

Safe Church Policy

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Matt. 19:14(NIV)

Statement and Purpose

Centreville Presbyterian Church (CPC) is establishing this policy to protect children and students participating in church activities from sexual abuse, sexual misconduct and other forms of harm (verbal, physical and emotional). CPC will make every effort to assure that the persons working with CPC children and students are deserving of that trust and responsibility. The policy also directs that activities involving children and students be conducted in a manner to minimize the risk of abuse or false allegations of abuse. This policy is for all CPC activities involving children and students, on CPC grounds or off site and for all outside groups using CPC facilities.

Standards of Conduct

- Volunteers are responsible for following the Safe Church Policy. Failure to routinely follow the policy will result in the removal from a position of responsibility or job termination.
- Volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a way that upholds Christian values and reflect positively on the church, the presbytery and the Presbyterian Church USA.
- All volunteers working with children and students will:
 - Submit a written volunteer application form with references.
 - Sign a consent form allowing a background check to be completed.
 - Read and sign this policy to acknowledge the willingness to abide by it.
- Common expressions of affection (hugs), affirmation (pats on the back), support (prayer), or physical care taking (changing diapers, etc.) are appropriate. Care must be taken that physical expressions of affection are not excessive or imposed upon another individual.
- Volunteers will use appropriate communication with students and children at all times including phone calls, text messages and all forms of computer-based communication.
- Appropriate discipline includes establishing clear expectations and providing incentives for acceptable behavior as well as using verbal disapproval, loss of privileges and redirection. Corporal punishment of any kind (slapping, spanking, shaking, etc.) is unacceptable. Derogatory remarks or comments will not be used. Refer children or students that continually misbehave to the director of Children Ministry, the director of Student Ministry or the director of the Middle School Ministry.
- All nursery workers, teachers, and other volunteers will work in pairs. When approved by the responsible entity, a roaming volunteer may be used in lieu of a second person.
- Children and students must be under direct, age-appropriate supervision at all times when on CPC grounds or attending any CPC activity. Volunteers also will take appropriate measures to ensure the physical safety of all participants during CPC events.
- PERMISSION SLIPS ARE REQUIRED FOR SPECIFIED CHURCH ACTIVITIES.
- All activities must have an appropriate child/adult ratio as determined by the Christian Education Ministry. For mixed gender student overnights, there must be both a male and female volunteers present.
- An employee or volunteer will transport children and students in groups for church activities. Parental permission by phone is required if a child or student is traveling with only one employee or volunteer.
- Any person who believes that misconduct governed by this policy has occurred will immediately report the information to a pastor or responsible staff member. Allegations of physical and sexual abuse will be reported immediately to the appropriate government authority as required by law.

Volunteer Signature

Date

Safe Church Procedures

Guidelines for Screening Staff and Volunteers:

Paid Staff – will adhere and submit to the Personnel Committee the following:

- Written Application
- References – must be checked
- Personal Interview
- Background Records Check – extent to be determined by Personnel Committee

Volunteers – will adhere and submit to the Christian Education Ministry the following:

- Written Application
- References
- Background Records Check – Every volunteer will undergo a background check to be conducted by CPC staff. Information, including social security number, will be kept confidential and on file with the same level of security as personnel forms. If in the process of the background check a concern is raised, it will be held in confidentiality. The initial screener and the senior pastor will determine if the concern would negatively affect the individual's participation in working with children or students. The background check will be repeated in three years for volunteers still active in the program.
- Personal Interview
 - Six-Month Rule. Volunteers, members or non-members, must be regular participants in the life of the church for at least six months before working with students or children in a role as lead teacher. CPC elders must interview and approve non-members, who have been active in church life for six months, before assuming a role as lead teacher. Members will be interviewed during the membership process.
 - Student volunteers may work with children and students, on recommendation of the director of Student Ministry and the director of Children's Ministry. Students are required to attend training sessions with the DCM. Volunteers under 18 do not need background checks.

Accountability

- The staff member or volunteer determined to be in charge of the program is responsible for enforcing the Safe Church Policy and Procedures. Each responsible entity should use his or her discretion when enforcing this policy. Volunteers should contact the directors' of Children's Ministry or Student Ministry if questions arise regarding policy implementation.
- Staff and volunteers who routinely do not adhere to CPC's Safe Church Policy and Procedures will face removal from positions of responsibility or job termination.
- Outside groups using CPC facilities are required to follow CPC's Safe Church Policy and Procedures. A copy will be supplied with the facilities use agreement.
- Ministries or groups planning special events that involve children and students must assess the level of risk for each event and adopt appropriate measures to ensure safety. These may include but are not limited to: requiring permission slips, establishing sign in/sign out procedures and determining appropriate child/adult ratios.
- The Christian Education Ministry will conduct training of the Safe Church Policy and Procedures at the annual meeting and at teacher training.

Reporting Allegations of Misconduct

A person who has reason to believe that misconduct governed by this policy has occurred will immediately report the information to a pastor, program staff member or other responsible entity.

Infractions of physical or sexual abuse will be reported to the misconduct response team consisting of the pastor, associate pastor, director of Student Ministry, director of Children's Ministry and the Christian Education Ministry chair. The response team will then reference the policies stated in the Staff Handbook, IV.8 Sexual Misconduct Policy (revised June 2002) and follow the steps as outlined.

Allegations of sexual abuse of children will be reported immediately to the appropriate government authority as required by law. Child sexual abuse between an adult and a child or student is always considered forced whether or not consented to by the child or student. By law, reports of abuse are strictly confidential. CPC will cooperate fully with government authorities in the investigation of allegations of child sexual abuse. . CPC paid staff working with children and students fall under the category of childcare custodians and therefore are considered mandatory reporters. Rape or sexual assault is a crime in every state and should be reported to civil authorities and to the stated clerk of the Presbytery.

All other forms of misconduct will be investigated by a member of the pastoral staff, a staff member and the chair of Christian Education Ministry. Should the report or charge be credible, the team will advise the session and take other steps as necessary to investigate and resolve the matter. They will also determine if professional advice is needed. Failure to follow CPC's Safe Church Policy and Procedures may result in removal from the position of authority.

If the accused is a pastor or associate pastor of CPC, the stated clerk of the Presbytery will immediately be notified and the Presbytery's policies and procedures will control the outcome from that point forward.

Explanation of Terms

- A **child** is a person considered a minor under the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia. A person who is legally incompetent is considered a **child** under this policy.
- A **student** is a special classification of children referring to students in grades 6 to 12.
- **Adult** refers to anyone 18 years of age or older, regardless of student status.
- **Employee** "is the comprehensive term used to cover individuals who are hired or called to work for the church for salary or wages." *Presbytery Policy, Appendix B.*
- **Volunteer** "is the term used for those who provide services for [the church] and who receive no benefit or remuneration." *Presbyterian Policy, Appendix B.*
- **Program Staff Member** is the term used for non-ordained employees responsible for CPC's education, music and student programs, i.e. director of Student Ministry, director of Children's Ministry.
- **Lead Teacher** is the term used for an individual who is responsible for teaching, content and classroom management.
- **Responsible entity** is the term used for elder liaison, ministry chair or other persons determined to be ultimately responsible for a program's adherence to CPC's Safe Church Policy and Procedures.
- **Mandated reporter** is a term for persons required by law to report suspected child abuse. Legally mandated reporters include, but are not limited to, childcare custodians, health practitioners, and employees of a child protective agency. CPC paid ministry staff fall under the category of childcare custodians.

- ***Misconduct Response Team*** is a predetermined group of people consisting of the pastor, associate pastor, director of Student Ministry, director of Children's Ministry and the Christian Education Ministry chair.
- ***Supervision*** includes direct observation or control of activities.
- ***Outside groups*** are individuals or groups using CPC facilities on a contract basis.
- ***Level of risk*** examines the degree of supervision needed at an event. General supervision is appropriate for low risk activities where potential for accident, isolation or injury is low. As risk increases, supervision must increase.
- ***Child sexual abuse and misconduct*** is defined as an abuse of authority and power, breaching Christian ethical principles, by using a trust relationship to gain advantage over another for personal gratification. Sexual abuse includes touching as well as non-touching interaction between adults and children, and between children, for the purpose of sexual stimulation. This behavior is always considered force, regardless of the child or student's consent. Child sexual abuse includes, but is not limited to:
 - Rape or sexual assault
 - Sexually demeaning comments
 - Verbal suggestions of sexual involvement or sexual activity
 - Unwelcome or inappropriate physical contact
 - Graphic or degrading comments about an individual's physical appearance
 - Expressions or questions or comments about sexual behavior
 - Implied sexual advances or propositions
 - Display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures