

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY FOR CHILDREN AND STUDENTS

Because we value children and students, Forest Park Covenant Church establishes these policies and procedures to assure that we will do our best to protect them and keep them safe.

***Forest Park Covenant Church
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Approved by FPCC Executive Board 2/20/07

Reviewed by: CF Board 2/13/07

Reviewed by: Exec Bd 2/13/07

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Definitions

CHILD ABUSE is a legal classification for the maltreatment of children.

Types of Abuse

- **Physical Abuse** - Violent non-accidental contact which results in injury. This includes but is not limited to striking, biting or shaking. Injuries include bruises, fractures, cuts and burns.
- **Sexual Abuse** - Any form of sexual activity with a child, whether in the home or any other setting. The abuser may be an adult, adolescent, or any minor four years older than the victim.
- **Emotional Abuse** - A pattern of crushing a child's spirit and attacking his/her self-worth through rejection, threats, terrorizing, isolating, or belittling. Emotional abuse affects a child's emotional development leading to low self-esteem, problems with feelings and emotions, and difficulty with relationships.
- **Neglect** - Includes failure by a caregiver to provide for a child's emotional needs such as love and attention; physical needs such as food, clothing, shelter and health care; and failing to offer supervision when it is within his/her power to do so.
- **Children** – Any child age 0 – 4th grade.
- **Student** – Any child 5th -12th grade.
- **Adult** – Any Individual who is 18 years of age or older.

Forest Park Covenant Church

Letter of Introduction

Introduction

Child abuse affects the lives of thousands of children every year in North America. Churches have long been seen as organizations which are lax or negligent in the screening, education, and training of their children's and students workers. The result has been embarrassing false accusations, or missed opportunities to protect a child in need. Churches have a responsibility in their ministry programs and for the actions of the staff and volunteers. Court decisions throughout the nation are holding churches liable when they can prove that the church did not properly screen their volunteers, educate their workers, or provide adequate supervision. Much can and should be done by churches in North America to make their children's workers more aware of the seriousness of child abuse and the procedures that the church can and will implement to protect their children from being abused.

Our Response

We desire to respond in earnest to make our facilities and programming a safe place for all children, students and church workers through implementation of a Safety and Wellness Program. Steps must be taken proactively to screen and to train children and student workers. Precautionary measures must be communicated by providing guidelines and procedures that offer assistance to parents and workers. Through increased awareness and supervision, we hope to prevent any incidents from occurring, and hence support effective, caring ministries which continue to further the cause of Christ and lead individuals to a personal relationship with Him.

Statement of Purpose

The main purpose for this policy is to protect children and students.

This purpose is accomplished in part by educating and training child care workers, both members and friends, on issues which may contribute to dangerous and unsafe conditions affecting children and students. These issues include how to supervise against neglect and abuse. Individual members and friends of the church are encouraged to act responsibly, not only in caring for children and students, but also in caring for each other (Matt. 19:13-14; John 15:9-17).

If charges against a child-care worker are substantiated, the goal of the church will include pursuing reconciliation and restoration to the fellowship of Christ. (Matt. 18:15-35; I Corinthians 6:1-11).

A list of approved forms is found on Page 8. They can be obtained through the church office

Forest Park Covenant Church

ABUSE AND HARASSMENT POLICY FOR CHILDREN AND STUDENTS

I. Recruiting, Selecting, and Training Volunteers and Paid Staff

A. Qualifications:

Every volunteer & staff person who works with children and/or students shall, as determined appropriate by pastoral staff

1. Confess Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior
2. Adhere to the affirmations of faith of the church
3. Be a regular attender for at least 6 months.
4. Any person recognized as posing a threat to children or students will be prohibited from working with minors.

B. Procedures:

Every volunteer, and paid staff person who works with children and/or students shall:

1. Complete a confidential application
2. Agree to a confidential check of public records and reference check
3. Meet with a person(s) designated by the church staff member to discuss and pray about his/her role in the ministry of the church

C. Application Form:

The application for volunteers and staff shall be maintained and includes:

1. Personal information: Name, address, criminal history and tendencies.
2. Ministry information: Area of interest, gifts, talents, etc.
3. Procedures: Concerning the care and guidelines for ministering to children and students.
4. A place for volunteers and staff to sign stating that they have read the procedures and agree to observe them.
5. Church History information: a five year church, volunteer, and ministry history for all.
6. A Public Records Release must be completed by volunteers and staff. This will authorize a background check with the appropriate agency.
7. A new Volunteer Ministry Application will be completed every three years which will include authorization for a new background check.

D. Training:

A person(s) designated by the church governing board will be responsible for educating volunteers and staff on the Child Protection Policy. Training specialists are also available locally from the State Department of Human Services – Child Protection Staff.

II. Procedures

A. Avoid Isolation:

Volunteers and staff are to observe the two-person rule. This requires that volunteers and staff are never in an isolated setting with children without a partner. There must always be two or more child care workers in each location

where children are present. In the nursery a paid staff or pre-approved nursery staff must be one of the two child care workers.

1. Transporting Children: When transporting children two volunteer and/or staff persons should be in each church van. Child care workers and staff are not to be alone while transporting a child to or from a church activity.
2. Transporting Students (middle and high school): One adult volunteer or staff member may transport two or more students. One adult transporting one student is not permitted.
3. Events: When away from the church on an outing or at a church “overnight,” volunteers and staff are to work together as a team and avoid being isolated with a child or adolescent; this is to be coordinated with the receiving organization’s guidelines.
4. Meeting Individually: If it is necessary for a volunteer or staff member to meet individually with a child or student, it should be done in a public setting or where they are clearly visible by others. Volunteer or staff members must notify another volunteer/staff member in advance of the meeting.

B. Early Childhood Bathroom Procedures:

1. Children are taken only upon their request to a self-contained bathroom.
2. Keep the main door open. Remain outside the bathroom where you can hear the child. Have the child come out for assistance with his/her clothes.
3. The staff should rotate this responsibility.
4. Shout and Scout guidelines will be followed (See attachment 1).
5. Diapering in the nursery will be performed by appointed child care workers within the current accepted guidelines.

C. Reporting Procedures:

1. Volunteers or staff shall immediately report verbally and in writing (on an “Incident Report Form”) any behavior which seems abusive or inappropriate, or any incident reported by a minor.
2. Indications of physical abuse as described above (under Definitions) must be immediately reported to staff, as this may be the result of maltreatment by others.
3. Line of Reporting:
 - a. Report directly to a program coordinator, director, or staff person.
 - b. This person will report the incident directly to the pastoral staff.
 - c. If the allegation is directed toward a pastoral staff member, reporting may be made to the Senior Pastor and/or the Church Chair.
 - d. The program coordinator or staff person, with assistance from pastoral staff or church chair shall report directly to the authorities as listed below in the Response Plan, D.2.c.

D. Response Plan:

1. If an allegation of abuse occurs, by a volunteer or peer, a meeting between the complainant and the appropriate pastoral staff member should be arranged as soon as possible following the response plan.
2. If the allegation involves a volunteer/peer, the pastoral staff will:
 - a. Seek legal advice prior to engaging in this response plan

- b. Meet with the volunteer/peer to discuss the allegation.
 - c. Inform the volunteer/peer that he/she may not participate in children's or student ministry until the investigation into the allegation is complete.
 - d. The church will report the complaint of abuse to the State Department of Human Services-Child Abuse 24-hour hotline (231)733-8281, and/or the Norton Shores police. (231)733-2691.
 - e. If Staff questions the need to report to authorities, it is better to err on the side of caution and make the contact.
 - f. The Pastoral staff will also make note of the allegation and its outcome on the volunteer's confidential application form.
3. If the allegation involves a staff member, then the Senior Pastor and/or the Church Chair will:
- a. Seek legal advice prior to engaging in this response plan.
 - b. Meet with the staff member to discuss the allegation.
 - c. Inform the staff member that he/she may not participate in children's or student ministry until the investigation into the allegation is complete.
 - d. Meet with accusers to discuss allegation.
 - e. Notation of the allegation and its outcome will be made in the staff person's confidential file.
 - f. The pastoral staff and/or church chair will report the allegation to authorities as noted in the Response Plan, Section D.2.d. and it is not in conflict with "E" below.
 - g. The Senior Pastor or Church Chair will make arrangements for the staff member to receive appropriate counseling.

E. Disclosure:

Church leadership will seek legal advice before disclosing any information at their discretion.

F. Child Release Guidelines:

Class release policy reduces the risk of opportunities for abuse.

1. Nursery:
 - a. Each parent or guardian will sign children in and receive a numbered pager. The parent/guardian will note where he or she will be.
 - b. No child will be released from the nursery except to parent/guardian or their assigned representative.
2. Preschool:
 - a. Each guardian will sign children in and out. The parent /guardian will note where he/she will be in the building.
 - b. No child will be released from preschool except to a parent/guardian or their assigned representative.
3. Elementary Children: (K through fourth grade)
 - a. No child will be released from the class except to a parent/guardian or their assigned representative.

G. Parental Consent:

1. The parent or legal guardian will fill out a parental consent form for each child participating in the ministries of the church.
2. Forms will be kept in a portable file for each ministry.

H. Medical Authorization:

1. The parent or legal guardian will fill out a medical authorization form for each child who participates in activity that takes place outside the church facilities.
2. The forms should accompany any activity that takes place outside the church facilities.

III. Age Requirements:

- A. All volunteers and staff who are working as child care workers for events on the FPCC premises, or sponsored by FPCC must be an adult (18 years of age or older). FPCC does allow the exception of female child care workers being 16 years of age or older, as long as they are working with an adult, so as to observe the two person rule. Child care workers and Student volunteers may be less than 18 years of age or older when working in a setting where at least two adults are present at all times.

IV. Training and Educating

- A. All volunteers who work with children and students will attend training to be educated in the policies and procedures for reducing the risk of abuse. They will sign a log stating that they have attended the training and agree to observe the policies and procedures.
- B. All church staff members will review together these policies and procedures yearly.
- C. All church staff will have a copy of this policy and procedures on file.
- D. Copies of this policy and procedure will be available to church members.

IV. Facilities

- A. All classrooms will have windows in either walls or doors.
- B. Half doors will be closed on the bottom, kept open on the top. Any whole doors without windows will be kept open.
- C. The facilities premises will be monitored by regular patrol when children's or students activities are scheduled (classroom observation, hallways and other areas of the building).

(Attachment 1)

Procedure for escorting elementary children to the bathroom

The following procedures are taught to all volunteers and staff. They must sign off that they have been through the training. Procedures are reviewed at the start of each season of a program.

When children are leaving the classroom to use the bathroom or escorted to the bathroom, use the following procedures.

- Utilize hall monitors when available.
- No more than 3 children may enter the bathroom at one time.
- Children must be within one grade of another child in the bathroom.
(Example: A 4th grader may not enter the bathroom if a 2nd grader is in there)
- Child Care Workers or any other persons are not allowed to use the bathroom while children are in the room.
- Child Care Workers must check the bathroom using the following steps:
 - Verbally check that the bathroom is empty (Shout)
 - Visually check that the bathroom is empty (Scout)
 - Allow children to enter
 - Wait outside the bathroom.
 - If other children come to use the bathroom, they may enter if:
 - They do not exceed the three at a time rule
 - The grades are not more than one above or below the child

If adults or students come to use the bathroom;

- Direct them to other restrooms
- Ask them to wait until the children are done
- Escort children back to class
- Another child care worker (hall monitor or program staff) can escort the child back to the classroom

(These bathroom procedures have been affectionately referred to as “Shout and Scout”)

Forms used in Children and Student Ministries. These are available in the church office:

(These forms may be revised by staff as needed)

- Volunteer Ministry Application Form
- Volunteer Ministry Reference Form
- Registration Form for Early Childhood and Elementary
- Early Childhood Sign-in Form
- Retreat and Camping Application
- FP Student Ministries Volunteer Leader Expectations and BIO
- Incident Report Form
- Elementary Attendance Form
- Preschool Attendance Form
- FPCC Permission Slip
- Confirmation of Receipt and Understanding of Policy
- Transportation & Medical Release Form
- Transportation Release Form
- KIDS Staff Handbook