



Emmanuel Episcopal Church
Geneva, Switzerland

Child Protection Policy and Guidelines

Policy explanation

We believe that every child has at all times and in all situations the right to feel safe and be protected from any situation or practice that results in physical or psychological harm.

We acknowledge that Child Protection is the responsibility of every adult who has involvement with children, including the staff and Vestry overseeing those adults.

In carrying its mission to provide spiritual leadership, formation and healing for the Episcopal community in Geneva, the Emmanuel Church of Geneva values all of its members and visitors. Taking into consideration its important role, the church respects the laws and policies that protect its members, particularly those who cannot protect themselves. In this regard, the church has set forth a policy which gives Emmanuel Church set guidelines for all activities with children, for recruiting workers and for dealing with cases, and suspected cases, of malpractice and harm.

The term “child” within this document refers to all people under the age of eighteen.

Why this policy exists

1. To keep children at Emmanuel safe

By implementing guidelines for all leaders to follow we can ensure to the best of our abilities that work is carried out in a professional manner that puts the safety and needs of children first.

2. To protect leaders

A policy enables, and demonstrates, precise guidelines being followed – thus helping leaders keep themselves free from suspicion of any wrongdoing, and to prove how they act as allegations arise.

3. To reassure parents

A policy demonstrates that the welfare of children is our paramount priority, and that we are professional in our work.

Emmanuel Church seeks to ensure that all its members feel secure and joyful in their respective participation within the church community. It is the hope of the church members and Vestry that this policy satisfies this aim.

Children need to know and believe that they have the right to be safe and feel safe at all times. Children are the most vulnerable members of our society. This policy has been developed to promote and enhance the safety and welfare of children.

The church regards the interests of children as paramount and acknowledges that it is the adults in our society who have the responsibility for protecting children. Therefore all adults in a position of

responsibility at Emmanuel will be held accountable to the policy. Furthermore, personal details regarding individuals who facilitate work with children at Emmanuel will be sought.

The child protection policy for Emmanuel Church integrates in its policies international human rights protections, particularly those principles found within the United Nations Rights of the Child. Further, the church respects the appropriate laws laid down by the Swiss authorities and the *Guidelines and Procedures for the Care and Protection of Children & Youth* of the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe.

The members of staff who have extensive training and experience in youth work are permitted (indeed expected) to occasionally operate outside these guidelines when their professional judgment deems it necessary to the needs of the child.

It is the responsibility of all church members to treat children with dignity and respect, to act with propriety, and to protect children in their care.

The responsibility of all who work with children

Core principles

- The Vestry shall appoint a Children's Representative who will monitor the work with children in the congregation, taking responsibility for the implementation and updating of these guidelines.
- A clear notice will be displayed within the premises stating that the church has a child protection policy in place.
- Visiting groups should be made aware of the policy and are expected to have the correct ratio of adults to children.
- They should be aware of health and safety issues in the building and their responsibilities where children are present.
- Groups meeting under the name of another organization (i.e.) Scouts, pre-school, other church groups, etc., must operate with their own Child Protection/Safe from Harm Guidelines or these guidelines. No activity with children will operate behind closed doors. Staff, parents and guardians have the right to observe any youth activity at any time.
- One-to-one meetings should only occur in public places.
- Leaders will make sure that a mental risk assessment occurs before each activity to reduce the risk of accidents.
- First aid facilities will always be available when working within Emmanuel Church and elsewhere whenever possible.
- Wherever possible have a register of every child involved with the group including relevant medical details and have a contact name and number close to hand in case of emergencies.
- Leaders should exercise caution whenever they use physical contact with children, and such contact should always reflect the needs of the child.
- The minimum number of responsible adults at any activity involving children is two, i.e 1 plus:

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|-------------|---|-------------|
| 0 – 2 years | 1 person for every 3 children | 1:3 |
| 2 – 3 years | 1 person for every 4 children | 1:4 |
| 3 – 8 years | 1 person for every 8 children | 1:8 |
| 8 –18 years | 1 person for the first 8 children and 1 more for every 12 more | 1:8 1:12 |

- A Parental Consent Form that includes full details of an event will be made available for every group social event. (Note that this is not required for youth group meetings, church services or small group and one-to-one gatherings.)
- On events that require sleepovers the sleeping arrangements will either be:
 - Every child and leader within the same room; or
 - Females and males in different rooms with leaders close by.Such events will not take place without thorough preparation.
- Leaders will make sure that all laws are followed regarding equipment and instruction when participating in outdoor activities and sports.
- Exercise caution when giving a child a ride in a car on your own. If possible make parents aware of your intentions prior to your journey.
- Try to obtain consent from parents and children before taking images. If they are to be displayed, used in publicity via newspapers including the Parish or Convocation newsletter or put on a web site, then specific written consent should be gained before the image is taken but must be obtained before publication.
- If the image is to be published, avoid naming the children. If a name has to be used, use only the first names.
- If photographs are to be taken then an oral notice should be given out at the beginning of the service/activity asking any parent objecting to images being made of their child to remove them from the view of the camera, or to ask the group leader afterwards to ensure that any image they object to is not used.
- Take action to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behavior by children and other leaders.
- In the event of misbehavior, exercise justice. Discover all the facts before taking action and remain calm.
- No one is ever to be deprived of food, water, shelter or clothing as punishment.
- No leader should possess illegal drugs, alcohol, or a dangerous weapon during an event (except in incidents of confiscation).
- No leader should take, or be under the influence of, alcohol (except communion) or illegal drugs during an activity.
- No leader should act in or play games in a physically suggestive or provocative manner or use sexually suggestive language.
- All staff and volunteers working directly with a student of any age in their professional capacity will not enter into a sexual relationship with a child during the course of the professional relationship. Professional relationship shall mean working, supervising, counseling, coaching, or volunteering.
- Under article 187 of the Swiss Penal Code, any sexual relationship with a child under the age of 16 is a criminal offence of sexual exploitation or sexual assault.

General guidelines

- Provide an example we would wish others to follow.
- Treat everyone with respect. Remember that comments and actions can have lasting effects on impressionable minds.
- Be aware that someone else might misinterpret our actions even if they are well-intentioned.

- Be aware of showing favoritism. Though it is natural to have favorites and the differing needs of particular children requires differing time be spent with them, be aware of the needs and feelings of other group members.
- Respect a child's right to personal privacy.
- Remember that some issues are confidential. (This is not the same as secret. All cases of abuse must be reported.)
- Recognize that special caution is required in moments when you are discussing sensitive issues with children.
- Provide time for both children and other leaders to talk to you.

If you suspect abuse

- If you have suspicions about a child's physical, sexual or emotional well-being, you should take action. All volunteers and staff are encouraged to share concerns with the Rector or Children's Representative.
- If the situation is clearly an urgent case, the child is too frightened to go home or you have very serious doubts about the child's safety, you will contact Swiss Social Services or Police immediately. (Remember that harboring a child against the wishes of a parent, albeit an abusive parent is classed as kidnap in the eyes of the law.)
- If your concerns are more general about a child's welfare, then you will make a referral to a social work agency that will make the necessary arrangement.

It is important that all volunteers and staff communicate concerns accurately. To this end, volunteers and staff will follow the procedures below:

- Upon the receipt of any information from a child, including allegations, or upon personal suspicions, it is necessary to record what has happened accurately at the time the event occurs.
 - Detailed factual documentations must be made, including dates, location, and people involved.
 - The person recording the information should do so with the child, parent or any other person involved and fully describe the reasons for the suspicions.
- Always REFER **never** INVESTIGATE any suspicions or allegations about abuse (Do not take any private initiatives to try to resolve the situation.)

If we have concerns we must act – it may be the final piece of the jigsaw that is needed to protect that child – or we may prevent further children from being hurt.

- During investigations be discreet with communications. Only share concerns and seek support from those members of staff on whom the responsibility falls.
 - Remember that a person is innocent until proven guilty.
 - Respect the child's right to privacy.
- If guilt is found *after* the investigation then transparency is essential. Make the public, including parents and teenagers, fully aware of any abuse incident.

The responsibilities for the Policy under Swiss Federal and Geneva cantonal law

- The behavior of the staff must respect Swiss Federal and Geneva cantonal norms. On the Federal level articles 187–189 of the Penal code defines illicit sexual conduct. Article 219 Penal Code deals with violations of an adult's obligation to assist and educate a minor. Article 220 of the Penal Code deals with kidnapping. Persons entrusted with the care of minors must

also adhere to Articles 136 of the Penal Code and Article 19 bis of the Law on Drugs which forbid giving a minor alcohol and drugs.

- On the cantonal level Art. 5 para 2 let. a (RSM/GE) holds those with the care of minors responsible for any illegal actions of the minor.
- Reporting requirements:
 - Everyone is authorized to report to the *Services de Protection des Mineurs (SPMi)* or to other competent authorities, such as the *Brigade des mineurs*, the *Brigade des mœurs* or the *Procureur général* any case concerning children or adolescents where intervention on their behalf is justifiable.
 - Any person in contact with children, regardless of his/her role or function, is under the obligation to report any abuse suspected.
 - The person reporting may not be prosecuted where the report stems from his/her professional duties.
 - To refrain from reporting may, in certain cases, result in prosecution, particularly if the non-reporting results in the deterioration of his inaction.

Official forms of the Convocation

All church employees and persons working with children will be asked:

- To complete Section A (Personal Information and Background) of the personal background and references sheet based on that of the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe.
- To complete Section B (References) so that background checks can be made. This check will include at the minimum a contact with references, and may also include an investigation of an individual's criminal record.
- To sign a statement indicating that he or she has received and read this document, and has never been convicted of child abuse nor had such a conviction expunged.
- These statements should be kept on file.
- The Rector and Wardens will carry out an observed probationary period for all volunteers and staff working with children of at least three months.

Approved by the Vestry of Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Geneva, on the 6th of May 2013.

Emmanuel Episcopal Church is a parish of the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe,
of The Episcopal Church