

SAMPLE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ANYWHERE, STATE

General Purpose Statement

First Presbyterian Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the following practices, our goal is to protect the children and youth of First Presbyterian Church from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations.

Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years including participants in our youth programs.

Selection of Staff and Volunteers

All employees and volunteers, or anyone who desires to work with the children participating in our programs and activities, will be screened. This screening includes the following:

A. Six Month Rule

No volunteer will be considered for any position involving contact with children until s/he has been involved with First Presbyterian Church 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.

If a prospective volunteer has transferred membership from another Presbyterian church or is living in the area for a temporary stay, the six month requirement may be waived if it is established that the volunteer was a member of the transferring church or home church for at least two years and if the teaching elder in charge at the transferring or home church recommends that the person is suitable for the volunteer position.

B. Written Application

All persons seeking to work with children must complete First Presbyterian’s written application form. (See Appendix A). The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous church affiliation, reference and employment information, and disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be stored at First Presbyterian Church on a need-to-know basis.

C. 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 volunteer position.

D. Reference Checks

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicants' references will be checked. These references should be of a ministry or personal nature as opposed to employer or family references, preferably from churches or organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be stored at First Presbyterian Church on a need-to-know basis.

E. Criminal Background Check

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and for the following categories of volunteers:

- Those who will be involved in all children and youth programs. This includes, but is not limited to; Sunday school, any clubs, Nursery, Youth Group meetings, retreats, church-sponsored athletic team coaches, vehicle drivers and summer programs;
- Those who will be involved in overnight activities with minors;
- Those counseling minors; and
- Those involved in one-on-one mentorship of minors.

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form (See Appendix B) 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.

What constitutes a disqualifying factor that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the teaching elder in charge on a case-by-case basis considering all the surrounding circumstances. Disqualifying factors include, but are not limited to:

- Being currently under investigation for, has pleaded no contest or guilty to, or been convicted of criminal sexual conduct, neglect of a child or vulnerable adult, or physical abuse or domestic abuse.
- Conviction for or pleas of no contest or guilty to an offense involving minors, violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, or indecency.
- Failure to disclose a criminal conviction.

Evidence of substantial rehabilitation may allow waiver of a disqualifying factor.

The background check authorization form and results will be stored at First Presbyterian Church on a need-to-know basis.

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. Some children's classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, the Open-Door Policy (see below) will apply. We do not allow a child to be alone with an unrelated adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation. (*Married couples must be accompanied by an unrelated adult or teenage helper. In the instance that a third volunteer is unavailable, married couples will function as a single adult teacher and follow the Open-Door Policy.*)

Open Door Policy

On rare occasions when only one adult is present with a group of children, classroom doors must remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window besides it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room. In all other places, where a single adult is present with a child or group of children, there must be other people present, such as at a coffee shop, or it must be in a public place, with members of the public present.

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action (or lack of action) by an adult or another child which 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 which is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, bullying 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 form of sexual contact or exploitation in which a child is being used for sexual stimulation or of the perpetrator. It may be violent or non-violent and includes behaviors that involve touching aspects (fondling, oral, genital and anal penetration, intercourse, forcible rape) and non-touching aspects (verbal comments, pornographic videos, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism and allowing children to witness sexual activity.)
- **Neglect**
Depriving a child of their essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter and medical care.

In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at First Presbyterian Church becomes aware of suspected child abuse of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to a member of the church staff for further action including reporting to authorities as mandated by Minnesota or Wisconsin law.

In the event that an incident of child abuse is alleged to have occurred at First Presbyterian Church, or during our sponsored programs or activities, the church staff will utilize the following procedure:

- Appendix F of the Presbytery Prohibited Conduct/Misconduct Policy and procedures should be consulted to determine if there is a legal duty to report. If so, the incident will be reported **immediately** to the state authorities (including the police and the Department of Human Services (Minnesota) or Department of Children and Families (Wisconsin), to the insurance company and to the church session. (See Appendix C for current contact information).
- The child's parents will be notified, and the child will be removed from the situation. We will not confront the accused until the safety of the child has been secured.
- When the child is safe, the worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the child abuse will be removed from working with children pending an investigation. This individual will be handled with dignity and respect. If the accused is a paid employee of the church, he or she may be suspended until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.
- An incident report (Appendix D) will be filled out. All efforts will be documented on a daily basis.
- We will cooperate with any investigation by the state or local authorities. In the event there is no investigation of the incident by state or local authorities, the session will form a team to investigate the circumstances of the incident and to make recommendations, if any, to the session. The team should act only in consultation with those assigned to us by our insurance company and the session.
- The role of the church is to provide spiritual care, comfort, and pastoral care for all parties, including the victim, the alleged perpetrator and their families. The church staff will not act as a detective or investigator. Staff members should not prejudge the situation and should show care and support to all parties.
- Public statements and media interviews will be handled under guidance of the attorney and through a session-designated spokesperson. All other workers should refrain from speaking to the media.

- If criminal charges are brought against the accused, an attorney appointed by the session to represent the church, will be engaged. Our insurance company and the denominational offices will also be informed of these charges.

Teenage Workers

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

- Teenage workers must be at least age 13.
- Teenage workers will be screened as specified above.
- Teenage workers must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children except in an emergency.
- First Presbyterian Church recognizes the importance of children below age 13 being allowed to participate in service to the church. When a child below age 13 wishes to serve as a volunteer in any given classroom, they will be allowed, pending approval of the Director of Christian Education. This child will be under direct supervision of an adult and their presence will not fulfill the two-adult requirement.

Check-In/Check-Out Procedure: Parents or guardians are responsible for their children and youth if they are not in a scheduled activity.

Before leaving a child under the age of 16 years at a scheduled activity, a parent or guardian must ensure their children are in the charge of a designated adult. Parents are responsible for their children and must notify a leader of the activity where they can be reached in case of an emergency or if there is a designated person assigned to pick up the child or youth at the end of the activity.

- **General Policy:** Paid staff or volunteers may not release a child until a parent or designated person (who can be an older sibling, if the sibling is 6th grade or older) has picked up the child.
- **Nursery and Toddler Room Policy:** Only parents, guardians, or a designated adult are permitted to pick up children from the Nursery or Toddler Room.
- **Parents to Remain in Building.** Parents are expected to remain in the building while their child attends a scheduled activity. If parents leave the building, they must inform the leader that they are leaving and designate an adult who will be responsible for the child or provide contact information for the parent for the period of time allocated for the activity.

Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all the children at First Presbyterian Church. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should **NOT** be dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting 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 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 First Presbyterian Church not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions) or children with a medication regimen that intersects with church activities. Parents of such children should address their situation with the Director of Christian Education or Minister of youth to develop a plan of action.

Discipline Policy

It is the policy of First Presbyterian Church not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There will be no spanking, hitting, or other physical discipline on children. Workers should consult with the Director of Christian Education or Youth Minister if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

Restroom Guidelines

Children five years of age and younger should utilize a classroom bathroom, if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, children five years and younger should utilize the following procedure:

Workers should escort children to the bathroom monitor who will check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, then allow the children inside. The bathroom monitor will remain outside the bathroom door and then escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the bathroom monitor will open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the

bathroom monitor should prop open the bathroom door and leave the stall door open as he/she assists the child.

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.

Accidental Injuries to Children

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

- For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide the 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.
- For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple first aid, the medical professional on-call and 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.
- 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

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.

APPENDIX A

APPLICATION FOR THOSE WORKING WITH MINORS

This form is to be completed for any position (paid or volunteer) involving the supervision or care of minors. This s being used to provide a safe and secure environment for the activities and programs of the church.

Name: _____
 Last First Middle Maiden

DL#: _____ Date of Birth: _____
(Identity **MUST** be confirmed with a driver's license)

Present Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zipe Code: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Occupation: _____ Work Phone: _____

If less than one year:

Previous Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zipe Code: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Occupation: _____ Work Phone: _____

Have you ever been arrested for, charged with, under probation for, or convicted of either sexual or physical abuse? Yes _____ No _____ If yes, please explain:

Personal References (3)

Name:

Address:

Telephone:

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I, the undersigned, authorize any references of churches listed in this application to release any and all records of information related to working with minors. The Church Staff or their designee may contact my references and appropriate government agencies as deemed necessary in order to verify my suitability as a worker. I understand that the personal information provided in this application will be held in strict confidence.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX B

AUTHORIZATION FOR CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK

I, THE UNDERSIGNED, AUTHORIZE First Presbyterian Church to acquire a criminal background check on me.

Print Name

Signature

Date

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Social Security Number: _____

Date of Birth: _____

APPENDIX C

CONTACTS

Church Staff to report an incident of abuse:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Police Department Phone #: _____

State Department of Child Protection Phone #: _____

Session Moderator Phone #: _____

Clerk of Session Phone #: _____

Insurance Company:

Name of Rep: _____ Company: _____ Phone: _____

Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area: 651-357-1150

APPENDIX D

ACCIDENT/INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Reason for report: _____

Date of Incident: _____

Time: _____

Event/Activity: _____

Name of Reporter: _____

Class/Group: _____

Title: _____

Name(s) of Child(ren)

Age(s)

Quote the child's/youth's first words verbatim: (There is no need to question the child further)

Briefly describe child's/youth's demeanor/appearance: _____

Briefly describe what happened: _____

What action did you take? _____

Has the incident been resolved? _____ Yes _____ No

Explain: _____

Were there any witnesses: _____ Yes _____ No

Names: _____

Signatures of witnesses (if possible): _____

Report submitted to: _____

Date: _____