

Children and Youth Protection Policy

(Proposed July 2018)

Rexmont Evangelical Congregational Church 328 Rexmont Road, Lebanon Pennsylvania 17042

We, the members of the Rexmont Evangelical Congregational Church, in order to maintain our organization in accordance with the DISCIPLINE of the Evangelical Congregational Church, and to promote the spiritual and temporal development of our members, do establish and adopt this Children and Youth Protection Policy for our congregation.

PURPOSE

Recognizing God's love and concern for children, it is our desire to reflect His love to those in our care. The following guidelines are designed to assist and guide our church in providing a safe and nurturing environment in which we can bring our children to Christ.

We believe that it is our responsibility to:

- Protect the children to whom we minister from being physically, emotionally, or sexually abused while they are under our care.
- Guard our workers from being suspected or falsely accused of wrongful behavior toward a child.
- Be good stewards, not only of those entrusted to our care, but also of our assets by protecting the church against unsubstantiated charges.

While we cannot completely guarantee the safety of our children and workers, these guidelines are designed for their ultimate protection. Everyone who teaches, helps, or cares for children under the sponsorship of Rexmont Evangelical Congregational Church must follow these policies and procedures.

Expectations

The following Guidelines will apply to everyone who interacts with the children of Rexmont Evangelical Congregational Church.

1. They shall possess a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and be active in the fellowship of Rexmont Evangelical Congregational Church.

2. They shall agree with Rexmont Evangelical Congregational Church's adherence to the DISCIPLINE of the Evangelical Congregational Church denomination.
3. They shall abstain from all things illegal and immoral.
4. They shall set an example for their students in character and conduct. They are strongly encouraged to abstain from alcohol and tobacco and are expected to exercise modesty in dress.
5. They are expected to participate in teacher training provided by the Rexmont Evangelical Congregational Church.
6. They shall be active members of Rexmont Evangelical Congregational Church.
7. They shall be mature Christians, careful in handling confidential problems and concerns.
8. They shall recognize the importance of prayer and personal Bible study and be committed to both. They shall incorporate prayer into each and every lesson.
9. They shall encourage and promote memorization of Scripture and encourage participation in lessons on the part of their students.
10. Above all, teachers are called to a higher standard of living and shall set an example for their students. (James 3:1-2)

A Statement Regarding Abuse

God embraces children with love, placing their nurture and care into our hands. We believe that children should be safe from all forms of abuse and neglect. We, the church at Rexmont, will be advocates for children and establish clearly defined safeguards, policies, and procedures for their protection. We recognize the seriousness and sinfulness of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. This type of treatment violates the very image of God. It causes serious damage to the soul, body, and spirit of the one abused. It also causes harm to the soul and spirit of the abuser. If abuse does occur, we will seek and support healing measures for both the abused and the abuser.

What Constitutes Child Abuse?

"There are four categories of child abuse: physical, sexual, mental, and neglect. Physical abuse is inflicting bodily injury on a child. Sexual abuse is using a child in or exposing a child to sexual activities, with or without his or her consent. Mental abuse is demanding that the child do more than he or she is able to do, severely criticizing or humiliating him or her for not living up to the demand or placing upon him or her such unclear requirements that the child cannot understand what he or she is supposed to do." (Midway Church of Lebanon, Pennsylvania)

Prerequisite Certifications

1. All paid church employees and volunteers who work with children and youth of the Rexmont Evangelical Congregational Church must undergo a thorough screening process.

The screening process for employees and volunteers includes:

- a. Criminal Background Check and Sex Offender Check (done every 5 years)
 - a. In addition, employees, including the pastor, must obtain an FBI background check in addition to the certifications listed above.
 - b. Every teacher and helper must complete a signed Conduct Guidelines which will be maintained on file with the pastor.
 - c. If requested, a personal interview with the Pastor and selected members of the Ministry Council.
2. New volunteer staff will be considered only after they have been actively involved in the life of Rexmont E.C. Church for a minimum of three months, with six months being preferred.
3. Any church employee or volunteer with criminal abuse convictions will not be accepted to work with children or youth.

Church Worker Supervision Guidelines

1. Use a team approach (The Two-Adult Rule). There must be two recognized members of the Rexmont E.C. Church with one being over the age of 18 present during any church activity for children and/or youth. These supervisors must remain until all youth are picked up unless parents are notified otherwise.
2. There are situations when an adult has legitimate reasons to be alone with a child or youth. The child or youth must be the same sex as the adult. The adult must, in advance of the proposed activity, receive consent from the child's/youth's parent.
3. Parents should be well-informed regarding all the events in which their children are participating.
4. An annual Parental Consent Form or Registration Form must be completed for each child/youth who is participating in a church activity away from church property without a parent present. Copies of the completed forms must be in each vehicle, with the activity leaders having the originals.
5. Adult workers shall meet with children and youth in well-lighted areas, in view of others.
6. Any Children and Youth Protection Policy violation will be confronted by the Pastor and selected members of the Ministry Council and further action may be taken as needed. Any inappropriate conduct between an adult worker and a child/youth must be reported to Childline by the mandated reporter. Concurrently the Pastor and the Ministry Council President must be informed.
7. All adult workers shall attend any informational meetings related to new procedures and methods to be employed.
8. Special procedures shall apply to all overnight events. All adult chaperones and supervisors must be cleared in advance by the Pastor and/or the Ministry Council

President and have gone through the previously mentioned screening process. **No last-minute adult guests!** The following procedure must also be cleared in advance:

- a. The specific proposed activity
 - b. The location of the proposed activity
 - c. The goal or objective of the activity
 - d. The manner of transport to and from the proposed activity
9. Any and all activities not reported to and approved by the Pastor and/or the Ministry Council President are not sanctioned activities and will not in any way subject Rexmont E.C. Church to any responsibility, liability, etc. the account of, or stemming from, such non-sanctioned activities.
10. If childcare is needed for a church event there must be at least two adults or one adult and two teenagers unless parents are notified otherwise and give their consent.

Responding to Possible Abuse

1. All paid church employees and volunteers who may work with children and youth of Rexmont E.C. Church must be familiar with possible indicators and symptoms of child physical, emotional, and/or sexual abuse.
2. **All paid church employees and volunteers who may work with children and youth of Rexmont Church are considered by PA law to be mandated reporters and are responsible for reporting and responding to possible abuse.**
3. Concurrent to reporting to Childline (**800-932-0313**), all reports of possible child abuse of any kind must be immediately communicated to the Pastor and the Ministry Council President. Proper confidentiality must be observed.
4. All verbal reports of abuse **and/or** violation of the established Child-Protection Policy of Rexmont Evangelical Congregational Church must be documented in writing by the Pastor or the Ministry Council President.

IF AN ALLEGATION OCCURS

1. **All efforts in handling the incident must be documented.**
2. When abuse is suspected it must be reported immediately by the mandated reporter directly to Child Line (**800-932-0313**) and a written report must be filed within 48 hours. (see form attached)
3. The incident must also be reported immediately to the Pastor and the Ministry Council President, who will then report the incident to the church insurance company, attorney, and denominational officials. Following the guidance of the insurance company and attorney, further actions will be taken as needed.
4. Pending guidance from Childline, the parents or legal guardians **may be notified unless they are the suspected abuser.**

5. Confrontation of the accused must never occur. This is the sole responsibility of the secular authorities.
6. The situation should not be prejudged, **but the allegations must be taken seriously and reported.**
7. If the accused is a volunteer church worker, that person must be relieved temporarily of his/her duty until the investigation is finished. If the accused is a paid church employee, arrangements should be made to either maintain or suspend his/her income until the allegations are cleared or substantiated. The District Field Director must be notified immediately!
8. A designated spokesperson may be empowered by the Ministry Council to address issues relating to the media, the public, and the congregation. (Care should be taken to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.)
9. **If suspected abuse is not reported, the observer/informed person(s) may be charged as a perpetrator for failing to protect a child. If such a charge is substantiated, the volunteer could be listed as a perpetrator on the Pennsylvania Child Abuse Registry.**

SOME SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Any off-campus activities must be pre-approved by the pastor and the Ministry Council President.
2. It is essential that all children and youth workers understand the essential need for the proper use of personal hygiene and proper handwashing. Care must be taken in interactions with all children with proper consideration for the health and safety of all involved. For example, the use of latex gloves is highly recommended when a worker may be asked to come in contact with blood or any bodily fluid as when changing a baby's diaper.
3. Children and youth workers at Rexmont Evangelical Congregational Church **will not** be responsible for the storing or dispensing of medications at any time.
4. Positive displays of affection are in accordance with God's love toward us and our children. However, the proper displays of affection from a worker to a child must always consider and be sensitive toward cultural differences, the developmental level of the child, individual personalities, the child's family background, and possible special needs.
5. **Physical discipline will never be tolerated in the church.** Physical restraint may be used, only sparingly, such as when the safety and well-being of the child is a radical consideration.
6. At no time should any children or youth worker have a private meeting with and child in a private home or automobile!
7. Doors should always be left open or, at least, ajar!

VOLUNTEER CONDUCT GUIDELINES CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRIES

In order to protect both the volunteer and the children of Rexmont Evangelical Congregational Church, we ask that you would read and sign these guidelines and abide by them.

1. When ministering to children and youth, the "Do as I say, not as I do" philosophy of ministry does not work. Therefore, it is important that you conduct yourself in a manner consistent with the Word of God.
2. In being an Evangelical Congregational church, we are making a statement that we believe and agree with the doctrinal statements, Christian practice, and DISCIPLINE of the E.C. Denomination. Therefore, it is important that your teaching and conduct be in accordance with these documents.
3. If there is not an opportunity for misconduct with one of our children, it is not likely that misconduct will occur. Therefore, it is important that you agree to follow the basic rule that you will not be alone in a private place with one of our young people of the opposite gender or without parental permission. This includes being in a room, a car, or any other area where there is no other adult within sight.
4. When doing ministry, it is important that we minister out of the overflow of our lives. Therefore, it is important that you seek daily to be filled by Christ through prayer and personal study of God's word.

In signing this agreement, I signify that I have read the above conduct guidelines and that I agree to live my life according to these guidelines.

Signed _____ Print _____ Date _____