

# Child Protection Policy and Procedures

First Presbyterian Church  
300 East Main Street  
Batavia, NY 14020

Introduction and Scope	page 2
Boundaries	page 2
Guidelines	page 3
Definitions	page 5
Outside Groups	page 6
Appropriate Touch Policies	page 7
Additional Guidelines	page 8

Date Adopted: May 22, 2013

We live in a society where accidental injury and child abuse (including physical, sexual and emotional abuse) are unfortunate realities. First Presbyterian Church (FPC) seeks to implement preventive measures and policies that will foster a safe and secure environment.

It is our sincere prayer that this policy provides an atmosphere of care, safety and spiritual development that protects and supports children. This policy was approved by the Session on

## **Section I: Scope of Policy**

The Child Protection Policy (“Policy”) applies to any programs involving children and/or youth (minors) conducted or sponsored by FPC. The policy applies to both employees and volunteers, although a distinction is drawn between employees and volunteers with respect to the reporting and handling of alleged violations. In the case of a volunteer who is alleged to have violated the Child Protection Policy, reporting and handling requirements are set forth in Paragraph 15 below.

Even though the Policy applies to all volunteers participating in programs involving children and/or youth, not all volunteers are subject to the screening requirements set forth in Paragraph 14 below. Screening is required for those individuals who are in leadership positions where they have a direct and primary supervisory role with respect to children and/or youth. This includes, but is not limited to, the nursery attendant, choir directors, and leaders of the following groups: Sunday school, youth, junior church, Vacation Bible School (VBS), and confirmation class. Individuals who work with children in a more limited capacity and under the immediate supervision of a screened volunteer or staff member are not required to be screened. This category includes, but is not limited to, nursery substitutes and assistants, choir parents, parent volunteers and teen helpers. Non-screened volunteers are still bound by all the other requirements of this policy.

## **Section II: Adult Boundaries**

- Adults are responsible for imposing limits and maintaining appropriate boundaries in interpersonal relationships with minors. For purposes of this policy, a minor is defined as anyone under the age of 18. The definition of “minors” includes children and youth.
- Abuse of children in any form will not be tolerated. Any problem or suspected issue regarding minors should be reported immediately to child protective services, a staff member and Presbytery. (See reporting requirements in Section III, paragraph 15)
- Whenever a question arises about where to draw appropriate interpersonal boundaries, remember that it is the adult’s responsibility to

behave professionally and appropriately at all times, even when serving as a volunteer.

- Adults should avoid being alone with one child in a private setting.
- Requests for counseling should be referred to the Pastor or mental health professionals.

### **Section III: Guidelines**

In order to best protect children, volunteers, and staff who are involved in church activities, FPC will implement the following guidelines for all programs:

- 1. Ban on working with children if adult has prior record of abusing children.** No adult who has been found in a civil, criminal, or church proceeding to have committed child abuse (whether sexual abuse, physical abuse or emotional abuse), or neglect by any child protective agency, shall serve as a volunteer for any church-sponsored activity where children are present. Convictions for other criminal conduct may or may not disqualify an applicant from volunteering to work with children at FPC. All criminal convictions must be disclosed by applicants seeking to work with children at FPC. (See Paragraph 14 below)
- 2. Ban on working with children if volunteer / prospective volunteer is accused of abusing or neglecting children.** No volunteer / prospective volunteer is allowed to work with children if the volunteer / prospective volunteer is the subject of a complaint or other legal pleading, filed in a civil, criminal, church, or administrative proceeding, involving allegations of child abuse or neglect. This ban will last until the complaint is resolved. All volunteers / prospective volunteers must disclose to the Pastor if they are the subject of any formal complaint of child abuse or neglect as described above. This disclosure must be made at the time of application, if charges are then pending, or immediately after such charges are made.
- 3. Read and Understand the Child Protection Policy for FPC.** Reference item 14 below.
- 4. Two-Deep Leadership** – Whenever possible, there will be two leaders present in any classroom, vehicle or situation where there are minors present.
- 5. Five Years Older Guideline** – We recommend that any volunteer supervising youth be at least five years older than the oldest youth they are supervising.
- 6. Random Program Checks and Open Door / Plain View Policy** – Programs can be checked by any one at any time. Windows shall not be obstructed during children's and youth's programming (except for when classrooms are used as dressing rooms) and doors will remain open if the door has no window. Counseling sessions with children and youth shall be conducted with the door to the room open.
- 7. Restroom Policy** – See item #3 under Addendum Two (page 8) for Appropriate Touch Policies.

8. **Appropriate Touching** – See Addendum 1 (Page 7) for Appropriate Touch Policies.
9. **Covenant for Youth Retreats, Work Camps, and Mission Trips** – Planning for one-time occurring events sponsored by the church, will integrate a covenant regarding both expected best behaviors and unacceptable behaviors that is signed by the participants, parents, accompanying leaders, and approved by session. Behaviors for adults, as well as youth, are specified. This covenant includes how transgressions will be addressed and to whom reports will be directed. *(The covenant is an opportunity to create positive expectations through affirmative language that declares the purpose and significance of the event, and how it expresses the church's missions and ministry.)*
10. **Overnight Accommodations** – Each overnight event will have at least three leaders. There must be at least one adult of each gender present at overnight events involving both male and female youth.
11. **Permission Forms** – Parental or legal guardian permission forms, including permission for emergency treatment, shall be securely maintained on site during church events and shall remain with the person transporting and/or accompanying the youth on any off-site event, retreat or overnight event. Copies of these forms shall also be securely located in the church office during the event / retreat.
12. **Information for Parent / Guardian** – Information shall be given to the parent(s) or guardian(s) prior to an off-site event stating the time and location of departure and pick-up time, and any available phone numbers to contact the group.
13. **Transportation** – All transportation of children (typically youth) must be provided by either a current Youth Advisor, program staff, or a parent approved by the appropriate program staff and any such driver must present a valid driver's license and auto insurance for the vehicle operated. Each child must wear a seat belt. Adults should avoid driving alone with one child (other than with one's own child); however, if such driving is necessary, parents and/or another staff member should be informed.
14. **Education & Training** – All persons who volunteer to work with children and youth shall complete an application packet that includes providing references; disclosing all criminal convictions; and, in the case of volunteers described in Section 1 (above) and listed in the Addendum, consenting to a computerized background check. All successful applicants shall read the Child Protection Policy and the Sexual Misconduct Policy and attend a seminar designed to explain and implement this policy, and upon completion of that training, shall sign a form stating their understanding of the policy and their commitment to abide by it.

**15. Reporting:** For each event, the Pastor will be informed of the on site person in charge.

**(a) Accidental Injuries**

If an accidental injury to a child occurs during any FPC event, the injured child's parents / legal guardians shall be contacted immediately or as soon as possible. The on site person in charge of the event must also be informed. An adult volunteer or staff member must also be informed and that adult volunteer or staff member must complete an *Incident Report* within 24 hours. The report must be submitted to the pastor who will forward a copy to the insurance agent. The report will be placed on file and available to parent / guardian upon request.

**(b) Suspected Incidents of Child Abuse**

Abuse of children and youth in any form will not be tolerated. Any problem or suspected issue regarding minors should be reported immediately to child protective services, a staff member and Presbytery. If an incident occurs during any FPC event in which child abuse is suspected, the affected child's parents / legal guardians shall be contacted immediately or as soon as possible. In addition, "Any member of this church engaged in ordered ministry and any certified Christian educator employed by this church and its congregations, shall report to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities knowledge of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity when (1) such information is gained outside of a confidential communication as defined in Book of Order G-4.0301, (2) she or he is not bound by an obligation of privileged communication under law, or (3) she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of future physical harm or abuse." (Book of Order G-4.0302)

## **Section IV: Definitions**

**A minor** is anyone under the age of 18 years old. This includes children and youth.

**A volunteer** is a person who works with children in any unpaid capacity.

**First Presbyterian Church (FPC)** includes all Christian Education activities, youth groups, choirs, worship services, committee meetings, and any other activity or program sponsored by FPC whether on or off the premises.

**Program staff, staff, or pastoral staff** refers to staff that work specifically with the members and children of FPC in programs including music, youth, Sunday school, worship, and outreach programs and would include the Pastor, Minister of Music, Youth Ministry Director, and Nursery Attendant.

**Inappropriate Touch** is any touch that makes those touching, being touched or observing the interaction uncomfortable. (See Addendum One)

**Child Abuse** refers to any non-accidental injury; any sexual activity or sexual exploitation; or any neglectful treatment or maltreatment that harms the health, welfare or safety of a child. This includes the following types of abuse:

- **Physical Abuse** – Causing deliberate and intentional bodily harm to a child.
- **Emotional Abuse** – Verbal and/or nonverbal emotional cruelty to a child. Emotional abuse sends a message to the victim that he/she is worthless, bad, unloved and/or undeserving of love and care.
- **Neglect** – Endangering a child's health, welfare and safety through negligence. This includes but is not limited to withholding food, medical care, affection, affirmation, clothing, shelter, hygiene or education.
- **Sexual Abuse** – Sexual contact between an adult and a minor or an older and/or more powerful child and a child. Sexual abuse may include but is not limited to: fondling, intercourse, incest, inappropriate touching, the exposure to pornography and/or prostitution, sexual advances or comments of a sexual nature.

## **Section V: Outside Groups and Individuals**

Groups/individuals renting or using the facilities of FPC who are not affiliated with the church are not included in this policy, but should provide proof of their own insurance coverage. If a group who is renting or using the church facilities is serving minors, they must also submit a copy of their child sexual abuse prevention policy.

# ADDENDUM ONE

## APPROPRIATE TOUCH POLICIES

1. Nurturing touch is very important to developing a sound relationship with youth. Children should be touched appropriately on faces, hands, shoulders, and head. Never touch a child in the area which should normally be covered by a bathing suit.
2. The following actions are not acceptable:
  - Verbal abuse, rough handling, shoving, hair pulling, shaking, slapping, spanking, biting, pinching, hitting.
  - Requiring a child to do anything that is demeaning to their character (hazing).
  - Requiring a child to say anything that is demeaning to their character.
3. Volunteers should never tickle children – it is over stimulating and is considered to be a deceptive device that may lead to more inappropriate touching (fondling).
4. Volunteers should never allow a child to stand between their legs when seated. Gently guide the child to your side. You may still speak eye to eye and comfort the child or talk quietly with them at your side when necessary.
5. Holding school age and older children on your lap is not appropriate. Holding a preschooler or toddler on your lap is appropriate for short time spans when comfort is needed.
6. All activities and practices should be scheduled so that all children are within your view at all times.
7. Never kiss a child on their lips. Never let a child kiss you on the lips.

## ADDENDUM TWO

### ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES

1. If anything happens that you believe may put you at risk of accusation by anyone, do not keep this a secret. You must contact the Youth Ministry Director, the Sunday School Superintendent, the Pastor, or a member of the Personnel Committee.
2. First Aid should be administered as gently and respectfully as possible. Always ask for assistance if the child needs to be removed from the group.
3. Bathroom Policy: It is often necessary for workers to assist young children to the restroom. Children's privacy should be maintained while helping the child to and from the restroom facility.
  - Workers should observe the nursery guidelines when changing diapers in our classes for three year olds and under. Workers should wear gloves and should make use of diaper changing stations. A child's diapers should be changed by and in the presence of approved workers (youth workers should not change diapers).
  - If a child is in an age group that requires him or her to be checked in / out of class, then that child should be escorted to the bathroom (3<sup>rd</sup> grade and under).
  - The worker should remain outside the bathroom door and should not enter a stall with a child or enter restrooms of the opposite sex.
  - The workers primary responsibility is ensuring that the child has a safe trip to and from the restroom facility in a timely manner.
  - When possible, two adults should be present if a worker must enter the restroom. If not possible, more than one child should be present.
4. All procedures as outlined in the Volunteer Emergency Procedures Handout and Volunteer Code of Ethics should be followed at all times.