

CHILD, YOUTH, VOLUNTEER AND STAFF  
PROTECTION POLICY

Central Presbyterian Church  
Summit, New Jersey

*Adopted by Session on November 10, 2014*

## **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

Our congregation's purpose for establishing this Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth.

We are committed to maintaining a safe environment in which children and youth are protected from inappropriate treatment of any kind. Our intent is to protect children and youth in all church programs, to educate all workers and caregivers concerning pertinent issues, and to protect staff, volunteers, and the church itself, from potential allegations of abuse and neglect.

## **OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR COMPENSATED STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

The following guidelines apply to all individuals, including compensated staff, volunteers, church members and visitors, who work with children or youth:

1. The Rule of Three: During any church-sponsored program, event, activity or ministry involving children and youth, there shall be no fewer than three people meeting together at any time unrelated by blood, marriage, or co-habitation. Appropriate examples include: one adult/leader with at least two children/youth or two unrelated adults/leaders with at least one child/youth. All groups, activities, and meetings involving children and youth are expected to follow: "2. The Open Door Policy" and "3. Open Door Counseling" and would meet in public places, not out of sight. For overnight activities involving youth and children there shall be at least one unrelated adult of each gender. Notwithstanding the foregoing (a) in the case of Sunday School for pre-kindergarten to 5<sup>th</sup> grade students, there shall be no fewer than two unrelated leaders –

one who is at least 18 years old present at all times with a second leader at least 12 years old and (b) in the case of Sunday School for middle school and high school students, there shall be at least one adult present at all times and best efforts shall be made to secure a second unrelated adult leader.

2. The Open Door Policy: Each room set aside for children and youth shall have a door with a window in it or a half door. Otherwise, the door shall be left open. If the door has a window, it is not to be covered.

3. Counseling Policy: At any counseling session with children or youth individuals shall abide by the Open Door Policy outlined above. Staff members and volunteers are expected to avoid to the greatest extent possible, any situation in which they would be alone and out of sight of others with a single child.

4. Release of Children: Children shall be released only to the parent, guardian, or designee of the parent/guardian as indicated on a written form. Sign-in sheets are necessary up to and including children in kindergarten through middle school.

5. Transportation: When transportation is provided by the church, written permission must be given by the parent/guardian. It is recommended that two adults, who have a valid driver's license, be present in each vehicle. Adults will oversee compliance with all seat-belt and other child safety laws.

6. Age of Workers: Except as noted in part (a) of the final sentence of "1. Two Adult Rule", persons who are working with children and youth should be at least eighteen (18) years old. Persons who are under 18 years of age shall serve only to

assist with children`s activities and must be supervised by two unrelated adults. Additionally, there must be a five year age difference between any compensated staff member or volunteer and the children or youth with whom they are working (for example, high school volunteer leaders should be at least 23 years old – 5 years older than the oldest high school youth).

7. Reporting Abuse/Neglect: Any behavior by an adult that violates the church`s policy and procedures shall immediately be acted upon according to the Procedures for Reporting Abuse or Neglect as outlined on page 6 of this document by the other adult present, to ensure the safety of the child or youth. Inappropriate treatment shall be immediately reported to the church staff member who is responsible for the program or activity, who shall thereafter consult with the pastor, head of staff or designee.

8. Attendance Records: To verify that the church is holding to this policy, a record of supervising adults is to be recorded at each program or event.

### **SELECTION OF CHILD AND YOUTH WORKERS**

1. Persons who have been members of Central Presbyterian Church for at least six (6) months are eligible to volunteer to work with children and youth. Parents of children who are enrolled in the church programs may volunteer sooner than six months with the approval of the appropriate committee. Non-members who have been active and regular participants of the church for at least six (6) months may volunteer with the approval of the appropriate committee.

2. Compensated staff and volunteers with ongoing, direct contact with children are required to complete the following, which will be kept confidential:

- a. An application form that requests their Social Security Number;
- b. A list of two personal references, not related to the applicant;
- c. An authorization and release authorizing the conduct of a criminal record/background check;
- d. A personal interview; and
- e. An orientation/policy training session.

3. A designated person or persons on the staff shall be responsible for reviewing the applications, processing the criminal record/background checks, and checking the Megan's Law and other child safety databases. The program staff member supervising the volunteer will conduct the personal interviews and verify the references.

4. Adults who have been convicted of any offense involving a child or youth will not be accepted to work or volunteer in any church sponsored program, event, activity, or ministry, without the express approval of the Session and in consideration of special facts and circumstances.

5. The performance of a criminal record/background check will be mandatory for all compensated staff and volunteers who will be expected to have on-going, direct contact with children or youth. Volunteers will also be required to complete a Background Check once every four years. Those who do not undergo a criminal record/background check may assist with children or youth only under the supervision of another adult who has successfully completed the application process, been approved

to work with youth and children and completed the training program (as outlined in paragraph 2 on page 4).

6. Mentors for the Confirmation program are to be chosen and supervised by the parents of the confirmands and do not fall under this policy. However, parents and mentors will receive copies of the policy and mentors are encouraged to attend the policy training.

### **PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING ABUSE OR NEGLECT**

1. Any person who suspects, believes, or witnesses the inappropriate treatment of a child or youth shall report the incident to the church staff member who is responsible for the program or activity, who shall thereafter consult with the pastor, head of staff or designee. If there is reasonable cause to suspect that abuse or neglect has occurred, the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) shall be contacted at (609) 292-6448. Such action is in compliance with G-4.0302 of the Form of Government of the Presbyterian Church (USA), which requires any member in an ordered ministry (elders, deacons, and clergy) or certified Christian educator to report abuse or neglect. .

2. Once DYFS has been contacted, the church's insurance carrier should also be notified.

3. If the alleged abuse happened during a program sponsored by the church, the family of the child or youth shall also be notified immediately of the alleged inappropriate treatment.

4. If the person accused of the inappropriate treatment is a staff member or volunteer in a church program, that person shall be removed from any position involving contact with minors until the completion of the formal investigation. All details of the investigation will remain confidential until a conclusion is reached. All investigations will afford reasonable due process as determined by the Session.

#### **CHURCH STAFF, VOLUNTEERS, SESSION, DEACON AND CONGREGATION EDUCATION**

The church will provide periodic Child Protection Policy education training programs to insure that all members of the church staff, all volunteers serving youth/children, all members of session, all deacons and any congregation members, or adult non-members participating in church programs, including parents, and youth and children of appropriate age, may be fully informed concerning the Policy guidelines and regulations. Parents/family members will be offered age appropriate materials and information to share with their children.

This program will be offered as often as needed to insure that Child Protection Policy education training is made available to all, and may include annual review training. This training will include, but not be limited to the following:

1. An overview of the church's Child Protection Policy, and discussion of how the policy will affect the participants.
2. A discussion of the definition of child abuse and neglect.
3. An overview of the federal, state and local laws governing reporting of child abuse and neglect.
4. An overview of the church's insurance coverage requirements concerning child abuse and neglect.

## Appendix I

1. For purposes of the Child, Youth, Volunteer and Staff Protection Policy, the terms children and youth are deemed to describe anyone under the age of consent (18-yearsold). Vulnerable Adults are deemed to describe any adults with diminished capacity to make informed consent. The term “child” is used to describe anyone falling under this definition.
2. Types of Child Abuse are described as:
  - A. *Physical Abuse*, in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to a child. Examples may include violent battery with a weapon or object, burning, shaking, kicking, choking, or breaking of bones.
  - B. *Emotional Abuse*, in which a person exposes a child to spoken and/or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty. Examples are sending a message to the child of worthlessness, badness, of being unloved and being undeserving of love and care.
  - C. *Neglect*, in which a person endangers a child’s health, safety or welfare through negligence. Neglect may include withholding food, clothing, medical care, education or affection.
  - D. *Sexual Abuse*, in which sexual contact between a child and adult (or another older and more powerful youth) occurs. It is implied that a child is never truly capable of consenting to or resisting such contact or sexual acts. Examples include fondling, oral, genital and anal penetration, intercourse, forcible rape, incest, and the exploitation of and exposure to child pornography or prostitution.
  - E. *Ritual Abuse*, in which physical, sexual or psychological violations of a child are inflicted regularly, intentionally and in a stylized way by a person or persons responsible for the welfare of the child. Abusers may appeal to a higher authority or power to justify the abuse.
3. Indicators of Child Abuse and Neglect are described as:
  - A. Physical Abuse:
    1. Hostile and aggressive behavior toward others
    2. Fear of parents or other adults
    3. Destructive behavior toward self, others and/or property
    4. Inexplicable fractures, lacerations, bruises, or injuries inappropriate for a child’s developmental stage
    5. Burns, facial injuries, pattern of repetitious injury



- B. Emotional Abuse:
  - 1. Severe depression or withdrawal
  - 2. Severe lack of self esteem
  - 3. Failure to thrive
  - 4. Threats or attempts to commit suicide
  - 5. Going to extreme measures to seek adult approval
  - 6. Extreme passive/aggressive behavior patterns
  
- C. Neglect:
  - 1. Failure to thrive
  - 2. Pattern of inappropriate dress for climate
  - 3. Beggars or steals food, chronic hunger
  - 4. Depression
  - 5. Untreated medical condition
  - 6. Poor hygiene
  
- D. Sexual Abuse:
  - 1. Unusually advanced sexual knowledge and/or behavior for a child's age and developmental stage
  - 2. Depression
  - 3. Promiscuous behavior
  - 4. Runs away from home and refuses to return
  - 5. Difficulty walking or sitting
  - 6. Bruised/bleeding vaginal or anal area
  - 7. Frequent headaches, stomachaches, extreme fatigue
  - 8. Presence of sexually transmitted diseases
  
- E. Ritual Abuse:
  - 1. Disruption of memory or consciousness
  - 2. Unexplained mistrust and mood swings
  - 3. Flashbacks
  - 4. Eating disorders
  - 5. Fear of the dark (sundown, full moon)
  - 6. Agitation or despair that seems to occur in cycles
  - 7. Fear of ministers, priests or others wearing robes or uniforms
  - 8. Onset of nightmares or sleep disorders
  - 9. Any of the symptoms of Sexual Abuse

Definitions and Indicators taken from *Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in Church*, by Joy Thornburg Melton, with permission.