

Avon Lake Presbyterian Church Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

NOTE: Cornerstone Preschool has a companion document, their teacher handbook, that also contains important information regarding child protection. Also, throughout this policy, where appropriate, child protection will apply to children, youth and vulnerable adults.

Purpose

The purpose of the Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy of the Avon Lake Presbyterian Church is to:

- make the environment for our children, youth and vulnerable adult programs as safe as possible while providing Christian education that will nurture their spirit for a lifetime.
- respond to all allegations in a fair and compassionate manner.
- protect church employees and volunteers from potential false allegations of abuse.
- protect the confidentiality of employees, volunteers, youth and vulnerable adults.
- strengthen the Christian education programs and ministries of our children, youth and vulnerable adults.
- limit the extent of our church's legal risk and liability.

When referring to children and youth, "children" will include infants through the age group who are eligible to attend grade six and "youth" are the young people who are eligible to attend grades seven through twelve. "Vulnerable adults" are generally defined as a person aged 18 or older who, due to physical or mental impairment, age, disability, or illness, is unable to protect themselves from abuse, neglect, or exploitation

The policy will cover all events and activities sponsored by Avon Lake Presbyterian Church, including Cornerstone Preschool, whether held at the church or off-site. The policy does not apply to activities or events held on the church premises but conducted or sponsored by groups not related to the church. The sponsoring group will be expected to execute an agreement detailing their use of the facilities and their obligation to provide security.

Code of Conduct

- ALPC Employees and volunteers are required to adhere to the ALPC Child and Youth Protection Policy guidelines in all their interactions with children and youth.
- ALPC Employees and volunteers will respect children's rights not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable or that disregard their right to say no.
- ALPC Employees and volunteers may not discipline children by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care.
- Restroom supervision: Children under the age of 10 years should be accompanied by an adult or volunteer whenever possible. The ALPC Employees or volunteer will monitor the door while children are using the

restroom. ALPC Employees and volunteers shall strongly encourage parents to take children to the restroom whenever possible.

- ALPC Employees and volunteers should be alert to the physical and emotional state of children. Any signs of injury or possible child abuse must be reported according to the ALPC Child and Youth Protection Policy (see Reporting below).
- ALPC Employees and volunteers are discouraged from being alone with children or youth without parental permission.
- Consuming, using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, or the use of tobacco products while working or volunteering with children or youth, is prohibited.
- Being impaired by legally prescribed drugs while working or volunteering with children or youth is prohibited.
- Possessing or using concealed weapons or firearms while working or Volunteering with children or youth is prohibited.
- Profanity, inappropriate jokes, and media, sharing intimate details of one's personal life, and any kind of harassment in the presence of children, youth, or parents are prohibited.
- ALPC Employees and volunteers will be mindful of the content on any portable electronic device, social networking pages, or other electronic media that might be accessible to any children and youth.
- ALPC Employees and volunteer adult and youth leaders shall wear appropriate dress when volunteering with children and/or youth.
- Videos used in all church settings shall be age appropriate. If any media used is determined to not be age appropriate, the leader will obtain prior consent from parents or guardians.
- ALPC Employees and volunteers may not date or be romantically involved with program participants or church members who are younger than 18 years of age.
- If it is necessary for an adult to take a child or youth home after an event, all ALPC Employees and volunteers shall abide by safe driving laws when transporting children or youth.
- In the event where a one-on-one child/youth to adult scenario arises, such as unexpected transportation needs, confirmation mentoring, or a similar situation, written or telephoned parental permission should be provided when possible. It is preferred to have mentors and confirmands meet in pairs and/or public places.

Selection, Screening and Training of Church Employees and Volunteers:

The procedure for selecting and screening of employees will be completed by the Human Relations (HR) Committee along with the Pastor and other appropriate church members.

The procedure for selecting and screening volunteers will be completed the Pastor, Cornerstone Director, church staff member, or layperson responsible for the ministry as appropriate.

Trip and Retreat Supervision

- All youth attending a trip or retreat must turn in an ALPC/Cornerstone permission slip signed by a parent or responsible adult for each event. These permission slips will have the following information: the name of the activity with the date and the time of departure and approximate time of arrival home. The address of the activity and phone number where their child can be reached in an emergency. The names of the adults supervising the trip. The names of the adults who will be transporting the children/youth.
- The adult in charge must also have with them a current emergency medical care form for each youth for trips lasting more than three days.
- Rules for providing transportation for church events:
Driver must be known to the designated leader of the event. Driver must be at least 25 years old.
Driver must have a valid state driver's license for the vehicle being operated. Driver must have proof of insurance.
- The designated leader for each event will be responsible to assure that each driver conforms to the requirements.

Photo, Video and Audio Usage

Accordingly, photography, videography, live streaming, and other recording may be in progress at Avon Lake Presbyterian Church's church services, ministry activities, classes, programs and other church events. Avon Lake Presbyterian Church may use the media recorded at these events in materials produced by or for the church, including but limited to our bulletins, posters, brochures, newsletters and other printed and electronic materials, digital media (e.g., Avon Lake Presbyterian Church's website, Facebook and other social media sites).

By participating in Avon Lake Presbyterian Church's church services, ministry activities, classes, programs, and other events:

- you consent to be photographed, videotaped, or otherwise recorded.
- you grant your permission for Avon Lake Presbyterian Church to use recordings containing your image, likeness, voice or statements, without compensation, credit or other consideration to you, for Avon Lake Presbyterian Church's promotional, publicity and other purposes.
- you agree to release, hold harmless and indemnify Avon Lake Presbyterian Church from all liabilities and claims involving the use of your image, likeness, voice or statements.

Response by ALPC Employees to Injuries and Accidents:

To assure proper attention was given to an injury or accident, the adult supervisor must complete an incident report within 24 hours of the incident whenever a child or youth is injured. The incident report is to be signed and dated by worker and parent. One copy is to be made to send home and the other is to be filed at church.

Response by ALPC Employees to Allegations of Abuse:

As caring Christians, we are committed to protect and advocate for children and youth participating in the life of the church. The church is entrusted to provide an emotionally safe, spiritually grounded, healthy environment for children, youth, and adults in which they are protected from abuse. It is our legal and moral responsibility to report suspected abuse whenever it comes to our attention regardless of where that abuse takes place.

If abuse is suspected by, observed by, or disclosed to a volunteer and or ALPC Employees the following procedures should be followed.

- Immediately notify the proper authorities depending on the location of the suspected abuse, usually Lorain County Children Services (Hotline 440-329-2121), or the Avon Lake Police (440-933-4567). (Reference Section 2151.421 of the Ohio Revised Code.) This is a requirement of the law. Do not attempt an investigation. Do not ask questions beyond those necessary to determine reasonable cause to believe that abuse has occurred. This should be left to professionals who are familiar with these cases. Follow the advice of Lorain County Children Services or the Avon Lake Police Department about notification of parents.
- If the alleged abuser is the Pastor, in addition to notifying the proper authorities, contact both the Clerk of Session and either the Stated Clerk or the General Presbyter of the Presbytery of the Western Reserve.
- If the alleged abuser is not the Pastor notify the Pastor after the report to the authorities has been made or have the Pastor witness the initial report to the proper authorities. If the abuse involves Cornerstone Preschool, the Director of Cornerstone should also be notified after the report to authorities has been made.
- After having reported the suspected abuse to the proper authorities, the incident is to be reported immediately to the church's insurance company and the Presbytery of the Western Reserve.
- A written report of the basic information shall be kept ensuring on-going ministry to, and advocacy for, victims and others involved. A form for this purpose shall be available in the church office. The report shall be brief and contain only information relevant to the situation. It shall be filed in a secure place to ensure confidentiality.

Upon the receipt of any report of potential or alleged child abuse by an ALPC Employee or volunteer of ALPC occurs, the individual accused of such conduct will be temporarily relieved of any duties involving youth or children pending an appropriate investigation. An allegation of abuse/misconduct would result in suspension with pay of the employee, or suspension of volunteer, pending results of investigation. If the investigation reveals no abuse or misconduct, the person accused will be reinstated in good standing. An employee/volunteer will be immediately terminated if the investigation reveals abuse or misconduct.

Notice

This Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy shall be posted in a commonly trafficked area in the church building and maintained on the church website. Additionally, a copy shall be included once a year in the Annual Report. The policy will be announced annually during church services at the start of the Sunday School year in September.

APPROVED: May 18, 2026