

**Child and Youth Protection
Policy & Procedures
Chapel In The Pines Presbyterian Church, USA
Chapel Hill, NC**

POLICY STATEMENT

Chapel in the Pines, Chapel Hill, NC (CITP) is committed to providing a church environment that is a safe place for children and youth. CITP has a long history of operating as a trusting community, and this policy provides a formal mechanism that will help to protect children and youth from any abuse of this trust when they are involved in church-sponsored activities. CITP adopts these policies and procedures to maximize safety and prevent child abuse from occurring within its church community. The policy also guides and protects volunteers and employees from unwarranted allegations of child abuse.

I TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

1. **Child or Youth** means individuals under 18 years old and considered a minor under the law. Legally incompetent individuals of any age shall also be protected by this policy.
2. **Staff** means any individual who is employed by the church.
3. **Volunteer** means any adult not employed by CITP who teaches, supervises, or otherwise helps with children or youth activities. These activities may include worship, Sunday school, nursery, childcare, choir, youth group, retreats, vacation church school, mission trips, confirmation mentoring and any other church sponsored child or youth activity.
4. **Youth volunteer** means a person under 18 who is approved to work on activities with children or youth and who is a church member, a child of a church member, or is sponsored by a church member.
5. **Leader** means a member of staff or adult volunteer designated by CITP to have responsibility for children and youth. The adult volunteer must be at least 18 years old. Leaders of overnight trips must be at least 21 years old. It is recommended that leaders be at least 4 years older than the youth they supervise.
6. **Head of Staff** means a Minister of the Word and Sacrament, in this case, employed by CITP to lead the staff.
7. **Screening Review Committee (SRC)** means a committee comprised of a member of staff and three persons who are members of the church appointed by the Session for a one-year term that is renewable by vote of the Session. The Session will designate the member of staff to serve on the SRC.
8. **Church sponsored activity** means any and all gatherings organized by CITP.
9. **Child abuse** is an act committed by a staff member, volunteer, or person in a position of trust, which is non-accidental and which harms or threatens harm to a child's physical or mental health or welfare. Types of abuse may include physical injury or threat of injury,

physical neglect defined 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:

- a. **Physical Abuse** - Any physical force applied by an adult or older youth to a child, youth, or other vulnerable individual.
- b. **Neglect of Basic Needs** - A form of abuse, which may include denial of food, water, shelter, cleanliness, clothing, or sleep. These are not appropriate means of discipline.
- c. **Sexual Abuse** – Any sexual contact or sexual interaction between a child (under the age of eighteen years) and an adult or older youth; any use of a child for the sexual stimulation of an adult or older youth, a third person, or the child; any discourse that has sexually suggestive context, innuendo, unwelcome casual touch, unwelcome and inappropriate hugs and kisses, and sexually suggestive pictures between an adult or older youth and a child, as deemed inappropriate by any reasonable adult.
- d. **Emotional Abuse** - Inappropriately derisive words and/or actions directed toward a child, youth, or vulnerable individual. Discipline by humiliation is also emotional abuse.
- e. **Spiritual Abuse** - Using religious references to shame, or guilt to motivate a child into a particular action or behavior.
- f. **Misuse of technology** – Using technology, which results in the sexual harassment or abuse of a child or youth, including viewing, texting or emailing suggestive messages or images to an individual.

II SCREENING PROCEDURES FOR ADULT AND YOUTH VOLUNTEERS

To be a volunteer for church sponsored activities with children or youth, a volunteer candidate will submit a volunteer application and sign the *Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers of Child and Youth Activities* at CITP.

1. A designated member of staff and up to 3 persons designated by Session to serve on the Screening Review Committee (SRC) will review the volunteer's application to ensure that the applicant is qualified and suited to work at church-sponsored activities for children or youth for which the volunteer is applying.
2. An outside criminal background check will be performed for all applicants through a private provider of record check services or a state law enforcement agency.
3. A driving record history will be obtained for all who regularly volunteer to drive children and youth in order to participate in church-sponsored activities.
4. CITP will pay the fee for a criminal background check and driving record history.
5. Evaluation of volunteer candidates:

- a. If the screening process reveals any information that causes a concern that a candidate poses a threat of abuse to children, youth or any adult, the candidate will not be approved for work with children and youth.
 - b. Any candidate who has any prior history of abuse directed against another person will create a strong presumption that the candidate should not be approved by the SRC.
 - c. Any candidate whose criminal background check reveals that the candidate has behavioral or emotional problems that may interfere with the care and well-being of the children and youth should not be approved by the SRC.
 - d. In making a decision to withdraw a candidate from consideration or to remove a volunteer who has previously been approved, the SRC should indicate the potential or actual threat being addressed in writing.
6. Criminal background check information and information contained in the application will be kept in a locked and confidential location and may not be revealed to any unauthorized person. Authorized persons are the volunteer candidate and the SRC and the Head of Staff.
 7. The Session may authorize youth volunteers to work with children's or youth activities using procedures they deem to be appropriate to make that decision. Volunteers or members of the church staff will supervise them. They will be screened, but no criminal background check will be required.
 8. There will be a mandatory training program in place for all staff and volunteers that work with children to ensure that all individuals authorized by CITP to work with children in our care understand and follow the guidelines set forth in our Policy and Procedures. For existing staff and volunteers, this training program should commence within three months of the approval of this Policy & Procedures document. New staff and volunteers will need to complete this training before working with children, or satisfy the SRC that they have completed acceptable training within an acceptable time frame at another church or organization.

III SIX-MONTH WAITING PERIOD

No volunteer may serve in a primary position of responsibility involving contact with children or youth until the candidate has been regularly involved in the church for six months. Screened and approved volunteers may participate in children's or youth activities before this six-month waiting period is observed, but they will be closely supervised or monitored by volunteers who have been involved for more than six months. There is no waiting period applicable to the other ministries of the church.

IV. STAFF SCREENING PROCEDURES (Also see Personnel Policies)

1. The relevant hiring authorities will screen any potential employees of the church using procedures at least as comprehensive as the procedures applicable to volunteers.

2. An outside criminal background check will be performed for all potential employees through a private provider of record check service or a state law enforcement agency.
3. If the screening process reveals any information that causes concern that the applicant poses a threat of abuse to children, youth or others in the church, or has a history of abuse directed against another person, the hiring authority will remove the applicant from consideration for employment within the church.

V SUPERVISION

1. At least two leaders shall supervise all children and youth activities. The presence of at least two leaders is to protect children and youth against situations in which abuse might occur, and to protect the leaders against false allegations of abuse or neglect. During any CITP program, a leader will avoid being alone with a single child in a place where others cannot easily or quickly observe them. Groups of children under the age of 4 must have two to ten children ratio. The two adult leaders supervising may not be married to one another.
2. For youth activities that include transportation to a location/event that is a one-hour or more drive from CITP, two leaders are required for each vehicle that transports children or youth.
3. The leaders become responsible when the scheduled activity begins. Until then, parents or guardians are responsible for their children. Leaders remain responsible until the children or youth have been picked up by a parent, guardian, or a person authorized by a parent or guardian to pick up the child or youth. Leaders should not send children out to find their parents, and they should not release any child or youth to await transportation without appropriate supervision.
4. Parents are responsible for their children when at church and the children are not in a church-sponsored activity for children or youth.
5. Classrooms, childcare rooms, and any area in which programs for children or youth are taking place may be visited without prior notice by staff, parents, or other volunteers. No windows may ever be totally blocked so as to prevent visual observation into the classroom.
6. In the event that two leaders cannot be present in the room, such that one leader is alone in a room with one or more children or youth, a door from the room must be left open. The leader should not position himself or herself in the room such that other people passing in the hallway cannot see him or her.
7. Furthermore, at any counseling session with children or youth, the door of the room used must remain open for the entire session. The session should be conducted at a time when others are nearby, even if they are not within listening distance.
8. Each classroom for children and youth should ideally have a door with an observation window. If it does not, and two leaders are not present in the room, then the door must remain open at all times.

9. Restrooms are the location for many incidents of abuse. Parents or guardians are encouraged to escort children to the restroom. If a parent or guardian cannot escort the child to the restroom, for children under age eleven, an adult (volunteer, youth volunteer) will accompany children to the restroom. The adult will ensure that the hallway to the restroom and the restroom is safe, and will be responsible for children returning from the restroom. In multi-stall restrooms, the adult will ensure that no one else is in the restroom while the child is using it. The adult may assist any child under six in the restroom or those over six in emergency situations or at the direction of a parent, guardian or designee. No leader may touch a person's private areas unless necessary to change a diaper or take any other therapeutic measure.
10. All leaders will avoid any improper and unwelcomed touching of children or youth, and should be particularly sensitive to the age of the children or youth with whom they interact.

VI DISCIPLINE

1. Leaders may not spank, hit, grab, shake, or otherwise physically discipline anyone.
2. Any disciplinary problems by a leader should be brought to the attention of the staff in charge. Please see Section VIII regarding the process of reporting.

VII RECORD-KEEPING

1. A leader will keep an attendance list of the church-sponsored activities involving children or youth. The record will include the date of the activity and the names of all participants, staff, and volunteers.
2. If an injury requiring medical treatment beyond simple first aid occurs during a church-sponsored activity, the leader will complete an *Accident Report*. The report will be submitted to the staff member in charge of the program. The staff member will share it with the parents/guardians and the *Accident Report* will be shared at the next weekly staff meeting.
3. Children and youth must obtain written parental or guardian permission for participation in church-sponsored activities that involve travel away from the church's physical facilities and have a signed Consent for Emergency Services for a Child or Adolescent on file. An adult in charge needs to bring the emergency contact and health insurance information of any child or youth so that medical help can be sought and parents/guardians can be contacted if needed.

VIII REPORTING

1. **Reporting Incidents**
Any adult who observes or becomes aware of any alleged incident of child abuse must, as soon as possible, complete a *Suspected Child Abuse Report* and submit it to the staff member in charge of the program and to the Head of Staff

2. Investigation

Upon receipt of a *Suspected Child Abuse Report* the Head of Staff, or other person designated, shall ensure that an appropriate investigation commences and appropriate procedures are followed as required by North Carolina law (see below). The process will include documenting all steps undertaken in handling the investigation.

North Carolina State Statute 7B-301. Duty to report abuse, neglect, dependency, or death due to maltreatment.

(a) Any person or institution who has cause to suspect that any juvenile is abused, neglected, or dependent, as defined by G.S. 7B-101, or has died as the result of maltreatment, shall report the case of that juvenile to the director of the department of social services in the county where the juvenile resides or is found. The report may be made orally, by telephone, or in writing.

3. Confidentiality

All investigations shall be conducted in as confidential a manner as is compatible with a thorough investigation of the report or allegation.

4. Parental Notification

If an incident has occurred on church property or during a church-sponsored event, the parents/guardians, other than the accused parent, of any minor involved in any allegation of abuse shall be immediately notified by the staff member in charge of the program or the Head of Staff.

5. Initial Response

Upon receipt of a *Suspected Child Abuse Report*, any individual accused of such conduct will be temporarily relieved of all duties and responsibilities involving youth or children pending an appropriate investigation.

6. Spokesperson

A single church leader, designated by the Session, will serve as spokesperson following notice of any alleged abuse in connection with children and youth activities. This spokesperson will be the only person to convey information concerning the situation to external audiences to avoid compromising any ongoing investigation.

IX PERIODIC STAFF/VOLUNTEER REVIEW

All staff and volunteers will complete a renewal application and training every three years on a cycle to be determined by the Session. The renewal application will contain a provision authorizing the church to conduct additional criminal background checks.

X POLICY REVIEW

The Session will ensure that the appropriate committees monitor the policy during its first year of operation and propose any modifications they deem necessary. Thereafter, the Session will review the policy regularly. The Session may modify this policy, and any modifications will be publicized in a manner to provide notice to the entire congregation of the church.