



## Central Presbyterian Church Child Protection Policy

Effective January 1, 2020

Approved by Session December 17, 2019

### A. Purpose Statement

Central Presbyterian Church believes that children and youth, as children of God, are an integral part of the community of faith and commits to nurturing them in a safe and welcoming environment. This policy was developed to protect children and youth from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior, while also protecting our staff and volunteers.

### B. Definitions

1. *Child abuse* - An act committed by a parent, caregiver, or person in a position of trust (even though he or she may not care for the child on a daily basis) which is not accidental and which harms or threatens harm to a child's physical or mental health or welfare. Types of abuse may include physical abuse, including physical injury or threat of injury; physical neglect, such as failure to provide necessary care to a child; sexual abuse; mental abuse or neglect; emotional abuse; and spiritual abuse. Child abuse includes, but is not limited to: neglect of basic needs, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, or spiritual abuse.
2. *Staff* - Any person who works for salary or wages at Central Presbyterian Church (CPC/the church).
3. *Volunteer* - Any person not employed by CPC who, at any time during the year, teaches, supervises, or helps with children and youth activities, or is in the presence of children or youth. These activities include, but are not limited to, Sunday school, nursery, childcare, confirmation, children and youth music activities, overnight events, and off-site events.
4. *Leader* - An adult designated by CPC or by a sponsoring organization to have responsibility for children and/or youth. The adult must be a minimum of 18 years of age. Leaders of overnight trips must be at least 21 years of age. It is suggested that leaders be a minimum of four years older than the children or youth they are supervising.
5. *Church Sponsored Activity* - Includes any and all gatherings that arise from any worship, educational, childcare, fellowship, administrative, pastoral, mission or recreational event generated or organized by CPC, whether on-campus or off-campus. This policy does not apply to activities where guardians are present and responsible for their children (e.g. Monthly Family Events, Project Home, Fall Family Retreat).
6. *Child or Youth* - Persons under 18 years old and considered a minor under the law.



## C. Screening and Selection of Staff and Volunteers

CPC will provide screening of all paid church staff members and adult volunteers working with children and/or youth. This screening will help make the church aware of potential issues prior to any activities with children and youth. CPC will provide training on a regular basis to educate church staff members and all volunteers working with children and youth. Following the offer of employment by the church of new staff and the approval by church staff and session of certain volunteers working with children and youth, the screening will be accomplished as follows:

1. CPC will perform a background check on all paid church staff members and adult volunteers who work with children and/or youth, facilitated by the Head of Staff and Children and Youth Ministries Coordinator.
2. The background check will be completed every three years for so long as a person works as a paid church staff member or volunteers with children or youth in the capacity described in this section.
3. A background check showing any violation will warrant further consideration by the Head of Staff, the Children and Youth Ministries Coordinator, and the Children and Youth Committee Chair. The position may only be filled by a candidate that gains unanimous approval from the aforementioned leaders after reviewing the background check. Factors that may disqualify someone from working with children and youth may include but are not limited to:
  - a. Any person who is currently under investigation for, has pleaded no contest or guilty to, or been convicted of (1) criminal sexual conduct, (2) neglect of a child, youth, or vulnerable adult, or (3) physical abuse of a child, youth, or vulnerable adult will not be permitted to work or volunteer in any activities sponsored by CPC involving children or youth.
  - b. Convictions for or pleas of no contest or guilty to an offense involving minors, violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency, and any conduct contrary to CPC's mission may preclude someone from being permitted to work with children and youth.
  - c. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction when requested may also be a disqualifying factor.
4. CPC shall provide a copy of this policy and shall facilitate training on the policy to all paid church staff members and all volunteers who work with children and youth. Volunteers will review this policy and sign a covenant each year that they continue to work with children and youth.



## **D. Use and Storage of Documents**

All forms filled out by volunteers will be treated in a confidential manner to the extent feasible and consistent with applicable law and will be kept in secure storage. Only the previously mentioned (Head of Staff, Children and Youth Ministries Coordinator, and the Children and Youth Committee chairperson) leaders will review the forms. The exception to this will be in response to a report of suspicious activity, in which case the information will be made accessible to appropriate legal authorities.

## **E. General Procedures**

### **1. Supervision: Two-Leader/Open-Door Policy**

Whenever possible, any adult who is present in a church sponsored activity for children or youth should be accompanied by another adult. CPC employees and volunteers should not, during a CPC program, be alone with a single child where they cannot be observed by others. The following guidelines should be observed:

- a. Whenever possible, at least two non-related adult workers should be present at activities involving children or youth. The only exceptions to the two-adult rule would be situations in which the adult and child or youth are in a public place or other persons are in and out of the area or room. In such cases, classroom doors shall remain open (doors for children and youth rooms should have windows, top halves that can open, or remain open at all times). The policy is not intended to restrict appropriate pastoral counseling and caregiving. The following **do not** violate this policy:
  1. On-campus and during the Sunday school hour on Sunday mornings, if a designated adult supervisor moves in and out of the classrooms and monitors the hallways;
  2. One-on-one interactions between a child and adult conducted in a public space with the prior knowledge of a paid church staff member and the prior consent of the parent of the child;
  3. When an emergency or other situation (for example, bathroom breaks, calming a distraught child, or a sick child) requires one adult to be alone with children or youth and another adult is notified immediately before and after that time period.
- b. Diaper changes, if not being performed by a child's parent or guardian, shall be performed by paid church staff members whenever possible. The doors of bathrooms used for children requiring adult supervision shall remain open.
- c. In settings where the premises are governed by other organizations, such as camps or conference centers, their policies shall apply.



## 2. Ratios

The recommended adult/volunteer-to-child/youth ratio, based on best practices, is 1:6, gender balance is recommended. For overnight trips, the ratio is 1:4, although 1:6 is permissible.

## 3. Injury or Illness

The safety of children and youth is our first priority, and any injury or illness should first be met with the appropriate level of care. After ensuring the safety of the child, all incidents involving illness or injury of any kind to any child or youth during a church sponsored event shall be reported in a timely manner to the parent or guardian of the child or youth, and also to the Children and Youth Ministries Coordinator.

## 4. “Six Month” Rule for Volunteers

A volunteer must be a member of CPC, or have regularly attended CPC, for six months before working with youth or children. This requirement does not apply to paid staff or volunteers involved in activities in which their own children are present. The Children and Youth Committee or the Children and Youth Ministries Coordinator shall have the authority to waive this six-month rule upon request, where appropriate.

## 5. Sign In/Out

Under no circumstances should volunteers release children to anyone other than the authorized parent, guardian, or other individual authorized by the parent or guardian. Staff and volunteers should not release children to any adult or family member, including older siblings, other than the child’s parents/guardian *unless* prior verbal permission has been obtained from the parent.

## 6. Social Media/Communication

Staff and volunteers will be mindful of the content on any portable electronic device, social networking pages, or other electronic media that might be accessible to any children and youth. They will abide by Central’s photo and media policy (found at [centralforgood.org/photography](http://centralforgood.org/photography)). CPC recommends not initiating social media connections or posting photos of a child or youth without permission from a parent/guardian.

Adults who are connected to youth on social media must agree to refrain from posting any inappropriate content. Emailing and/or texting with children/youth about anything beyond matters related to the church should be avoided and should be brought to the attention of the Children and Youth Ministries Coordinator immediately. Any and all communication between a child/youth and an adult not directly involving church matters must include two adults.



## **7. Off-site/Overnight Events**

- a. Leaders
  1. Consistent with this policy, any adult staff or volunteers working with children or youth will be screened with the measures outlined under section C.
  2. Drivers of vehicles will be screened as appropriate, and given briefings on church insurance as needed.
- b. Parental/Guardian Consent
  1. Children and youth must obtain parental or guardian permission for involvement in church sponsored activities or programs that involve travel away from the church's or physical facilities or overnight events. This consent will be accomplished by an activity form for each unique event, and an additional medical form for overnight events.
- c. Transportation
  1. The spirit of the two-leader/open-door policy will remain in effect whenever leaders are transporting children or youth to off-site events. This means that an adult should have either multiple children or another adult in any vehicle transporting children and youth. When vehicle space is limited, this can be accomplished by multiple vehicles caravanning to a destination together.
  2. Parental/Guardian consent will be required for transporting children or youth to off-site events.
- d. Sleeping arrangements
  1. The Children and Youth Ministries Coordinator and other adult leaders will determine sleeping arrangements for overnight events as appropriate and necessary.
  2. All adult staff and volunteers should abide by the two-leader/open-door policy, being particularly mindful in sleeping spaces.
  3. Adults and children/youth should not meet or gather in sleeping spaces, unless common spaces are unavailable.

## **8. Policy Review**

The provisions of this policy shall be reviewed annually by the Children and Youth Committee. The committee shall report periodically to the Session and recommend any changes deemed appropriate.



## **F. Staff and Volunteer Code of Conduct**

While participating in events sponsored by Central Presbyterian Church, children and youth have the right to a safe and supportive environment.

To ensure this, staff and volunteers **will:**

- Adhere to the CPC Child Protection Policy guidelines in all their interactions with children and youth.
- Respect children's rights not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable or that disregard their right to say no.
- Remain alert to the physical and emotional state of children. Any signs of injury or possible child abuse must be reported according to the CPC Child Protection Policy.
- Wear appropriate dress when volunteering with children and/or youth.
- Read, sign, and adhere to all policies related to identifying, documenting, and reporting child abuse.
- Report any concerns or suspicions regarding their observations of any individual's interaction with a child to the Children and Youth Ministries Coordinator.

Staff and volunteers **will not:**

- Discipline children by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care.
- Use physical restraint except in situations necessary to protect the child, other children, or staff from harm.
- Participate in any activities, dancing, games, skits, or jokes that make fun of a person's gender, ethnicity, socio-economic reality or sexual orientation.
- Consume, use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while working or volunteering with children or youth.
- Be impaired by legally prescribed drugs while working or volunteering with children or youth.
- Possess or use concealed weapons or firearms while working or volunteering with children or youth.
- Smoke or use tobacco in the presence of children, youth, or parents while working or volunteering.
- Use profanity, share inappropriate jokes or media, share intimate details of one's personal life, or engage in any kind of harassment in the presence of children, youth, or parents.
- Date or be romantically involved with children/youth or other program participants.



## G. Reporting

Staff and volunteers working with children and youth are mandatory reporters in Minnesota (Minn. Stat., section 626.556, subd. 3(a)(2)), and will report suspected abuse within 24 hours of a concern arising. In accordance with the requirements of the law, and as far as practicable, such reports shall be treated as confidential. Reporters should call the county in which the child lives.

- Ramsey County Child Protective Services: 651-266-4500
- Hennepin County Child Protective Services: 612-348-3552
- Washington County Child Protective Services: 651-430-6457
- Dakota County Child Protective Services: 952-891-7459

Central encourages all reports of suspected abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, verbal) of children or youth associated with the church to be made promptly and made directly to the Children and Youth Ministries Coordinator or to one of the church's pastors. As a staff or volunteer reporting abuse, one of the pastors or the Children and Youth Ministries Coordinator can assist the reporter in calling the appropriate reporting body.

1. In the event of a report concerning a paid church staff member, the Children and Youth Ministries Coordinator or pastor to whom the report was made shall confer with the head of staff, and may request the assistance of another church staff member with regard to the steps to be taken concerning further investigation, if any, further reporting, or interim or final disposition;
2. In the event of a report concerning a volunteer, the Children and Youth Ministries Coordinator or pastor to whom the report was made shall confer with the head of staff and the chair of the Children and Youth Committee, and may request the assistance of another church staff member with regard to the steps to be taken concerning further investigation, if any, further reporting, or interim or final disposition.



**Covenant Agreement for Staff and Volunteers:**

Please read through the above policy and sign to show that you have understood the policies in place.

While working as part of a Central Presbyterian Church ministry, I agree to provide a safe and supportive environment for all persons who come together in this place. I will do everything within my power to minimize the possibilities of any kind of personal abuse and ensure the safety of those in my care.

I understand that abiding by these promises and policy guidelines is important and necessary to my participation with children and youth as part of Central Presbyterian Church's programs. If I fail to abide by them, I realize that I may be reassigned or relieved from my church-related duties at the full discretion of church leadership.

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Signature

Date

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Name Printed

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Parent Guardian Signature (If volunteer is under 18 years)

Date