

**Policy and Procedure
for the Prevention
of Child Abuse
at
The Presbyterian Church
in Orland Park
May, 2018**

PURPOSE

It is the purpose of the members and staff of The Presbyterian Church in Orland Park to provide a safe and secure environment for children and youth who are entrusted to our care as they participate in our programs and use our facilities. We want our congregation to be a haven, free of sexual misconduct or harassment. To help reach these goals, we have adopted the following policies, procedures, and educational programs to reduce the possibility of child sexual or physical abuse, or any type of sexual misconduct or harassment from occurring in our congregation. The educational aspect will make us aware of potential problems, and the implementation of prudent policies will help safeguard our children, youth, and members. We do this to encourage preschoolers, children, youth, and their families to grow in their relationship with God and one another.

A safe and secure environment includes a formal, written policy to help prevent the occurrence of child abuse. The following policy and procedures are for the protection of our preschoolers, children, youth, employees, volunteers, and our entire church family at The Presbyterian Church in Orland Park.

SCOPE

This policy shall apply to all current and future workers, compensated and/or volunteer, who will have the responsibility of supervising the activities of preschoolers, children, youth, and developmentally disabled persons.

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions shall apply:

1. "Preschooler," "child," "children," "youth," and "minor" shall be defined as any individual under the age of eighteen (18) or whose mental capacity is that of a minor.
2. "Adult" shall be defined as any individual at least eighteen (18) years of age.
3. "Worker" shall be defined as any adult who serves as a paid person given the responsibility of working with or caring for minors.
4. "Volunteer" shall be defined as any adult who serves as an unpaid person, including parents, given the responsibility of working with or caring for minors.
5. "Teenage Volunteer or Worker" shall be defined as any volunteer or worker at least fourteen (14) years old or older, but under the age of eighteen (18), enlisted to assist with the care of minors.
6. "Child Abuse" shall be defined as verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse of a preschooler, child, youth, or minor.
7. "Criminal Background Check" (CBC) is the procedure used by qualified agencies to check the background of adult workers and volunteers for criminal activity.
8. "Child Safety Advocate" is the Staff Relations Committee Chairperson.

WHAT IS CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE?

Child sexual abuse is “any sexual activity with a child – whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day care situation, a foster/residential setting, or in any other setting, including on the street by a person unknown to the child. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child (provided the abusing child is at least four years older than the victim).”

Child sexual abuse may be violent or non-violent. All child sexual abuse is an exploitation of a child’s vulnerability and powerlessness in which the abuser is fully responsible for their abusive action.

Child sexual abuse is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behaviors for which they are not emotionally, socially, and/or developmentally ready.

Child sexual abuse includes behaviors that involve touching and non-touching aspects.

PAID WORKER ENLISTMENT

1. All paid employees of The Presbyterian Church in Orland Park will be required to complete an Employment Application and sign a “Background Investigation Consent Form.”
2. After an application is received, prior employment record, volunteer service, and personal references will be checked. It is suggested that, at a minimum, personal references be contacted by telephone and a written memorandum be made of the contents of those telephone conversations, and that a letter of reference be requested from prior employers and paid or unpaid church service.
3. Criminal background checks will be performed on each applicant after the applicant has signed the background consent form, and prior to being enlisted as an employee. Only qualified representatives of the Staff Relations Committee will have access to the criminal background check report. Recommendations will be given by this committee as to the qualification of applicants.
4. Any prospective worker that has prior incidents of sexual misconduct or child abuse should not be considered for employment.
5. Interview notes/sheets will be filled out with the results of the interview and kept in the employee personnel file, as well as the reference checks and the applications. A separate permanent file will be maintained on each paid worker.
6. At the applicant’s request, The Presbyterian Church in Orland Park shall allow the applicant to review his/her criminal history record transcript at the church, but in no event shall the church allow the applicant to retain and/or copy his/her transcript.
7. The church shall immediately notify the Insurance Company or other qualified agency if an internal grievance (applicant disputes) is filed by an applicant because of incorrect information or other reasons related to criminal histories provided by the agency. The church shall submit in a reasonable time period the “Criminal History Record Resolution Request” or similar document to the agency.

WORKER TRAINING

All new (hired) employees will go through an employee orientation conducted by a member of the Staff Relations Committee. The orientation will include education regarding these policies, procedures, and code of behavior. Periodic training will be conducted with volunteers referencing legal definitions of child abuse, how and when to report a possible sexual misconduct incident, and how to discuss questionable behavior.

SCREENING OF VOLUNTEERS

Teachers of minors, and volunteers of activities or programs for minors, of The Presbyterian Church in Orland Park may be required to complete a Volunteer Screening Form providing personal and confidential information necessary to perform security background checks and reference checks on each individual volunteer. While this process understandably trespasses into the privacy of our lives, the security of our children outweighs the personal invasion inherent with such investigation and disclosures. All personal information voluntarily disclosed, the results of all security background and reference checks, or the refusal of any person to participate in a program or activity in lieu of such disclosure requirements, will be maintained in the strictest of confidence.

Whether disclosed voluntarily or by result of the security background check, the following items will automatically disqualify a volunteer from participating in the leadership, sponsorship, or supervising of any activities or programs with minors:

Any conviction for:

- Criminal homicide;
- Aggravated assault;
- Sexual abuse;
- Sexual assault (rape);
- Aggravated sexual assault;
- Injury to a child;
- Incest;
- Indecency with a child;
- Inducing sexual conduct or sexual performance of a child;
- Possession or promotion of child pornography;
- The sale, distribution, or display of harmful material to a minor;
- Employment harmful to children;
- Abandonment or endangerment of a child;
- Kidnapping or unlawful restraint;
- Public lewdness or indecent exposure;
- Enticing a child.

Any other convictions will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

SPECIFIC ACTS AND OMISSIONS IN VIOLATION OF THE POLICY

The following acts of omissions are violations of this Policy and will not be tolerated or accepted during any activity or program and are to be immediately reported to the designated program staff after the safety of the child, children, youth, or minor involved has been assured:

Any direct observations or evidence of sexual activity in the presence of or in association with a minor.

Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of abusive conduct towards a minor.

Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any person and a minor.

Infliction or physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to a minor.

Physical neglect of a minor, including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to the activities of The Presbyterian Church in Orland Park.

Mental or emotional injury to a minor.

The presence or possession of obscene or pornographic materials at any function of The Presbyterian Church in Orland Park.

The presence, possession, or being under the influence of any illegal or illicit drugs, or alcohol, while leading or participating in a function for minors at The Presbyterian Church in Orland Park.

WORKER SUPERVISION

1. The church has adopted the “two adult rule” which means that no adult shall be left alone with a child, unless a parent or guardian of the child is in the building, and the church requires a reasonable ratio of adult workers to be maintained in each situation involving the supervision of children. When parents of child(ren) are on the premises, one adult volunteer can supervise a group of children such as during Sunday School, MOPS program, etc.

2. Church staff and volunteer directors will supervise on an ongoing basis and make unannounced visits into classes or other program sites from time to time.

3. In counseling sessions with minors, parental permission shall be obtained prior to a minister meeting privately with a minor, or the two adult rule shall be used in that instance. Prior permission may be granted by parents to cover a particular time period (i.e., a school year) for their child to receive counseling from a particular minister.

4. Teenagers, 12-18 years of age, wanting to work in any capacity with activities, studies, or programs for preschoolers or children can do so if supervised by an adult worker.

5. A door without windows shall remain open at all times.

6. A check-in/check-out procedure for all preschool nursery aged children will be used.

7. All volunteers and paid workers will be educated as to the church’s policies and procedures concerning prevention of child abuse.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION REPORTING

The Staff Relations Committee of The Presbyterian Church in Orland Park shall be the governing body in which volunteers, congregational members, or staff members may, if uncomfortable with the minister, report an allegation of sexual misconduct. This committee will also be responsible for supporting staff members charged with any allegation. All members of this committee shall maintain a strict code of confidentiality and be trained in these policies and procedures.

Any person having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect shall report the person's belief in accordance with this procedure. Non-accusatory reports (reports that identify the victim of abuse or neglect whether or not the person responsible for the abuse or neglect is known) shall be made to the local or state law enforcement agency by calling 911.

- A. The church shall fully comply with the child abuse reporting statute.
- B. The church should also immediately contact the insurance company to report the occurrence, and should contact its attorney.
- C. In instances where child abuse is confirmed and a member of the staff is the perpetrator, the immediate supervisor should be contacted and advised, along with the Staff Relations Committee Chairperson.
- D. This procedure is not only required as a condition of a job or volunteer position, but is also required by law.

Upon the first suspicion of an instance of child abuse, the following steps should be taken immediately:

1. Do not treat the suspicion as frivolous.
2. Commence the investigation immediately, and conclude it as soon as possible.
3. If a worker or volunteer of minors suspects a case of child abuse, he or she is required by law to report his/her suspicions within 24 hours to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). It is the policy of The Presbyterian Church in Orland Park that it also be reported immediately to one of the paid staff ministers of the church, and the Staff Relations Committee Chairperson.
4. The minister receiving the initial report will be responsible for confirming the facts reported and the condition of the child, on the same day on which the first report was made. The "Reducing the Risk Application Checklist" will be used to complete the church/staff responsibilities involved with the occurrence.
5. Data concerning the child, name, address, and other pertinent information will be obtained through discussion with the initial reporter and other staff members. The name and address of the person responsible for the care of the child, if available, will be obtained.
6. Maintain confidentiality of the investigation as much as possible. Emphasize confidentiality of the victim and any accused.
7. Cooperate fully with law enforcement officials.
8. Suspend any accused from the performance of duties involving children until the investigation has been completed.

9. Inform the victim and the victim's family of the steps that are being taken and continue to keep them advised of the status of the investigation.

10. In instances where child abuse is confirmed, the church should immediately remove the volunteer/worker from that position. Any necessary actions will be considered.

11. In instances where the evidence is inconclusive, the church will consider an appropriate response depending on the strength of the evidence available.

12. Keep the congregation informed of the investigation with respect to matters which are not confidential, so that the congregation will hear about the investigation from within the church rather than from the news media.

13. Promptly take steps to plan for a response to the media and attempt to speak to the media only through one contact person so that the church can emphasize through the media to the public the church's position on child abuse, its concern for the victim, and the extensive steps the church is taking to address the present occurrence and to reduce the risk and provide a safe environment for other children.

Every allegation of sexual offense or molestation should be investigated promptly and thoroughly by officials and reported to the church insurance company immediately. If such allegation is confirmed, appropriate and necessary actions will be taken.

POLICY REVIEW

The immediate supervisor will review this policy with each new employee and will obtain a dated signature showing that the employee has read and understood it. The signed document will be kept in his or her personnel file. The Director of Educational Ministries will review this policy with workers and volunteers who deal directly with children.

I have read and understand this "Policy and Procedure for the Prevention of Child Abuse at The Presbyterian Church in Orland Park."

Printed Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Signature: _____

Witnessed by: _____

**REDUCING THE RISK APPLICATION CHECKLIST
TO BE COMPLETED BY CLERGY/PROFESSIONAL STAFF PERSONS**

In the case of an allegation of child/youth sexual abuse, the volunteer or clergy staff person who observes or to whom the information is given is required by The Presbyterian Church in Orland Park and by the state law to complete the tasks below. Date and initial as each step is completed.

Date: _____	Initial: _____	For clergy and paid professional staff: Remove the accused from the situation, suspend the accused from duties involving children and youth, and notify the Staff Relations Committee Chairperson.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	For volunteers: Remove the accused from the situation and immediately notify the closest available clergy/professional staff person who will prohibit the accused from further volunteering until the situation is resolved. The clergy/professional staff person will then notify the Staff Relations Committee Chairperson.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	Make written documentation of everything done and said. If the person reporting the allegation is a volunteer, both the volunteer and the clergy/professional staff to whom the volunteer has reported will document the procedures taken.

The procedures after this point will be administered by ministerial staff persons and the Staff Relations Committee Chairperson only.

Date: _____	Initial: _____	Immediately notify the parents/guardians of the alleged victim and respond to their questions and concerns.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	Immediately notify state authorities. Failure to report any suspected, alleged, or witnessed abuse is a crime.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	Immediately notify the minister in charge and the Staff Relations Committee Chairperson.

Date: _____	Initial: _____	Make written documentation of persons contacted and action taken to this point.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	The clergy/professional staff person will immediately notify the Child Safety Advocate (the Staff Relations Committee Chairperson) to begin the internal and pastoral care process.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	The Child Safety Advocate will notify the insurance carrier of the incident immediately and comply with its investigation, if any.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	The Child Safety Advocate will cooperate with legal and state authorities in their investigations, if any.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	The Child Safety Advocate will prepare a written statement and designate a spokesperson to respond to media inquiries.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	The Child Safety Advocate will provide assistance to the alleged victim and his/her family in obtaining counseling or referral to a mental health professional, if needed.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	The Child Safety Advocate will respond to the needs of the families of the alleged victim and the accused to seek a redemptive solution for all involved.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	The Child Safety Advocate will inform the affected volunteer(s) and paid staff members of the need for confidentiality.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	The Child Safety Advocate will consider and respond to the concerns of other parents.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	The Child Safety Advocate will give an ongoing report to Session regarding the case and its progress.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	Within five (5) days of the alleged abuse, the clergy/professional staff person who made the original report will prepare a written report and send one copy to the state agency and will give one copy to the senior pastor.