

Child Protection Policy for All Children's and Youth Ministries

Statement of Purpose:

Opportunities to teach and supervise children and youth are a privilege offered by _____ . As a church, we believe that nurturing the spiritual, emotional and physical well-being of children is vital.

This operating policy is intended to ensure that all interactions between adults and children and youth are consistent with the example and teachings of Jesus Christ. All adults who are entrusted with the care of our children and youth must always strive to be worthy of the example of Christ. Adults must understand the importance of providing a safe and secure environment and avoid any conduct that might appear to be inappropriate, even if no such conduct takes place.

Worker to Child Ratios

_____ has a goal of maintaining the following ratios of ministry workers to children whenever feasible. These ratios are goals. The church recognizes that in some circumstances achieving these ratios may not be feasible.

Worker to Child Ratios

PROGRAM WORKERS CHILDREN

Nursery	2-6
Preschool	2-12
Sunday School K-6th	2-16
Youth Programs 7-12th	2-20
Fellowship Groups	2-14
Vacation Bible School	2-16

Classroom Policy

- At all times activity inside the classroom must be accessible to parents and church members. Rooms with a window will not have that window covered in any way as to prevent someone from viewing activity going on inside. Classroom doors will not be locked during church activities.

Touching Policy

_____ has implemented a touching policy that will safeguard our children while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry to them. The guidelines below are to be carefully followed by anyone working with children and youth.

- Physical affection should be appropriate to the age of the child or youth. (For example, it is generally appropriate for a four-year-old to sit in a nursery worker's lap and give a kiss on the cheek, but it is not appropriate for a teenager and adult leader to behave this way.)
- Touching should be initiated by the child or youth. It should be a response to the child's need for comforting, encouragement, or affection. It should not be based upon the adult's emotional need.
- Touching and affection should only be given when in the presence of other children's ministry or youth workers.
- Touching behavior should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. As ministry workers our behavior must foster trust at all times; it should be above reproach. For this reason the worker must be particularly careful in regards to cross gender touching.
- A child's preference not to be touched should be respected. Do not force affection upon a reluctant child.
- Church workers must promptly discuss perceived or reported inappropriate touching or other questionable behavior by other workers with the ministry leader, CE Director, or the pastor.

Informal Contact

Informal contact refers to phone calls, letters, or face-to-face contact between an adult worker and a youth, or use of the nursery or other rooms when they are not scheduled for use (ie weddings, funerals, special holiday services etc.)

In the case of informal contact with children and youth, the church recognizes that informal contact between worker and youth frequently occurs. For example, workers may hire teens as baby sitters for their own children, or workers may see kids during social events with the child's family. This interaction is usually legitimate and beneficial. However, workers should seek permission of parents before having informal contact with their youth. The worker should clearly let the parent know the nature of the contact and that it is not part of church activity. Parents are responsible for monitoring this informal contact.

Six-Month Rule

- Volunteers working with children must have been a member of or a regular attendee of the church for at least six months. This time of interaction between ministry leaders and the volunteer allows leaders to better evaluate the suitability of a volunteer for children's and youth work.
- In some situations this rule is not feasible and may be waived (such as church employees or interns who are not church members). If the six-month rule is waived, program leaders may take additional steps to screen the volunteer at their own discretion.

Minimum Age

- All workers must be 18 years of age or older. Younger persons may assist adults, but they may not take the place of adult workers.

Auto Safety

- Persons who will drive vehicles for conducting church business or transporting children and or youth must be 21 years of age, will be insured, have and use appropriate number of seat belts and have a valid driver's license.

Before Service Begins

- All workers must be members or regular attendees of _____ for at least six months before becoming Primary Workers. (i.e. teachers, youth leaders, camp directors, VBS Directors etc.)
- All workers must be approved by the CE Director and/or CE Committee Before working with children and youth at _____.
- _____ can conduct a criminal background check and a registry check at their discretion.
- Any adult with prior incidents of sexual misconduct may not be a staff member or volunteer with children or youth at _____.
- The volunteer will receive and be trained as to the content of the "Child Protection Policy" of _____.

Specific Guidelines for Nursery Staff and Volunteers

All nursery staff and volunteers are to follow the General Guidelines in addition to the following specific guidelines:

- Parents are to sign in their child upon arrival.
- The Nursery does have an open door policy. This means that workers, parents, and church members have a right to visit the nursery; however, children will only be released to a parent or the person designated by the parent.
- Young children should be accompanied to the restroom. A Worker may enter the restroom to assist the child as needed but the door must remain open.

Guidelines to Follow While Working With Children and Youth

- Two workers will generally be present at all times when working with children and youth. The Second worker may be an older child assisting an Adult but said youth may not have primary leadership of a classroom or activity. In cases where this is not possible the CE Director or someone appointed by the CE Director will regularly visit the classroom during church activities involving children and youth.
- All events will be open door. This means that workers, parents, and church members have a right to observe any activity if they are able to do so without disrupting the activity.
- Corporal punishment or the threat of corporal punishment (hitting, spanking, or any form of punishment involving pain) is strictly forbidden at _____. This is true even if parents have suggested or authorized corporal punishment. Workers should consult the CE Director for alternative methods of discipline.
- Workers must follow the highest standards of confidentiality when working with children and youth. Parents must be confident that stories about their children are not going to be repeated inside or outside the church setting. When reporting actions of a child to a parent, the worker should not name another child by name but instead use language such as "another child", "classmate", etc.
- Workers must report suspected or observed child abuse to the CE Director or the pastor immediately. All reports are considered strictly confidential. Allegations will be referred to the proper civil authority and higher governing bodied of the PCUSA.
- Questionable behavior by workers must be reported in the same manner and will be handled appropriately by the CE Committee, CE Director, or the Pastor.

- Workers must avoid even the appearance of misconduct. This is critical to maintain parent confidence, avoid mistaken allegations and to reflect _____'s commitment to safeguarding the safety of children.
- Workers who disobey these guidelines may be reassigned or relieved of their duties at the discretion of the Christian Education Committee. In certain instances the CE Director or the Pastor may be empowered to relieve workers of their duties.

Specific Guidelines for Children's Field Trips

All Sunday school and Fellowship Group volunteers are to follow the General Guidelines in addition to the following specific guidelines in regards to field trips:

- A Field Trip Permission Form for each child must be completed and signed before the child will be allowed to participate in a field trip. This form is to be kept with the worker at all times during the field trip. On any overnight field trip, at least one worker must be the same gender as the children on the activity.

Specific Guidelines for Youth Staff and Volunteers (KEYS & PACT)

All youth staff and volunteers are to follow the General Guidelines in addition to the following specific guidelines:

Team Leadership -- Teams of adults (preferably male and female) will supervise activities. This policy provides for more than one adult to help ensure appropriate levels of supervision.

Overnight Activities -- At least two adults will supervise overnight activities. If the participants are male and female, then male and female chaperons must be present. If these conditions cannot be met, then the event should be postponed. It is never appropriate for an adult chaperon who is not a family member to share a bed with a youth. Experienced adult workers should be included with adults who are newcomers to youth ministry.

Individual Counseling -- Team counseling is preferable whenever possible. When team counseling sessions are not feasible, notify another adult of the location and with whom you are meeting. Counseling should be done in a public place where private conversations are possible but occur in full view of others. The leader must guard carefully to avoid seclusion. If possible, have female adults counsel female youths and males counsel males. A male/female team is generally appropriate for counseling either gender.

Long-Term Counseling -- Persons working with youth should not meet with youth more than two times to discuss the same issue. Persons working with youth are not prepared or supported for long-term counseling or formal therapy. Adult leaders are encouraged to refer youth who they suspect have a serious need for counseling to professionals in the community. Questions about referral must be discussed promptly with the Youth program leader, the CE Director, or the minister.

Transportation To and From Meetings -- Transportation to and from meetings is not part of church or youth group activities. Parents are responsible for providing or arranging for this transportation. If a leader does transport a youth at the parent's request, this should be recognized as informal contact, and the guidelines for informal contact should be followed.

Transportation as a Part of Church Programs -- The church may from time to time provide transportation as an official part of church activities. For example, the church may provide transportation to out-of-town events or field trips. When youth are transported as a part of club activities, all guidelines will apply.

Confidentiality - Workers of youth must report to a clergy person if a minor discusses harming himself or others, committing a crime, or being abused. There are limits to confidentiality when working with youth. Questions about such cases or other issues of confidentiality must be discussed promptly with the CE Director or Senior Pastor who will also protect the confidential nature of the discussion. Conferring with the CE Director or the minister on sensitive issues is not considered breaking a confidence.

Youth Supervising Youth -- Minors may help adults lead youth activities only under the direct leadership of adults. A minor may not be used to meet the team leadership or team counseling guidelines discussed above.

Gifts --Persons working with youth are generally discouraged from giving personal gifts or money to youth. When the giving of personal gifts is desired, the worker must first notify parents and the Youth Minister. Gifts can be easily misinterpreted. Gifts given to groups of young people are appropriate, such as graduation presents or awards for participation.

Dating or Sexual Involvement -- No adult worker is to date a youth or be romantically or sexually involved with a youth.

Supervision and Communication -- It is the responsibility of the Christian Education Committee to communicate the guidelines and make them available to all volunteers through proper education and training.