

CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY POLICY SUGGESTED COMPONENTS for use in congregations

Developed by the Pastoral Response Team
and the Christian Education Work Group
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Statement of Purpose

(1st Presbyterian-Ypsilanti & 1st Presbyterian-Evanston)

Theological: God's love, covenant, justice

Ethical: Protection of all minors from all forms of abuse: sexual, physical, verbal, emotional

Legal: Congregational protection from legal action due to false accusations

Screening Process

(All policies)

Be sure to check with your church's insurance company for their guidelines and requirements regarding safety policy elements and background check resources.

Volunteer

Interview questions related to history with children

Background check for all volunteers (including current volunteers)

Signature on church safety policy stating volunteers have read and will follow policy

Six-month waiting period for volunteers who are new to the church

Potential Employee (Nursery Staff, Youth Leader, Christian Education Director, any staff in direct care of children):

Employment application with questions about history with children

National Criminal background check through:

Church insurance *Screen Now* program: low cost

Presbytery of Detroit resource: limited number

State of Michigan: free

Reference check: written and verbal

Signature on Church Safety Policy stating employees have read and accepted policy

Education

Session and Congregation

Purpose and content of policy

Definitions and signs of abuse

Clergy, Session and Member responsibilities to the policy

Civil Law: Mandated reporter status for all ordained Ministers of Word and Sacrament

Book of Order: Mandated reporter status for all ordained Elders and Deacons even though civil law does not require it

(G-14.0732, G-6.0402b, G-6.0304b, G-6.0204b).

Reporting process

Research your local child protective services and law enforcement agencies for phone numbers to distribute to volunteers, staff, elders and deacons. It is imperative that initial reporting is done immediately to civil authorities and not to church authorities.

() denotes churches that have the component in their policy See <http://www.pbydetroit.org> in Committees file under Committee on Ministry for these church policies.

Volunteers and Staff (at least annually)

On-site procedures for class room activity for children

On-site procedures for youth activities

Off-site procedures for all minors

Driver requirements

Definitions of prohibited behavior for volunteers and staff in regards to minors

(First Presbyterian Church of Evanston)

- Threatening or inflicting physical injury upon a child or youth other than by accidental means or in self defense.
- Committing any sexual offense against, or engaging in any sexual contact with a child or youth
- Making any kind of sexual to, making a request for sexual favors from, or engaging in other verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature with a child or youth.
- Entering, as an adult, into a dating relationship with a child or youth.

Guidelines for physical contact with children & youth

(First Presbyterian Church of Evanston)

Touching may not be completely avoided, but staff and volunteers should be aware of how any contact looks and how the person being touched might interpret it. Side-by-side hugs should be used instead of full body contact. Youth leaders should not initiate or encourage back rubs, neck rubs, massages, kissing or similar contact.

Supervision of Volunteers and Staff

Evaluate ratios of adult volunteers/staff required for each age group

Two adult minimum: Many smaller churches will need to think creatively about how to plan classroom spaces so that adult teachers may see each other through open doors or doors with windows when two adults cannot be provided for each classroom.

Review classroom visibility and open door policy

Unannounced supervisory classroom visits

Reporting Procedures

Mandated Reporting of Offenses

In the state of Michigan, ministers of word and sacrament are mandated reporters. This means that civil law requires them to report suspected child abuse of any kind (physical, emotional, verbal, sexual) to civil authorities as soon as possible. In addition, the Book of Order requires all ordained elders and deacons to report child abuse to civil authorities even though they are not legally mandated reporters. **Be sure to provide all mandated reporters with phone numbers and specific directions for reporting to local child protection agencies and police.**

Policy Example:

(First Presbyterian Church of Evanston)

First Presbyterian Church directs all of its paid personnel and volunteers, even those who are not mandated reporters, to report to appropriate civil authorities their knowledge of the abuse of children or youth, if such knowledge is obtained while engaging in the ministries of First Presbyterian Church.

Reporting to Church Authorities

Policy Example:

(First Presbyterian Church of Evanston)

Beyond the legally mandated reporting situations, this policy requires that a report be made to church authorities in all cases when a violation of this policy is reasonably suspected.The suspected incident should not be discussed with anyone else. The parents of the alleged victims shall be notified in accordance with advice from Child Protective Services.

Responsibilities of Church Counsel.

- Report the alleged incident of abuse to the proper authorities – either Child Protective Services (helpful if that number for the appropriate county is listed here) or law enforcement.
- Send appropriate notice to any liability carrier for the Church and provide such carriers with information and such other cooperation as such carriers shall lawfully require
- If the alleged Incident of abuse involves a member of the clergy, report the alleged the Committee on Ministry of the Presbytery of Detroit

Church Limitations Regarding Investigation

It is important to note that when reporting an abuse to authorities, one is not in the position to investigate or to be responsible for substantiating that abuse. It is the responsibility of that agency to conduct the investigation and to substantiate should the evidence prove abuse. The person reporting is simply responsible for presenting the facts as they know them.

General Assembly

Excerpted from the 216th General Assembly Resolution on Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse Against Educators

Recommendations

3. Urge sessions and middle governing bodies to approve and implement strong sexual misconduct policies, procedures, and training programs for prevention of and protection from sexual misconduct.

FINAL CLARIFICATION

Clergy Sexual Misconduct in adult relationships is reported to the Presbytery of Detroit Executive Presbyter, Stated Clerk or Committee on Ministry Chairperson.

Any Sexual Abuse toward minors (ages 0-18) is reported directly to civil authorities, either a Department of Protective Services or the police.

RESOURCES

Books

A Clergy Guide to Child Abuse and Neglect. Crosson-Tower, Cynthia (Pilgrim Press), 2006.

Preventing Sexual Abuse in Congregations. McClintock, Karen A. (Herndon, VA: [The Alban Institute](#)), 2004.

Protecting Your Church Against Sexual Predators: Legal FAQs for Church Leaders. Glover, Voyle A., Esq. (Kregel Academic and Professional Publishing), 2005.

Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church. Hammar, Richard R., Klipowicz, Steven W., Cobble, James F., Jr. from the Church Law & Tax Report series (North Carolina: Christian Ministries Resources), 1993. *Training manual and VHS also available.*

Safe Sanctuaries. Melton, Joy Thornburg (Discipleship Press), 1998.
Safe Sanctuaries for Youth. 2003.

Surely Heed Their Cry. A Presbyterian guide to child abuse prevention and healing. *Available through PCUSA Distribution Center.*

We Won't Let It Happen Here! Preventing Child Abuse in the Church. Rifner, Lois, Ph.D. and Smith, Susan Keil, M.A. with assistance from the Child Advocacy Office. *Available through PCUSA Distribution Center.*

Curricula

God's Plan for Growing Up. Berry, Rev. Woody and Seymour, Dr. Sandra Elizabeth Fields (Louisville: Presbyterian Publishing House), 1996. *Teaches human sexuality in a faith context including saying 'no' to abuse.*

Leader's Guide and Parent's Guide

Wonderfully Made for Grades 2-3 and Amazing Stuff for Grades 4-5

Preventing Child Sexual Abuse. Reid, Rev. Katherine Goering (Cleveland: The United Church Press), 1989, 1994, 1996. *Christian Education curriculum for ages 5-8, 9-12, Teen. Available from Faith Trust Institute website. See Links.*

Safe Keeping: Session Plans for Developing Abuse Awareness in Kids. Helleman, Henni and Vos, Patricia (Grand Rapids: Faith Alive Resources), 2006.

Multi-Media

Bless Our Children: Preventing Sexual Abuse from Keeping the Faith series (Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence), 1993. *Video and Study Guide. Available from Faith Trust Institute website. See Links.*

Safe Sanctuaries for Children and Youth. Melton, Joy Thornburg. (Discipleship Resources), 2004. *DVD and VHS.*

Websites

www.pcusa.org/phewa/childabuseawareness.htm

www.pcusa.org/sexualmisconduct

www.churchmutual.com

www.faithtrustinstitute.org

Colleagues to contact for more information

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