

EP Kids Handbook

Policies and Procedures Guide

Code of Conduct

C.A.R.E Policy



**Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Annapolis
710 Ridgely Avenue, Annapolis, MD 21401**

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Annapolis Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Annapolis

Philosophy of Children's Ministry

The children's ministry at Annapolis EP Church exists for God's glory. The mission of this church is to be "a community of God's people seeking the spiritual, cultural, and social renewal of Annapolis and the surrounding community as we are moved by the Gospel into greater devotion to Jesus Christ, love for his family, and service to his world—that Christ would be glorified, and that people from every nation, tribe, and language would worship and serve the living God."

We pray that our children will:

Know Jesus through sound Biblical teaching and discipleship.

Love Jesus by developing a relationship with him through greater understanding of scripture.

Show Jesus to the watching world through their relationships with others.

We seek to accomplish these goals by God's grace and through the work of the Holy Spirit and through:

- Team Building - developing leaders to shepherd and disciple our children and their families.
- Sunday School - using curriculum to teach solid Bible truths, the whole story of redemption, showing Jesus in all of scripture. This is a time to build the community and disciple young hearts and minds.
- Scripture and Catechism memory - teaching children to hide God's word in their hearts and to know what and why we believe.
- Family teaching/training - partnering with families by providing resources, support, and encouragement to equip them in their God given responsibility of training their children in righteousness (Deuteronomy 6:4; Ephesians 6:4).
- Service - opportunities for families and children to serve the body of Christ and the greater community. These might include serving as ushers, helping with Operation Christmas Child, Angel Tree, helping around the church.
- Outreach events - These events may include VBS, Easter events, Advent Adventure.
- Fellowship opportunities -- family movie nights, firepit fellowship, playground meetups so that families can build a community of faith.

*Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. – **Hebrews 13:20-21***

Classrooms and Ratios

The Children's Ministry has classes available for the following ages:

Nursery: Infants through walking

Lambs: Walking through age 2

Bears: Age 2 through 3

Giraffes: Age 4 through 5

Classes for infants through Pre-K are available during the morning worship service and the 9:00 Sunday School hour. Classes open 15 minutes prior.

Elementary age children are encouraged to worship with their parents.

There is a wiggle room available outside the sanctuary for children who need it. Coloring sheets and worship bags are available in that room for use in worship. The service can also be viewed in this room if necessary.

All children must be checked in to their classrooms by a parent or guardian. Check in areas are located by the chapel or on the nursery hallway.

Our classes adhere to ratios and promotional markers as follows:

Class	Promotional Marker	Adult: Child Ratio
Infants	Developmental	1:3
Lambs: Toddlers	Developmental or Two by September 1	1:4
Bears: Twos/Threes	Four by September 1	1:5
Giraffes: Fours/Fives	Begins school	1:6
Elementary	Grade Level	2 adults per classroom

*No class will be allowed to open without a minimum of two adults present. Except in extraordinary circumstances as outlined in the EP Care Policy and approved by the ministry director.

Because we want to provide the best care for children, we closely monitor the adult-child ratio in each classroom. Should a classroom go over the appropriate ratio, the greeter or ministry director will ask parents to volunteer. On occasion, a classroom may be closed.

Generally, we promote children the first Sunday after Labor Day in September, except for infant, Lambs (toddler), and Bears (twos/threes)\ classes.

Curriculum

“From infancy you have known the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” 2 Timothy 3:15

Nursery/Toddlers

Young children learn best by doing! Our youngest children are taught that the Bible is God’s word, that God made them, and that God loves them. Each week they are read a Bible story, and taught through songs and play.

Preschool

The Noah’s Ark Preschool (ages 2 through 5) uses the Show Me Jesus curriculum. We work to build a vocabulary of faith by presenting the Bible stories. Even at this age children are able to understand and put their faith in Jesus.

Elementary

Elementary students will be using Lifeway’s The Gospel Project curriculum (K-5th grade) this year. This curriculum “immerses children in the gospel through every story, theological concept, and call to mission from Genesis to Revelation.” This framework aims for heart transformation through the gospel as children see how the gospel is present in the entire Bible. Children will understand that the Bible “is not just a collection of stories, but one unified story—God’s story of redemption” (www.thegospelproject.com). It is our prayer and deepest desire that the Lord would use this series to help your children go deeper into God’s Word, grow in the Gospel of Christ, and be able to share the joy and love they have received from God with others!

Parent Responsibilities

For the safety and well-being of your child, please adhere to the policies and procedures that are outlined in this entire manual.

Tags

1. Every parent is required to create a profile for their family in our database system. This system generates our nametags. Please check every fall to be sure your information is correct. If you are unsure how to do so, coordinate with the Director of Children's Ministry.
2. Every parent must print off a name tag for their child and its corresponding security tag prior to dropping their child off.
3. Once the name tag is printed, affix it to the child's back. Parents should retain the security tag portion as is it is required to pick your child up.

Security for Child Pick Up

1. As mentioned above, each child receives a name tag and security tag prior to Sunday School. Parents must retain the security tag portion. Preschool children will not be dismissed without that tag. If the tag becomes lost, contact the Director of Children's Ministry for a replacement.
2. No children under 5th grade will be dismissed without a parent or guardian present.

Alerts and Requests

1. If your child has any allergies or special conditions, please explain them to the staff member or volunteer leading your child's class. For allergies, make sure that a note about the allergy has been made on your child's registration. If the allergy is correctly noted in the system, it will print out on the name tag. While teachers and volunteers will do their best to follow all allergy guidelines, parents are responsible for making volunteers and teachers aware of the allergy.
2. Alert the teachers if your child is potty training. Please take potty-trained children to the restroom before dropping them off in class.
3. We welcome parents to spend up to 3 weeks acclimating their children to the class. Once your child feels comfortable, we encourage you to leave your child in class so that you may enjoy the service.
4. It is often most beneficial to quickly drop off your child, as this reduces separation anxiety and helps the child more quickly adjust to the classroom.
5. Drop your child off at the door rather than going all the way into the classroom. This reduces confusion and crowding in the hallway.
6. Whenever possible, allow one parent to drop off and pick up your children to prevent crowding in the hallway.
7. Only parents with a security tag will be allowed to pick up their children.

Items to Bring

1. Label all of your child's belongings, including diaper bags, cups, bottles, pacifiers, etc.
2. Please leave all toys and dolls at home or in the diaper bag as they can get lost or cause other children to be upset.
3. All bottles must be pre-mixed. Nursery workers are not allowed to mix formula for health and safety reasons.
4. Please provide a diaper for your child if they need one.
5. If your child has allergies or special dietary concerns, please send a snack for them. We typically provide goldfish and water.

Volunteering

1. We encourage parents to volunteer in our classes. We request that all parents volunteer in a class at least 4 times a year.
2. When you volunteer, please sign into the iPad when you check in your child.

Volunteer Responsibilities

Requirements to Serve

1. Each volunteer in our ministry is required to complete an application process, which includes, but is not limited to, a personal interview, a testimony, and background check. Background checks and abuse prevention screening will be redone at minimum of every two years.
2. We hold comprehensive teacher trainings, either online or in person to:
 - a. Ensure our volunteers understand and follow our policies;
 - b. Enable them to nurture our children.
3. Youth must be at least 12 years old to work in the preschool rooms. Youth must be at least 16 to work in the nursery unless supervised by a parent. Youth may serve at the permission of the Ministry Director and the classroom teacher.
4. Volunteers are entrusted to the teach the children of EP about the Gospel. We ask that volunteers commit themselves to the responsibility of building a strong, spiritual foundation in the hearts of the children.

Scheduling

1. Volunteers will communicate with the Ministry Director concerning the schedule.
2. Once the schedule is set, any changes should be made by switching with another team member and notifying the Ministry Director as soon as possible. Team members' contact information can be found in the EP Database.
3. In case of an emergency that causes the volunteer to run late or be unable to serve, it is imperative to call or text the Ministry Director.
4. When a volunteer is no longer able to serve with Children's Ministry, 2 weeks notice is needed to find a replacement. Longer is appreciated.

General

1. Volunteers must be knowledgeable about and adhere to applicable policies and procedures in this manual.
2. Volunteers are not permitted to have any personal drink (other than water or coffee) or food during class if there are children with allergies present.
3. Personal belongings are to remain off the floor and out of reach of children.
4. Phones should to be on vibrate and may not be used in the classroom except in the case of an emergency.
5. Any special treats or activities involving food outside of the scheduled curriculum must be approved by the Ministry Director.

Arrival and Setup

1. Please arrive a minimum of 20 minutes before your scheduled service time, and sooner if preparation is required. *Please be on time.* Punctuality is required and excessive tardiness will not be tolerated as it compromises the quality of programming for the children. Please remember that tardiness has a domino effect, involving supervisors, fellow teachers, children, and families.

2. Sign in via iPad upon arrival or check in with the hall monitor or director and take your nametag from the check-in desk.
3. Wash your hands before setting up the classroom.
4. Set out any materials needed for class, as provided by area supervisor.
5. Ensure that all tables are wiped clean and toys and supplies are put away neatly in their proper places prior to leaving the room. Notice that there are labels indicating where toys and supplies are to be stored.

Snacks

1. All children's hands must be washed or sanitized prior to eating a snack.
2. A light snack is provided for children. It usually consists of goldfish and water.
3. Before handing children snacks, ensure they do not have allergies.
4. Children may have snacks and drinks only when they are seated. Children are not allowed to walk around with snacks or cups due to allergy and sanitation reasons.
5. Cups should be promptly removed once each child has finished.
6. All bottles must be pre-mixed. Nursery workers are not allowed to mix formula for health and sanitation reason.

Class Time

1. Anyone not wearing an approved name tag, or a parent of one of the children in your room, is not permitted in the classroom. *If there is a problem, or you feel uncomfortable asking someone if they are approved, see the hall monitor or Ministry Director.*
2. One volunteer should welcome children and take attendance while the other engages with the other children. Be sure to ask new parents to leave a phone number where they can be reached in case of emergency.
3. Be particularly aware of children with allergies and check all nametags for any indication of allergies or other special needs. Ask parents for further clarification.
4. Review the classroom rules with the children regularly (Refer to Classroom Management section for details).
5. Whenever possible, sit on the floor with children to interact with them. Being on their eye level helps gain and maintain their attention.
6. Remain in the classroom at all times unless you are leaving to take a child to the restroom.
7. Enjoy being with the kids! Remember that this is not babysitting, but ministering to these children and guiding them closer to the Lord.

Departure Procedures

1. Children must be wearing a printed name tag to enter the classroom. If a child arrives without a name tag, send the parent and child back to the check-in area.
2. When a parent arrives, ask for the child's security tag before releasing the child. *This is imperative: do not release a child without having the security tag.*
3. Match the child's name tag with the security sticker, check the child off on your class roster. These pages will be collected by the Ministry Director at the end of the morning.

4. After all children have been picked up, tidy your classroom and return your nametag and lanyard to the cabinet in your classroom.

Classroom Management Policies

Classroom Rules

1. Obey the teacher
2. Listen
3. Respect Others
4. Keep your hands and feet to yourself

Proactive steps for helping children in the classroom

1. Communicate the rules at the beginning of class every Sunday.
2. Make eye contact when speaking to the child.
3. Catch the child being *good*. Use positive reinforcement.
4. Have the child repeat what you asked them to do.
5. Try to redirect the child if they are doing something they shouldn't be doing.
6. Discipline should always be given in love, not in anger.

Preventative Actions

1. Create a loving, caring atmosphere.
2. Establish and communicate realistic expectations for children.
3. Focus on positive actions.
4. Be fair and consistent with children.

Aggressive Behavior

1. Biting, hitting, pushing, scratching, kicking, swearing, or pulling is considered aggressive behavior.
2. If a child displays any of these behaviors, he or she will be removed from the situation and the parent will be notified.

Discipline Steps

1. Verbal Warning: If possible, *whisper* to the child in order to not draw attention away from the teaching and onto inappropriate behavior.
2. Remove and Set Apart: Remove the child from the rest of the class. Have them sit in a different part of the classroom for a set amount of time or until the child is ready to participate cooperatively (a good rule of thumb is one minute for every year of age, example 2 minutes for a two year old).
3. If at any point you feel uncomfortable with the behavior of the child, or need assistance, the hall monitor or Ministry Director is available to assist.
4. Let parents know at pickup any discipline necessary. Ask them for suggestions on what works best with their child (keep in mind, they may not have any ideas)
5. Note home:
 - a. Use the parent communication forms in your classroom. Fill it out and bring it to the checking desk for a copy to be made. Give the original to the parent.
 - b. Once a parent communication form is sent home, we will work together with the parents to decide what the best next steps are for the child

6. We never use physical discipline of any kind.

Self Evaluation

1. Pay attention to how you feel
 - a. If you are stressed, children will sense that. Try to focus on the present moment and the children in front of you rather than the outside stresses and circumstances.
 - b. We only have about an hour with these kids each week to give them our all and teach them about the depth of God's love for them, which we can demonstrate through our actions and our undivided attention.
 - c. Take a minute away if needed (example: step into the hall for a moment with the door open and within line of sight of the classroom. If you must leave for longer, contact the greeter/hall monitor/ministry director to fill in for you).
2. If you are struggling with a child, pass him or her off to another staff member or volunteer. You are never alone in the classroom, so let those around you help you through the difficult moments.
3. Arrive prepared for the morning, in heart and mind. Arriving on time enables you to have time to prepare for the morning (and have a cup of coffee).

Positive Classroom Management and Discipline

1. Praise the Positive and reward good behavior.
Children often learn by modeling behavior. So try, for example “I love the way Sarah is sitting quietly with her hands in her lap. Great job!” The other children will follow quickly in hopes of being praised in the same way. Praising kids rewards good behavior and reinforces it for the entire class.
2. Explain the rules of the class every week.
Children do well when they know what is expected of them. Keep the classroom structure similar from week to week. Having a predictable routine helps kids cope with an environment and understand appropriate behavior.
3. Be assertive: Say what you mean and do what you say.
Children need to know what consequences will follow for disobedience. When children know the consequences ahead of time, they are likely to deal with them with less arguing and complaining. It is best to order your classroom around what you have said you are going to do. You are the teacher. Be firm in giving instructions and following through with what you say. You should never yell at a child. Speak on their level. Look at them in the eye and make sure they are listening to what you say. If appropriate, have them repeat back what you just said. Do not discipline a child from across the room: go to the child and pull them aside. Do not let kids tell you what to do. You must be in control.
4. Make things fun!
Instead of going into things like clean up time with a negative approach, such as “I'm so sorry, but we have to put toys away now...” try addressing it with a positive spin like “OK, kids, I have a mission for you: do you think we can have all of these toys put away in two minutes?” Or, singing the clean-up song is a fun way to begin and encourage a clean-up routine. Don't offer too many activity choices for kids. Switch out the toys so kids do not become bored.
5. Talk to a child who is crying.
Engage an upset child with something of interest. Talk to them in a way that distracts them from thinking about their parents and avoid saying that Mommy is coming. If absolutely necessary, you can remind them that Mommy and Daddy will come back soon, but do not make that the point of your conversation. For children who are likely to cry, ask their parents about how to best soothe them. Don't force an upset child to be cuddled/comforted if they clearly don't want to be.

“For these commands are a lamp, teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way of life.” Proverbs 6:23

Wellness:

1. Children must be symptom free from the following illness without medication for 24 hours before entering the classroom:
 - Fever of 100 or higher: there is a digital thermometer at the check in counter
 - Vomiting or diarrhea
 - Conjunctivitis (pink eye or other eye infection)
 - Rash
 - Nasal drainage
 - Sore throat
 - Open sores
 - Cold
 - Significant coughing
 - Lice
 - Any contagious disease or illness
2. If a child develops any of these symptoms while in class, the parent will be called to pick up the child. If a parent cannot be reached via cell phone, the child will stay outside of the class with the supervisor or greeter but always within view of two adults approved for work with children.
3. In cases of questionable illness or whether a child is fit to remain in children's programs, the director will be called for a decision.
4. Security tags for children with allergies will be marked with the allergy. Parents should also discuss allergies with teachers at drop-off.

Injury and First Aid:

Although we strive to provide a safe environment, the nature of children's activities occasionally leads to accidents, which should be handled as follows:

1. Any life-threatening situations should be given immediate medical attention by contacting 911; parents and the Ministry Director should then be promptly notified.
2. Staff/volunteers may attend to minor cuts, scrapes and bumps (e.g. applying a bandage or cold pack). A first aid kit is accessible in each preschool/nursery room as well as in the kitchen, the church office, and the wiggle room. We can give only Band-Aids and Ice Packs. If an EpiPen is necessary please inform the teachers or volunteers and ensure they are comfortable administering it.
3. Any injury or illness should be reported to the Ministry Director or hall monitor, who will in turn notify a parent (since trivial injuries can turn out to be serious).

4. Once a child has received attention, the staff/volunteer or supervisor will complete a parent communication form for any injuries beyond minor cuts or scrapes.
5. No medications are allowed in children's rooms except inhalers, EpiPens or other required emergency medication, which may be administered by those trained. These must be kept with the child. However, AEP will not be responsible for any "Good Samaritan" assistance offered by any of its congregants.
6. If there is an injury in the classroom, the teachers and/or volunteers should immediately tell the hall monitor or Ministry Director. Any injury must be reported since some seemingly trivial injuries can turn out to be serious. The teacher must complete a Parent Communication Form as soon as possible, to be filed, and have it copied for the parent to take home.
7. Radios are available in each classroom to call for help from the deacons or the ministry director as necessary.

Safety and Security

We believe that it is of utmost importance that our children are nurtured in a safe and responsible environment. We also desire that our staff and volunteers be protected from any false allegations of misconduct.

1. Each volunteer in our ministry is required to complete an application process, which includes a personal interview and background check. They must also complete abuse training. Background checks and online training are required at minimum of every two years, but may be required more frequently as needed.
2. Each volunteer is required to read and agree to follow the stipulations in this comprehensive manual regarding Children's Ministry Policies and Procedures.
3. We hold comprehensive teacher trainings to (1) ensure our volunteers understand and follow our policies and to (2) enable them to nurture our children.
4. We have a detailed security procedure for picking up a child outlined in the Parent Responsibility section of this manual.
5. There is a Two-Adult rule in place for all classrooms. This means there should always be two adults, present while children are there. This is to protect the children from the possibility of abuse and to protect the adults from false accusations.
6. If there are last minute volunteers who have not been screened, they will be approved by the ministry director or greeter and placed with a volunteer or staff member who has had a background check. They are not to be left alone with children.

Restroom and Diapering:

1. Parents should take their toilet-trained child to the restroom prior to dropping him/her off in class.
2. Diaper changes should only be done in the presence of another adult. Parents may opt to be notified if their child needs a diaper change or help in the bathroom.
3. All diapers should be checked and changed if necessary, before children are picked up.

4. Adults must wash their own hands as well as the children's hands (at a sink or with hand sanitizer) after going to the restroom or changing a diaper.
5. Staff must always attend a child who is on the changing table. Prepare ahead so that all supplies are within reach. Never leave a child alone on the table, even if just to reach for something.
6. Children beyond pre-school age will take care of their own bathroom needs. Usually an entire class or several children from a class are sent to the bathroom, along with an accompanying adult/helper. The outer door of the bathroom WILL remain open at all times and the adult/helper will remain outside in view of another adult/hall monitor. The adult/helper will escort the children as a group directly back to the classroom when all children are finished.
**Teachers should encourage parents to take their child to the restroom before class begins.

Evacuation:

1. If the fire alarm sounds while parents are in the service, they must follow the evacuation instructions out of the sanctuary. Parents flooding the childcare area will cause congestion and prevent the children from being able to safely evacuate the building.
2. All volunteers/supervisors/teachers are aware of the plan to follow in case of an emergency. The supervisors will be responsible for getting everyone out of the building and helping people to follow the evacuation plans in their designated areas.
3. In the event of an emergency, the building evacuation plan for infants and children is as follows:
 - Ambulatory Children - Teachers will walk their students out of the building via the nearest exit. All classes will meet at the back of the playground, by the church garage. Communication will be made by 2-way radio between children's ministry staff to establish progress and status.
 - Infants -Infants will be evacuated and placed in infant evacuation carts (cribs) that are stored in the monkey room off the nursery. Infants and staff will then proceed to the rendezvous location at the back of the parking lot by the playground. Communication will be made by 2-way radio between children's ministry staff to establish progress and status.
 - Parents will pick up their children at the back of the parking lot by the playground. Parents should not go to children's hallway.
 - Evacuating staff and volunteers will NOT return to the building until an "all clear" has been transmitted by the fire department.
 - Make sure that no one is left in the areas where you are serving. CLOSE THE DOORS as you exit rooms but do not lock them. Move briskly to outside evacuation areas.
 - Accounting for children: Teachers will have attendance sheets with them. Teachers and Children's Ministry staff should check attendance again once they reach the evacuation point.
 - In the event that it is unsafe to proceed to the back parking lot by the playground, the alternate evacuation point will be the Weems Creek Baptist Church parking lot.
 - See the Emergency Information Guide in each classroom or attached as an addendum for more information.

Media/Photography

Photographs may be taken of children from time to time. Parents will always have the option of adding their children to the “do not photograph” list by informing the ministry director.

- No photographs or video of children showing faces may be used in print, or online without parental approval.
- If faces are visible, parent approval must be obtained from a parent of the child in the photograph.
- Identifying information including names, ages, or schools will never be shared online.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CHILD SAFETY

Background

The most effective way to reduce abuse of children is to be vigilant. By being vigilant in following the Code of Conduct we will help protect children from abuse.

All staff and volunteers who have roles with children are expected to interact with children in a mature, capable, safe, caring, responsible manner, with a high level of accountability. All adult staff and volunteers are responsible for giving and accepting feedback from others in order to maintain our high level of professionalism.

This Code of Conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following expectations of staff and volunteers. Please sign the attached form.

Code of Conduct

Visibility: All work with children shall be planned in a way that minimizes risks as far as possible. This includes being visible to other adults when working with children. This can be accomplished by planning activities in areas where other adults are present and at a time when other activities are occurring.

There is to be no one on one between an adult and unrelated child in a ministry setting.

Overcoming Isolation: At least two adults must be present in work with children. When this is not possible, reduce isolation by having a minimum of two children present, informing the child's parent of your meeting, and doing it during a time and/or in a location where your interaction with the child is visible to others. Isolation could be overcome, for example, by taking two or more children to the bathroom together rather than only one, dropping off siblings last in a carpool, or taking your own child or spouse along when providing rides. We expect an adequate number of adults to supervise youth events, especially overnight activities.

Accountability: When ministry to a child involves one-on-one contact, the following procedures must be followed, as applicable. Always be accountable to other adults regarding your interactions with youth or children. Counseling or other necessarily confidential meetings with children shall be done in an office with a window in the door and only when another adult is in close vicinity, aware that the meeting is occurring, and willing to stay in the vicinity until it is completed.

Parents and/or supervisors are to be notified beforehand of any activities with youth or children. For example, before transporting a youth or child, keeping a child after meetings or a youth activity, or when tutoring a child or youth. When transporting a child, consider notifying the parent and another person via text at the time of leaving and upon arrival at the destination.

In an emergency situation, find someone to go with you if at all possible, or notify whoever is available.

Parent Involvement: Parents are responsible for knowing where their children are at all times. Therefore, parents must be informed of planned activities (e.g. trips or events) and asked to sign a consent form whenever possible. Parents shall be encouraged to make unannounced visits to program activities, as this also reduces the risk of abuse.

Supervision: Supervision also reduces risk. Program administrators shall periodically and randomly inspect classrooms, offices, work areas and other areas where children and adults are together.

Technology: Technology must be used appropriately to protect children or youth from abuse and exploitation, for example, to prevent downloading pornographic material from the Internet, access to inappropriate emails, chat rooms, or movies. Obtain parental consent before taking photographs of their children. Do not allow photos or videos of children to be posted online without parent consent.

Discipline: Discipline should be used to teach and correct rather than punish. It may not include slapping, hitting, shaming, yelling at, or belittling a child.

Bullying: Bullying is never acceptable from either adults or other students.

Touch: Because healthy, caring touch is valuable to children but unhealthy touch is abusive, the following guidelines apply. Touch must be open rather than secretive. A hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors. Touch must be in response to the need of the child, and not the need of the adult. Touch must be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child rather than the adult. It must be with the child's permission and any resistance from the child should be respected. Touch must always communicate respect for the child. Adults should avoid doing things of a personal nature for children that they are able to do for themselves, including dressing, bathing, etc.

Adults and other youth or children may not hit, slap, pinch, push, hold against their will, or otherwise assault children.

The following signs of affection are generally appropriate within specific contexts: verbal praise, side hugs, shoulder to shoulder hugs, pats on the shoulder, back, or head (when culturally appropriate). For smaller children, touching their hands, faces, shoulders and arms, arms around their shoulders, hugs, or holding them when others are present.

The following behaviors between staff or volunteers and children are inappropriate and shall not be engaged in: touching buttocks, chests, genital areas, or thighs; showing affection in isolated areas or when alone with a child; sleeping in bed with a child; inappropriate comments that relate to physique or body development; flirtatious or seductive looks; any form of affection that is unwanted

by the child; showing sexually-suggestive videos or playing sexually-suggestive games with any child; any behavior that could be interpreted as sexual in nature.

Team members shall monitor each other in the area of physical contact, helping each other by pointing out anything that could be misinterpreted.

Verbal Interaction: Words can also be used to support and encourage a child, such as praise, positive reinforcement, and appropriate jokes. Inappropriate verbal interaction includes the following: shaming, belittling, humiliating, name calling, using harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate the child, cursing, or making derogatory remarks about the child. Adults shall avoid favoring or showing differential treatment to particular children or youth to the exclusion of others. Inappropriate verbal interaction also includes telling off-color or sexual jokes, making sexually suggestive comments, telling inappropriate secrets, or inappropriately discussing sexual encounters or desires with children.

Personal Interaction Policy For Private (Not Church Sponsored) Activities

Research shows many cases of abuse occur off-site and outside of sponsored activities. Contact outside of church activities may put employees, volunteers, children in our care at increased risk. The following offers various options for managing the risk of abuse and false accusations arising from contact outside regularly scheduled church activities.

Examples of contact outside of church activities:

- Babysitting arrangements
- Tutoring
- Private lessons/coaching
- Mentorship
- Social interactions between employee's or volunteer's children and children served by the organization include:
 - o Playdates and birthday parties
 - o Sleepovers
 - o Overnight trips and vacations
 - o Rides to/from organization or extracurricular activities and events
- Attending public events in a shared community (like graduation, sports events, religious ceremonies)

EP Church strongly encourages employees and volunteers to exercise caution and judgement when having outside contact with children with which they do not have a familial or social relationship (i.e., children are friends at school).

- To increase transparency consider texting or emailing the parents, and a ministry director or other volunteer when interactions like transportation and social outings occur and there may

be one on one contact. Consider bringing someone else along on the ride, even your own children.

- When in doubt, notify the parents of the child and someone else—ministry director, other volunteer, what is happening. This helps keep all interactions with minors above board.
- If there is ever an interaction with a minor that has occurred that raises a question or even a shadow of a doubt, let the parents of the child, and the ministry director, pastor, or other church employee know. Document the interaction thoroughly.

Reporting of Abuse: When anyone working with children or subject to this policy has either a credible suspicion or actual knowledge of child abuse, they must make a report according to AEP's reporting protocol contained in the C.A.R.E. policy.

Electronic Communication and Social Media Code of Conduct

Electronic Communication and **social media** present the potential for inappropriate behavior, increased access to vulnerable minors, and privacy violations. Employees, volunteers, church officers, and students participating in EP Church's programs, ministries, events, and activities shall adhere to the following Social Media Code of Conduct:

1. Do not engage in electronic behavior or comments that are abusive, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, humiliating, or that are contrary to EP's statement of belief. We hold the Bible as the chief authority and source of truth for Christian beliefs and living.
2. Be a positive role model by exhibiting professionalism in all interactions; portray an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience, courtesy, tact, and maturity.
3. Electronic communication between employees or volunteers and students, must either include a parent on the communication or have parental consent and knowledge for the communications to be occurring.
4. Never reveal sensitive or confidential information, including identifiable details or photos of a student without parental approval.
5. Employees and volunteers may not post or share on their personal social media accounts any photographs or videos of students participating in EP programs or ministries without consent of the parents.
6. Employees and volunteers may not post or share inappropriate photos or comments about photos of students.
7. Do not make pornography in any form available to students participating in EP programs, events, and activities or assist minors in any way in gaining access to pornography.
8. Employees and volunteers may not create web pages on behalf of the church unless they have prior approval to do so. They may not misrepresent their work with the church or the church itself.
9. Always act in a professional and constructive manner and use sound judgement before posting or sharing content.
11. Employees and volunteers must adhere to uniform standards of electronic communication and social media use as outlined in any applicable organizational policies and procedures.

- EP church ministry directors monitor its social media pages and removes any posts that violate the organization’s policies for appropriate behavior.
- EP Church ministry directors will inform parents/guardians of any such prohibited posts or online behavior.
- This Code of Conduct and associated policies and procedures shall be available to parents/guardians of minors. It shall also be available for public view on the church website as part of the child protection policy.

Minors and Parents/guardians may request in writing that a minor not be contacted through any form of electronic communication or social media by an employee or volunteer of the organization.

Acknowledgment of Electronic Communication and Social Media Code of Conduct

I have received a copy, read, and voluntarily agree to comply with the EP Church Electronic Communication and Social Media Code of Conduct. I understand that failure to comply with these policies may result in my removal from employment or volunteer service.

(Please Print)

Name _____

Ministry or Area of Service: _____

Signature _____ **Date** _____

Parent/Guardian Name *(if applicable)*

Signature _____ **Date** _____

Evangelical Presbyterian Church Of Annapolis

C.A.R.E. Policy

Children and Adults in a Responsible Environment

Mission

It is the purpose of the church members/attendees and employees to provide a safe, secure environment for children and youth. A safe and secure environment includes a formal, written policy to help prevent the occurrence of child abuse. The following policy and procedures are for the protection of our children, youth, vulnerable adults, employees, volunteers and families at Annapolis EP Church. This policy is in agreement with and support of *Overture 6–Child Protection in the PCA* approved during the 2014 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America.

Goals

The goals of these Child Abuse Prevention Policies and Procedures are to protect children and youth from emotional, physical and sexual abuse by volunteers and/or employees and protect AEP volunteers and employees from false accusations of child abuse.

I. Statement of Intent

The Session, members, and staff of The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Annapolis (AEP) recognize that children, youth, and vulnerable adults may be entrusted to the care of adult providers and student helpers who lead church programs and activities both on and off the AEP site and also in educational or recreational programs operated by others on AEP property.

The Session, members, and staff of AEP are committed to maintaining an environment in which children, youth, and vulnerable adults are protected from emotional, physical and sexual abuse, and in which church staff, teachers, and volunteer providers are protected from potential false allegations of abuse.

To achieve the goals of preventing either incidents of abuse or the unfounded assertion of such conduct, AEP has developed appropriate procedures to be implemented in the following areas:

- The interviewing and selection of volunteers involved in the supervision or custody of minors and/or vulnerable adults;
- Orientation and training of approved providers;
- Supervision of approved providers by trained leadership;
- Reporting of, and responding to any incident and/or allegation of the abuse of a minor and/or a vulnerable adult.

AEP's role does not supplant that of the parents/guardians who remain primarily responsible for the nurturing, protection, supervision and care of their child(ren) and vulnerable persons in their legal charge. Rather, AEP desires to help such parents/guardians protect their children by establishing safeguards and appropriate practices within AEP sponsored programs and activities to reduce the risk of abuse.

II. Applicability

The general policy and procedures apply to staff, church officers, interns, teachers or volunteer providers, church members, and guests. As situations arise which are not adequately addressed by a specific procedure or policy, this policy may be revised by the Session of AEP.

III. Definitions

The following definitions shall apply in this document:

Abuse includes emotional, physical, mental and sexual abuse.

Approved worker (or provider): A staff person, teacher, or volunteer (18 years or older) involved with the supervision or care of minors and/or vulnerable adults through programs provided at or sponsored by AEP whose participation has been pre-approved by AEP and has undergone a background check and child protection training.

Child: A minor under the age of eighteen (18) years old.

Physical abuse is defined as physical maltreatment, which results in non-accidental physical injury. Any brutal conduct that is not accidental is physical abuse. This may include such things as shaking, hitting, burning, choking, kicking or other maltreatment.

Sexual abuse is defined as acts of sexual assault and sexual exploitation of minors or vulnerable adults. Sexual abuse encompasses a broad range of behavior and may include, but is not limited to incest, fondling, rape, sexual proposition or enticement, intercourse, indecent exposure, oral-genital contact, child pornography or child prostitution or communicating in a sexual way. Sexual abuse may be violent or non-violent, and may include non-contact acts.

Emotional Abuse is defined as conduct that reasonably causes harm to a minor or vulnerable adult's psychological or intellectual functioning, which is exhibited by emotional damage such as severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, or aggression. Emotional damage may be demonstrated by substantial and observable changes in behavior, emotional response or learning, which is incompatible with the minor or vulnerable adult's age or stage of development. Emotional Abuse includes the following conduct: shaming, humiliation, and cruelty.

Student Helpers: approved youth 12-17 years old. Student helpers will be accompanied by an adult teacher, 18 years of older, and must be approved by the ministry leader. (Exception: children younger than 12 who desire to accompany their parent in the classroom may do so with the approval of the staff person responsible for the ministry.)

Vulnerable Adults: Persons 18 years or older who cannot reasonably make informed decisions for themselves due to severely impaired physical or mental function and who either reside in licensed facilities or who are in the guardianship or care of others.

TYPES OF ABUSE

Child Abuse and Neglect

Generally, the term abuse encompasses the most serious harms committed against children. An "abused child" is a child whose parent or other person legally responsible for his/her care inflicts upon the child serious physical injury, creates a substantial risk of serious physical injury, or commits an act of sex abuse against the child.

Not only can a person be abusive to a child if they perpetrate any of these actions against a child themselves, but they can be guilty of abusing a child if they allow someone else to do these things to that child. Child Abuse is defined in law in section 5-701 of the Maryland Family Code ([MD Fam L Code § 5-701 \(2017\)](#)).

Neglect occurs when a parent or other person legally responsible for the care of a child harms a child, or places a child in imminent danger of harm by failing to exercise the minimum degree of care in providing the child with any of the following: food, clothing, shelter, education or medical care when financially able to do so. Neglect can also result from abandonment of a child or from not providing adequate supervision for the child. Further, a child may be neglected if a parent engages in excessive use of drugs or alcohol such that it interferes with their ability to adequately supervise the child.

Child Sexual Abuse

This policy defines 'Child Sexual Abuse' as any sexual act between an adult and a minor, or between two minors, when one exerts power over the other. Child sexual abuse includes forcing, coercing or persuading a child to engage in any type of sexual act. It also includes non-contact acts such as (A) exhibitionism, exposure to pornography, voyeurism (B), and communicating in a sexual manner by phone or electronic means.

- A. Exhibitionism is exposing one's genitals on purpose to attract or to cause sexual interest in another person.
- B. Voyeurism is getting sexual arousal from looking at other's naked bodies and genitals, or at others' sexual acts.

The book *Making Your Church Safe From Child Sexual Abuse*, from Church Law and Tax Report further says that "Child sexual abuse may be violent or non-violent. All child sexual abuse is an exploitation of a child's vulnerability and powerlessness in which the abuser is fully responsible for the action. Child sexual abuse includes behaviors that involve touching and non-touching aspects. Child Sexual Abuse also includes non-contact acts such as exposure to pornography, exhibitionism or communicating in a sexual way.

Child Physical Abuse

Child physical abuse occurs when a minor is mistreated or not provided with the basic necessities of life resulting in injury, risk, or harm. Physical abuse is defined as brutal physical contact that is not accidental. It may include hitting, kicking, shaking, burning, hair pulling, biting, choking and other harmful behaviors.

Physical indicators of child physical abuse include: unexplained bruises or welts, bruises that occur with regularity, suspicious burns, and unexplained fractures or dislocations. Behavioral indicators of child physical abuse include: wariness of adult contact, behavior extremes, self-abuse, or acting out of abusive behavior.

Bullying

Bullying can be another form of abuse and can result from adult and/or youth behaviors. Bullying can be physical, emotional or mental. Female bullying is becoming increasingly common and typically is in the form of verbal and emotional harassment. Cyber bullying (bullying via internet, email, text messaging, etc.) is also increasingly common and equally destructive.

IV. Policies

Annapolis EP Church has **zero tolerance** for abuse and will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of participants in our programs. Any mistreatment or abuse by an employee or volunteer will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or volunteer service. Further, EP Church will fully cooperate with law enforcement throughout the investigation and resolution of mistreatment or abuse incidents.

In addition, EP Church will not tolerate any behavior that is classified under the definition of bullying, and to the extent that such actions are disruptive, we will take the necessary steps to eliminate such behavior.

To safeguard our children, and to achieve the stated intent of paragraph I above, the following policies are in effect:

I. PROHIBITED CONDUCT

- A. No provider, staff member or volunteer may ever expose children to pornographic or other sexually explicit material of any sort. Staff members/volunteers must not access, display, or possess pornography or other sexually explicit material on AEP property or equipment, at AEP sponsored events or in any setting where such material may either intentionally or inadvertently be accessed or observed by children.
- B. No provider, staff member or volunteer will use inappropriate corrective measures or behave in a violent manner (such as hitting, slapping, choking, kicking or screaming) towards children in their care.
- C. No provider, staff member or adult volunteer shall make any sexual advances towards, "date," proposition, solicit or engage in sexual contact with a minor child or vulnerable adult regardless of whether or not such child is above the statutory age of consent, regardless of whether such contact may be welcomed or encouraged by a minor or vulnerable adult and regardless of whether such contact is prohibited or permitted by statute.

II. TWO PROVIDER RULE

- a. Providers shall observe the “two provider rule,” which requires: At least two adult providers be present at church sponsored activities with minors or vulnerable adults or one adult provider and one student helper be present in church sponsored activities with children under 12 years old
- b. Exceptions to the two provider rule include:
 - 1) in a group situation, a provider who has completed background check(s) and received prior pastoral approval may lead approved group activities without a second provider or helper
 - 2) If a second provider cannot be found, the activity may be cancelled until adequate staffing is available. Alternatively the door to the classroom will be left open and a staff member of the Children’s Ministry will make every effort to visit the class during the session.
 - 3) Middle School and Senior High events where students participate in large group activities at the AEP site or in small group activities which meet in the home of a member. Parental permission may be required for these activities.
 - 4) In the event of an emergency that requires one of the providers to leave an activity, an attempt will be made to contact the supervisor before leaving the activity. If this is not practicable due to circumstances, the activity may be continued as long as the classroom door remains open. In situations where leaving a door fully open would raise safety concerns (such as with toddlers or very young children), safety gates, half doors, full glass doors and/or visibility by unobstructed windows at eye level may be approved on a case-by-case basis. Attempts will be made to have a second provider join the activity as soon as possible.

III. Children’s Ministry

- a. The “Safe-key” policy shall be followed for children’s services provided by AEP. This policy provides that each child, preschool age and younger is released only to his/her parent/guardian unless the parent/guardian authorizes an alternate pick-up. Children’s ministry staff may require signed documentation of such authorization and may extend the policy through fifth grade.

IV. Youth Ministry

- a. One-on-one contact with a Middle School or Senior High student is acceptable only in the event that the visit takes place in a public area or if written or verbal parental permission is received. Pastoral visits are exempt from this policy except that pastors shall make reasonable attempts to obtain the consent of a parent / guardian before engaging in any one-on-one session(s).

- b. Compensated church staff or their designees are encouraged to make unannounced visits to scheduled small group classroom situations involving volunteer providers at a frequency of approximately once per hour.
- c. Volunteers for overnight church activities involving minors or vulnerable adults shall be approved in advance by the pastoral staff or person responsible for that program. Materials used with minors/vulnerable adults must be approved by the appropriate Ministry Director. This includes, but is not limited to, Youth Groups, Sunday school, Vacation Bible School, and mid-week children's programs.
- d. Off-site gatherings sponsored or coordinated by AEP, including those taking place at large public venues (such as a group outing to a park, ski resort or retreat center) may not follow the two-provider rule if director(s) or ministry leaders determine it is not feasible to provide 2 chaperones for each grouping of participants. However, a minimum of two providers must be present at the venue at all times for the group event and parental permission must be given for such off-site church sponsored or organized events.
- e. In the event that student activities take place off-site, transportation to and from that event should occur in a caravan with multiple vehicles traveling together or with three or more persons in a vehicle. Exceptions to this policy will be made with written or verbal parental permission for one student to ride with an adult of the same sex to a specific location for a meeting (or any time a parent of either gender wishes to drive only his/her own children).

5. Procedures for Supervision

It shall be the responsibility of the AEP staff member accountable for AEP programs that involve minors or vulnerable adults to ensure that all providers and students helpers have completed the screening protocol. Providers and student helpers are to follow safety, security and other policies specific to that area.

Continuing education programs on abuse issues and program specific practices may be offered periodically by the Church staff or Session.

6. Other organizations using AEP facilities

Entities or other organizations that use AEP facilities must either agree to abide by this policy or operate under similar training and supervision procedures of that organization. The similar procedures of that organization must be approved by the Pastor, ministry director, and/or the Session.

V. Training

Procedures for Hiring and Screening

New providers (members/nonmembers who are new to child work) involved in the care of minors and/or vulnerable adults at AEP must go through an application process prior to being involved in any such ministry.

All staff, volunteers, church officers, and those regularly visible on the platform in worship must complete a background check every two years and child prevention training at minimum of every year.

Hiring:

1. Volunteer workers must be known by the Children or Youth ministry leaders and/or AEP Pastoral staff. It is preferred that all volunteers be members of AEP. Exceptions can be made for active prospects who regularly attend AEP and are seeking to join with the Church.
2. Before a volunteer worker is allowed to fill a position working within the Children's or Youth Ministry they must be generally observed at church services or functions for other church members or current staff employees. This observation should be documented by attendance records or reports that include: Worship service attendance, Sunday school, Bible studies or other scheduled AEP events.

Screening:

1. All volunteers, staff, and church officers are required to complete an online application and background check. On the application each potential volunteer must disclose whether or not they have been charged or convicted of any sexually related felony, including sexual assault or abuse. Adults who have been convicted of sexual or physical abuse (including but not limited to sexual assault, molestation, incest, rape or domestic violence, regardless of the age of the victim) are not permitted to provide supervisory services in any church sponsored activity or program for minors and/or vulnerable adults.
2. Volunteer applicants shall provide two (2) non-family personal references. For volunteers who are new to the church or not known by the overseeing church staff, the overseer will be responsible for contacting each reference to screen the volunteer applicant. Volunteer applicants may also list previous church membership so that overseeing staff may contact their previous church.
 - a. Volunteers for special events limited in duration to one week or less per calendar year may have the 2 non-family reference checks waived at the supervising staff members discretion, provided that the volunteer completes all other requirements including submitting an application and passing the online background check.
3. All employees, church officers, and paid full or part time ministry staff must complete and pass a background check every two years. All volunteer and staff applicants will have their names run through an online Sex Offender registry.
4. All employees, church officers, volunteers, and paid or part time ministry staff must complete abuse prevention training every year.
5. Volunteer applicants, employees, and church officers must read and sign a statement saying they have read the CARE policy, child protection policy, and media policy and agree to abide by it.
6. The ministry leader is responsible for carrying out steps 2, 3, 4, and 5 above.

7. Confidential files for full time and part time staff may be kept with an online service such as that provided by Protect My Ministry or Ministry Safe. Ready access to these confidential files will be limited to the Senior Pastor, Executive or Associate Pastor(s), and the Ministry Director(s) (i.e., Youth Pastor or Children's Ministry Director).
8. There will be a probationary period of 9 months under the supervision of the ministry director. During that time the volunteer may, in the ministry director's discretion, serve in the role of helper. (Newly hired church staff and pastors may be exempted from the probationary period and membership requirements. However, thorough background checks will be conducted on such staff or pastors.)
9. Background checks must be completed at minimum every two years. Child Protection training must take place every year. The C.A.R.E. policy must be reviewed by all volunteers, employees, church officers, and staff on the same schedule. They must sign a statement saying they have read and agree to abide by the policy.

V. DISCIPLINE POLICY

1. Providers shall review the EP Discipline policy above and shall use the procedures outlined to address child misbehavior and/or discipline issues.

VII. Reporting Procedures

A. REPORTING INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS OR POLICY VIOLATIONS

1. Adult members of AEP who participate in AEP activities (or programs on the property of AEP) should be aware of the potential for abuse of minors and/or vulnerable adults. Therefore, they should not hesitate to raise issues of questionable or inappropriate behavior, including directly questioning or expressing concerns to any person who appears to be engaged in questionable behavior.
2. When an AEP member or provider observes questionably inappropriate behaviors or policy violations but does not initially have a clear basis for suspecting abuse, the member/provider should endeavor to address the situation directly with the person engaging in questionable behavior.
3. Policy violations, whether or not any suspicion of abuse is involved, should also be reported to the AEP Staff person directly responsible for the specific area of ministry. Initial reports may be made in-person or by phone or by filing out an incident report form.
4. If after raising any concerns and/or after further observations the observer still has concerns or believes that abuse may have occurred, a report should be made to the AEP Staff person directly responsible for the specific area of ministry.

B. REPORTING SUSPECTED OR OBSERVED ABUSE.

1. Mandatory reporting laws will be followed when and as they apply. For more information, see Md. FAMILY LAW Code Ann. § 5-704.
2. The procedures in this policy for reporting abuse are not designed to discourage reporting to secular authorities. Mandatory reporting laws require reporting of child abuse for any adult in ministry leadership,

including Sunday School teachers. **Any person who observes or suspects abuse should independently report such observations or concerns to state or local authorities.** Reports to authorities may be made confidentially or anonymously. Maryland provides immunity from civil liability for persons required to report suspected abuse who make truthful reports in good faith. **A call should be placed to the Department of Social Services of Anne Arundel County (DSS of AAC): (410) 421-8400, Child Protective Services and/or Adult Protective Services (CPS/APS).**

3. Members, staff, church officers, and/or providers shall (independently from any other reporting) report any suspected or known abuse of children or vulnerable adults to AEP in the manner outlined in this Policy.
4. After contacting appropriate authorities, observations of abuse or suspicions of abuse shall be reported immediately to the staff person responsible for the area of ministry where an observation or alleged incident occurred. If suspicions or observations of abuse involve a parent or other third party not in an area of ministry, a report may be made to the Pastor. Reports may initially be made orally but shall be followed in writing (on an Incident Report Form) within 48 hours.
5. *Any person observing abusive conduct which appears likely to cause imminent risk of serious physical or emotional harm, death, sexual abuse, or exploitation should immediately intervene to address the situation.* Calls should be placed to 9-1-1 as necessary for emergency response personnel (police and/or ambulance) to address serious physical or sexual assault or abuse. A verbal report must be made to the DSS of AAC, (410) 421-8400, as soon as possible, along with the subsequent written report within 48 hours. Immediately following the call to DSS, a verbal report must be made to the AEP Staff person directly responsible for the specific area of ministry.
6. When the Pastor or Ministry Director determines that there is a credible report of abuse involving a risk of physical or sexual harm, then, after reporting to appropriate authorities, must follow the procedures herein, and seek counsel if appropriate.
7. Organizations that use AEP facilities may follow their own established reporting practices. However, such organization is required to also notify the AEP Session as soon as possible about any incident or suspected incident involving any person affiliated with that organization using AEP facilities.
8. Notwithstanding any privilege that may exist in law, any AEP Pastor who in the course of counseling, confession or church discipline learns of conduct which in the opinion of the Pastor seems likely to subject a specific child or vulnerable adult to a serious risk of current, ongoing or future physical harm or sexual abuse, such Pastor must take action, including reporting to secular authorities as appropriate, to minimize the risk of such harm or abuse.

VIII. Procedures for Responding to Reports of Abuse

Any person, who receives a disclosure of abuse, discovers abuse or has cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or appears at substantial risk of being adversely affected by abuse or neglect shall following the reporting protocol in accordance with the following procedure after the safety of the child, children, or minor involved has been assured.

1. The person who receives the disclosure of abuse or has cause to believe a child's physical or mental health or welfare are at serious risk must make a verbal report must be made to the **DSS of AAC, (410) 421-8400**, as soon as possible, along with the subsequent written report within 48 hours. Immediately following the call to DSS, a verbal report must be made to the AEP Staff person directly responsible for the specific area of ministry.
2. The staff person and/or volunteer supervisor should document all events or observations regarding the concerns or alleged incident using the CARE Incident Report Form.
3. The Pastor or an elder of the church is to assure the safety of the possible victim and then notify the parent/guardian(s). If a parent/guardian is an alleged abuser then the notifying Pastor/Elder shall use his discretion as to the timing and manner of parental notification.
4. Parents and/or guardians of the possible victim of abuse should be advised to seek immediate medical attention for the child if physical harm is suspected.
5. If during the course of any review, the pastor(s) and/or elder(s) have a credible basis for suspecting abuse subject to mandatory reporting and/or imminent risk of serious physical or emotional harm, death, sexual abuse or exploitation, the Pastor shall promptly notify appropriate state and/or local authorities.
6. After consulting with the appropriate authorities, as long as it does not interfere with any investigations or law enforcement activities, the Pastor or an elder of the church is to notify the accused.
7. If the accused is a Pastor, then the Session shall bring such accusation before the local Presbytery consistent with the rules pertaining to the discipline of ministers contained in the Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America.
8. Persons against whom sexual or physical abuse allegations have been lodged through this Policy will be immediately relieved of further responsibilities involving direct contact with minors or vulnerable adults and shall not resume responsibilities unless and until the review is completed and allegations are cleared or otherwise unsubstantiated.
9. If AEP becomes aware that a provider has been criminally indicted with charges of any felony sexual or physical abuse, regardless of whether or not an incident has been reported under this policy, then during the pendency of proceedings s/he will be removed from all responsibilities involving direct contact with minors or vulnerable adults and the Session will consult with the accused regarding future responsibilities.
10. If any accused is criminally convicted of felony physical or sexual abuse then that person shall be permanently removed from responsibilities supervising minors or vulnerable adults.
11. While all parties involved in any incident, concern or reasonably suspected incident or concern, including the accused, but especially any actual or possible victim(s), along with the accuser, will be treated with dignity, support, and love.
12. The confidentiality of all persons involved will be safeguarded by maintaining all written documentation in the church's confidential files and by prohibiting any discussion outside of the parties involved in the

incident, any parent/guardian(s) of such parties and any personnel involved with reporting or response procedures, except with relevant authorities including DSS, and law enforcement.

13. Pastoral or shepherding response to any allegation will be handled by the Session according to Biblical principles and the Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America.
14. The Senior Pastor, an Associate Pastor or an assigned Session Elder will be the spokespersons for the church insofar as media inquiries are concerned

Specific Policy Violations

1. The following acts or omissions are violations of the policy and should immediately be reported verbally to the DSS of AAC, (410) 421-8400. Immediately following the call to DSS, a verbal report must be made to the AEP Staff person directly responsible for the specific area of ministry.
 - Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of abusive conduct towards a minor while engaged in a church sponsored activity.
 - Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any person and a minor.
 - Infliction or physically abusive behavior or intentional bodily injury to a minor.
 - The presence or possession of obscene or pornographic materials at any function of AEP.
 - Inappropriate use of social media such as internet chats of sexual nature.

In the event that any policy violations are committed by a minor, the parents of such minor will be contacted, the minor will be immediately removed from any activity and appropriate further reporting of the minors actions will be determined by EP Pastors and ministry director.

Crisis Management Plan

Definition:

- **Crisis** - defined as any occurrence that harms a minor, threatens the public reputation or immediate financial integrity of EP Church, or that may create a situation of legal liability to the church or its staff or leadership. Examples include allegations or incidents of suspected abuse including minor-to-minor abuse, arrest of current or former employee or volunteer for child pornography, etc.

Key Crisis Management Objectives

- Prioritize minor protection and safety.
- Be proactive, timely, transparent, accurate, consistent, and unified in the messages presented internally and to media, members, and the public.
- Maintain strong relationships with various stakeholders and members.
- Evaluate the church's policies and protocols and demonstrate to members and the public how the organization is evolving to correct past challenges and improve the organization's safeguarding efforts.
- Prepare for a potential crisis proactively, not just when one occurs.

Prior to Allegation/Incident

- The Crisis Management Team will be made up of a subset of the Ministry Support Administration Team.
- They will be responsible for educating employees and volunteers on what to do if someone alleges current or historical abuse involving a student, employee, or volunteer of EP Church.
- All employees and volunteers should know how to fulfill their duties as mandated reporters (as appropriate).
- All employees and volunteers should be trained on how to complete the appropriate incident forms for the organization. Copies of the appropriate forms can be found in the church office.

Once Allegation/Incident Occurs

Secure Immediate Safety and Minimize Access

- To the extent possible, ensure the victim-survivor is secure and safe from additional harm or abuse.
- Follow all mandated reporting requirements and contact the authorities as appropriate.
- If the accused person is an employee, follow progressive discipline procedures accordingly. This may involve suspending the accused during the investigation.
- Where applicable, prevent the accused from having further access to consumers until a thorough incident review and/or investigation is completed. Before beginning an internal incident review, verify with local authorities that this will not interfere with their investigation.
- When applicable, notify other employees that there has been a critical incident, and the crisis management plan has been activated.

Initial Communication Plan

- The Ministry Support Administration Team will alert the session to designate a point person to respond to all inquiries from parents/guardians, the media, and other stakeholders.

The Session designee will:

- o Prepare a short media statement in advance or anticipation of receiving a media or public inquiry.
- o All oral and written communication should speak with a voice of compassion and confidence.
- o All employees and volunteers should know how to refer media inquiries to the appropriate spokesperson.
- As soon as possible, meet in person (not over the phone) with identified victim/survivors and their parents/guardians.
 - o Reassure them that you are taking the allegation or incident seriously.
 - o Find out what response they desire and be prepared to explain what support you will offer, such as counseling or therapeutic services.
- Consider reaching out in writing to parents/guardians of all students attending the specific program in which the accused offender was involved or had contact with consumers.
 - o The message should communicate:
 - **Empathy:** Begin by stating that such incidents run counter to EP Church's values.
 - **Facts:** Include a summary of the incident, including information about any suspensions, investigations, arrests, etc.
 - **Contact Request.** Ask parents/guardians to contact the church or the specified authorities if they suspect their child may have been abused.
 - **Your Response:** Explain that EP is fully cooperating with the authorities. Describe proactive steps the church is taking such as offering resources to individuals, hosting a parent/community meeting, training employees and volunteers, and conducting an independent investigation to learn from this incident so the organization can prevent it from happening again.
- Host a parent/community meeting to speak directly with concerned families and directly answer any questions before rumors or misinformation is spread.
 - o Communicate appropriate information about the incident.
 - o Provide information regarding the proactive steps leadership is taking in response to the incident.
 - o Describe resources the organization is providing families and give parents/guardians a chance to ask questions.
 - o Provide parents/guardians with information about how to talk to their child about abuse.

Ongoing Communication and Response

- The Session will determine how to manage ongoing relations with authorities, parents/guardians, the community, and media relations.
 - o Designate specific individuals in the organization to handle various communications and outreach efforts.

Promote Prevention at All Levels of the Organization

- Educate parents/guardians on abuse prevention information.
- Educate students on how to report concerns of abuse.
- Train (or -re-train) all employees and volunteers on how to identify and report “redflag” behaviors that do not rise to the level of suspected abuse. This is an important part of the overall response and ongoing prevention effort.

Policy Review

This CARE policy will be reviewed by the appropriate ministry staff and the EP Session every two years. Changes will be made as appropriate.

Annapolis Evangelical Presbyterian Church

Code of Conduct

Acknowledgement Form

I acknowledge that I have received, read, understand and agree to the Annapolis Evangelical Presbyterian Church Child Protection (C.A.R.E) Policy and Code of Conduct, and have familiarized myself with the procedures for reporting suspected abuse. In addition, it is my responsibility to read and comply with any future updates to this policy, the Code of Conduct or changes in how suspected cases of abuse are to be reported.

- I understand the definition of Child Abuse set forth in this policy and the procedures for reporting reasonable suspicion of and/or allegations of misconduct.
- I confirm that I have/have not been accused of (to the best of my knowledge), instances involving any form of abuse or inappropriate behavior with a child. If yes, please explain on the reverse.
- I confirm that I have not been investigated for or prosecuted for instances involving any form of abuse or inappropriate behavior with a child. If yes, please explain on the reverse.
- I agree not to engage in any inappropriate behaviors either physically, verbally, or digitally related to physical, emotional, or sexual child abuse or neglect.
- I further agree that as an individual who has engendered trust from a child, I will not tolerate physical, emotional or sexual child abuse or neglect.
- I agree to immediately report any reasonable suspicion of or disclosure of inappropriate behavior between adults and minors to the DSS of AAC, (410) 421-8400. Immediately following the call to DSS, a verbal report will be made to the AEP Staff person directly responsible for the specific area of ministry. I will cooperate with helping assist the youth of our community to remain safe.
- I also agree to work with the parents of children involved in inappropriate behavior to report to the appropriate leadership immediately and cooperate in helping assist the children of our community to remain safe.

Name

Date

Position

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT OF THE POLICY

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have received and read a copy of C.A.R.E. Policies & Procedures on the date indicated.

Name

Date

Signature

**Annapolis Evangelical Presbyterian Church
Children's Ministry**

I, _____, acknowledge that I have been trained and will agree to read the Children's Ministry Handbook its entirety as well as all handouts given to me and will follow the stipulations therein.

Signature

Date