

Child Protection Policy

First Presbyterian Church of Fernandina Beach

1. Introduction

First Presbyterian Church is committed to providing a safe, nurturing, and Christian environment for children and youth. First Presbyterian Church makes every effort to assure that the persons placed in positions of trust and responsibility with respect to the children and youth, entrusted to our care, are persons deserving of that trust and responsibility. This policy directs that activities involving children, youth, and adults be conducted in a manner to minimize the risk of abuse or false accusations of abuse.

2. Explanation of terms

For the purpose of this Child Protection Policy:

- "Abuse" includes, but is not limited to, directly injuring or excessively punishing a child; placing a child in a situation in which they will likely be injured or emotionally-verbally abused.
- "Sexual abuse" or "sexual misconduct" includes, but is not limited to, any contact or interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult person or of a third person. The behavior may or may not involve touching. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered forced whether or not consented to by the child.
- "Employee" is a comprehensive term used to cover individuals who are hired or called to work for the church for salary or wages.
- "Volunteer" is a term used for those who provide services (for the church) and who receive no benefit or remuneration.
- "Program Staff member" is the term used for non-ordained employees responsible for the education, music, and youth programs of First Presbyterian Church.
- "Supervision" includes direct observation or control of activities and may include open doors.
- Direct contact is defined as anytime an adult is supervising or instructing a youth member.
- "Youth members" fifth grade and below shall be considered children. Sixth through twelfth grades shall be considered youth.

3. Volunteer screening

Volunteer requirements

- Volunteers will have been attending the church for six months and be known to the staff.
- Volunteers will complete an application providing all required information.
- A background check screening through a registered sexual offender database will be required for all positions involving direct contact with children or youth.

1. A background check may not be required for members in good standing in another local Christian church, upon a written recommendation from their Pastor.
2. After having submitted a volunteer application and before its approval, parents of a child in a church program may volunteer for positions not involving direct contact with children or youth.
3. Any person convicted of a crime of violence will not be allowed direct contact with children or youth.
4. Any person convicted of a sex related crime will not be allowed direct contact with children or youth.

Screening

- The Pastoral Staff will receive and review all volunteer applications and will conduct a good faith evaluation of each candidate.
- All information gathered from the volunteer questionnaires and related background checks will be held in strict confidence by the church in a confidential file.
- The Pastoral Staff will keep and maintain a list of approved volunteers.
- A list of approved volunteers will be available in the church office.

Appeal

- Any person having submitted a volunteer application who feels an error has been made in its evaluation may request a follow up background check.

4. Transportation policies

Driver requirements

- When children or youth are transported by an employee or volunteer, for church activities, all drivers must be 25 years of age and less than 70 years of age and have proof of a valid driver's license appropriate for the vehicle to be driven and insurance.
- Youth are not to transport other youth from any church sponsored activities without prior written or verbal permission from their parent and from the parent of the youth that will be transported. Such permission is not required in the case of siblings.
- Drivers should have a valid, unrestricted driver's license and a good driving record for the past three years (not at fault accidents; no convictions for reckless driving, driving under the influence, leaving the scene of an accident or other similarly serious offense; and no more than one moving violation).
- One seat belt should be provided for and used by each passenger.
- No one should ride in the back of a pick up truck.
- Motorcycles should not be used.

Permissions

- Parents will provide in writing a list of persons who may pick up any child under the age of ten.
- Parents will provide in writing permission for their children to attend any off-site activities.

5. Standards of Conduct

- Two Person Rule: Employees and volunteers working with children and youth shall work in pairs to the fullest extent possible. If a volunteer or employee is working alone, there must be visual access to the meeting space (open door or windowed door).
- Common expressions of affection (hugs), affirmation (pats on the back), support (prayer), or physical care taking (changing diapers, etc.) are appropriate in this community of caring Christians. Care must be taken, however, that physical expressions of affection are not inappropriate or imposed upon a non-receptive individual.

Bathroom Procedures:

- Infant, Toddler, 2 year olds, 3 year olds:
 1. Diapering should be done in diaper stations and in the close proximity to other care providers; bathroom doors must remain open.
- 2 and 3 year olds:
 2. Bathroom doors should remain open in bathrooms with stalls; child may require assistance.
- 4 and 5 year olds:
 1. Permission granted to use facility; bathroom doors should remain open in bathrooms with stalls; child may require assistance.
- Kindergarten through 5th grade:
 1. Permission granted to use facility unless special help is required.

Sleepover Procedures:

- All sleepovers must be approved by the appropriate committees or staff.
- Employees and volunteers must have information for each participant including where parents can be reached during the sleepover.
- The Two Person Rule must be followed. A minimum of one adult for every ten students will be required for sleepovers.
- Boys and girls must sleep in separate rooms (or areas) properly supervised by same gender leaders.

Shower Procedures:

- Leaders of the same gender will inspect shower facilities prior to use.
- Adults will use shower facilities privately.

Child Care

- There must be one adult for every four children under two years of age, and at least one adult for every eight children over two years of age.

6. Accountability

- Each Program Staff member is responsible for enforcing the Child Protection Policy as it pertains to his or her program area. The Director of Community Life or Christian Education Committee shall guide volunteers should questions arise regarding this policy.

- All employees and volunteers who work with children and youth shall be required to sign this policy, acknowledging that they have read this policy and agree to abide by it.

7. Reporting Procedures-Allegations of Misconduct:

- A person who has reason to believe that misconduct governed by this policy has occurred shall immediately report such information to a member of the Pastoral Staff. It is First Presbyterian's policy to report all allegations of abuse of children to the Sexual Abuse Hot Line, as required by law.
- By law, reports of abuse are strictly confidential. First Presbyterian Church will cooperate fully with government authorities in the investigation of allegations of child sexual abuse.

I have read this policy and agree to abide by this policy.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please print name: _____

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Adopted by the Session of First Presbyterian Church, Fernandina Beach, FL January 2008

VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

*“Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.”
Matthew 18:3-6*

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

DATE OF BIRTH: (M)____ (D)____ (Y)____

HOME PHONE: _____ Email: _____

DO YOU USE ILLEGAL DRUGS? YES __ NO __

HAVE YOU BEEN CONVICTED OF A CRIME OF VIOLENCE? YES __ NO __

HAVE YOU BEEN CONVICTED OF SEX RELATED CRIME? YES __ NO __

IS THERE ANY FACT OR CIRCUMSTANCE INVOLVING YOU OR YOUR BACKGROUND THAT WOULD CALL INTO QUESTION YOUR BEING ENTRUSTED WITH THE SUPERVISION, GUIDANCE, AND CARE OF YOUNG PEOPLE?

YES __ NO __

IF YOU ARE VOLUNTEERING TO TRANSPORT CHILDREN OR YOUTH ON A CHURCH SANCTIONED EVENT, PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING:

DO YOU HAVE A VALID DRIVER LICENSE? YES __ NO __

DRIVER'S LICENSE NUMBER: _____ S TATE _____

IS YOUR AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE CURRENT? YES __ NO __ CARRIER: _____

HAVE YOU HAD A MOVING VIOLATION WITHIN THE LAST 3 YEARS? YES __ NO __

HAVE YOU BEEN CONVICTED OF A TRAFFIC RELATED CRIME? YES __ NO __

APPLICANT'S STATEMENT

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. Should my application be accepted, I agree to a level one background check and to be bound by the policies and standards of First Presbyterian Church, refraining from any physical punishment or improper sexual conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of the church.

Applicant's signature _____

Date: _____

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