

# Child and Youth Safety Policy

Children's Education Ministry Group

Updated February 2017

## I. Introduction

- A. The purpose of the Children's and Youth Ministries at Trinity Presbyterian Church (the Church) is to foster the Christian growth and discipleship of all minors through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. It is the policy of the Church that those age groups should receive the maximum spiritual, physical and emotional protection available within reasonable and feasible means. To that end, the Church wishes to educate its adults and to establish guidelines for the delivery of child care and ministry.
- B. The authority for this policy arises first and foremost from the authority placed upon the Church and responsibility demanded by Scripture to train up our children in the way they should go. It also arises out of the PCA Book of Church Order and from applicable federal, state and local laws.
- C. The general areas addressed by this policy include:
  1. Definition of Terms (Section II)
  2. Nursery, Preschool and Elementary Safety (Section III)
  3. Alleged Staff Sexual/Physical Child Abuse/Neglect (Section IV)
  4. Additional Youth Safety Procedures (Section V)
  5. Worker Hiring/Appointing Employees/Volunteer (Section VI)
  6. Implementation, Review and Revision (Section VII)

## II. Definition of Terms<sup>1</sup>

**Child abuse** is defined as any action (or lack of action) which endangers or harms a minor's physical, psychological or emotional health and development (or as otherwise defined under NC law).<sup>2</sup> Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- a) **Physical Abuse:** any physical injury to a minor which is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, biting, etc...
- b) **Emotional Abuse:** emotional injury occurs when the minor is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling, persistent teasing.
- c) **Sexual Abuse:** any sexual activity between a minor and an adult or between minors, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, pornography."

**Worker** shall be defined as any individual who is paid by the church on a full or part-time basis and is serving any position involving the supervision or custody of minors.

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<sup>1</sup> These definitions are drawn from the Child Protection Policy at Lookout Mountain Presbyterian Church. A public online version can be found here:

[http://lmpc.org/wpcontent/uploads/2013/10/PPP\\_Child\\_Protection\\_Policy\\_public\\_web\\_copy.pdf](http://lmpc.org/wpcontent/uploads/2013/10/PPP_Child_Protection_Policy_public_web_copy.pdf). Pg.

<sup>2</sup> C.f. Janet Mason, *Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect in North Carolina*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (UNC School of Government, 2013), 39.

**Child** shall be defined as any individual age 5<sup>th</sup> grade and under.

**Youth** shall be defined as any individual age 12<sup>th</sup> grade to 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Minor** shall be defined as any individual age 18 or under.

**Volunteer** shall be defined as any individual who is not paid by the church and is serving in any position involving the supervision or custody of minors.

## **Nursery, Preschool and Elementary Safety**

- A. Classrooms and nurseries will be kept in a generally safe and clean manner. Any worker who discovers or identifies any unsafe condition should abate or eliminate the condition immediately if possible. If elimination is not possible, or if the condition persists or returns, the worker shall remove the children from the affected area and report the matter to the Director of Children's Education (the Director), any deacon on duty, or other leader of the Church, who shall then take any reasonable steps to make the condition as safe as possible.

It is the general expectation and policy of the Church that all children placed in a classroom or under the care of a worker will follow standard immunization recommendations as outlined in the American Academy of Pediatrics "Redbook" or should be met as much as reasonably possible. In the event a child does not have those immunizations, that child's parent or legal guardian shall release the Church from any and all liability resulting from the lack of immunizations. It is the responsibility of the parent/legal guardian to notify the Church if a child is not so immunized. It is the responsibility of all parents to notify the Church if a participating child contracts any of these diseases, such as pertussis (whooping cough), chickenpox, measles, mumps, or hepatitis A.

It is the responsibility of each parent to notify his or her child's teacher, or the director, of any medical conditions, such as allergies to any food or insect bites, existing in his or her child. Teachers shall maintain a current list of all children in his or her class with such conditions or allergies, including such child's particular medical condition or allergy.

### **B. Classroom and Student Safety**

1. Any teacher, staff member, volunteer, appointee, substitute, or helper, whether paid, unpaid, permanent or temporary, is a worker. Workers' attire should encourage cleanliness and safety. Any worker whose attire creates an unsafe condition may be asked to remove the unsafe condition.

2. Each child's parent or guardian is responsible for ensuring the child's safe delivery to his/her class. If a worker discovers an unattended child at the facility without prior arrangement and the worker attempts to attend to the child's needs or otherwise assists the child, those actions shall not be considered acknowledging responsibility for the child or children by the worker or the church beyond what is necessary to attend to that immediate need.

3. Children will be directly and constantly supervised at all events and activities. The minimum number of workers at any event or activity is two. No worker is permitted to be alone with any one child at any time except in an emergency.
4. Any worker comforting upset children or disciplining children for disruptive behavior (pursuant to any permitted disciplinary action) is permitted to take children outside his/her classroom only when the worker remains within constant visual sight of any other worker. Hall monitors may be used to assist workers with these needs outside the classroom.
5. No worker shall ever hit, spank, slap, pop, strike, push, pinch, smother, sit on, stand on, or physically discipline any child at any time. No form of corporal punishment may ever be used on any child. Any worker known to have violated this section of this policy will be immediately relieved of any duties.
6. Telephones are available in most rooms within the Church building, including the nursery area, foyer, kitchen and office areas. Emergency telephone numbers will always be posted at each telephone. First-aid supplies shall be accessible in the nursery area and the Director's office.
7. In the event a child is injured or becomes ill, that child's parent or guardian, and the Director, shall be notified as soon as possible. Necessary first aid must be given or sought when any child has been hurt and is in need of medical attention. Workers should receive basic instructions on how to give first aid or on seeking appropriate medical attention. Basic First Aid instructions shall be posted in each room. If believed needed, more advanced medical attention must be sought by any available and willing medical provider. If parents or guardians can not be located, the worker or medical provider must use their best discretion in determining what medical attention is required.
8. A system of identifying each child and his or her parent will be established and implemented in each nursery and classroom through the Toddlers. Unless specifically informed to the contrary, a worker may allow parents or guardians to drop off and pick up a child without requiring parent-child identification if they know the family and have a reasonable belief that no such identification is necessary. Any parent or guardian who wishes to limit or prevent any other person's ability to have contact with or pick up any child has the duty to notify the Director or her designee of such specific request. Only assigned workers are allowed in each classroom area. Mothers needing to nurse their children and parents needing to calm upset children in kindergarten and younger may enter classrooms for those purposes only. Workers shall receive children into the classroom and shall deliver children to be picked up only by authorized persons.
9. Individual workers may take more than one child at a time for restroom breaks.. In classrooms that have restrooms, the door should be left open but at the same time should provide the maximum privacy possible. In the rooms for

children three and under, there will be columns on the clip board log for parents to check their preference for a child to have his/her diaper changed or to call the parent who will come to the room and change their child's diaper.

- C. Each parent has a duty to maintain sufficient contact with Church staff to know when any off-site activities shall be scheduled, where those activities will occur and what they may include such as travel to and from the activity, and whether participation necessitates any consideration for the child's inclusion such as any specific planning or limitations in participation. Each parent shall determine if his or her child may participate in such activities, and is responsible for determining each child's involvement in, and restrictions during, such activities.
- D. Procedures to Follow if a Minor is Missing:

The signal that a child is missing will be the use of an air horn or by an announcement over the building's phone system. If there is a deacon on duty or other church officer or staff, he or she should be notified as quickly as possible.

- 1. During Church Functions:
  - a. Deacons will lock the driveway gate.
  - b. Deacons will post a sentry at each door to see that no one leaves the building except those appointed to search for the minor.
  - c. Volunteers will be asked to search the building and grounds in a grid as follows:
    - The nursery rooms and the restroom in the nursery foyer
    - The rooms in the preschool wing
    - The hall in the preschool wing
    - The rooms upstairs
    - The office area – all offices and the copy room
    - The adult wing
    - The sanctuary
    - The rooms behind the sanctuary
    - The High School modular
    - The back parking lot and the bank areas
    - The playground area
    - The side parking lot and the bank area
    - The field in front of the church

An air horn and/or phone system announcement will be the signal that the minor is found.

The same instructions and search system will apply to Mother's Morning Out and Preschool except that the MMO Director or Preschool Director will instruct someone to lock the gate and see that all doors and exits are secured as soon as possible. She will assemble all children in room 205 and alert the church staff to assist in the searching of the building and grounds.

- E. Discipline

1. There should be posted in each classroom a set of classroom rules which state as clearly as possible what behavior is expected of each child. The following is a recommended series of disciplinary measures which may be modified to meet the needs of any individual classroom or child:
  - a. The child should be warned that the behavior is inappropriate.
  - b. The worker should place the child in time-out within the room and reaffirm appropriate behavior;
  - c. The worker should remove the child from the classroom or have the child removed by another worker or the child's parent or guardian within the guidelines of Section II. B. 8. above;
  - d. The worker should report the child's behavior to the child's parent if the parent is at the Church premises as early as possible. If not, then the report shall be made to the Director, Deacon on duty, or other staff member or Church leader. As soon as is practicably possible, the worker and Director (or other involved person) should report the child's behavior to the parent or guardian.
  
- F. Each parent and guardian is responsible to make arrangements for the child's care prior to coming onto the Church premises. A parent or guardian who brings his or her child to the Church premises without prior arrangements for care is solely and absolutely responsible for his or her child's safety and well being. Parents and guardians are to be encouraged to make prior arrangements by the posting of signs in general facility areas giving notice that Trinity Presbyterian Church is not responsible for such children's care and safety other than required by law. Parents and guardians shall give clear instructions to The Director regarding any specific needs required for proper care of his or her child.

### III. Additional Youth Safety <sup>3</sup>

#### A. Youth Supervisory Requirements

1. Meetings that regularly occur between one employee and a group of minors or a single minor (junior or senior high small groups, private music lessons, counseling, etc...) shall have written parental consent from each participant on file in the youth ministry office.
2. Trinity recognizes that one-to-one, intentional contact between employees and students is a critical part of the ministry. Therefore, employees/volunteers will be responsible to conduct these meetings in view of others adults and or minors and to report the meeting with their supervisor following the meeting. For any one-to-one meetings, there should be an open door at all times
3. *No Confidentiality*  
Employees/volunteer shall not promise confidentially to a minor. Employees/volunteers must report to the Pastor if a minor discusses harming himself or others, committing a crime or being abused.

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<sup>3</sup> The following heading (Additional Youth Safety) is adapted from the Child Protection Policy at Lookout Mountain Presbyterian Church. A public online version can be found here:  
[http://Impc.org/wpcontent/uploads/2013/10/ CPP\\_Child\\_Protection\\_Policy\\_public\\_web\\_copy.pdf](http://Impc.org/wpcontent/uploads/2013/10/ CPP_Child_Protection_Policy_public_web_copy.pdf)

4. *Digital Privacy*  
Posting any images on the internet is not allowed UNLESS permission has been granted by the parents/legal guardians and approved by your supervisor. Permission forms should be kept on file.
5. *Hazing and Bullying*  
Physical hazing and initiations are prohibited. Verbal, physical, and cyber bullying will not be tolerated.
6. *Controlled substances*  
The use of tobacco, alcohol, drugs, and mind altering substances with minors is prohibited.

## B. Physical Contact

### 1. *Permissible Contact*

Limited physical contact with minors, such as a pat on the back or on the head, or a handshake, is permissible. Brief hugs are permissible within the sight of others. Employees/volunteers must avoid any prolonged hugs and must stop a hug immediately upon request of the minor. Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms, placing an arm around the shoulders, holding hands during prayer, and high-fives are all appropriate.

### 2. *Gift giving*

Accepting and giving gifts from/to minors is permissible when appropriate (Christmas, birthday) but is discouraged as a frequent practice. Report to your supervisor any gifts you receive that seem inappropriate in nature.

### 3. *Close emotional relationships*

Employees/volunteers need to avoid developing close emotional relationships with the minors of the opposite sex and exercise extreme caution in dealing with minors of the same sex.

## C. Off-Campus and Overnight Supervision Plan

1. Overnight activities should require a signed permission statement from the parent or legal guardian.
2. There must be a minimum of two employees/volunteers participating.
3. A ratio of 1 employee/volunteer per 9 minors must be maintained.
4. There must be both male and female employees/volunteers at overnight co-ed events.
5. At same gender overnight events, there must be at least two leaders.
6. No employee or volunteer may ever sleep in the same bed as a minor.

## IV. Alleged Child Abuse, Neglect or Exploitation by Church Personnel

It is the policy of the Church that no minor be subject to, exposed to nor encouraged to perform any form of abuse, neglect, exploitation or mistreatment, whether physical, emotional, sexual or otherwise ("hereafter called "prohibited behavior").

A. Prevention

1. Classrooms - Each classroom should be arranged to make all areas of each classroom visible. Rooms not in use should be locked if possible, and should be monitored by a worker, Deacon or other adult when in use.
2. Periodic classroom/restroom monitor - The Director shall provide for a periodic hall monitor for each session of teaching. Each monitor shall personally view any assigned area's classrooms and shall also be aware of any restroom usage. Each monitor shall report any suspicious activity during such monitoring duty as required below.
3. Prevention Training in Worker Orientation - Worker training will address the subject of abuse, neglect and exploitation to stress prevention and reporting. See Section IV. D., below. Trinity also offers/requires semi-annual training from Stewards of Change: Darkness to Light. This is required for all paid childcare workers.

B. Detection and Report

1. Any person suspecting any prohibited behavior to have occurred at the church or during any church activity by any person shall immediately report such behavior to the Director, or any Nursery or Preschool or Elementary Coordinator, or any Deacon, Elder or Pastor, or any staff member.
  - 1a. Any person suspecting any abuse, neglect or exploitation to a minor under the age of 18 years within any church program to have occurred at any place other than at the church or during a church activity shall immediately report such behavior to the Director, or any Nursery or Preschool or Elementary Coordinator, or any Deacon, Elder or Pastor, or any staff member. In addition, such persons shall report the suspected behavior to the Department of Social Services in the county in which the child resides.
2. Medical treatment/first-aid - Any required medical treatment must be rendered as outlined in Section II.B.7., above.
3. Any person who observes or receives a disclosure/discovery of suspected prohibited behavior shall make sure the report is then immediately made to the director or assistant director of Children's Ministry who will relay the information to the Pastor and to a member of the Session. An investigator will be appointed by the Session at the time of the incident, and the investigator shall notify the minor's parent or guardian as soon as is possible unless the parent is the one suspected of abuse.

- a. If at any time the pastor reasonably determines that no prohibited behavior has occurred, and therefore determines that there is no cause to suspect prohibited behavior, then the investigator shall submit a written report to the Session, indicating the date, time, event, person(s) involved, the reporting person and disposition. Any additional relevant information may be added to the report. A copy of the report must be placed in the file of the reporting person, the person who was the subject of the report, and any other applicable files if any. If no file exists as to the reporting person or the subject person, the Director shall open a new file. The Church Office Manager shall keep a general file labeled "Child Safety Policy: Reported Behaviors".
- b. If the investigator believes there is cause to suspect prohibited behavior occurred, the person who is the subject of the report must be temporarily relieved of his or her duties immediately. The pastor shall notify the Church Session as soon as is possible. The pastor shall make a written report as outlined above.
- c. Any initial discovery of the event will be done in such a way that it won't impeded with an official investigation. The Session shall make or continue any investigation it deems necessary. Any evidence relevant to the investigation may be considered. A called Session meeting is not required but may be scheduled if needed. The Session shall decide if there continues to be cause to suspect that any prohibited behavior occurred. A written report by the investigating body must be submitted to the Pastor and to the Clerk of the Session.

4. Reporting Duties if cause is determined to exist

- a. The Session or the Pastor shall report the suspected behavior to appropriate legal counsel.
- b. If the abuse behavior involves a minor, and upon the advice of legal counsel, the Session shall report the suspected behavior to the Director of the Buncombe County Department of Social Services (DSS). The report must follow the legal requirements set forth in applicable statutes at the time of the potential offense.
- c. The Session, upon the advice of legal counsel, also shall report the suspected offense to the congregation's insurance carrier if required by the policy in effect at the time the suspected behavior occurs.

- d. The person who is being investigated shall be placed on administrative leave pending the investigation and any legal proceedings. Volunteer status will be suspended. The Session has the authority to reinstate duties to the investigated person, authorize an intermediate staff hiring or continue the administrative leave for whatever reason it deems appropriate.
- e. The Session shall determine the appropriate church discipline and/or restoration according to Scripture. This may be delayed until any legal proceedings are completed, but the Session is not obligated to delay any discipline or restoration it deems appropriate.
- f. Any confidentiality recognized between a Pastor and a person who confides in the Pastor must be respected. Any legally required reporting duties shall be followed by the Pastor.
- g. Contact with any form of media or reporters shall be limited to those chosen at the pastor's discretion.

## **V. Worker/Volunteer Hiring/Appointing**

### **A. Worker Hiring/Appointing Procedures**

1. Each paid worker who serves as an employee of the children's or youth ministry shall complete an application. No application is required for workers who have already served the children's ministry in any capacity at the time this policy is implemented, but a memorandum of prior involvement shall be placed in the worker's file. An application is not required for guest speakers, visiting ministries, other church's performers, and the like. A volunteer applicant should be a member of the church and may be required to complete an application at the Director's discretion.
2. Each application shall state at least two (2) references enabling church leadership to check the applicant's prior work, social or church experience. The application shall notify the applicant that an examination of prior work, social and church experience may be made, including any applicable criminal histories.
3. Each applicant shall be given opportunity to review the church policy.
4. If the applicant is new or unknown to church leadership, the Director or his/her appointee shall conduct a personal interview of the applicant. The purpose of the interview is to acquire information about the applicant, his or her background, experience, motive, potential and goals in joining the children's ministry. The interviewer shall make a written report to be filed in the applicant's file.

5. The Director or his/her appointee shall conduct a background or criminal examination of each applicant, using any available and reasonable means. Recommended areas of examination include courthouse records, law enforcement departments, any local, state or national reporting agencies, or private investigations of the applicant's prior residences, prior employers, prior churches, or other known or learned contacts. Criminal Background checks will be revised every 3-5 years for anyone who has consistently worked in Ministry who is 18 or older, whether paid or volunteer. The session reserves the right to do a check on anyone at any time.
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- B. Age Requirements - Any worker taking part in the children's ministry as a lead teacher shall be twenty-one years old (18 years old with the approval of the Children's Ministry Director or the Ministry Group) or over unless supervised directly and consistently by an adult who has been hired or appointed according to the requirements set forth above. Any variance from this requirement may be made with the Session's approval upon the C. E. Committee's (Committee's) recommendation.
  - C. Membership Status - Any volunteer worker taking part in the children's or youth ministry (nursery, Sunday School, worship, mid-week activities) shall be a member of Trinity Presbyterian Church for a period of six-months or more. The exception shall be regular attendees who are supervised by a member and approved by the Children's Ministry Director, Youth Minister or the Ministry Group.
    1. For any reason, the Director may ask for the Session's direct involvement in the hiring process, either continually or on any given case. The Session may intervene as it deems necessary.
    2. The Child Care Director shall have the discretion of hiring for Mother's Morning Out and Women in the Church or any child care situation.
    3. At least one of the adult supervisors at any event, Sunday school class, etc. should have submitted to a screening process and background check. No supervision of minors should consist **only** of volunteers that have not been screened.
  - D. Training Requirements - Each worker involved in the children's ministry should attend an annual orientation session which reviews the Child Safety Policy. Each worker must sign a statement that he or she has read the policy, understands it, and has had opportunity to ask any questions regarding the policy.
  - E. Worker Supervision - Each worker shall have an available supervisor appointed by the Director. Resources on medical assistance, safety and abuse prevention shall be made available on an as-needed basis.

- F. File kept on each worker - The Office Manager shall keep a permanent personnel file on each paid worker. All documents used in the hiring/appointing process, primarily consisting of the criminal record check made by the Director, the worker's application and any references, shall be kept in the paid worker's file. The Director shall keep a record of all volunteer workers, including primarily the criminal record check. Though not required, a checklist or other evidence of hiring/appointing considerations may be made. Prudent measures shall be taken to assure the confidentiality of any information gathered at any stage of the hiring/appointing process. During the hiring/appointing process, only permanent church staff, the Director, the Director's appointee, and other persons involved in the hiring/appointing process may have access to workers' files only for legitimate reasons dealing with the hiring or appointing process. No person except the Director, the Director's appointee, the Session, or the Session's appointee, and then only for compelling reasons or with the consent of the worker, may have access to any worker's file at any other time. During the entire course of any investigation pursuant to a reported incident of prohibited behavior, the worker's file shall be held under lock and key by the Director or the Session. All reports or records of investigated incidents shall be kept in the subject worker's personnel file. At all other times, workers' files shall be kept under lock and key.

## **VI. Motor Vehicles**

At least one adult accompanying children in any motor vehicle used on any church related activity should check to see that each child has buckled his or her seatbelt or other proper restraining device made for that purpose. This should be done prior to vehicle movement. Each Church-owned vehicle used regularly in transporting children on church related activities must have a fixed sign or placard reminding all passengers to remain properly restrained during vehicle movement and reminding adults accompanying children to have the children fasten their seatbelts or restraining devices. Two adults in any transportation situation is preferred. If there is only one adult, there may never be less than two children present in the vehicle.

## **VII. Implementation, Review and Revision**

The Directors of youth ministry, children's ministry and the pastors shall see that the provisions of this policy are implemented. The Directors may delegate implementing portions of this policy to Coordinators or other capable assistants. It shall be the duty of the Committee or its successor to review this policy at least bi-annually. This policy may be revised at any time. Any changes in church policy, authoritative law or experience shall be considered in revising this policy. All revisions shall be approved by the Session.