



Introduction

Content Warning: The following information contains definitions and discussion of child abuse that may be triggering to some individuals. Please take care while reading. If you need support to complete this training, please reach out to Director, Armedia Houston at ahouston@chicagolights.org, who can discuss options for completing this training with you.

Fourth Presbyterian Church and Chicago Lights adopted this Child Protection Policy to ensure that all children, youth, and adults who come through our doors will find it a safe and secure place. As part of our Child Protection Policy, all staff and volunteers who work with children and youth need to complete this training. This is for your own safety and protection, as well as the safety of our children and youth. Some things you read in this training may be upsetting. Please don't be discouraged but continue to inform yourself and complete this course. We appreciate the time you will give and the contributions you will make to positively impact the life of a child. Completing this course is one step in ensuring that Chicago Lights offers a safe and secure place for all the children and youth who participate.

By the end of this training you will: be able to recognize the different types of child abuse, understand a. how you, as a volunteer of Chicago Lights, can help protect children and youth from abuse, b. learn about the supervisory procedures implemented when working with children and youth, c. learn how to report suspected child abuse, and d. be clear on how Fourth Presbyterian Church and Chicago Lights will respond to a report of child abuse. **At the end of the document, please sign your name and date to confirm that you read and understand this important policy.**

Understanding Child Abuse

We are committed to providing a safe and secure environment for the children entrusted to our care and protecting the volunteers and staff from false abuse allegations. Child abuse occurs everywhere in the world, regardless of racial, social, cultural, economic, or religious affiliations. It is estimated that over 1 million children are abused every year.

To get a better understanding of child abuse, you must be able to recognize the different types of abuse. Abuse can be physical, sexual, neglectful, emotional, or ritualistic.

- **Physical abuse** is when someone who is responsible for a child intentionally causes or permits physical injury including death, bodily harm, disfigurement, or impaired physical or emotional health. This includes bites, bruises, fractures, and burns. Physical abuse also occurs when a person responsible for a child's welfare creates a risk of physical injury by hitting, shaking, throwing, choking, smothering, or violent pushing or shoving. Other examples of child abuse include violating court orders by failing to separate an abuser from a child or placing a child at risk by exposing them to a person with a history of committing sexual abuse.
- **Sexual abuse** is a criminal behavior that exploits a child's vulnerability and powerlessness. Even if a child or youth consents to sexual activity with an adult, such activity is prohibited, and the adult is fully accountable. Sexual activity with an adolescent or young child may include fondling, vaginal or anal penetration, intercourse, rape, or any type of sexual contact. Sexual exploitation does not have to include touching. It may include explicit verbal comments, pornographic videos or pictures, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, masturbation in the child's presence, prostitution, or allowing a child to witness sexual activity.

- **Neglect** occurs when a person responsible for a child's welfare fails to provide for basic needs such as food, weather-appropriate clothing, shelter, or medical care. Neglect may also occur when a person fails to provide adequate supervision. Examples of this may be leaving the child in the care of someone who is unable to supervise or putting a child in any situation that presents an obvious or imminent danger.
- **Emotional abuse** occurs when a person responsible for a child's welfare intentionally commits or permits psychological injury or engages in a pattern of emotionally distressing behavior. Examples include verbal cruelty such as name calling, insulting, or misplaced blaming.
- **Ritualistic abuse** occurs when a person responsible for a child's welfare engages in physical, sexual, or emotional abuse which is stylized and repeated. In order to make a report of abuse unbelievable, abusers often manipulate and gain control of the child through threats, brain washing, indoctrination, and mind control techniques such as sleep deprivation or withholding of food and water.

Screening Process for Volunteers

This next section will discuss the screening process and supervision requirements used by Fourth Presbyterian Church and Chicago Lights in order to protect children and youth in our care. All prospective volunteers who will work with children or youth must complete a volunteer application and consent to a criminal and child abuse background check. This check will include the State of Illinois via DCFS, the Department of Children and Family Services, and a national search against the National Sex Offender Registry. Individuals will not be able to begin volunteering until background checks have come back clear. However, after submitting your background checks, you **will only be notified if you do not pass the background check. If Tutoring Staff match you with a student or invite you to begin tutoring, you can assume that you have passed the background checks.** Please note that volunteers must complete a modified application every year and must consent to the two background checks each two-year cycle.

Anyone refusing consent to the DCFS and criminal background checks shall not serve as a volunteer for Chicago Lights. Upon receipt of the results of the background checks, anyone who has been indicated of child abuse will not serve in any program or activity for children and youth sponsored by Fourth Presbyterian Church or Chicago Lights. In situations where the results of the child abuse check or criminal background checks do not show indication of child abuse, but show related information, the case will be brought to the attention of the Executive Director of Chicago Lights.

Best Practices for Volunteers

Another important element of keeping everyone safe is supervision. When working with children or youth, make sure that there are other people around and that you are within sight or hearing of another adult. In fact, a minimum of two adults must be present in each room, except in the event of an emergency or for very brief intervals. All students who attend Chicago Lights programs are old enough to use the bathroom by themselves. While we ask that you escort your student to the bathroom, adults should not be alone with a child in a bathroom. Instead, prop the door open and remain outside.

We believe that a wonderful relationship can form between adult and child during the time spent at the Chicago Lights programs. Oftentimes after working with each other for some time, a student and their tutor/mentor wish to get together outside of the program. Chicago Lights does not sponsor outings between volunteer and student. That requires an arrangement between the parent of the child and the volunteer. It is highly advised that volunteers obtain written permission from the parent of the child before meeting with the child or youth outside of the program.

Any inappropriate conduct between an adult and a child or youth must be confronted immediately and reported to program staff. If you observe another adult interacting with a student in a manner that makes

you uncomfortable or doesn't seem appropriate, please tell a staff member about it as soon as you observe the behavior.

The purpose of discipline is to encourage appropriate behaviors and to eliminate inappropriate ones. When among children and youth, adults should model positive interaction and communication among themselves. Corporal punishment or any form of physical touch to discipline or manage behavior is never appropriate. Use words and non-verbal communication to reinforce positive behavior.

It is common for students, especially those who are younger, to crave affection from adult volunteers. This affection can be given in the form of praise rather than physical touch. Nevertheless, Chicago Lights does not have a no-touching rule. However, there are a few things to remember. Some young people do not want anyone to touch them in any way. Please respect that. Other students don't mind being touched and even initiate it, however, there are ways to do it that are safe, such as giving high fives or a light side hug. It is never appropriate for a student to sit in your lap, even if they ask to. Please do not carry a child on your back or neck.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

Next, we will discuss how to report a suspected case of child abuse. Any reasonable suspicion of abusive behavior must be taken very seriously. All employees and volunteers are required to make a report to the DCFS hotline at 1-800-25-abuse immediately upon having reason to believe that a child may have been abused or neglected. Again, if you suspect abuse, you must report it. It is not your job to get all the facts and prove that the abuse occurred. It is DCFS's job to investigate and they are trained and equipped to do that. A volunteer may seek program staff's assistance in making the report, but that is not required. However, any volunteer who makes a report shall inform the program staff who will then report the abuse or suspected abuse to the Executive Director of Chicago Lights.

All communication regarding the report will be kept in strictest confidence. The identities of the alleged abuser, reporter, witnesses, and any other alleged victims will not be disclosed to the parents of the child. Fourth Presbyterian Church and Chicago Lights will help provide care, counsel, and referral for resources to help the alleged victim or victims, the alleged abuser or abusers, and their families, as appropriate. The detailed policy of procedure that will be followed in the event of suspected child abuse is outlined in the Fourth Presbyterian Church and Chicago Lights Child Protection Policy and will be made available to you upon request.

Conclusion

This concludes the training for the Fourth Presbyterian Church and Chicago Lights Child Protection Policy. Please do not let this training make you anxious about volunteering. It is highly unlikely that you'll have any reason to suspect abuse, but now you are equipped with the information necessary to keep children and youth safe – our highest priority.

Please complete the document on the next page to confirm that you read and understand this training. Then, email that page to tutor@chicagolights.org.

A written copy of the Child Protection Policy is also available for you upon request. Thank you for taking your valuable time to learn more about child abuse and how you can make Fourth Presbyterian Church and Chicago Lights a safe place for all.



Chicago Lights and Fourth Presbyterian Church
Child Protection Policy Training

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COMPLETION AND UNDERSTANDING

Volunteers

I, _____, confirm and acknowledge that I read and understand all aspects of the Chicago Lights and Fourth Presbyterian Church's Child Protection Policy, including the definitions of child abuse, the screening process to become a volunteer, best practices for volunteers, and how to report suspected child abuse. Furthermore, I will adhere to this policy at all times while volunteering with Chicago Lights

Printed Name

Signature

Date

After completing this page, please email it to tutor@chicagolights.org.