

Safe Place Child Protection Policy
of Second Presbyterian Church
Roanoke, VA
Finding direction by following Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

Second Presbyterian Church is committed to creating a worship and work community in which members, friends, staff, and volunteers can worship and work together in an atmosphere free of all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. To create and maintain the most secure environment for children and youth in our care, several procedural and leadership selection policies have been put in place. These policies and procedures include, but are not limited to, recommendations and review by the Session and Staff of the church, background check, and screenings. In addition to these, the church requires a training component for that leadership selection.

LEADERSHIP SELECTION

Second Presbyterian Church takes great pride in the quality of our adult leadership. Being a leader is a privilege, not a right. The quality of the program and the safety of our children and youth members call for high-quality adult leaders. The staff works closely with the Nominating Committee and the Session to help identify and call the best possible leaders for the church.

The leader application requests background information that shall be checked by the Executive Pastor, the Associate Pastor for Youth & Young Adults, or the Church Administrator before accepting an applicant for leadership.

Individual volunteers will not be considered for children and youth work until they have been associated with this church or have been church members for more than six (6) months. If an individual volunteer is not a member, but has been associated with the church for at least six (6) months, he or she must also provide a church member to serve as a reference for their character and gifts for work with children and youth.

PROCEDURES FOR SCREENING

Staff and volunteers working with children between the ages of birth and 18 years of age will be asked to complete a "Volunteer Application" for any work with children and youth. In addition to the application, all staff and volunteers will sign a statement that they have had no prior conviction for child molestation or abuse of any kind. All individuals must also agree to a police "criminal history" – "sex offender and crimes against minors" records check. Individuals may be required to provide personal and/or professional references to determine suitability for work with minors. Existing staff and volunteers will receive background checks every three years.

Individuals who fail to agree with any of the above criteria will not be considered for ministry to children and youth. There are no exceptions to this policy.

REQUIRED TRAINING

Child and Youth Protection training is required of all volunteers working with children and youth at any level. It will be offered under the supervision of the Executive Pastor for volunteers and paid staff working with children from birth through fifth grade. Training will be offered under the supervision of the Associate Pastor for Youth & Young Adults for volunteers working with youth between sixth grade and age 18.

Child and Youth Protection training must be taken by volunteers. It will be offered online and applicants will be asked to complete a quiz, showing they have completed the course.

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

The Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church (USA), at G-4.0302, "Mandatory Reporting," requires the following of Teaching Elders (ministers of the Word and Sacrament), Ruling Elders, and Christian educators:

Any member of this church engaged in ordered ministry and any certified Christian educator employed by this church or 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 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 a risk of future physical harm or abuse.

All persons involved in the delivery of programs to children and youth shall report knowledge of abuse to the Senior Pastor, the Executive Pastor, the Associate Pastor for Youth & Young Adults, or the Church Business Administrator. That individual will be responsible for notifying the appropriate church and civil authorities as dictated by the Book of Order and state law. Any good-faith suspicion or belief that any child is or has been physically or sexually abused, physically or emotionally neglected, exposed to any form of violence or threat, exposed to any form of sexual exploitation, including the possession, manufacture, or distribution of child pornography, online solicitation, enticement, or showing of obscene material should be reported immediately. You may not abdicate this reporting responsibility to any other person.

The Rules of Discipline of the Book of Order provide detailed procedures to be followed in the case of allegations of abuse or sexual misconduct. In the case of a Teaching Elder (Minister of the Word and Sacrament) such allegations shall be reported to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery through the Clerk of Session. In all other cases involving elders, members, or employees, the Moderator and the Clerk of Session should contact the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery for advice and guidance. See also Second Presbyterian Church's Sexual Misconduct Policy.

BARRIERS TO ABUSE

Second Presbyterian Church has adopted the following policies to provide additional security for our members. These policies are in place for the protection of our youth members and to protect our adult leaders from false accusations of abuse.

- **Two-deep leadership is required for all church programs, on- and off-site.** Two approved adult leaders or one approved leader and a parent of a participant, or other adult, one of whom must be 21 years of age or older, are required for all church programs on all trips and outings. The church is responsible for ensuring that sufficient leadership is provided for all activities. Appropriate adult leadership must be present for all overnight church activities; coed overnight activities require male and female adult leaders.
- **One-on-one contact between adults and children or youth is prohibited.** In situations that require personal conferences or counseling, the meeting is to be conducted in view of other adults and youths, or in a public place.
- **Excluding special exceptions requested for specific youth mission trips, separate accommodations for adults and youth are required.** No child or youth is permitted to sleep in the room of an adult other than his or her own parent or guardian.
- **Privacy of youth is respected.** Adult leaders must respect the privacy of youth members in situations such as changing clothes and taking showers, intruding only to the extent that health and safety require. Adults must protect their own privacy in similar situations, and ensure that other children and youth respect the privacy of their peers.
- **Inappropriate use of cameras, imaging, and digital devices is prohibited.** While most people use cameras and other imaging devices responsibly, it has become very easy to invade the privacy of individuals. It is inappropriate to use any device capable of recording or transmitting visual images in shower houses, restrooms, or other areas where privacy is expected by participants.
- **No hazing.** Physical hazing and initiations are prohibited and may not be included as part of any church activity.
- **No bullying.** Verbal, physical, and cyber bullying are prohibited.
- **Youth leadership is monitored by adult leaders.** Adult leaders must monitor and guide the leadership techniques used by youth leaders working with children or other youth and ensure that policies are followed.
- **Discipline must be constructive.** Discipline used should be constructive and reflect the values of the church. Corporal punishment is never permitted.
- **Appropriate attire for all activities.** Proper clothing for activities is required.
- **Leaders are responsible to enforce Safe Place Protection policies.** The adult leaders are responsible for monitoring the behavior of children and youth, and interceding when necessary. Parents of members who misbehave should be informed and asked for assistance. Any violations of the Safe Place Protection policies must immediately be reported to the Senior Pastor, the Executive Pastor, the Associate Pastor for Youth & Young Adults, or the Church Business Administrator.

APPENDICES

1. Volunteer Application.
2. Incident Report Form.
3. Important Notes for Child Protection Training.

APPENDIX 1

**Second Presbyterian Church, Roanoke, VA
Volunteer Application**

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

Daytime Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

How long have you been a member of Second Presbyterian? _____

Occupation (if employed): _____

Employer (if applicable): _____

Current and/or previous job responsibilities: _____

Previous volunteer experience:

Special interest, hobbies and skills: _____

Can you make a commitment to this volunteer role? _____

Why would you like to volunteer as a worker with children and/or youth?

What qualities do you have that would help you work with children and/or youth?

Have you ever been convicted of a crime involving children or youth? _____

Reference(s): Non-member volunteers, please list at least one personal reference from Second Presbyterian Church (people who are not related to you by blood or marriage), and provide contact information.

1. Name: _____

Address or Phone: _____

Relationship to Applicant: _____

Signature: _____

APPENDIX 2

**Second Presbyterian Church, Roanoke, VA
Incident Report Form**

Date of Incident: _____

Time of Incident: _____

Name of child/youth involved: _____

(A separate form should be completed for each child involved in order to keep the information confidential.)

Address of child/youth: _____

Phone number of child/youth: _____

Name of parent/guardian: _____

Location of incident: _____

Name of person(s) who witnessed the incident:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Please describe the incident as seen/heard and actions taken:

Any additional relevant information, please document:

Signature of person completing this form

Date

(Upon completion of this form, immediate contact should be made with the Executive Pastor, the Associate Pastor for Youth & Young Adults, and/or the Senior Pastor.)

This form should be given to staff member responsible for the program and should be filed with the Church Administrator. [This form may be used to report any suspicion of abuse as well as an accident.]

APPENDIX 3

Notes for Training:

These practices will be followed in an effort to prevent any child abuse from occurring:

- Online Training: All staff and volunteers working with children under the age of 18 will be asked to complete an online training course. **By signing this form, you acknowledge that you have completed the online training.**
- In Person Training: Periodically, in person training will be offered and may take the place of online training, or be offered in addition to online training. An example of such training is the “Children First: Child Abuse Prevention” program offered by Children’s Trust.
- Maintain the “two adult” rule: Two adult workers must be present during all church activities involving one or more minors. Every effort should be made for both adults to remain present during all activities. In addition to the two-deep leadership for any overnight activity leadership should be representative of the group. (If the activity is co-ed then the leadership should be also.)
 - While recognizing that some meetings, such as those between prospective confirmands and their mentors, may be enhanced by private conversation, it is recommended that these conversations take place within sight of others (pairs of people scattered in a room, or in a public place).
- Approve overnight chaperones: All chaperones for overnight activities must be approved in advance by the responsible staff person and be in compliance with this policy.
- Return children to parents: A system will be engaged to assure that only the parents or their assigns are able to claim young children from the nursery or church school classes for children under the third grade.
- Report suspicious behavior: Any inappropriate conduct or relationships between adult workers and children or members of youth groups must be reported immediately in accordance with the reporting procedures outlined below.

Reporting Obligations:

- An effective reporting system is essential to prevent child abuse. Those likely to harm children are less likely to remain in a church where workers are trained to spot symptoms of child abuse and report suspicious activities to church authorities. Similarly, church staff should take all reports seriously and treat each with care and discretion.
- Pursuant to this policy, any staff member, worker (paid or volunteer), teacher, aid, or other adult participant in any Second Presbyterian sponsored program involving children or youth must report any incident, activity, behavior or evidence noticed that reasonably appears to indicate that child abuse has occurred or may occur in any program associated with Second Presbyterian Church. Persons making reports will not be identified, without their permission,

except as necessary in connection with any potential or pending legal action or criminal investigation.

- Reports should be made to the Senior Pastor, the Executive Pastor, the Associate Pastor for Youth & Young Adults, or the Church Business Administrator. The Pastor will be responsible for notifying the appropriate authorities as dictated by the Session and the Book of Order.

Response to Allegations

Once a report has been received, the Senior Pastor or Executive Pastor will convene a Response Team.

The Response Team will:

- Notify the parents of the child or children involved. In the instance when a parent may be involved in the abuse of a child, notify appropriate civil authorities for direction.
- Select a spokesperson to handle inquiries in a discrete, informed and diplomatic way.
- Document all matters related to the reported incident and accumulate all files related to the hiring or selection of the worker(s) involved.
- Report the incident to legal counsel and to our insurance carrier, if indicated.
- Contact the appropriate civil authorities, if indicated, under the advice of legal counsel and insurance carrier and in accordance with the Book of Order of PC(USA).

If a report of child abuse is made, it is essential that everyone involved handle the matter as promptly, thoroughly and discretely as possible. The following guiding principles will apply:

- All allegations will be taken seriously.
- Each report will be handled forthrightly with due respect for privacy and confidentiality.
- The victim will be cared for and not held responsible in any way.
- Full cooperation will be given to church and civil authorities under the guidance of legal counsel and in accordance with the Book of Order of PCUSA.

Both the victim and the accused will be treated fairly and with dignity. The care and safety of the child is the first priority. The accused should not be confronted until the child's safety has been ensured. As soon as a report is made, the accused should be temporarily removed from his or her duties with minors pending resolution of the matter. Paid workers may be suspended with or without pay.

This policy is intended to assure families and those working with children and youth in our programs that we will not tolerate child abuse in our church in any form, physical, emotional, spiritual, or sexual. Effective prevention will reduce the risk of harm to our children and the threat of legal liability for our church and its leaders. We hope that these guidelines will assure a safe, loving, and welcoming experience for all children and youth attending Second Presbyterian Church, and will reflect the spirit of the ministry of Jesus Christ.