

# Safe Church Child Protection Policy for FPC Northshore

## FPC Children's Protection Policy

Revision 1.0, November 6, 2018

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### Background

First Presbyterian Church advocates a strong childcare policy. The following policy was developed in conjunction with Guide One, FPC's insurance provider. This policy has been reviewed, approved and is supported by the Nursery Committee, Christian Education Committee, Budget & Personnel Committee, Session, Nursery Director, Children's Ministry Director, Youth Director and Youth Ministry Assistant.

This policy covers all FPC campus locations.

### General Purpose Statement

First Presbyterian Church Northshore (FPC) seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children of FPC from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

### Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms "child" or "children" include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term "worker" includes both paid and unpaid persons who work with children. The term "volunteer" means anyone involved in Nursery, Children's Ministry, or Youth Ministry at FPC, in overnight activities involving minors, in counseling of minors, or in one-on-one mentoring of minors.

### Selection of Workers

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

a) **Six Month Rule**

No person will be considered for any volunteer position involving contact with minors until she/he has been involved with FPC for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

b) **Written Application**

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by FPC. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous church affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at an FPC campus office. A copy of the application form may be found in the APPENDIX at the end of this policy.

c) **Personal Interview**

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

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## **Selection of Workers (Cont.)**

d) **Reference Checks**

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicants' references will be checked. When possible, these references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past.

Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at an FPC campus office.

e) **Criminal Background Check**

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and "volunteers" as defined above. Additionally, the applicant must inform FPC if they are now or have ever been under probation by the court or had a Continuation without Finding (CWOFF) in a case involving a child.

f) **Child Custody**

In situations where there is parental separation, divorce or restraining orders, parents and or guardians should inform the Children's Ministry Director so FPC can be on guard against parental kidnapping or custodial interference.

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing FPC to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will be unable to work with children.

A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Nursery, Children's Ministry or Youth Director or Youth Ministry Assistant or staff of FPC on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at an FPC campus office.

## **Two Adult Rule**

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open and there should be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation.

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## **Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse**

For purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- **Physical abuse** – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- **Emotional abuse** – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- **Sexual abuse** – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- **Neglect** – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at FPC, becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the Nursery, Children's Ministry or Youth Director or an FPC Pastor for further action, including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at FPC or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The pastors and parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. The worker or church member alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation. He or she should be instructed to have no contact with the victim or with witnesses.
3. All allegations of abuse should be reported to the civil authorities, and the organization will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. The organization will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. The insurance company will be notified, and FPC will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
5. As necessary, FPC will designate a spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. The advice of legal counsel will be sought before responding to media inquiries or releasing information about the situation to the congregation. All other representatives of FPC should refrain from speaking to the media.
6. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it. This should be for the purpose of providing pastoral support during the time of crisis and not for the purpose of investigating the incident or influencing the investigation.
7. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth.

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### **Open Door Policy**

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

### **Teenage Workers**

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- Must be at least age 14.
- Must be screened as specified above.
- Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

### **Check-in/Check-out Procedure**

For children below third grade, a security check-in/check-out procedure will be followed. The child will be signed in by a parent or guardian, who will receive a "child check" for the child similar to a claim check. The parent or guardian must present the "child check" in order to sign out the child from our care. If a parent or guardian is unable to pick up their child, they may give the "child check" tab to another responsible individual who may pick up their child. The temporary guardian must be at least 12 years of age. In the event that a parent or guardian is unable to present the "child check," the Nursery Director, a member of the Nursery Committee, the Children's Ministry Director or a member of the Children's Ministry Committee will be contacted. The Nursery Director, a member of the Nursery Committee, the Children's Ministry Director or a member of the Children's Ministry Committee will be responsible for releasing the child to the care of a parent or guardian after discussing the surrounding circumstances with the parent or guardian.

### **Sick Child Policy**

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at FPC. Parents or guardians are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours; Green or yellow runny nose; Eye or skin infections; and/or other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease.

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

### **Medications Policy**

It is the policy of FPC not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent or guardian at home. Parents or guardians are reminded of our sick child policy.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents or guardians of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents or guardians of such children should address their situation with the Nursery, Children's Ministry Director or Youth Director or Youth Ministry Assistant to develop a plan of action.

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## **Discipline Policy**

It is the policy of FPC not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents or guardians have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with the Nursery, Children's Ministry or Youth Director or Youth Ministry Assistant if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

If a child is hurting other children (biting, hitting, pushing) or exhibiting destructive behaviors, the child will be separated from the other children and parents or guardians will be contacted to request the child be picked up.

## **Restroom Guidelines**

Children five years of age and younger should use a classroom bathroom if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, workers should escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom. They should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child.

This policy will be applied to all campus locations and implemented as follows:

- Danvers Campus
  - Parents of all children will be paged to take their children to the bathroom.
- Ipswich Campus
  - Each floor on the CLC will use a half wall barrier to insure only children and authorized Nursery staff are working with the children. If a child needs to go to the bathroom, the classroom doors will remain open so the bathroom is visible from the classroom. When bathrooms are not child only, there will be a group restroom break allotted in the class time and an adult will escort the boys and girls following the procedures outlined.

For the protection of all, workers should *never* be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents or guardians are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

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## **Accidental Injuries to Children**

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care. Workers will also fill out an incident report, found on the check-in clipboard, so the Nursery Director, Children's Ministry Director or other ministry leader can follow-up with the parents or guardians.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called by dialing 9-1-1 on a landline if available, otherwise a cell phone.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

## **Fire Evacuation**

At the sound of an alarm, workers will escort children to the nearest safe exit. If parents or guardians come to collect their child, they will be asked to walk out with the children. Everyone will make their way to the emergency meeting place, designated at each campus. Everyone will await instructions from the pastors / elders / deacons or emergency responders.

### **0-24 month fire evacuation:**

Nursery workers will place children in the evacuation crib and wheel children out of the nearest safe exit. If the doors are blocked by a fire or threat, hand children out of the windows, when possible

## **Threat in or outside of the building**

If there is a perceived threat inside or outside of the building (threatening, yelling, gunshots) volunteers will call 9-1-1 from the landline phone. Pull all shades, turn out lights, and lock and barricade doors using moveable toy shelves and chairs. Move the children to the safest, least visible parts of the room away from windows and doors. This may include interior walls, closets or bathrooms. Keep children as quiet and calm as possible.

Stay sheltered in place until the threat is over as communicated by Church staff or emergency responders.

Once the threat is gone, bring the children to the emergency meeting area sign.

Note: If an intruder does breach the room, and as a last resort, fight, using anything available as a weapon such as books, toys etc.

## **Training**

FPC will provide training on this child protection policy to all new childcare workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All workers are strongly encouraged to attend these training events.

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**FPC Application for Working with Minors**  
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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Previous work experience with children \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of previous church or other affiliation where work was performed \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Check if you will permit a background check to be conducted by FPC
- Check if you are now or ever have been under probation by the court or had a Continuation Without Finding (CWOFF) disposition

Is there anything that may or may not come up during a background check that FPC should know about? If yes, please explain:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Where would you be willing to serve?**

Children's ministry:

- Nursery \_\_ 9AM \_\_ Sunday school \_\_ 11:15AM
- Children's Sermon (K-2nd grade during the sermon)
- Sunday school (10:15-11AM Sunday mornings)
- GEMS (1st- 5th grade girls Wednesday evening program)
- ROCKS (1st - 5th grade boys Wednesday evening program)
- One-on-One Assistant for a child
- VBS
- Other Children's Ministry, describe \_\_\_\_\_

Youth ministry:

- Middle School Youth Group
- High School Youth Group
- Small Group Bible Study
- Other Youth Ministry, describe \_\_\_\_\_

**References**

1) \_\_\_\_\_  
Name Address Phone #

\_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail

\_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship

2) \_\_\_\_\_  
Name Address Phone #

\_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail

\_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship

Signature of applicant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for your interest and willingness to serve in children's ministry at FPC.**