

**Child/Youth Protection Policy  
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church  
Westlake, Ohio  
2022**

**General Purpose Statement:**

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth who participate in our programs and activities. By adhering to the Code of Conduct and Practices (separate documents), our goal is to protect the children and youth of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations.

**Definitions:**

For purposes of this policy, the terms "child" or "children" include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.

**Selection of Workers:**

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

**a. Six Month Rule**

No volunteer will be allowed to work with children until s/he has been a member or regular attendee of church for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

**b. Written Application**

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by us. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous church affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at the Prince of Peace Lutheran Church.

**c. Personal Interview**

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

**d. Reference Checks**

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, 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 organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church.

**e. Criminal Background Check**

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and for the following categories of volunteers:

- Those who will be involved in overnight activities with minors;
- Those counseling minors;
- Those involved in one-on-one mentorship of minors;
- Those having occasional one-on-one contact with minors (i.e., event chaperones and vehicle drivers)

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

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Senior Pastor on a case-by-case basis considering all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses 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 form will also be a disqualifying event.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church.

**f. Code of Conduct and Practices**

All volunteers and staff who work with children are required to review and sign the Code of Conduct and Practices document every three years.

**g. Updates**

Background checks, review of this document and signed Code of Conduct forms are to be updated for ALL staff and volunteers every three years.

**g. Training**

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church will provide training on this child protection policy to all new childcare workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All staff and volunteers will be required to review the online training resource annually, and will be encouraged to attend any live training events provided.