



## Position Statement On

### Confidential Communication with Clergy Regarding Child Safety

In Matthew 19:14, Jesus says, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” In the previous chapter, Jesus even goes so far as to say, “Whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me” (Matthew 18:5), making this act of providing nurturing spaces for children an especially holy one.

#### Child Protection Policies

As followers of Christ, the Conference takes seriously the call to ensure our congregations are safe places for all people. This is why **the Conference encourages all congregations to enact and implement Child Protection Policies** (required by law in Pennsylvania).

#### Mandated Reporters

As many state laws indicate, **the Conference considers all credentialed leaders (also known as clergy) to be Mandated Reporters.** “Mandated Reporters are certain adults, who are legally required to report suspected child abuse if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse.”<sup>1</sup> The Conference expects all credentialed leaders within the conference to operate as a mandated reporter, reporting suspected child abuse to the appropriate authorities, whether or not required by the state or national law. Failure to report will result in a ministerial misconduct review process with possible consequences.

#### Confidential Communications to Clergy

While some state laws allow protection from reporting confidential communications made to a member of the clergy, **the Conference takes the position that any communication involving suspected abuse or neglect of any individual (regardless of age) should be disclosed/reported to the appropriate legal authorities.**

As the body of Christ we can walk with individuals through whatever process necessary to ensure those involved in any abuse case (the abused and the abuser) receive the appropriate care and support they need to be the people God created them to be.

All credentialed leaders are *encouraged* to ensure they know child protective service laws and are *required* to complete mandated reporter training within the state in which they minister.

Credentialed leaders are encouraged to contact their Leadership Minister for guidance. The Conference is committed to working with all credentialed leaders and congregations through any suspected abuse situation.

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Approved by Ministerial Committee March 13, 2019. Revised December 11, 2019, December 9, 2020

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<sup>1</sup> <http://keepkidssafe.pa.gov/resources/reportabuse/index.htm>