

First Presbyterian
Church of
Fort Oglethorpe
Child Protection Policy
and Procedures

Adopted by Session May 24, 2019

26I. INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE It is the purpose of the First Presbyterian Church of Fort Oglethorpe ("FPFO") through its Session, Diaconate, members, and staff of to provide a safe and secure environment for the covenant children and mentally handicapped persons entrusted to its care in order to encourage and facilitate the fulfillment of the members' vows to the covenant children and parents in its midst, and encourage those young people 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, and to appropriately handle any reports of alleged child abuse. The Church is committed to clear and well publicized standards of behavior and appropriate boundaries for all Church staff (paid and volunteer) in positions of trust who have regular contact with children. The following policy and procedures are for the protection of the children, staff, and the entire church family at First Presbyterian Church, and those to whom it seeks to minister.

B. SCOPE This Child Protection Policy ("Policy") shall apply to the hiring and supervision of all current and future staff, whether paid or volunteer, who will have the responsibility of supervising the activities of children participating in activities or programs of First Presbyterian Church of Fort Oglethorpe. This Policy shall also govern the handling and reporting of any allegation of child abuse regarding any staff or any member of the Church covered by this Policy.

C. DEFINITIONS For the purpose of this policy the following definitions shall apply:

1. "Adult" shall be defined as any individual at least eighteen (18) years of age.
2. "Child" shall be defined as any individual *under* the age of eighteen (18) (or whose mental capacity is that of a minor).
3. "Child Abuse" shall be defined as verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse of a child, including any sexual activity of any kind, whether violent or non-violent, touching or non-touching behavior.
4. "Member" shall mean any person listed on the rolls as a member of FPFO either as an infant, communicant, or associate member of the Church.
5. "Staff" shall be defined as any adult who serves with the responsibility of working with or caring for children, and includes volunteer and paid individuals.
6. "Teenage Volunteer" shall be defined as any worker at least twelve (12) years old or older, but under the age of eighteen (18) enlisted to **assist** with the care of children.

II. PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION AND MAINTENANCE

1. The Session shall form a Child Protection Committee ("CPC or "Committee"). The Committee and will be responsible for coordinating and carrying out the policy and procedures outlined below. The Committee shall consist of at least 2 members of the Session and one member of the Diaconate.

2. The CPC will be responsible for a coordinated response by the Church of any allegations of Child Abuse involving members or staff of FPFO, or any activity occurring on church premises or during a Church sponsored function.
3. These procedures shall be reviewed at least every two years by the Committee which will make a report to the Session and, if necessary, recommendations for amendments. The Committee shall also provide reports and recommendations to the Session regarding the effective implementation of these policies and procedures, and any resources required for the same. The Committee shall also make recommendations regarding the provision of general education of and communication with the congregation of the Church regarding these policies and procedures, and related topics to promote an appropriate level of awareness of issues related to the prevention and detection of child abuse and child sexual abuse.
4. The Session shall provide sufficient funding, qualified personnel and facilities to ensure the effective implementation of this Policy.

III. STAFF ENLISTMENT

1. Any person desiring to work with children must be approved by the Session.
2. The Session reserves the right to perform a background and reference check regarding the applicant including: prior employment, volunteer service, personal references, and criminal background. The Session will review any information obtained. Whether disclosed voluntarily or by result of any background check, any applicant that has been previously charged or convicted of a crime may be disqualified from serving or participating in activities or programs with children. Any applicant that has prior incidents of sexual misconduct or child abuse shall not be allowed to serve in any capacity where they would have contact with children.
 - a. The church office shall maintain a record of training and policy orientation for staff members.
 - b. Subsequent to a completed background check, all adult applicants must attest that s/he has never been a perpetrator of abuse.
3. No person will be allowed to work with minors until they have become a member or associate member of the church. However, the Session may approve non-members to watch children on an occasional and temporary basis.
4. It shall be a condition of staff appointment for any paid or volunteer position with First Presbyterian Church that the applicant read and agree with each and every provision of this child protection policy, including reporting procedures.

IV. STAFF TRAINING AND SUPERVISION RULES

1. Staff members will be required to read and understand this Policy on reporting Child Abuse.
2. Every activity or room where children's activities are taking place shall be supervised by

at least two people, and a reasonable ratio of adult workers to children will be maintained in each situation involving the supervision of children (but never fewer than one adult).

3. Staff members are responsible for maintaining the appropriate number of staff or adult supervisors that any particular situation requires. Staff members shall immediately notify a member of the Committee or other Church officer should additional adult supervisors be needed.
4. If activities involving children are taking place in a room with a door without a window, the door shall remain open at all times.
5. Church staff will supervise these procedures on an ongoing basis and make unannounced visits into classes or other program sites from time to time.
6. 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 (e.g., a school year) for their child to receive private counseling.
7. Teenage Volunteers wanting to serve in any capacity with activities or programs for children will need to complete an application and receive the regular training.

V. SPECIFIC ACTS AND OMISSIONS IN VIOLATION OF THIS POLICY

1. The following acts or omissions constitute 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 involved has been assured.
 - a. Any direct observations or evidence of sexual activity in the presence of or in association with a child.
 - b. Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of abusive conduct towards a child.
 - c. Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any person and a child.
 - d. Infliction of physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to a child.
 - e. Physical neglect of a child, including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to the activities of the Church.
 - f. Mental or emotional injury to a child.
 - g. The presence or possession of obscene or pornographic materials at any function of the Church.
 - h. The presence, possession, or being under the influence of any illegal or illicit drugs.
 - i. The consumption of or being under the influence of illegal or illicit drugs or alcohol while leading or participating in a function for children at the Church.
2. The Church also reserves the right to take action under and consistent with this Policy with respect to any Member against whom a credible accusation has been made of a violation

of any of the standards of conduct contained in this policy not occurring on Church property and not related to Church activities.

VI. REPORTING INCIDENTS OF ALLEGED CHILD ABUSE

1. Any person having cause to believe that a Child has been subject to an act of Child Abuse, or any other violation of this Policy, during any activity at or sponsored by the Church, shall report the incident, or the basis of the person's belief, as outlined below.
2. A report should be made to a member of the Committee as soon as possible. The Committee member receiving the initial report will be responsible for confirming the allegations reported and the condition of the child on the same day on which the first report was made. Each member of the Committee should be notified as soon as possible, and the Committee should immediately commence a preliminary investigation, and conclude it as soon as possible. In instances where child abuse is alleged and a member of the ministerial staff is the alleged perpetrator, the entire Session will be contacted immediately.
3. The following information should be collected as quickly and discreetly as possible:
 - a. The name, age, address, and phone number of the Child victim and the Child's parents or guardians.
 - b. The nature and extent of the Child's injuries.
 - c. Evidence of previous injuries to the Child.
 - d. Name, age, address, and phone number of the alleged perpetrator.
 - e. Name, address, and phone number of any witnesses.
4. The investigation should be limited to collecting the appropriate information from the victim's parents or guardians, and any alleged adult witnesses whenever possible.
5. The Child victim shall not be questioned or interrogated about the incident.
6. Contact with the alleged perpetrator should be limited to that which is initiated by the alleged perpetrator only. Contact should not be initiated with the alleged perpetrator.
7. Upon determination that a credible accusation of Child Abuse has been made, within 24 hours the Committee shall cause the matter to be reported pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 19-7-5 to a child welfare agency providing protective services as designated by the Department of Human Services, or, in the absence of such agency, to an appropriate police authority or the district attorney.
 - a. The initial report shall be made to the (CPS) **Central Intake Center at 1-855-422-4453** or online using the mandated reporter form.
 - b. If that agency is unavailable, the initial report shall be made to the **Fort Oglethorpe Police Department at 706-866-2512**.
 - c. In an **EMERGENCY** situation, 911 shall be called immediately.
8. A report shall be made whether or not the identity of the alleged perpetrator is known.

9. The Committee shall further cause to be reported to the Church's insurance agent any allegation or violation that could result in potential liability as soon as possible using the information in Attachment A.
10. The Committee will maintain confidentiality in the investigation and emphasize confidentiality of the victim and any accused.
11. The Session will be responsible for communicating with the victim and the victim's family regarding the steps being taken, and the status of the investigations. If child abuse is confirmed, the victim's family will be consulted, and their opinion considered regarding what action they would like to take in the matter, within the bounds of a Scriptural, as well as legal and prudent response (Church legal counsel should assist in this determination).
12. The Session will be responsible for any necessary communication with the congregation regarding any serious incidents, and 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. The Session will be responsible for any necessary response to the media, and will coordinate any necessary or prudent contacts with the media.
14. The Church shall fully comply with the O.C.G.A. § 19-7-5 and cooperate fully with law enforcement officials.

VII. ACTIONS PURSUANT TO A REPORT OF CHILD ABUSE

1. The Committee shall immediately notify the entire Session of any report of alleged Child Abuse or other violation of this Policy.
2. If the alleged perpetrator is on the Church Staff, the Session shall suspend the staff duties of the alleged perpetrator until at least the conclusion of the initial investigation. If the initial investigation results in a credible report being made to the appropriate authority under O.C.G.A. § 19-7-5, the staff duties of the alleged perpetrator shall be suspended indefinitely until further action of the Session
3. The Session shall restrict any person who has been the subject of a credible report pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 19-7-5 from any and all interaction or dealings with Children upon Church premises or at Church functions.
4. The Session shall further have the option to completely ban any alleged perpetrator who has been the subject of a credible report pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 19-7-5 from the Church premises indefinitely, and to indefinitely prohibit participation in any Church sponsored activities.
5. If any allegation of Child Abuse against a Staff member is confirmed, the Staff member shall be immediately dismissed. If any allegation of Child Abuse against a teaching elder

is confirmed, a congregational meeting shall be called to request presbytery dissolve the pastoral relationship.

6. In instances where the evidence after the initial report is inconclusive, the Committee will make a report and recommendation to the Session regarding any potential further actions. The Session will make any final determination regarding any further or permanent action.
7. The Session reserves the right under this Policy to direct and implement any other measures or restrictions it may deem advisable or necessary with regards to individuals coming onto the Church property or attending Church functions in order to carry out the spirit and purpose of this policy.

VIII. INSURANCE The Church shall obtain a sufficient level of liability insurance coverage that would cover child abuse and sexual misconduct claims. If available, the church should have the levels of coverage which are required for limited immunity.

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 First Presbyterian Church and by the state law to complete the tasks listed below. Date and initial as each step is completed.

Date: _____	Initial: _____	1. For clergy and paid professional staff: remove the accused from the situation and suspend the accused from duties involving children/youth.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	For volunteers: Remove the accused from the situation and immediately notify the closest available clergy/professional staff person who will suspend the accused.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	2. 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.
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The procedures after this point will be administered by ministerial staff persons only.

Date: _____	Initial: _____	3. Immediately notify the parents/guardians of the alleged victim and respond to their questions and concerns.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	4. Immediately notify state authorities.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	5. Immediately notify the minister.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	6. Make written documentation of persons contacted and action taken to this point.

Date: _____	Initial: _____	7. The clergy/professional staff person will immediately notify a member of the Committee to begin the internal and pastoral care process.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	a. notify the insurance carrier of the incident immediately and comply with its investigation, if any;
Date: _____	Initial: _____	b. cooperate with legal and state authorities in their investigations, if any;
Date: _____	Initial: _____	c. prepare a written

		statement and designate a spokesperson to respond to media inquiries;
Date: _____	Initial: _____	d. provide assistance to the alleged victim and his/her family in obtaining counseling or referral to a mental health professional, if needed;
Date: _____	Initial: _____	e. respond to the needs of the families of the alleged victim and the accused to seek a redemptive solution for all involved;
Date: _____	Initial: _____	f. inform the affected volunteer(s) and paid staff members of the need for confidentiality, and;
Date: _____	Initial: _____	g. consider and respond to the concerns of other parents.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	8. The director of the affected ministerial area will respond to the pastoral care concerns of persons within the department.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	9. 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.

Date: _____	Initial: _____	10. Make written documentation of persons contacted and action taken.
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INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Reason for report _____
Date of incident _____ Class
Name(s) and Age(s) of Minor(s)

Quote the child's first words verbatim:

Briefly describe what happened:

What action did you take?

Has the incident been resolved? ___yes ___no Explain:

Were there any witnesses? ___yes ___no Names:

Signatures of witnesses (if possible): _____

Report submitted to: _____
