

Safeguarding Trinity's Children

Adopted by the Vestry, 6/23/10

Trinity Episcopal Church is a spiritual community that takes seriously its responsibility to provide a safe and nurturing environment for children and youth who participate in our ministries. All persons are encouraged to participate fully in the lives and ministry of children and youth. However, the church has an overriding obligation to safeguard all children and youth under its care from abuse and neglect. This policy statement covers the obligations of church employees and volunteers who work with children and/or youth. All employees and volunteers of Trinity complete the Episcopal Church's child safety and abuse prevention program called "Safeguarding God's Children," and comply with the policy stated herein.

General Policy

1. Volunteers who provide child care, teach Sunday School, work with the Youth Group, or are involved with any other children's or youth program must have been active at Trinity for at least six months. This includes, but is not limited to: regular church attendance, involvement in other church activities, letter of transfer, or the formal intent of joining Trinity. Exceptions to this policy include paid staff, including nursery caregivers, or those individuals who have confirmed experience in spiritual formation at previous parishes. All church employees undergo a thorough background check.
2. Any person who is currently under investigation for, or has been convicted of (1) criminal sexual conduct, (2) neglect of a child, or (3) physical abuse, will not be permitted to work or volunteer in any church-sponsored activity or program involving children or youth.
3. No person shall use or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while conducting activities for children or youth at Trinity Church.
4. This policy will be distributed and reviewed with all Trinity's employees and volunteers. Each person will sign a statement saying he/she has received and reviewed these policies.

Nursery Programs

1. Youth that are sixteen or older may be a nursery caregiver, provided that an adult is present. Youth may not care for child/ren without adult supervision.
2. At least two caregivers should serve in the nursery whenever it is scheduled. Optimally, the caregiver-child ratio is 5:1.
3. Caregivers may take children from the nursery only for good reason, such as in case of illness. Any significant medical problem should be reported immediately to the child's parent(s). For children who require assistance in the bathroom, the adult caregiver must remain outside the bathroom with the door ajar. The diapering of an infant or toddler must take

place in the nursery room under the observation of another caregiver.

4. An adult or youth who does not have plausible reason to be in the nursery may not spend time in the nursery room during or after the service without the express permission of the lead caregiver.

5. Nursery-age children who also attend the Pre-Kindergarten Sunday school class will be escorted from the nursery to their Sunday School classes if they have not been picked up by a parent.

Sunday School (Pre-K thru 12th grade) and Children's Chapel

1. It is the policy of Trinity and The Episcopal Church to have two certified adults present with every group of children or youth. Additionally, an adult will also monitor the hall during the education hour.

2. All activities for children and youth will be conducted in rooms with hallway windows. If the room cannot be viewed from the hallway, the door must be left open.

3. Only adults may assist children with bathroom needs. Bathroom assistance is conducted as in the nursery policy. Children will be encouraged to use bathroom facilities before and after class.

4. Children should not leave the children's chapel or classroom except for illness, to use the bathroom, or other compelling reasons. The assisting adult in chapel/class or the adult hall monitor will tend to the child, if needed.

5. Parents of pre-school and kindergarten children and other authorized adults must escort their child/ren to and from class.

Youth Group (Grades 6-12)

1. Two certified adults must be present at each youth group gathering.

2. Permission slips are required for off-site youth group events.

3. There must be appropriate adult supervision during youth activities.

4. It is not appropriate for a youth group leader and member to date.

5. If a youth leader and member need to meet for pastoral reasons, the leader must a) have permission from the parent and b) must meet in a public area or in a room with exterior visibility.

Transportation:

1. There must be at least two certified adults accompanying every group of children that are

traveling as part of any Trinity sponsored activity.

2. Drivers providing transportation for a Trinity sponsored activity for children or youth must:

- a) Be at least 21 years of age
- b) Have a current valid driver's license
- c) Be insured as required by Indiana law

3. Before leaving the church premises, the adult who is responsible for the group should have in his or her possession a signed permission slip (including emergency medical information) for every child or youth being transported.

4. Before leaving the church the adult who is responsible for the group must leave a copy of the group's travel plans in the church office. The travel plan must include:

- a) The group's destination (including address and phone numbers)
- b) Estimated times of arrivals and departures
- c) A general overview of the group's planned activities
- d) A list of drivers and passengers for each vehicle
- e) A list of parents/guardians names and phone numbers for use in case of emergency or change of plans

5. If the group is traveling out-of-town, each driver must have a copy of the group's travel plan and copies of the signed permission slips for every child or youth traveling in that vehicle.

6. If the group is traveling at any time when the church office is not open (evenings or weekends,) a parent or other adult must be designated as the emergency contact person. The emergency contact person must have a copy of the travel plan as indicated above.

7. Every person in the vehicle shall have and use a seat belt.

8. It is recommended that each vehicle be equipped with a first aid kit and a cell phone.

9. There should be at least two children or youth in every vehicle. Pick-ups and drop-offs should be organized to minimize instances of one-on-one situations between adults and children or youth. If a one-on-one situation is unavoidable, the driver should contact parents or guardians to ask permission and to give an estimated time of pick-up and/or drop-off.

General Safety

1. During church services children under 10 are to be supervised at all times. This supervision should come from the responsible adult (parent/guardian/other) who brought the child to church. This includes leaving church during the service to go to the restroom. Since Trinity is in a downtown setting and we welcome a variety of guests into our space, children need to be accompanied by the responsible adult to ensure safety.

2. Young children should not ride the elevator without an adult.

3. Children are not allowed in the kitchen unless supervised by an adult.

Non-church Sponsored Use of the Church Facility

1. Anyone who uses the Trinity building and grounds for non-church sponsored activities will be required to comply with this policy.
2. At the time a contract is made with a non-church group or person to use the church facility, it shall be the duty of the Parish Administrator to obtain written confirmation from the users that demonstrates their agreement to comply with the above.
3. Leaders of outside groups who use the church on a continuing basis must complete the "Safeguarding God's Children" program.

Indiana Child Safety Policies

Indiana State law requires certain professions to be mandatory reporters. These are adults who are in a position to work with children in an official capacity such as clergy, a teacher, a counselor. At Trinity we recognize that it is imperative that *anyone* with a concern about the safety of a child report that to a mandatory reporter, which would be the Director of Children and Family Ministries or to one of the clergy. The mandatory reporter can then file a report to the authorities. In addition, *anyone* can file an anonymous report to Child Protective Services. Reporters of abuse or neglect can remain anonymous and are immune from all civil and criminal liability, provided they have made the report in good faith. Investigations of abuse or neglect may be substantiated or unsubstantiated. The child's safety is the paramount concern for child protective staff who will conduct the investigations and assessments.

**Portions of this policy which are in line with the Episcopal Church's stance on child safety and abuse prevention have been excerpted from the policies of All Saints' Episcopal Church, Portland, OR and First Presbyterian Church, Ann Arbor, MI.*