

TPUUF Child Protection Policy

General Purpose Statement

Thomas Paine Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (TPUUF) seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children of TPUUF from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

Definitions

For purposes of this policy the terms “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term “worker” includes both paid and volunteer persons who work with children.

Selection of Workers

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

a. Three month rule - (applies only to volunteers)

No applicant will be considered for any position involving contact with children until he/she has been involved with TPUUF for a minimum of three (3) months. This time of interaction between the applicant and our leadership allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

b. Written Application - (applies only to paid staff)

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by TPUUF. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, current/ previous congregational affiliation, references and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will remain in confidence on file at TPUUF.

c. Personal Interview - (applies only to paid staff)

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

d. Background checks - (applies to ALL workers both paid and volunteer)

A Pennsylvania criminal background check, a Pennsylvania child abuse background check and FBI fingerprinting (some exceptions apply - see below) is required of all employees regardless of their position and the following volunteers who have regular interactions with children:

- Those who will be in our nursery/preschool/or school aged classrooms
- Those that will be involved with overnight activities with the children
- Those in a counseling role with children
- Those involved as a one on one mentor with children (Coming of Age program)
- Those having occasional interaction including but not limited to vehicle drivers to an event or Fellowship sponsored athletic team coaches.

All background checks must be obtained by the worker, but may be assisted by the Director of Lifespan Faith Development. Both Pennsylvania clearances are free of charge (for volunteers only) and are valid for five (5) years from the time of application. Volunteers who have lived continuously in the state of Pennsylvania for the previous ten (10) years are not required to submit to FBI fingerprinting. In this case, said volunteer may sign an affidavit with the Director of Lifespan Faith Development stating that they have no prior Federal record. If fingerprinting is required, TPUUF will pay all or a portion of the costs associated with FBI fingerprinting upon request and with consideration of financial hardship. Volunteers who have obtained clearances for other employment or volunteer opportunities in school settings may present original clearances for in-person review of the DLFD and then copies will be kept on file. Employees must complete new clearances upon hire for each of the three forms outlined. Copies of applications will be kept on file until the completed clearances are returned. New employees MUST be accompanied by another credentialed person until all three clearances are returned and reviewed by the Board of Trustees.

All copies of volunteer and employee clearances and background checks shall be kept in a locked file cabinet on premises at TPUUF as dictated by Pennsylvania state law with the Director of Lifespan Faith Development holding the key. The DLFD will maintain a list of those individuals who have clearances on file and will provide this list to the Board of Trustees.

The list of offenses that disqualify an individual from working with children is determined by and outlined in PA State Law. The most recently published list is kept on file at TPUUF and is available by request. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application by a potential staff member or volunteer will be a disqualifying event.

Two Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. We do not allow minors to be alone with a single adult on our premises at any time unless that arrangement was established by the parent of that child (watching a child for another adult while they attend a meeting for example).

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For the purpose of this policy, "child abuse" is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological, or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways including the following:

- **Physical Abuse-** any physical injury to a child that is not accidental; such as beating, shaking, burns or biting.
- **Emotional Abuse-** emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security such as constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- **Sexual Abuse-** any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, or pornography.
- **Neglect-** depriving a child of essential needs such as; adequate food, water, shelter and medical care.

ALL workers with their clearances are considered mandated reporters. Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an

individual involved in the care of children at TPUUF becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care they need to immediately report this to the authorities that same day. The hotline number will be provided to each worker upon their approval by TPUUF. In the event that the incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at TPUUF or during one of our sponsored programs or activities the following procedure shall be followed:

1. TPUUF will comply with Pennsylvania laws and requirements regarding mandated reporting, including annual training for all employees.
2. The authorities will be notified as per the guidelines stated above.
3. The parents will be notified (with the exception only if the parent is alleged in the abuse or neglect)
4. Our insurance company will be notified, an incident report will be filed by the Director of Lifespan Faith Development, the Minister, the board president or all three.
5. TPUUF will cooperate with any investigations of the incident by state and local authorities. In the event there is no investigation of the incident by the state and local authorities, a team will be formed by the board to investigate the circumstances of the incident. The team should act only in consultation with our insurance company and/or attorney.
6. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from his/her position with the children and youth.
7. The Minister, Director of Lifespan Faith Development or board president will be our spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect unless he or she is alleged to be involved. All others should refrain from speaking to the media.
8. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.

Open Door Policy

All classrooms at TPUUF have doors with windows therefore they may be closed while class is in session. Any parent may attend class with their child with the strict understanding that they are ONLY to supervise and interact with their own child during this time unless that adult also has their clearances on file with TPUUF.

Teenage Workers

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary for babysitters (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under the age of eighteen (18), to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- They must be at least 14 years of age and have all required clearances in accordance with the laws of Pennsylvania as specified above.
- They must be “working” in this capacity with an adult who also has all required clearances.
- They must remain under the supervision of the adult they are with at all times and never be left alone with the children for any reason.

Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all children at TPUUF. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of the other children when deciding whether or not to place a child in our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be in our programs:

- Fever, diarrhea or vomiting that occurred within the last 48 hours

- Green or yellow runny nose
- Eye or skin infections
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from the other children; the parent will then be contacted immediately to take the child home.

Medication Policy

It is the policy of TPUUF not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by the parent at home. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy even if their child is medicated.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life threatening conditions such as asthma or severe allergic reactions. Parents of such children must discuss this with the Director of Lifespan Faith Development to develop a plan of action prior to the child's involvement in any TPUUF program or activity.

Discipline Policy

It is the policy of TPUUF not to administer corporal punishment even at the parent's suggestion or given permission. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or any other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with the Director of Lifespan Faith Development, the minister or a board member if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues. Additionally if a child exhibits behavior that is deemed harmful, a behavioral plan can be developed with the Director of Lifespan Faith Development for that child.

Restroom Guidelines

Parents are strongly encouraged to have their child use the restroom prior to each class. For the protection of all workers they are not allowed to assist your child in the restroom. Additionally workers are not able to change diapers for children in our care.

If a child needs to visit the restroom during class a worker may only stand in the doorway of the classroom and watch as the child goes into the restroom. This ensures that two adults remain in the classroom and that no adult is alone with a child in the restroom. If the worker feels the child is taking too long in the rest room the Director of Lifespan Faith Development or designated supervisor for the day must be contacted to get the child's parent. Under no circumstance is a worker to enter the bathroom when a child is in there alone unless it is a medical emergency, such as a fall.

Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child is injured while under our care the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises workers will provide First Aid as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid the parent or guardian will be immediately summoned as well as the Director of Lifespan Faith Development. If warranted, an ambulance will be called.

3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

Training

TPUUF and the Director of Lifespan Faith Development will provide training on this child protection policy to all new childcare workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All workers are strongly encouraged to attend these trainings and may not be in a childcare situation without a trained person present if they have not completed the required training.

Outside of the classroom environment, the safety of each child is the sole responsibility of the child's parent or guardian.