

CHILD, YOUTH, VOLUNTEER and STAFF PROTECTION POLICY

(Effective 4/23/1998; Formatting revised 08/04; Revised 8/19/2004)

**First Presbyterian Church
200 West Trade Street
Charlotte, NC 28202
(704) 332-5123**

OVERVIEW

At the First Presbyterian Church of Charlotte, we take very seriously our moral and legal responsibility to provide a safe environment 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 are committed to maintaining a safe environment for every child and young person involved in our program ministry. We believe that parents, volunteers, and staff prefer a church with an established, caring protection program. Therefore, First Presbyterian affirms the rights of children and youth to be protected from inappropriate treatment (see definition below). As well, First Presbyterian wishes to establish a clear policy and procedures that promote a safe atmosphere and assure volunteers and staff of protection from false allegations of inappropriate treatment.

This general policy and these procedures shall apply to all persons who work with children and youth in programs sponsored by this church, both on and off the church premises. This includes all persons, whether church members or visitors, compensated staff or volunteers.

The Child, Youth, Volunteer and Staff Protection Policy of the First Presbyterian Church of Charlotte includes the following:

- Overview
- Statement of Intent
- Guidelines for Workers (Compensated Staff and Volunteers)
- Selection of Child/Youth Workers and Application Form
- Orientation and Training
- Supervision and Monitoring Requirements
- Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Allegations
- Appendix (definitions)

Definition: Throughout this document “inappropriate treatment” shall refer collectively to physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, neglect and dependency.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

The Session, staff, and members of First Presbyterian Church 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 concerning pertinent issues, and to protect staff and volunteers, as well as the church, from potential allegations of abuse and neglect.

Implementation includes:

- Selection of staff, teachers, care-givers, and others involved in activities with children and youth
- Orientation and training of these individuals
- Supervision of these individuals
- Monitoring the policy and procedures to ensure compliance
- Procedures for reporting and responding to allegations

We recognize those children and youth are entrusted to the care of adults in church programs and activities, both on and off campus, and also in programs operated by others on church property. Children and youth should be free to participate in these programs and activities without intimidation, coercion, or abuse of any type. This policy is applicable to all persons, whether church members or visitors, compensated staff or volunteers.

GUIDELINES FOR WORKERS
(COMPENSATED STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS)

All children have a right to be safe. Adults have the responsibility to ensure safety. It is the responsibility of the staff and committee(s) providing the church program or activity to make certain that proper supervision is in place. The possibility of being accused of child abuse – whether true or false – is a risk each staff person and volunteer faces in working with children at First Presbyterian Church. These guidelines apply to all individuals (church members and visitors, compensated staff and volunteers) who work with children or youth.

- 1.) Persons who have been members of First 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 church programs may be cleared for volunteering before six months by the Director in charge of the program.
- 2.) Volunteers and staff who have infrequent direct contact or contact only in group settings are required to attend policy training sessions and are subject to reference checks, especially regarding their children/youth work history.
- 3.) Volunteers and staff with long-term, on-going, direct contact with children are subject to the above requirements as well as a personal interview with the program director and a criminal records check up to (including a nationwide records search, and a review of all state offenders registries). These records are considered confidential church property and are not to be released to any other party except on a need-to-know basis with the approval of the Senior Minister, the Business Administrator, or Personnel Committee.
- 4.) Adults who have been convicted of an offense involving a child or youth will not be accepted to work or volunteer in any church-sponsored activity for children or youth.
- 5.) Staff members are expected to avoid, to the greatest extent possible, any situation in which they would be alone, out of sight of others, with a single child. This is to protect: A) children from situations in which abuse might occur; and B) adults from false accusations of child abuse.
- 6.) Two adults (over age 18) will be present during on-site children/youth activities. In addition, for off-campus, out-of-town, or overnight activities or trips, there should be at least one adult for every six children or youth, with a minimum of two adults.
- 7.) Two adults need not be present for regular church school or worship service extended care if classroom doors are left open (doors with windows may be closed) and if supervisor is provided for periodic observation (e.g. staff member, superintendent, and/or Deacon).
- 8.) Camp Grier church parents are strongly encouraged to visit in the homes of the campers in the presence of a parent or legal guardian. Also, two adults should accompany the child to and from their home to the church.

- 9.) Adults are encouraged to be sensitive to the potential for abuse of children/youth and to avoid appearance of same. They should not hesitate to caution others if they observe activities or behavior, which are, or might appear to be, inappropriate.
- 10.) Workers/volunteers who observe questionable or inappropriate behavior of any kind affecting children/youth must report it to an appropriate staff member.

Selection of Child/Youth Workers

All persons, whether church members or visitors, compensated staff or volunteers, who wish to work with minors in First Presbyterian Church-sponsored programs or events must adhere to the guidelines listed in this booklet. The Personnel Committee is responsible for oversight of the policy, including application review, monitoring and enforcement.

Individuals who are already working with minors at First Presbyterian Church the time this policy is enacted can continue without providing references as long as they have been First Presbyterian members for at least two years and have worked with children/youth at the Church for at least six months.

**Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Allegations
of Physical, Sexual or Emotional Abuse, Neglect or
Dependency of a Minor Involving Church Members or
Visitors, Compensated Staff or Volunteers**

The procedure set forth below shall be carried out in the event of an incident or allegation of inappropriate treatment, including physical, sexual or emotional abuse, neglect or dependency.

- 1.) The person who suspects or witnesses Inappropriate Treatment of a child shall report the incident immediately to the chairperson of the division with responsibility for the program/activity (hereafter referred to as the “Chairperson”).
- 2.) Within twenty-four hours of the incident, the person who suspects or witnesses the Inappropriate Treatment shall document in writing all known facts and circumstances regarding the incident and shall deliver to the Chairperson, written documentation of the Inappropriate Treatment.
- 3.) The Chairperson shall notify the Senior Minister (or the Senior Minister’s designee) within twenty-four hours of the incident.
- 4.) Together with the Chairperson and Senior Minister or designee, the person who suspects or witnesses the Inappropriate Treatment shall make a telephone report to the Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services (336-CARE) as soon as possible and at least within twenty-four hours of the incident.
- 5.) The Senior Minister or designee shall document all steps taken in the course of handling the reported incident.
- 6.) The church will be supportive of individuals who make reports in good faith regarding actual or reasonably suspected cases of Inappropriate Treatment. All reports will be considered seriously, but not judged prematurely.
- 7.) The investigation of the alleged Inappropriate Treatment shall be conducted by the Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services or other appropriate public authorities rather than by church personnel.
- 8.) Contact with and notice to the parents/guardians of the suspected victim regarding the alleged Inappropriate Treatment shall be dealt with solely by the appropriate public investigating authority and not by church personnel.
- 9.) The Chairperson shall assure that the safety and security of the child are safeguarded before relieving the person accused of his or her responsibilities.
- 10.) The Chairperson shall relieve the person accused of the Inappropriate Treatment of further responsibilities until the appropriate public investigating authorities complete the investigation and determine whether or not the information obtained through the investigation substantiates the allegations.

- 11.) Any person accused of Inappropriate Treatment must be treated with dignity and support.
- 12.) The Senior Minister or the Senior Minister's designee shall make an appropriate and timely report to the Personnel Committee chairperson, the liability insurer for the church and the church's attorney regarding the incident.
- 13.) The Senior Minister or the Senior Minister's designee shall be the sole spokesperson for the church regarding media and other public or church inquiries.
- 14.) All persons involved in reporting alleged Inappropriate Treatment shall cooperate fully and completely with investigating authorities, but shall otherwise maintain confidentiality regarding all aspects of the incident, including the identity of individuals involved.
- 15.) Any report of Inappropriate Treatment involving an ordained minister shall be made to the accused minister's Presbytery. The Presbytery's designee shall be responsible for following the procedures set forth in this section and all practices established by the Presbytery.
- 16.) Organizations that use the church facilities shall notify the Senior Minister or the Senior Minister's designee as soon as possible (and at least within twenty-four hours) about any incident of Inappropriate Treatment involving any person affiliated with that arm of the organization using the church facilities. In addition, the organization using the church facilities shall follow that organization's reporting practices or, if it has no established reporting procedures, that organization shall follow the procedures set forth in this section.

**PROCEDURES APPLICABLE TO REPORTS INVOLVING PERSONS
OTHER THAN EMPLOYEES, VOLUNTEERS AND INTERNS**

All procedures set forth in paragraphs 1 through 9 and 11 through 14, above shall be followed, except that there shall be no contact by the church representative to the person accused of the Inappropriate Treatment.

Confidential

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

APPLICATION TO WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

(to be completed by all applicants for any position involving the supervision or custody of minors)

This form will be reviewed and processed by the Associate Minister for Christian Education, the Director of Children's Ministries, and/or the Director of Youth Ministries, and maintained in a confidential file by the Secretary to the Senior Minister.

Personal Information

Date _____

Are you a member of First Presbyterian Church? ____ Yes ____ No

If yes, how many years? _____

Name _____
Last First Middle

Date of Birth _____ Social Security Number _____

Driver's License No. _____ State Issued _____

Current Address:

_____ Street

_____ City State Zip

How many years at this address? _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

E-mail address (es): _____

If you have lived outside of Mecklenburg County during the past five years, please list former addresses:
(use back of page if needed)

List all previous church work involving children and youth:
(Organization name, address, contact person, type of work, dates, etc.)

List all previous non-church work involving children/youth. Be specific:

Personal References

(not required for anyone who has been a First Presbyterian member for two or more years and who has been involved in First Presbyterian’s children/youth activities)

Name: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Phone: _____

Worker’s Pledge

I have not been convicted of a child/youth sexual or physical abuse crime.

I have not been, nor am I currently a defendant in a civil or criminal action involving domestic violence, inappropriate treatment of a minor, or other action constituting a civil or criminal offense involving a minor.

I have received training on the Child, Youth, Volunteer and Staff Protection Policy of First Presbyterian Church, Charlotte, NC, have read the brochure, and agree to observe all church policies and procedures regarding working with children/youth.

Signature _____ Date _____

Authorization to Review Criminal Records

I hereby give my permission for First Presbyterian Church to obtain information pertaining to any charges and/or convictions I may have had for federal and state criminal law violations. The criminal history record, as received from the reporting agencies, may include arrest and conviction data as well as plea bargains and deferred adjudication. I understand that this information will be used, in part, to determine my eligibility for and employment/volunteer position with this organization. I also understand that as long as I remain an employee or volunteer here, the criminal history records check may be repeated at any time. I understand that I will have an opportunity to review the criminal history and a procedure is available for clarification, if I dispute the record as received.

Signature _____ Date _____

Release Agreement

I, _____ the undersigned, do, for myself, my heirs, executors and administrators, hereby remise, release and forever discharge and agree to indemnify the First Presbyterian Church and each of their officers, directors, employees and agents harmless from and against any and all causes of actions, suits, liabilities, costs, debts and sums of money, claims and demands whatsoever, and any and all related attorneys’ fees, court costs, and other expenses resulting from the investigation of my background in connection with my application to become an employee or volunteer.

Signature _____ Date _____