride where an airbag is located.

- E. For children still in booster seats, Pennsylvania state requirements apply.
- F. No worker should transport a youth one-on-one, except with the consent of a parent/guardian.
- G. When arranging transportation to, from, or between offsite locations, licensed student drivers may transport their siblings. No other students may be present in the car.

VIII. Proper Display of Affection

A. Importance

- i. Physical touch is an importance element in the communication of love and care. It is an essential part of the nurturing process that should be characteristic of our ministry to children and youth. Volunteers need to be aware of, and sensitive to, the special and differing needs and preferences of each individual child. Physical contact should be age and developmentally appropriate.

B. Appropriate Touch

- i. Meet the child at eye level by bending down or sitting.
- ii. Listen to the child with your eyes as well as your ears.
- iii. Hold the child's hand while listening or speaking to him, or when walking to an activity.
- iv. Put your arm around the shoulder of a child when comforting or quieting as needed.
- v. Pat a child's head, hand, shoulder, or back when encouraging.
- vi. Hold a preschool child who is crying.

C. Inappropriate Touch

- i. Kissing a child or coaxing a child to kiss you.
- ii. Extending hugging or tickling.
- iii. Touching a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit (except when needed to assist a child in the restroom).
- iv. Carrying an older child or sitting him or her on your lap.
- v. Being alone with a child.
- vi. Giving a full contact, body-to-body hug.

IX. Discipline Procedures

- A. The following classroom discipline procedure has been developed so that volunteers are able to deal with behavioral difficulties in a caring and consistent manner. We believe that proper discipline includes both prevention and correction, helping to create a healthy learning environment.
 - i. REWARD good behavior. Immediately praising and recognizing positive actions encourages more of the same. Inform parents when a child does well or shows improvement.
- B. When inappropriate or disruptive behavior occurs:
 - i. REDIRECT the child. Mildly inappropriate or disruptive behavior can at times be resolved by helping the child return their attention to the task at hand.
- C. REMIND the child of proper behavior, including rules and expectations.
- D. REMOVE the child from the group for a time-out. After a brief explanation of the child's behavior, the child can sit in time for several minutes in full view of a volunteer. When the child is settled, invite him/her to rejoin the group. After class, speak to the child in more detail about the behavior that caused the time-out. Instruct the child to apologize and grant forgiveness. Use this as an opportunity to teach about sin and reconciliation.
- E. RETURN the child to a parent/guardian. If the previous steps fail to change behavior (or in the case of violent or egregious behavior), the child will be returned to a parent/guardian for the

remainder of the class. The teacher will explain the problem to the parents and reassure the child that he/she is welcome to join the class next time. The teacher will report this action to the ministry director.

F. Suggested Classroom Manners

- i. Be kind to one another.
- ii. Pay attention and listen.
- iii. Follow instructions.
- iv. Talk one at a time.
- v. Keep hands and feet to yourself.

X. Responding to Allegations of Abuse

A. Be Prepared in Advance

No practical prevention strategy is 100% effective. An accusation of abuse could occur in any church. Wrong actions in response to an allegation could magnify the pain and liability inherent in such a case. An effective response recognizes the following underlying principles:

- i. All allegations need to be taken seriously
- ii. Situations must be handled forthrightly, with due respect for an individual's privacy and confidentiality.
- iii. Full cooperation must be given to civil authorities under the guidance of the church's lawyer.
- iv. Appropriate care must be shown for the well-being of alleged victims.
- v. The alleged victim should not be held responsible in any way.
- vi. The Senior Pastor should contact the church's insurance agent immediately.

B. Create a Response Plan

In light of the above principles, a response plan should be developed.

- i. Maintain adequate records
 1. Keep adequate records of volunteer worker's applications, references, and screening forms. They should be up to date and accessible. Records should be kept at least 5 years after the conclusion of a person's volunteer ministry.
- ii. Select a spokesperson
 1. Designate a specific spokesperson for the church. This person should be able to speak to the media and the congregation in a discreet, informed, truthful, and diplomatic way. Everyone involved in the ministry of the church should know who this person is and should not attempt to respond to allegations themselves. All inquiries should be referred to the spokesperson. Conflicting and contradictory statements can be reported and create a negative impression of the church. Problems can be avoided if only one person is designated to speak for the church.
- iii. Prepare a position statement
 1. This is an opportunity to influence public opinion positively by emphasizing an awareness of the problem of child abuse, a concern for victims, and the extensive steps the church has taken to reduce the risk and provide a safe place for students. Let the media know that the church takes the risk of child abuse seriously and that the church has acted responsibly.
- iv. A sample statement:

1. It is always tragic when children are abused or exploited. CAC is aware of the ever-growing nature of child abuse and the harm that is done to the victims. We have taken every precaution to protect the students entrusted to our care. Our staff and volunteers are carefully screened before beginning ministry in our church. Training occurs to inform ministry staff about the various policies implemented to provide for the safety of our children/youth. WE have also reviewed with our staff what to watch for and how to report any suspicious behavior relating to the abuse of students. We are distressed by any accusation of child abuse. For the welfare of all involved, all information has been directed to the Cumberland County Children and Youth Services.
 - v. Don't engage in denial, minimization, or blame. The following responses are all inappropriate and should be avoided:
 1. Deny that the incident occurred despite clear evidence to the contrary.
 2. Acknowledge that the incident happened, but minimize it. For example by saying, "It only happened once," or "It wasn't that serious."
 3. Blame the victim or the victim's family.
 - vi. Use a lawyer
 1. Always have the church's lawyer present while answering any investigating questions from the police or social agencies. The accused should follow the same procedure with his or her lawyer.
 - vii. Don't be accusatory; avoid spelling out the details of an accusation in a public interview.
 - viii. Work with denomination, lawyer, and insurance company.
- C. When an Allegation Occurs
- i. Immediately record the facts of the incident (i.e. persons present, phone calls, correspondence, etc.)
 - ii. As "mandated reporters," we must make an immediate and direct report of suspected child abuse to ChildLine either electronically at www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis or by calling 1-800-932-0313. Individuals reporting abuse claims should be aware that Child Abuse Hotline personnel will never disclose the name of a reporting source. When reporting you may be asked the following:
 1. Name and physical description of child
 2. Age or approximate age of child
 3. Name, home address, and telephone number of parent/guardian of child
 4. Name or physical description of suspected child abuser
 5. Home address and telephone number of suspected abuser
 6. Suspected abuser's relationship to the child
 7. Description of suspected injury to the child
 8. Where the incident took place
 9. Any concern for the child's immediate safety
 10. Your relationship to the child
 11. Your contact information
 - iii. Following your report to ChildLine, you must fill out the attached report, CY-47 and either fax it (717-240-6433) or mail it (16 West High Street, Suite 200, Carlisle, PA 17013)
 - iv. Document the church's efforts to safeguard against incidents

- v. Report the incident immediately to the church's lawyer, insurance agent, and denominational officials. Don't try to handle this without professional assistance. The accused should do the same.
- vi. If a church volunteer or staff member is the alleged perpetrator, the individual's immediate ministry director will immediately suspend the individual from all ministry duties with those under age 18 until the claim is shown to be unfounded. If/when this occurs, the volunteer may resume ministry duties.
- vii. Following the guidance of the church's lawyer, contact the proper civil authorities. Don't attempt an in-depth investigation. This should be left to professionals who are familiar with these cases.
- viii. Take the allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed, and remember the care and safety of the victim is the first priority. Don't prejudge the situation. Responding in a negative or unsupportive manner to the alleged victim can increase the anger and pain of the victim and the victim's family. Future reconciliation will be more difficult and the possibility of damaging litigation increases.
- ix. Treat the accused with dignity and support. "Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ." Galatians 6:1-2
- x. Use the text of the prepared public statement to answer the press and to convey news to the congregation. Be careful to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.

D. Mandated Reporters

- i. Who is a Mandated Reporter
 - 1. A clergyman or spiritual leader of any regularly established church or other religious organization (i.e. senior/associate/assistant pastors, elders, deacons).
 - 2. An individual (paid or unpaid) who, on the basis of the individual's role as an integral part of a regularly scheduled program, activity, or service, accepts responsibility for a child (i.e. volunteer children's Sunday school teacher, youth group leaders, nursery worker).
 - 3. An individual supervised or managed by a person listed above, who has direct contact with children in the course of employment.
 - 4. Youth, under the age of 18, are not Mandated Reporters. However they may choose to report to their ministry leader with whom they serve.
- ii. How Do I Report?
 - 1. Call Childline: 1-800-932-0313 or www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis immediately. Trained specialists are available 24/7 to receive referrals of suspected child abuse and general child well-being concerns.
THEN
 - 2. Immediately thereafter inform your supervisor (who shall facilitate the church's cooperation, or face criminal charges for intimidation/retaliation/obstruction)
THEN

3. Submit (you, not your supervisor) a written report using the attached CY-47 form to the Cumberland County Children and Youth Services. Any questions should be directed to CYS at 717-240-6120.

NOTE: The mandated reporter may not talk to a supervisor before making the immediate oral report, even to discuss the propriety of making a report. If the mandated reporter is unsure whether the situation warrants a report, they may immediately call an attorney for advice on the spot (i.e. no callbacks allowed). However, if an attorney is not reached immediately, a report must be made immediately.

E. Recognizing Signs of Abuse

- i. Unexplained bruises, burns, fractures, or abrasions (often in various stages of healing).
- ii. Consistent lack of supervision.
- iii. Consistent hunger, inappropriate dress, poor hygiene, or unattended medical needs.
- iv. Extremes of aggression or withdrawal.
- v. Moves with discomfort and shies away from physical contact.
- vi. Wears winter clothing in warm weather in order to cover the body.
- vii. Withdrawn, depressed, listless.
- viii. Torn, stained, or bloody underwear.
- ix. Irritation of the mouth, genital, or anal area.
- x. Difficulty sitting or walking.
- xi. Inappropriate sex play, acting out seductiveness or promiscuity.
- xii. Sudden changes in school performance, appetite, or perceived self-worth.

Abuse or neglect need not have occurred for a child or youth to be in need of protection. It is not necessary to wait until a child or youth has been harmed to intervene. When abuse or neglect can be reasonably anticipated and there are reasonable grounds to believe a child or youth is in need of protection, the necessity of reporting applies. If you have a question about a specific incident, an anonymous phone call or email can be placed to Childline at: 1-800- 932-0313 or www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis, to clarify whether or not the given situation constitutes a reportable offense.

F. Key Contacts

[This section contains contact information for the spokesperson for the church, church insurance, and church legal counsel.]