

**Child and Youth Protection Policy**  
**First Presbyterian Church**  
**Durham, NC**

**POLICY STATEMENT**

First Presbyterian Church, Durham, NC (FPC) is committed to providing a church environment that is a safe place for children and youth. FPC has a long history of operating as a trusting community, and this policy provides a formal mechanism that will help to protect children and youth from any abuse of this trust when they are involved in church-sponsored activities. FPC adopts these policies and procedures to maximize safety and prevent child abuse from occurring within its church community. The policy also guides and protects volunteers and employees from unwarranted allegations of child abuse.

**I TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

1. **Child or Youth** means individuals under 18 years old and considered a minor under the law. Legally incompetent individuals of any age shall also be protected by this policy.
2. **Staff** means any individual who is employed by the church.
3. **Volunteer** means any adult not employed by FPC who teaches, supervises, or otherwise helps with children or youth activities. These activities may include worship, Sunday school, nursery, childcare, choir, youth group, vacation church school, mission trips, confirmation mentoring and any other church sponsored child or youth activity.
4. **Youth volunteer** means a person under 18 who is approved to work on activities with children or youth and who is a church member, a child of a church member, or is sponsored by a church member.
5. **Leader** means a member of staff or adult volunteer designated by FPC to have responsibility for children and youth. The adult volunteer must be at least 18 years old. Leaders of overnight trips must be at least 21 years old. It is recommended that leaders be at least 4 years older than the youth they supervise.
6. **Minister** means a Minister of the Word and Sacrament, in this case, employed by FPC.
7. **Screening Review Committee (SRC)** means a committee comprised of a member of staff and three persons who are members of the church appointed by the Session for a one-year term that is renewable by vote of the Session. The Session will designate the member of staff to serve on the SRC.
8. **Church sponsored activity** means any and all gatherings organized by FPC.
9. **Child abuse** is an act committed by a staff member, volunteer, or person in a position of trust, which is non-accidental and which harms or threatens harm to a child's physical or mental health or welfare. Types of abuse may include physical injury or threat of injury,

physical neglect defined as failure to provide necessary care to a child, sexual abuse, mental abuse or neglect, emotional abuse, and spiritual abuse. Child abuse includes, but is not limited to:

- a. **Physical Abuse** - Any physical force applied by an adult or older youth to a child, youth, or other vulnerable individual.
- b. **Neglect of Basic Needs** - A form of abuse, which may include denial of food, water, shelter, cleanliness, clothing, or sleep. These are not appropriate means of discipline.
- c. **Sexual Abuse** – Any sexual contact or sexual interaction between a child (under the age of eighteen years) and an adult or older youth; any use of a child for the sexual stimulation of an adult or older youth, a third person, or the child; any discourse that has sexually suggestive context, innuendo, unwelcome casual touch, unwelcome and inappropriate hugs and kisses, and sexually suggestive pictures between an adult or older youth and a child, as deemed inappropriate by any reasonable adult.
- d. **Emotional Abuse** - Inappropriately derisive words and/or actions directed toward a child, youth, or vulnerable individual. Discipline by humiliation is also emotional abuse.
- e. **Spiritual Abuse** - Using religious references to shame, or guilt to motivate a child into a particular action or behavior.
- f. **Misuse of technology** – Using technology, which results in the sexual harassment or abuse of a child or youth, including viewing, texting or emailing suggestive messages or images to an individual.

## II SCREENING PROCEDURES FOR ADULT AND YOUTH VOLUNTEERS

To be a volunteer for church sponsored activities with children or youth, a volunteer candidate will submit a volunteer application and sign the Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers of Child and Youth Activities at FPC (Appendix A).

1. A designated member of staff and up to 3 persons designated by Session to serve on the Screening Review Committee (SRC) will review the volunteer's application to ensure that the applicant is qualified and suited to work at church-sponsored activities for children or youth for which the volunteer is applying. This review will include checking at least two references provided by the applicant.
2. An outside background check will be performed for all applicants through a private provider of record check services or a state law enforcement agency.
3. A driving record history will be obtained for all who regularly volunteer to drive children and youth in order to participate in church-sponsored activities.
4. FPC will pay the fee for a background check and driving record history.

5. Evaluation of volunteer candidates:

- a. If the screening process reveals any information that causes a concern that a candidate poses a threat of abuse to children, youth or any adult, the candidate will not be approved for work with children and youth.
  - b. Any candidate who has any prior history of abuse directed against another person will create a strong presumption that the candidate should not be approved by the Minister.
  - c. Any candidate whose background check reveals that the candidate has behavioral or emotional problems that may interfere with the care and well-being of the children and youth should not be approved by the Minister.
  - d. In making a decision to withdraw a candidate from consideration or to remove a volunteer who has previously been approved, the SRC should indicate the potential or actual threat being addressed in writing.
6. Background check information and information contained in the application will be kept in a locked and confidential location and may not be revealed to any unauthorized person. Authorized persons are the volunteer candidate and the SRC and a Minister.
7. The Session may authorize youth volunteers to work with children's or youth activities using procedures they deem to be appropriate to make that decision. Volunteers or members of the church staff will supervise them. They will be screened, but no background check will be required.
8. The Session will approve a mandatory training program to ensure that new volunteers understand and are able to apply these procedures and any other procedures they determine to be necessary to orient the volunteers.

**III SIX-MONTH WAITING PERIOD**

No volunteer may serve in a primary position of responsibility involving contact with children or youth until the candidate has been regularly involved in the church for six months. Screened and approved volunteers may participate in children's or youth activities before this six month waiting period is observed, but they will be closely supervised or monitored by volunteers who have been involved for more than six months. There is no waiting period applicable to the other ministries of the church.

**IV. STAFF SCREENING PROCEDURES (Also see Personnel Policies)**

1. The relevant hiring authorities will screen any potential employees of the church using

procedures at least as comprehensive as the procedures applicable to volunteers.

2. An outside background check will be performed for all potential employees through a private provider of record check service or a state law enforcement agency.
3. If the screening process reveals any information that causes concern that the applicant poses a threat of abuse to children, youth or others in the church, or has a history of abuse directed against another person, the hiring authority will remove the applicant from consideration for employment within the church.

## **V SUPERVISION**

1. At least two leaders shall supervise all children and youth activities. The presence of at least two leaders is to protect children and youth against situations in which abuse might occur, and to protect the leaders against false allegations of abuse or neglect. During any FPC program, a leader should avoid being alone with a single child in a place where others cannot easily or quickly observe them.
2. For youth activities that include transportation to a location/event that is a one-hour or more drive from FPC, two leaders are required for each vehicle that transports children or youth.
3. The leaders become responsible when the scheduled activity begins. Until then, parents or guardians are responsible for their children. Leaders remain responsible until the children or youth have been picked up by a parent, guardian, or a person authorized by a parent or guardian to pick up the child or youth. Leaders should not send children out to find their parents, and they should not release any child or youth to await transportation without appropriate supervision.
4. Parents are responsible for their children when at church and the children are not in a church-sponsored activity for children or youth.
5. Classrooms, childcare rooms, and any area in which programs for children or youth are taking place may be visited without prior notice by staff, parents, or other volunteers. No windows may ever be totally blocked so as to prevent visual observation into the classroom.
6. In the event that two leaders cannot be present in the room, such that one leader is alone in a room with one or more children or youth, a door from the room must be left open. The leader should not position himself or herself in the room such that other people passing in the hallway cannot see him or her.
7. Furthermore, at any counseling session with children or youth, the door of the room used must remain open for the entire session. The session should be conducted at a time when others are nearby, even if they are not within listening distance.
8. Each classroom for children and youth should ideally have a door with an observation

window. If it does not, and two leaders are not present in the room, then the door must remain open at all times.

9. For children under age eleven, a leader or youth volunteer will accompany children to the restroom. They will ensure that the hallway to the restroom and the restroom are safe, and be responsible for children returning from the restroom. They may assist any child under six in the restroom. No leader may touch a person's private areas unless necessary to change a diaper or take any other therapeutic measure.
10. All leaders will avoid any improper and unwelcomed touching of children or youth, and should be particularly sensitive to the age of the children or youth with whom they interact.

## **VI DISCIPLINE**

1. Leaders may not spank, hit, grab, shake, or otherwise physically discipline anyone.
2. Any disciplinary problems by a leader should be brought to the attention of the staff in charge. Please see Section IX regarding the process of reporting.

## **VII INJURIES OR ILLNESS**

1. Leaders who are seriously ill may not participate in any church-sponsored activity while the disease may be transmitted.
2. Temporary substitutes for leaders who are unexpectedly ill will be screened and approved using the procedures in this policy to the extent possible, given the time available to conduct such screening.
3. If a leader determines that a child or youth has a serious or communicable illness, the child or youth will be returned to his or her parent or guardian as soon as feasible. If this is not possible, then the ill person will be separated in a manner that will allow supervision to continue until the parent or guardian can assume responsibility for the child or youth.
4. All persons supervising children or youth are expected to take reasonable steps to prevent any person involved in the church-sponsored activity from coming into contact with any bodily fluids.
5. If a child or youth receives a minor injury during a church-sponsored activity, a leader should provide first aid as needed at the time of injury. A leader should promptly notify the injured person's parent or guardian of the minor injury.
6. If a child or youth receives an injury, which requires medical treatment beyond simple first aid, a leader should provide immediate attention to the injured person. A leader will also notify the injured person's parent or guardian as soon as possible, and if appropriate, should seek emergency medical assistance and complete an *Accident Report* (See Appendix B).

## VIII RECORD-KEEPING

1. A leader will keep an attendance list of the church-sponsored activities involving children or youth. The record will include the date of the activity and the names of all participants, staff, and volunteers.
2. If an injury requiring medical treatment beyond simple first aid occurs during a church-sponsored activity, the leader will complete an *Accident Report*. The report will be submitted to the staff member in charge of the program. The staff member will share it with the parents/guardians and the *Accident Report* will be shared at the next weekly staff meeting.
3. Children and youth must obtain written parental or guardian permission for participation in church-sponsored activities that involve travel away from the church's physical facilities and have a signed Consent for Emergency Services for a Child or Adolescent on file. An adult in charge needs to bring the emergency contact and health insurance information of any child or youth so that medical help can be sought and parents/guardians can be contacted if needed.

## IX REPORTING

### 1. Reporting Incidents

Any adult who observes or becomes aware of any alleged incident of child abuse must, as soon as possible, complete a *Suspected Child Abuse Report* (Appendix C) and submit it to the staff member in charge of the program and to the Minister.

### 2. Investigation

Upon receipt of a *Suspected Child Abuse Report*, the Minister shall ensure that an appropriate investigation commences and appropriate procedures are followed as required by North Carolina law. The process will include documenting all steps undertaken in handling the investigation.

### 3. Confidentiality

All investigations shall be conducted in as confidential a manner as is compatible with a thorough investigation of the report or allegation.

### 4. Parental Notification

If an incident has occurred on church property or during a church-sponsored event, the parents/guardians of any minor involved in any allegation of abuse shall be immediately notified by the staff member in charge of the program or the Minister.

### 5. Initial Response

Upon receipt of a *Suspected Child Abuse Report*, any individual accused of such conduct will be temporarily relieved of all duties and responsibilities involving youth or children pending an appropriate investigation.

**6. Spokesperson**

A single church leader, designated by the Session, will serve as spokesperson following notice of any alleged abuse in connection with children and youth activities. This spokesperson will be the only person to convey information concerning the situation to external audiences to avoid compromising any ongoing investigation.

**X PERIODIC STAFF/VOLUNTEER REVIEW**

All staff and volunteers will complete a renewal application every three years, on a cycle to be determined by the Session. The renewal application will contain a provision authorizing the church to conduct additional background checks.

**XI POLICY REVIEW**

The Session will ensure that the appropriate committees monitor the policy during its first year of operation and propose any modifications they deem necessary. Thereafter, the Session will review the policy regularly. The Session may modify this policy, and any modifications will be publicized in a manner to provide notice to the entire congregation of the church.

Adopted, 10/27/14

Revised, 11/23/15

## APPENDIX A

### Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers of Child and Youth Activities at FPC

1. Staff and volunteers are required to adhere to the FPC Child and Youth Protection Policy guidelines in all their interactions with children and youth. Staff and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in child abuse of any kind.
2. Staff and volunteers will respect children's rights not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable or that disregard their right to say no.
3. Staff and volunteers at FPC shall never use physical force (hitting, spanking, shaking, shoving, etc.) with any child or youth.
4. Staff and volunteers may not discipline children by failing to provide the necessities of care.
5. Physical restraint is used only in situations necessary to protect the child, other children, or staff from harm.
6. While supervising children and youth participating in FPC programs, staff and volunteers should know where participants are at all times.
7. Restroom supervision: For children under the age of eleven, the leader, volunteer, or youth volunteer should check to see that the hallway to the restroom and the restroom are safe before allowing a child to enter. They may assist any child under six in the restroom. No person may touch a person's private areas unless necessary to change a diaper or take any other therapeutic measure. They will also be responsible for safely returning children from the restroom. This policy allows privacy for the children and protection for the staff or volunteer (not being alone with a child). Parents are strongly encouraged to take their children to the restroom before the event begins.
8. Diapering and potty training should be done primarily by staff members or paid nursery personnel. Volunteers may be asked to help in certain situations and should follow posted nursery guidelines when performing diapering.
9. Staff and volunteers should be alert to the physical and emotional state of children. Any signs of injury or possible child abuse must be reported according to the FPC Child and Youth Protection Policy.
10. Staff and volunteers are not to be in situations where they are alone with children or youth. Staff and volunteers' activities with children and youth should be easily observable and accessible.
11. Consuming, using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while working or volunteering with children or youth is prohibited.
12. Being impaired by legally prescribed drugs while working or volunteering with children or youth is prohibited.
13. Possessing or using concealed weapons or firearms while working or volunteering with children or youth is prohibited.
14. Smoking or use of tobacco *in the presence of* children, youth, or parents while working or volunteering is prohibited.
15. Staff and volunteers should not release children to any adult or family member, including older siblings, other than the child's parent/guardian unless prior verbal or written permission has been obtained from the parent.
16. Profanity, inappropriate jokes and media, sharing intimate details of one's personal life, and any kind of harassment in the presence of children, youth, or parents/guardians are prohibited.



17. Staff and volunteers will be mindful of the appropriate and inappropriate uses of portable electronic devices by children and youth during church-sponsored activities and events.
18. Staff and volunteer adult and youth leaders shall wear appropriate dress when volunteering with children and/or youth.
19. Movies used in all church settings shall meet the voluntary movie rating system guidelines established by the Motion Picture Association of America for age-appropriate content.
20. Staff and volunteers may not date or be romantically involved with program participants or church members who are younger than 18 years of age.
21. Staff and volunteers are required to read, sign, and adhere to all policies related to identifying, documenting, and reporting child abuse and will attend training sessions on the subject.
22. Staff and volunteers are encouraged to raise any concerns or suspicions of any individual's inappropriate interactions with a child or youth. Except for behavior of alleged abuse, which requires completing a *Report of Suspected Child Abuse*, these concerns may be brought to the individual. If the concerns are not alleviated by a change in the individual's interactions, a follow-up discussion should take place with the Minister and with the SRC.
23. If it is necessary for a staff or volunteer to transport a child or youth before or after an event, all staff and volunteers will abide by safe driving laws when transporting children or youth. An effort should be made to contact the family and inform them of who will be driving before transporting the child or youth.
24. In the event that a one-on-one child/youth to adult scenario arises, i.e., unexpected transportation needs, confirmation mentoring, or otherwise, parent/guardian permission should be granted in writing or by phone when possible. Mentors and confirmands should meet in pairs or in public places.

By signing and dating this document, I confirm that I have read the *Child and Youth Protection Policy* of First Presbyterian Church, Durham, NC, and will adhere to its *Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers of Child and Youth Activities at FPC*.

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Volunteer Printed Name

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Volunteer Signature

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Date

Adopted, 10/27/14  
Revised, 11/23/15