

**2015 SAFE PLACE POLICY**  
**Continuing Resolution 2015-1**

**Policy for Prevention of Misconduct with Minor and Dependent Persons**

I. Authority: This revised policy is established by the authority of the Congregation Council of Grace Lutheran Church, Macungie and enacted by vote on May 12, 2015. (This revised policy replaces Continuing Resolution 2011-1)

II. Purpose: Our ministry is a position of trust and responsibility. This trust is fundamental to the well-being of the Christian community and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Sexual misconduct by a pastor, staff member, volunteer, or any participant in ministry violates this trust and is destructive to the community. It is the purpose of this policy to provide guidelines for the prevention of sexual misconduct in the activities and programs of the congregation and to ensure that Grace Lutheran Church is a safe place.

III. Applicability: This policy applies to paid staff, volunteers (age 18 or older), congregational members, and participants in all activities and ministries of Grace Lutheran Church.

IV. Definition: Sexual Misconduct is defined as adultery, promiscuity, the sexual abuse of another and the misuse of counseling relationships for sexual favors. This definition includes attempted sexual seduction; unwelcome, offensive, obscene or suggestive language, behavior or action; and/or taking physical or emotional advantage of the vulnerability of another for sexual purposes.

V. Policy: It is the policy of Grace Lutheran Church that:

1. All minors and dependent persons will be treated with courtesy, respect, and Christian concern while attending the programs and activities of Grace Lutheran Church.
2. All minors and dependents will be well and appropriately supervised while in the care of the church.
3. Paid staff and volunteers who work with minor and dependent persons will receive appropriate screening and training as per the following procedures in order to conduct and supervise such activities properly and safely. They will be aware of the terms of this policy and agree to abide by its procedures, and will be instructed how to report circumstances of vulnerability or suspicious activities.
4. Screening and education are the primary methods to be used to prevent sexual misconduct and to implement the protections of this policy.

VI. Procedures:

1. Paid staff must submit PA State Police, PA Child Abuse Clearance, and a Federal Criminal History Report.
2. Volunteers age 18 and over must submit PA State Police and PA Child Abuse Clearance; and must submit either a Federal Criminal History Report or an affidavit certifying that they have resided within Pennsylvania for the previous ten consecutive years and have not been arrested for (charged with a misdemeanor or felony) or convicted of any Reportable Offense since the completion of their most recent background checks before receiving approval to supervise and/or assist with activities involving minor or dependent persons. Grace Lutheran Church will assist with the cost of such background screening, if needed. Serious felonies and most types of sex crimes will automatically disqualify volunteers, along with any reports of child abuse or drug law convictions from the previous five years. Background checks shall be valid for a period of three years before being renewed and re-submitted.
3. All individuals wishing to provide leadership or supervision in activities involving minor or dependent children will be required to wait a minimum of six months following their formally becoming members of Grace Lutheran Church before they may be considered for such involvement.

4. Paid staff and volunteers who participate in or supervise activities involving minor or dependent persons shall receive a copy of this policy, sign a certificate acknowledging such receipt, and shall receive orientation regarding its terms and purposes from the pastor, paid staff, or other qualified person as designated by the Congregation Council.
5. Mandated Reporter Training: There is no current required training for mandated reporters, but because it is good practice for volunteers to know the signs of abuse and how to make a report, it is suggested that staff and volunteers complete "Recognizing Child Abuse," a free, three-hour online course from the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work located at [www.ReportAbusePA.pitt.edu](http://www.ReportAbusePA.pitt.edu)
6. Whenever possible, a minimum of two adults shall be present to supervise all official, scheduled and public youth activities of Grace Lutheran Church involving minor or dependent persons unless parental permission has been secured in advance. At least one of the adults must be over 21 years of age. All such supervisors must have successfully completed the appropriate screening and training process.
7. Children participating in nursery programs, their parents or guardians, and all volunteers and staff shall be clearly identified. Children shall be signed in, signed out, and only released to a properly identified or pre-authorized individual.
8. No paid staff or volunteer may transport a minor or dependent person to or from any church activity without securing permission from the parent or guardian in advance.
9. Any program for minor or dependent persons that involves overnight activities will observe the following procedures:
  - a) Written permission to participate must be obtained from the parent or guardian in advance.
  - b) Only adult supervisors who have successfully completed the required screening may attend.
  - c) There shall be a minimum of two approved adults present at all times.
  - d) Minor or dependent participants may not leave the location of the event without appropriate arrangements made by the parent or guardian in advance, except in cases of emergency.
10. Any inappropriate or suspicious conduct or relationship between an adult and a minor or dependent person shall be confronted immediately and reported to the Pastor and President of Congregation Council. Information should also be conveyed to the parent or guardian as well as to the Congregation Council.
11. The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare runs a ChildLine telephone hotline at 800-932-0313 to receive reports of suspected child abuse. Trained intake specialists take calls and determine whether reports should be referred to county child protective agencies, law enforcement or local social services agencies. *Any suspected abuse must be reported to Childline.* As of July 1, 2015, all paid staff and volunteers that work with children and youth in congregational programming are mandated reporters of child abuse: this includes Sunday School and VBS staff, nursery helpers, and youth group volunteers. Mandated reporters are required by law to report any suspected abuse by notifying Childline. Note that it is not our job to determine whether or not it is abuse. If abuse is suspected, we are required to report it.
12. All members of Grace Lutheran Church congregation shall be informed of the presence and purposes of this policy through the newsletter and worship bulletins of the congregation. New members will be informed of the presence and purposes of this policy as a regular part of new member classes. Copies of this policy shall be made available upon request to any concerned parties.
13. All documentation and records appropriate to the enforcement of this policy will be maintained confidentially by the Pastor and may be accessed on a need-to-know basis at the approval of the Congregation Council.
14. Individuals who do not meet the above requirements may assist in activities only to the extent that they are not in a situation where they are alone with a child.