

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Statement of Need for Policy

Relationships among people are at the foundation of Christian ministry and the life of the church. Healthy and safe relationships should not be hindered by our Child Protection Policy (CPP) but should be strengthened because clearly defined behaviors and practices have been laid out. First Presbyterian Church (FPC) 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 FPC from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and 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 unpaid volunteers 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. This screening includes the following:

a) **Six Month Rule**

We reserve the right to keep volunteers out of any position involving contact with minors until she/he has been involved with FPC for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

b) **Personal Interview**

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

c) **Reference Checks**

We reserve the right to require a reference check before an applicant is permitted to work with children. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organization or church where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at FPC.

d) **Criminal Background Check**

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and volunteer workers as defined above.

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing the church to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will be unable to work with children.

A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the pastor and the Children's Ministry Director on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving

children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at the church office.

Two Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities.

Exceptions to the two-adult rule –

- If only one leader is present temporarily, the actions of that leader are known and visible to others. This is accomplished by the adult choosing to be in visible and public locations, and by communication with other ministry staff.
- Some youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open and there should be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher.

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes 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 and includes the following:

- **Physical abuse** – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- **Emotional abuse** – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of 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, and pornography.
- **Neglect** – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

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 FPC becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the Children’s Ministry Director for further action, including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred FPC or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. The worker or church member alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave pending an investigation and instructed to remain

away from the premises during the investigation. He or she should be instructed to have no contact with the victim or with witnesses.

3. All allegations of abuse should be reported to the civil authorities, and FPC will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. FPC will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. The insurance company will be notified, and FPC will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
5. FPC will designate a spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. The advice of legal counsel will be sought before responding to media inquiries or releasing information about the situation to the congregation. All other representatives of FPC should refrain from speaking to the media.
6. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it. This should be for the purpose of providing pastoral support during the time of crisis and not for the purpose of investigating the incident or influencing the investigation.
7. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth.

Open Door Policy

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

Youth Workers

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

- Students must be 14 years old to serve with children under 2 years old.
- Must be screened as specified above under Selection of Workers
- Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.
- Volunteers are not texting or engaged in any social media while serving.
- No volunteer under the age of 12 is allowed to escort children to the bathroom.
- There must be a five-year age difference between the age of the youth volunteer and the age of children they are serving.
- Middle and high school workers should not bring unapproved friends to volunteer with them.
- Youth volunteers may not change diapers.

Check-in/Check-out Procedure

For children fifth grade and below, a security check-in/check-out procedure will be followed. The child will be signed in by a parent or guardian, who will receive a "child check" for the child similar to a claim check. The parent or guardian must present the "child check" in order to sign out the child from our care. In the event that a parent or guardian is unable to present the "child check," the Children's Ministry Director or designated worker will be contacted. The director or the designated worker will be responsible for releasing the child to the care of a parent or guardian after discussing the surrounding circumstances with the parent or guardian.

Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at FPC. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. We follow the recommendations of the **American Academy of Pediatrics**. We ask that your kids are not in the classroom or nursery/toddler room if he or she displays any of the following symptoms:

- Fever (in the last 24 hours)
- Vomiting (in the last 24 hours)
- Sore throat
- Jaundice
- Any skin infections; sores and/or crusts on the scalp, face or body
- Skin eruptions or rash (other than diaper rash)
- Swelling and tenderness of glands, particularly around face or neck
- Sneezing or coughing, if persistent and/or productive
- Colored nasal discharge; white viral infection; yellow or green bacterial infection
- Diarrhea (in the last 24 hours)
- Pink eye or other eye infections
- Any communicable disease
- Head Lice

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

Medications Policy

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

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 should address their situation with the Children's Ministry Director to develop a plan of action.

Discipline Policy

It is the policy of FPC not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with the Children's Ministry Director or designated worker if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

Appropriate Touch

Appropriate touch is part of a healthy ministry. These are the guidelines for when, where, and how to use appropriate touch. Using good judgement, the following are examples of appropriate touch:

- An arm around the shoulder (side hug)
- Walking hand in hand with small children
- Carrying small children (no piggy back rides or carrying elementary-aged children)
- Short congratulatory or greeting hug
- Brief, assuring pat on the back or shoulder
- Handshakes and high-fives

Inappropriate Touch

- Touching a child in anger or disgust
- Touching a child in any manner that may be construed as sexually suggestive
- Touching a child between the belly button and the shins
- Touching a child's private parts (with the exception of diaper changes)
- Children over the age of first grade should not sit in the laps of volunteers
- Playing rough with children or letting children play touch with each other is not appropriate. The safety of everyone is of utmost importance

Social Media/Photographs- Volunteers should not post pictures of children on social media. Staff of FPC are the only approved people to take photos in the classroom and post these on the Internet. This is for legal reasons protecting the church and the children. Some parents do not wish for their children to be photographed. FPC staff has a list of children who have photo releases.

Restroom Guidelines

All bathrooms should be checked before church activities to ensure that they are empty and ready for child use. It is imperative that children stay in the Toddler Room until they are potty-trained so that the Toddler Room worker can take them to the bathroom. At this point the bathroom door should be propped open and the stall door open as they assist the child. If children are over the age of three and potty-trained, they will go to the Preschool/Kindergarten class. For children under the age of five in the Preschool/Kindergarten room, the worker will check the restroom to make sure it is empty before a child goes.

For the protection of all, workers should *never* be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

Bathrooms in the Children's Wing will be for children, background checked adults, and parents only during children's activity hours. Adults will be asked to use the upstairs bathrooms to minimize the risk of adults and children alone in the restroom. In case of emergency and an un-background checked adult needs to use the bathroom in the Children's Wing, the bathrooms will

be checked first and then a staff member or volunteer will wait outside to make sure that no children enter the restroom.

Accidental Injuries to Children

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

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) 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 and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, 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.

Age-Appropriate Classrooms

Children will stay in their age-appropriate classrooms consistently for reasons of safety and growth and development. Children learn and grow in their faith in different ages and stages, and we have worked to design our classrooms with this in mind.

Parents will not have their children serve in the classrooms where they volunteer so that A) all of the parent volunteer's attention is on the class they are serving and B) their children experience their own class that is designed for their specific age group.

Exceptions –

- If teachers are not available and the classes need to be combined
- If a child brings a friend who would normally attend another grade, they can attend with their friend for a maximum of three weeks
- If a child skips a grade or is held back in school, their class in church will be consistent with their current grade level in school

Training

First Presbyterian Church 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 training events.