

CHILD and YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY SUMMARY

Psalm 27:4-5

One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple. For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock.

At the First Presbyterian Church of Charlotte, (FPC) we take very seriously our moral and legal responsibility to provide a safe sanctuary for Children and Youth and support for those who work with them. This is an expression of our faith as we seek to proclaim the good news that we know in Jesus Christ and work for Him in the heart of Charlotte and beyond.

We believe that parents, volunteers, and employees prefer a church with an established, caring protection program. Therefore, FPC commits to provide a safe environment and affirms the rights of children and youth and adults to be protected from inappropriate treatment whether through neglect, sexual, physical, or emotional abuse.

This policy applies to:

All employees and volunteers working with Children and Youth ages 18 and under.

This policy is intended to:

- Create a safe environment for Children and Youth
- Protect Children and Youth from neglect, physical, sexual, emotional, and spiritual abuse
- Protect employees and volunteers from unwarranted allegations of child abuse
- Educate employees and volunteers how to handle suspected abuse

Components:

Screening, Supervising, Reporting and Responding

Screening:

A criminal background and sex offender registry check will be performed on all employees and volunteers. Those driving children in personal or church vehicles will also have a driver's license check.

Supervising:

Two-Adult Rule:

At least two adults must be present with children at all times and remain in sight of one another except in emergency situations.

- On overnight trips there should be a 1:6 ratio of adults to children
- Gender balance is required for overnight trips
- A married couple counts as one person

Open Door Rule:

Doors to rooms in which children are present are to remain open or windows in them be uncovered if doors need to be closed.

Training:

Any person working with Children or Youth must complete training every three years and sign a Recombitment Form every year. Goals of Training are to:

- State the theological basis for the policy
- Raise awareness of the danger of child abuse
- Establish common set of guidelines for the entire community
- Develop tools for safe ministry

Reporting Allegations of Suspected Abuse:

- The safety and security of children and youth are to be safeguarded before the accused person is confronted or other steps taken.
- Each employee and volunteer is required to document in writing any witnessed or suspected situation of alleged abuse.
- Such allegations should be reported to the Program Director and/or Business Administrator within 24 hours.

Responding to Allegations of Suspected Abuse:

- All persons shall maintain confidentiality.
- Any person accused of inappropriate treatment shall be treated with dignity and support.
- All reports will be taken seriously, but not judged prematurely.

Code of Conduct:

Employees and volunteers are expected to follow the Employee and Volunteer Code of Conduct (see reverse).

EMPLOYEE AND VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT

FPC employees and volunteers:

1. Will not verbally, emotionally, physically, or sexually abuse children or discipline children by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care. Will use physical restraint only in situations necessary to protect the children, other children, or staff from harm.
2. Will avoid situations during FPC programs in which they would be alone with a single child and cannot be observed or monitored by others. As adults supervise children, they should space themselves in a way that other adults can see them.
3. Are expected to observe the Two Adult Rule and Open Door Rule in their interaction with Children and Youth at all times except in emergency situations. Adults should only visit a child's home in the presence of a parent or legal guardian.
4. Will always use proper supervision when children are using public bathrooms such as i) ensuring no suspicious or unknown individuals are occupying the restroom before allowing children to use the facilities; ii) calling on leaders who may be "floating" from room to room to assist with restroom supervision in order to maintain the two-adult rule; iii) assuring that children will be sent in pairs, and whenever possible, with a FPC employee or volunteer who will stand in the doorway in visual sight of another adult while children are using the restroom.
5. Will respect the rights of Children and Youth not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable, and their right to say no. Adults will discourage children and youth from touching others in an inappropriate manner.
6. Should be alert to the physical and emotional state of children entering the program. Any signs of injury or possible child abuse must be reported to the Program Director who will report to the Senior Pastor or designee.
7. Should release children only to the authorized parent, guardian, or other individual.
8. Will not use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, or be impaired by legally prescribed drugs during church working hours or church-sponsored programs. Will not smoke or use tobacco during church programs.
9. Will not i) use profanity, inappropriate language, jokes, or any kind of harassment in the presence of children, youth or parents; ii) share inappropriate details of their personal life; or iii) ask Children or Youth to share inappropriate details through any form of communication: written, verbal, or electronic. FPC employees and adult volunteers may not date program participants under 18 years of age.
10. Are required to i) read, sign, and adhere to all policies related to identifying, documenting, and reporting child abuse; and ii) attend training sessions on the subject, as instructed by a supervisor.
11. Are required to report to the Senior Pastor or Associate Pastor of Administration any circumstances under this policy that might affect their ability to work with Children and Youth.