

Proposed St. Johns Presbyterian Church Guidelines for Safe Ministry with Children and Youth

PURPOSE

St. Johns Presbyterian Church strives to provide a safe environment for all members and visitors, especially children. In any unsafe situation, the church shall take all reasonably necessary measures to insure the safety of those who are in danger. These guidelines are intended to educate and guide parents, volunteers, church staff and others, as a means for establishing a safe environment for children and youth while in the care of our church. With careful and reasonable application of these rules, our children and youth may enjoy a safe, loving, and nurturing environment for worship and spiritual development.

DEFINITIONS

“Adult” means any person at least 18 years of age;

“Youth” means any person between 6th grade (or of that age) and 18 years old

“Child” means any person in 5th grade (or of that age) or younger (i.e., younger than “youth”)

“Infant” means a child who is generally less than 3 years old

“Parent” means natural, adoptive or legal guardians of a child or youth.

“Mentor” means a Worker, (but is not subject to the two adult rule; for confirmation classes which are designed to be one-on-one)

“Staff” means any person paid by the church who interacts with or has regular access to any Child or Youth during any church functions or activities, whether on or off of the church campus.

“Volunteer” means any person of appropriate age who assists the church with caring for and attending youth or children, including chaperones, Sunday School teachers, youth advisors, floaters, and drivers.

“Worker” means any volunteer or staff member.

ADULTS

A. EMPLOYEES

1. Hiring

a) References. All employees who interact with children and youth must provide personal and professional references. The church will contact those references to ascertain the appropriateness, moral and ethical qualities and ability of the candidate to perform the job.

b) Prior Child Abuse. No person who has been convicted of any form of child abuse shall be employed by the church without prior Session discussion and approval. Conviction of child abuse shall be grounds for termination of any church employment with cause.

2. Christian based training in child safety. All staff members shall promptly attend the Presbytery's program "Creating Safe Churches" or a similar Christian based sexual misconduct program

B. VOLUNTEERS

1. Training Course. All volunteers must attend a class addressing sexual misconduct and safe ministry with children and youth. Currently, the church offers a course titled "Reducing the Risk."

2. Refresher Courses. All volunteers will be encouraged to attend an annual refresher course. The church may offer this course, or arrange for volunteers to attend a similar course offered by others.

C. WORKERS

1. Training

a) CPR, Epi-Pen, Allergies, etc. The church will encourage broad first aid and CPR training for all Workers.

b) Refresher courses. All Workers with children and/or youth will be required to participate in an annual orientation session at which they be informed of the following:

- These guidelines, including discussion and an opportunity to ask questions
- Appropriate steps to report in writing an accident (visible wounds and/or continued pain) and/or incident of child/youth abuse
- Overview of state laws regarding child/youth abuse

2. Age requirement. Workers with children should be youth or adults, and Workers with youth should be at least five years older than the youth with whom they work. Volunteers who are not adults will be accompanied by an adult worker.

3. Background Checks. All adult workers with children and youth will be required to sign a release allowing the church to do a criminal records check with local and/or national law enforcement authorities to include two references and a background check. The church will perform a criminal records check for all workers and repeat the criminal records check any time the pastor or session or presbytery deems necessary. No one may work with children or youth until a background check has been conducted and approved. The Senior Pastor and administration committee chairperson are to review these documents.

4. Worker Allocation. The pastor responsible for children and youth ministries shall be responsible for allocation of workers, and assignment of duties.

CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

A. Onsite Events

1. Staffing and Supervising

a) Teacher/Student Ratios. The church will strive to maintain effective teacher/student ratios, and will comply with state law requirements at all times.

b) Two Adult Rule. Having two adults present at all times during any church sponsored program event, or ministry involving children and/or youth is mandatory. The church may use one or more workers to serve as a “floater,” meaning that the worker(s) move from room to room or group to group occasionally, and are counted in meeting the “two adult rule.” There are two exceptions to the two-adult rule: Confirmation classes, and one-on-one occasional spiritual consultation.

c) Open Doors Requirement. Each room designated for children and/or youth should have a door with an unobstructed window and/or a half door. At any one-on-one spiritual consultation sessions with children and/or youth, the door of the room should remain open for the entire session.

d) Medical Release. Children and youth for whom an annual medical release is not on file shall provide a signed medical release at the time of registration for any onsite and local events. The medical release will authorize the church to seek medical treatment in the event that (i) an emergency situation occurs, and (ii) the parents are not present and cannot be reached. Youth who arrive for an offsite activity without a release form shall provide contact information for their parents, and a staff member will contact the parents to verify permission for the youth to attend the event, and to discuss means of contact in the event of an emergency.

e) Confirmation Classes. The church shall perform a background check for each mentor as described above before the start of confirmation classes. Parents and mentors will participate in an orientation to discuss the curriculum and the requirements of the process, and parents shall be involved in the mentor selection process.

2. Special Issues Regarding Infants.

a) Nursery Drop-off and Pickup. Parents shall sign-in and sign-out when dropping off or picking up infants in the nursery. Nursery workers may place a name-tag on the child with the child’s name and the parents’ names, or some other means of identification.

b) Diaper Changing. Workers will use gloves, and wash their hands after changing a diaper. Used diapers will be disposed of properly. The changing area will be wiped down with a disinfecting wipe after each diaper change.

c) Restroom Guidelines. Children who require accompaniment to the restroom will be accompanied to the restroom by an adult. The adult will determine whether the restroom is empty. Then, the adult will wait in the hallway while the child goes into the restroom. If

assistance with clothing is needed, the adult may provide that assistance in the hallway. Infants who are learning potty-training may be assisted in the restroom. Children and workers shall wash their hands following each trip to the restroom.

B. Offsite Events

1. Medical Release. Parents/guardians of children and youth must complete and sign a separate medical release form for each out-of-town or overnight event. It is the responsibility of the parents to update the form anytime the requested information changes.

2. Drivers. All drivers must be at least 21 years of age, have a valid driver's license, have a driving records check annually indicating no more than one moving violation in the last 18 months, and maintain adequate auto liability insurance. These requirements may change from time to time as required by the church's liability insurance carrier.

3. Chaperones. For all overnight group events for children and/or youth of mixed gender, at least one male and one female chaperone will accompany the group.

C. Generally

1. Communication with Parents. The church should give parents advance notice and adequate information in writing regarding the events and curriculum in which their children and/or youth will be participating.

2. Medications. Generally, workers will not administer medications to youth and children. On overnight trips, however, workers may verify that children take medication as prescribed.

3. Emergencies. In the event of any emergency involving a child or youth, workers shall make every reasonable effort to contact the parents. Workers shall contact emergency medical personnel, and take all other actions as reasonably needed to insure the safety of all.

4. One-on-One Contact. Except as otherwise discussed in these guidelines, private one-on-one contact between a worker and a child or youth shall be prohibited. If such a situation arises, the contact shall be limited and moved to a public area or an area which includes another adult.

5. Proper Attire. Workers, children, and youth shall at all times wear appropriate attire given the particular circumstances.

6. Physical Contact. Appropriate means of touching youth and children are those which are pure and genuine displays of God's love. Workers should not initiate any inappropriate contact such as prolonged physical contact or touching a child or youth in an area that would be covered by a bathing suit.