

CHILD
PROTECTION
POLICY



**FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**

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CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

(For children, youth, and those who work with them)

The Gospel of Mark records that when people brought little children to Jesus, he took them in his arms, put his hands on them, and blessed them.

Jesus loved and cared for children in a way that was rare and counter-cultural. As the gathered people of God, we have the responsibility to do the same.

Because we recognize that we are a reflection of God's love to those in our care, we take seriously our responsibility to them. These guidelines are set forth to provide a safe and nurturing environment in which we can bring our children to the Savior.

We view ourselves as partners with parents, seeking to provide quality care and instruction in our children's ministries. All of our guidelines are designed to protect and promote growth in God for each child and adult involved.

Everyone who teaches, helps, or cares for children under the sponsorship of First Presbyterian Church must follow these policies and procedures. Be aware that the document that follows represents minimum requirements. Individual programs may impose additional guidelines as appropriate to their ministry setting.

I. DEFINITIONS

A. *For the purpose of clarity, the following terms will be defined below and that definition assumed throughout this document.*

B. *Definitions of Abuse*

- 1. Sexual Abuse:** Any sexual activity—verbal, visual, or physical—engaged in without consent. The child is considered unable to consent due to developmental immaturity and ability to understand sexual behavior¹.
- 2. Physical Abuse:** Acts of commission toward the child by a parent or caregiver. Such acts can result in harm to the child or they might intend to harm, although there may be no harm or only a minor injury. It can include injuries that occur when a child is punished severely or when a parent loses control and shakes a crying infant.²
- 3. Emotional Abuse:** Occurs when a child repeatedly feels that he or she is unwanted, unloved, or worthless. It includes degradation, belittling, and ridiculing; it can also include actively rejecting the child or ignoring the child's emotional needs...

¹ Diane Mandt Longberg, *Counseling Survivors of Sexual Abuse* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1997) 62.

² John M Leventhal, MD, *Overview of Child Maltreatment* in Angelo P. Giardino, MD, and Randel Alexander, MD ed, *Child Maltreatment. A Critical Guide and Reference*, Third Edition (G.W. Medical Publishing, 2005). 1

Emotional maltreatment... often accompanies other types of abuse and neglect and plays a major role in the consequences of these types of abuse.³

4. Spiritual Abuse: The inappropriate use of spiritual authority (the Bible, ecclesiastical tradition, or church authority) to force a person to do that which is unhealthy. Often it will involve a forceful or manipulative denial of that person's feelings and convictions.⁴

C. Other Definitions

- 1. Parent** refers to any responsible adult who brings a child to a church program. Adult is any individual age 18 or over.
- 2. Approved Adult** is an active volunteer in First Presbyterian Church's children's ministry who has gone through the current volunteer screening process as described below and is 18 years of age or older.
- 3. Approved Youth** is an active volunteer in First Presbyterian Church's children's ministry who has gone through the current volunteer screening process as described below and is under the age of 18.

II. POLICIES FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

A. ARCHITECTURAL PRECAUTIONS (0-12th)

- 1. Many large interior windows for easy viewing by parents and supervisors.**
- 2. All doors with the exception of hallway public rest rooms have windows or side windows. Sight lines through the windows should remain unobstructed at all times.**
- 3. Gates on rooms for children under three keep children contained.**
- 4. Nursery changing tables are in full view and available for parents to use when they drop off or pick up their child.**

B. Volunteer Screening Process

1. Six Month Rule:

- a) There is a minimum requirement of six months attendance at First Presbyterian Church for those interested in volunteering with the children's ministries. Exceptions may be made at the discretion of the Family

³ John M Leventhal, MD, Overview of Child Maltreatment in Angelo P. Giardino, MD, and Randel Alexander, MD ed, Child Maltreatment. A Critical Guide and Reference, Third Edition (G.W. Medical Publishing, 2005). 2

⁴ Steven R. Tracy, Mending the Soul (Zondervan, 2005) 32-33.

Ministries Staff for special event childcare or the after school program when the individual is a regular attender in good standing at another church.

2. Volunteer Profile- Ministry Application:

a) Every volunteer serving in the children's ministry must complete a volunteer profile to indicate interest in serving as a volunteer and as an initial step in the volunteer process. See attached forms in Appendix A.

3. Reference Check:

a) Every Adult Volunteer shall provide a minimum of three references in addition to the volunteer profile. These references shall include: One supervisor, one spiritual leader, and one relative. Additional references may be required and contacted at the discretion of the Directors of Family Discipleship and other relevant Church Staff.

4. Background Check, Renewed every 2 years:

a) Every new adult volunteer must consent to a background check at the time of application. The background check will be completed every two years for as long as that individual is an active volunteer within the children's ministries of First Presbyterian Church.

5. Interview with Family Ministries Staff:

a) Every Adult volunteer will complete a screening interview with a Family Ministries Staff member at the beginning of their service, and at the end of each subsequent year that they continue to serve.

6. Covenant For Teachers and Leaders:

a) Every Adult Volunteer will be required to sign a covenant committing to one year of service within the Children's ministry program. This covenant will be signed each year and will include an annual review of First Presbyterian Church's Child Protection Policies and approved Child Protection Training Materials.

C. Child Security Policies

1. Drop-Off Policy (0-6th)

- a) Children are never to be dropped off in a classroom without the teachers present. Generally, supervision will be provided 10-15 minutes before a program starts.

2. Volunteer Identification Policy (0-6th)

- a) All volunteers working with children (nursery through sixth grade) will wear a name tag identifying them and their role in the children's programming.

3. Registration Policy (0-6th)

- a) All children's programming at First Presbyterian Church requires a child to check-in at one of the check in kiosks located in the nursery and at the Sunday School entrance.
- b) Children must be registered and attend the class at their age, grade, or development level.

4. Security System (0-3yrs)

- a) All children nursery through 3 years old will be issued a security tag at check-in. The security tag is presented to the classroom teacher at the time that the child is released back to their parents.
- b) Children (nursery through 3's) will be released only to adults who have their child's security tag.

5. Parent Pick Up (0-1st)

- a) We require that a parent come to the room and pick up their child/children from their classroom following any church program. Unless the child's security badge indicates that the child is to be dropped off in the nursery. We ask that this be done within ten minutes of the class ending so that the teachers may remain on schedule for places they may need to be. Any exceptions to this rule must be cleared directly with the teacher of that specific class.
- b) If the child's security badge indicates the next location the child is to be dropped off (i.e. Sunday School>Nursery Second Service), the teacher or another volunteer may take all children as a group to the next classroom.

6. Sunday School Release (3rd-6th)

- a) Children in grades 3-6 may be released independently from their Sunday School classes. These children **may not** pick up younger siblings from Sunday school classes.

7. Diaper Changing Policy

- a) Due to the architectural precautions and staffing requirements in the nursery, men and women may both change children's diapers. Children under the age of 14 who are assisting in the nursery may not change diapers.

8. Bathroom Policy (0-6th)

- a) We strongly encourage parents and their children to visit the bathroom prior to each class.
- b) When escorting children to the bathroom the following procedure must be followed:
 - (1) *Children grades K-1 should make trips to the bathroom in groups.*
 - (2) *An approved adult must escort the children to the bathroom hallway.*
 - (3) *An approved adult must screen the bathroom to make sure it is safe.*
 - (4) *An approved adult must prop open the exterior bathroom door and wait for the children in the hallway.*
 - (5) *Children may use the bathroom 2 at a time (provided there are two stalls).*
 - (6) *An approved adult may stand in the doorway and call the child's name if he/she is taking longer than seems necessary.*
 - (7) *If a preschool aged child needs assistance in the bathroom, an approved adult woman may enter the bathroom and assist the child with the stall door open, leaving a second approved adult or youth in the hallway to supervise the other children. Approved youth **may not** provide assistance to children in the bathroom.*
 - (8) *At the conclusion of the bathroom break, the approved adult must stand at the door and ask "is everyone out?" The approved adult should then screen the bathroom and close the bathroom door.*

(9) The approved adult should then escort the children back to their classroom.

- c) If at any time one child needs to go to the bathroom, the above procedure must still be followed with two approved adults. Always aim to escort children in groups or pairs to the bathroom. (A member of the Children's Ministry staff will be on hand in the hallway during Sunday School to provide a second adult as needed.)
- c) Children grades 2 through 6 may be sent in same-gender pairs to the bathroom.
- d) Bathroom policies and procedures must be posted on the bathroom doors in children's areas.

REMEMBER, ADULTS: NEVER BE ALONE WITH A CHILD IN AN UNSUPERVISED BATHROOM AND NEVER GO INTO A BATHROOM STALL WITH A CHILD AND SHUT THE DOOR.

D. Classroom Supervision Policies

1. Staffing Guidelines (0-12th)

- a) Only approved adults and youth will serve as teachers or volunteers in the nursery or in children's classes.
- b) At last one approved adult (at least 18+ years old) must be in each room at all times.
- c) Teachers must serve in teams so that at least two workers are in the room at all times. Two-deep leadership is strongly recommended whenever possible.
- d) Rooms for children ages 0 through 4 must be staffed with at least one worker who is a woman. This will facilitate observance of the **Bathroom Policy**.
- e) Rooms for kindergarten and above that are subdivided into sections and easily visible to the department head may have one teacher. (i.e. multiple small group break outs that occur in the same large room or area.) However, we encourage team-teaching situations for school-age children.
- e) All volunteers in one room should not be from the same family. Family members may work together when other workers are present.
- f) The following ratios are staffing requirements. A minimum of two adults is required for Sunday morning programs and Kingdom Kid's Club regardless of the number of children present.

Nursery (0-24 months)	- One adult per 4-5 children
Pre-School	- One adult per 6-8 children
Grades K-6	- One adult per 6-8 children
Grades 7-12	- One adult per 8-10 children

If a class is unexpectedly short-staffed, the following steps will be taken:

- i. **Staff Shuffle:** Children's Ministry staff will step in to fill holes and to maintain ratio. Volunteers may be moved from different classes to meet staffing needs in other rooms. A floating helper or approved substitute/assistant may be contacted.
- ii. **Combined Classes:** Two classes may be combined, if practical, to meet the staffing requirements. A notice will be posted for parents telling them where to pick up their children.
- iii. **Cancellation of Class:** Programs without adequate staffing will not commence. Additionally, programs which continually experience staffing deficiencies will be subject to review by the CE Committee and possible cancellation.

g) When the occasion arises that baby-sitting is required for a one-time church-sponsored event not defined as children's ministry (example: annual meetings, Women's Bible Study brunch, etc.) and church facilities are used, the following is required:

- i. An approved adult must be present to ensure that child protection policies relevant to the situation are followed.
- ii. Two-deep leadership is required as well as strict adherence to the staffing guidelines listed above.

2. Proper Display of Affection (0-12th)

a) Touch is an essential responsibility in nurturing lives. Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally appropriate. Be aware of and sensitive to differences in sexual development, cultural differences, family backgrounds, individual personalities, and special needs. The following guidelines are to be promoted for pure, genuine, and positive displays of God's love:

Hugs One-arm side hugs or hand-to-arm hugs are positive contact. Avoid initiating full contact, body-to-body hugs, or kisses.

Lap-Sitting Appropriate sitting on laps may occur with children 5 and younger. Discourage lap sitting with school-age children. Rather, encourage them to sit next to you.

Casual Touch Gentle contact during activities may be on children's heads, shoulders, arms and hands. **Physical discipline must never be used on children or students.**

Back-Rubs Anyone working with our children must refrain from giving back rubs.

3. Discipline Policy (0-12th)

a) All interaction regarding discipline needs to carefully consider a child's dignity and fragile life. Gentleness, respect, and understanding must guide all actions and words. Discipline will be carried out through instruction, training, and correction, in accordance with the Classroom Management Policies & Procedures. Physical punishment will not be used.

4. Special Events/Overnight Policies (0-12th)

a) Field Trips and Special Events

(1) *Appropriate adult/children ratios will be ensured by the staff member in charge (See Staffing Guidelines listed above.)*

(2) *Off-campus activities must be pre-approved by the appropriate paid staff member (Director of Children's Ministries, etc. See 'b'). Parents will be notified at least one week prior to the outing. Two-deep leadership is essential for these types of excursions.*

(3) *Proper written consent and medical release forms are required for each child participating in off-campus activities.*

(4) *When transporting children is involved in an activity, all drivers must have a valid driver's license and current automobile insurance. The number of persons per car should not exceed the number of seat belts, and seat belts must be used.*

(5) *Two-Deep Leadership: All trips and outings will require a minimum of two approved adult leaders. Staffing guidelines must be followed as listed above.*

b) **Overnight Policy:** All church sponsored overnight activities will be permitted as long as the following guidelines are met:

(1) *All overnight activities should be pre-approved by the appropriate paid staff member (Director of Children's Ministries, youth director, Executive Pastor). This includes follow up activities to camp, discipleship groups, etc.*

(2) *There will not be overnight activities for children younger than third grade unless it is specifically a parent/child outing.*

(3) *All overnight activities must have at least two unrelated leaders supervising the activities.*

(4) *All supervising adults need to go through the Volunteer Screening Process as outlined in **A. Volunteer Screening Process**, above.*

E. Special Concerns for Youth Ministry

1. Driving:

- a) When a staff member (volunteer or paid) is driving students home, they must never be alone with a student of the opposite sex. Additionally, the driver must have a valid driver's license and current automobile insurance. The number of persons per car should not exceed the number of seat belts.

2. Lunches:

- a) One-on-one lunch appointments with the opposite sex may only be made if separate transportation is used. Eat in public places.

3. Dating:

- a) At no time shall anyone working with youth pursue a dating or romantic relationship with a student. Staff should always be cautious with students with "crushes on staff members."

4. Open-Door Policy:

- a) At no time will anyone working with youth have a one-on-one meeting behind closed doors. For your protection, keep your door at least partially open.

III. POLICIES FOR SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

A. Recognizing Child Abuse

1. All volunteer and paid leaders of First Presbyterian Church involved with children (0-18) shall immediately report any items of obvious concern relating to child abuse or neglect of which they have knowledge or observe within the scope of their duties to the designated director of ministry (Director of Children's, Jr. High, High School Ministries). These leaders or teachers shall report the following (in addition to as well as any other indications) that may suggest the occurrence of child abuse or neglect.

- a) has an unexplained injury—a patch of hair missing, a burn, a limp, or bruises
- b) has an inordinate number of “explained” injuries such as bruises on his/her arms and legs over a period of time
- c) gives verbal testimony
- d) makes drawings in conjunction with verbal testimony
- e) exhibits an injury that is not adequately explained
- f) alludes to incidents in writing or through prayer requests, etc.
- g) complains about numerous beatings
- h) complains about others “doing things to them when others are not at home”
- i) is dirty and smells or has bad teeth or hair falling out
- j) is inadequately dressed for inclement weather
- k) wears long-sleeved tops during the summer to cover bruises on the arms

It is not the responsibility of the reporting person nor the Director to substantiate any allegations or suspicions.

B. Responding to Child Abuse

1. Confidentiality

- a) At all times keep the information confidential. If your director of ministry is unavailable, please contact the Pastor or the Assistant Pastor.

2. Responding to the Child

- b) When the child first comes to you, be sure to take his/her word seriously. Don't deny the problem, but stay calm and listen to the child. Give emotional support, reminding the child that he/she is not at fault and that the child was right in telling you about the problem. Do not promise the child you will not tell anyone.

3. Reporting Child Abuse

a) Report Form

- l) Use a Suspicion of Child Abuse Report Form. These forms may be obtained through your ministry director (Children's Director, Jr. High Director, Sr. High Director,

Executive Pastor) or at the church office. Fill out the report form with the director of your ministry.

b) Summary of Steps

- (1) *Gently affirm the child.*
- (2) *Report to the appropriate director of ministry and the Executive Pastor for accountability.*
- (3) *The director of ministry or other staff will then assist the reporter in calling the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services (D.C.F.S.) for investigation as required by law, 1-800-252-2873.*

Local assistance: Northern Regional Office
630 E. Galena Blvd.
(630) 801-3400

- (4) *Complete the form with the assistance of director of ministry.*
- (5) *Pray for the child and maintain confidentiality.*

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