

A CHILD SAFETY POLICY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The First Presbyterian Church of Yorktown
2880 Crompond Road
Yorktown Heights, New York

*Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes one child in my name welcomes me.
Woe to the one who puts a stumbling block before one of these little ones."
~ Matthew 18:4-5 paraphrased*

I. DEFINITIONS

This policy requires that any action that results in physical or emotional abuse or that endangers children must be reported. This includes but is not limited to the definitions and abuses defined below.

- A. Child: Any person under 18 years of age, or at-risk adults 18 and older who are particularly vulnerable due to limited mental function.
- B. Child Abuse: Any treatment of a child that threatens the child's safety or leaves the child's life with physical or emotional scars. It may result from physical contact, sexual contact or improper communication by any adult with authority over a child. Abuse can also occur between two children. Any activity that is abusive is still abuse, even if a child cooperates out of ignorance, innocence or fear.
- C. Sexual Abuse: Any sexual activity with a child - whether in the home by a caretaker, in a daycare situation, a foster/residential setting, or in any other setting. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child, provided the child is four years older than the victim. Sexual Abuse may be either touch (physical) or non-touch (verbal) by a person known or unknown to the child. For all sex offenses, a person is deemed legally incapable of consent if they are less than 17 years of age, mentally defective or incapacitated, or physically helpless.
- D. Child Maltreatment: The responsible person is not providing minimal care for the child, with the result that the child's physical, mental or emotional condition has been impaired or is in danger of becoming impaired. This includes not providing adequate food, clothing, shelter, education or medical/dental care when financially able. It also includes excessive corporal punishment, or abandonment of the child, or loss of control of one's actions due to drugs or alcohol.

For the purposes of this policy, when the term "child abuse" is used it will include child abuse, sexual abuse, and child maltreatment as defined above.

II. RECEIVING AND REPORTING INFORMATION ABOUT CHILD ABUSE

A. Receiving Information about Child Abuse

Information about child abuse which comes to employees, teachers or other volunteers must be taken seriously. This includes but is not limited to the following:

- Reports by children of abuse to others
- Disclosure (direct or indirect) by the abused child
- Observations by individuals
- Conversations with other children or adults about potential abuse
- Evidence of possible abuse

B. Reporting Child Abuse

Church employees, ordained officers (i.e.: Elders, Deacons), Trustees, and all volunteers working with children/youth, are required to immediately report (within 24 hours) any situation where there is reasonable cause to suggest that a child/youth may have been abused in any form.

1. If child abuse, sexual abuse, or maltreatment by anyone (including the Pastors or any ordained minister), is reported or suspected, the person making or receiving the complaint must report it immediately to the Clerk of Session and appropriate civil authorities (see #3 below).
2. If it is not possible for any reason to contact the Clerk (e.g. s/he is unavailable) or the Clerk is the accused, notify the Pastor. If that too is not possible, then notify the Chair of Personnel. The Pastor must also be notified as long as s/he is not the accused.
3. Using the Incident Report Form (Form A – attached) as a guide, the person making or receiving the complaint along with the Clerk of Session will contact the civil authorities together by calling the New York State Child Protection Hotline (1-800-342-3720; <http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/cps>). (The clerk and complainant together should first determine whether the complainant is a mandated reporter or voluntary reporter under New York State Law. (<http://www.nysmandatedreporter.org>) Depending upon their location they will make the call together on speakerphone (available in church offices) or by using an extension telephone.
4. In addition, the Clerk or other appropriate authority, i.e. Pastor or Personnel Chair, will report the action to the child's parent or guardian (providing this will not put the child in jeopardy for additional abuse) as well as the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Hudson River.

C. Consequences and Additional Action

1. When a child is in immediate danger, if possible, secure the safety of the child first.
2. The accused person may not participate in any church-sponsored activities involving children and youth, until and unless the investigation by civil and/or ecclesiastical authorities is completed and the accused is exonerated.
3. The identity of the accuser and the accused must be kept confidential. The report or the suspected incident may only be referred to and discussed with the authorized people listed above in B 2 through 4.

III. POLICIES FOR CHURCH RUN PROGRAMS

A. Screening of Teachers and Volunteers in Church Programs

The Session will assure itself that any person who serves as staff, teacher or volunteer of children is qualified to do so. This would include Sunday School teachers, children's choir directors, youth group leaders, or volunteers who work with children at any other church-sponsored event.

1. It is required that teachers and others listed above sign a Sexual Misconduct Information Form (Form B – attached) and undergo a basic background check.
2. Any person who is known to have been convicted of, pled guilty to or no contest to, or is presently under indictment for a crime against children or youth or for sexual misconduct of any kind will not be placed in a position involving access to children.
Please refer to the New York State Sex Offender Registry (<http://www.criminaljustice.ny.gov/nsor/>).
3. The Pastor reserves the right to clarify any information or concerns through interview or further screening. The Pastor may limit access of any individual to children at any time in the interest of safety.
4. Teachers or others working with children are required to receive training in the child protection policy and the *Darkness to Light: Stewards of Children* abuse prevention program (<http://www.d2l.org>) or an equivalent program, prior to working with children, and to renew that training at least once every three years.

B. Requirements of Parents/Guardians of Children in Church Activities

1. A parent or authorized guardian must sign in and sign out children up through fourth grade from all church activities in which the children will not be under the supervision of their parents/guardians.

2. Parents must advise the Teacher if it is necessary for a child to leave before the scheduled end of an event.
3. Any time a child participates in an overnight event at the church or elsewhere, parents are required to sign a permission slip.
4. Parents are responsible for all transportation of children to church events off site, unless otherwise arranged by the church (for events such as a mission trip).
5. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to supervise their children at church when the children are not participating in a church-related activity in which the children are under the supervision of someone other than parent/guardian.

IV. SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

1. All children through fourth grade must be signed in and out of any church activity in which the children are under the supervision of someone other than the parent/guardian by said parent/guardian.
2. Staff/teachers/volunteers will not allow children through fourth grade to leave the classroom, however temporarily, unaccompanied.
3. Staff/teachers/volunteers will not dismiss any child before the scheduled end of an event without permission. If, for any reasons, a child needs to leave a program without prior permission, a parent or authorized guardian will be contacted and advised.
4. Every effort will be made to have at least two adults present for all activities involving children at least one of whom will be over 18 years of age and at least five years older than those whom they are supervising.
5. Rooms and areas used for activities for children and youth shall be made as visible as possible. Wherever possible, doors shall have an unobstructed viewing window. Where there is no window in the door, the door shall be left open.
6. When children attend overnight events, they must be accompanied by at least two trained leaders, both of whom are at least 21 years of age and at least five years older than those whom they are supervising.
7. Any injury, action, illness or mishap that takes place while a child is under the supervision of a staff member/teacher/volunteer, must be reported by the staff member/teacher/volunteer to the church office within 24 hours of the incident.

Adopted by the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Yorktown on December 6, 2016, effective January 1, 2017.

INCIDENT REPORT FORM

1. Name of staff or volunteer observing or receiving disclosure of child abuse:

2. Child's Name/Address/Telephone:

3. Child's Age/Date of Birth:

4. Date/place of initial conversation with/report of child:

5. Child's statement (give your detailed summary here or on back of this page):

6. Name/Address/Telephone of person accused:

7. Relationship of accused to child (paid staff, volunteer, family member, other):

8. Name/Address/Telephone of witness(es), if any, to the incident:

9. Reported to either Clerk of Session, Pastor(s) or Chair of Personnel:

Name:

Date/Time of Report:

Summary of Report:

10. Call to Child's Parent/Guardian:

Date/Time:

Spoke with:

Summary of conversation:

11. Date/Time/Name of person reported to:

Pastor:

Child Protective Services (800-342-3720):

Stated Clerk of the Hudson River Presbytery (914-941-2100):

Form B

First Presbyterian Church of Yorktown
Sexual Misconduct Information Sheet

ALL INFORMATION PROVIDED ON THIS FORM WILL BE KEPT ENTIRELY CONFIDENTIAL.

Name (please print): _____

Please initial:

_____ I certify by signature below that I have never been convicted of, or pleaded guilty to, any crime related to child abuse or sexual misconduct, and that no such charges are presently filed against me.

_____ If I am unable to make the above certification, I offer the following information or explanation:

_____ I authorize First Presbyterian Church of Yorktown to inquire concerning any civil or criminal records, or any judicial or ecclesiastical proceeding involving me as a defendant, related to child abuse or sexual misconduct. I also authorize those contacted to release any and all requested relevant information to First Presbyterian Church of Yorktown.

For this reason, please provide:

Date of birth (month/day/year) _____

Social Security Number: _____

_____ I understand that information obtained in this manner may be used to deny my acceptance as a Teacher or Parent Helper of children, youth or adults at First Presbyterian Church of Yorktown. And, I hereby release the church from any and all claims, liabilities and cause of action for the release of any information related to child abuse or sexual misconduct.

The above information is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Signature: _____

Date: _____