

# **Second Presbyterian Church**

## **CHILD/YOUTH PROTECTION** **POLICY**

**Revised March 2014**

## GENERAL POLICY

Second Presbyterian Church (the “Church”) has an obligation to reduce the possibility of child abuse occurring at its events or on its property. This policy has been formed with that obligation in mind. In response to the provisions of the National Child Protection Act of 1993 and because the Church desires that its facilities and activities are safe and secure for all children and youth who attend or participate in its events, the Church has adopted the following Child/Youth Protection Policy.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Set out established definitions related to child abuse that are used in this Policy
- Ensure that all volunteers and compensated child and youth workers (compensated child and youth workers are “staff” herein; volunteers and staff collectively are “workers”) understand the Church’s employment selection practices (as they relate to child abuse)
- Provide for the reporting of suspected abuse
- Ensure the appropriate supervision and conduct of workers
- Train workers regarding child abuse
- Set up a process to deal with workers who have been accused of child abuse
- Establish a worker screening process
- Establish a policy for non-Church groups who are using or renting the Church’s facilities

## PROCEDURE

### A. Definition of Child Abuse

#### 1. What is a Child?

Missouri Law defines a child as any person, regardless of physical or mental condition, under 18 years of age. In this policy, the words “child” and “youth” and “student” are one and the same and refer to any person under 18 years of age.

#### 2. What is considered abuse?

Missouri Law defines “abuse” as “any physical injury, sexual abuse, or emotional abuse inflicted on a child other than by accidental means by those responsible for his/her care, custody, and control...” Mo. Rev. Stat. 210.110.

### B. Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

Missouri Law states, “[if a] child care worker...teacher...or other person with responsibility for the care of children has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been or may be subjected to abuse or neglect or observes a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances which would reasonably result in abuse or neglect, he/she shall immediately report or cause a report to be made to the Division of Family Services.” Mo. Rev. Stat. 210.115.

#### 1. How to Report an Incident

If staff or a volunteer has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been or may be subjected to abuse or neglect or has observed a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances which would reasonably result in abuse or neglect, the Child Protection Coordinator (defined below) or his/her designate must place a HOTLINE telephone call to the appropriate Division of Family Services.

If the incident giving rise to reasonable suspicion occurred at Church or at a Church event, the report should be made to the state in which the Church or Church event is located. If the child resides in another state, a report should also be made in that state as well. The most common HOTLINE numbers in the Kansas City area are:

Missiouri Children’s Division Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline: 1-800-392-3738

Further, the Church staff member or volunteer must report any suspicions or allegations immediately to a staff supervisor, both orally and in writing on the “Form for Reporting Abuse” as soon as reasonably possible. Any suspicions or allegations must also be reported to the Child Protection Coordinator. Second Presbyterian’s Child Protection Coordinator is the Church Head of Staff, currently the Reverend Dr. Paul Rock.

2. After a Report is Made

The Child Protection Coordinator or his/her designate will see that an immediate investigation is conducted in conjunction with appropriate leadership.

The Child Protection Coordinator and all staff and relevant volunteers shall fully cooperate with any internal investigation and an investigation by any agency.

C. Investigation and Status of Worker During Investigation

The Child Protection Coordinator or his/her designee will conduct an investigation in a prompt manner and maintain written documentation regarding the report and the investigation. At the discretion of the Child Protection Coordinator, an outside professional may be hired to monitor the investigation.

In the event an allegation is made against a staff member, that staff member will automatically be either relieved from any further activity or function whereby he/she has any contact with children, or put on paid leave, until further notice. This means that the accused is not allowed to work in his/her previous role, but will continue to receive his/her usual pay until an investigation is completed.

In the event an allegation is made against a volunteer, that volunteer will be relieved from his or her duties immediately. The volunteer is not permitted to serve in a volunteer capacity until further notice.

Upon completion of the investigation, the Child Protection Coordinator will make a report to the Church’s Session. The Church will take appropriate action, including, but not limited to issuing prompt written warnings, termination of employment or termination of volunteer privileges. If warnings are issued, the Child Protection Coordinator or his designee will monitor closely all accused person’s interactions with children and youth. The staff member’s employment or volunteer status will be terminated immediately for continued violation of such warnings, or for a single violation of sufficient gravity.

The Child Protection Coordinator or his/her designee shall notify the Church’s insurance company of any allegation of abuse.

D. Second Presbyterian's Public Statement

Under no circumstances is anyone affiliated with the Church, other than its Senior Pastor or his/her designee, permitted to make a public statement.

The basic content of the public statement will be as follows: "An allegation was received by the Social Services Department. Social Services is investigating the allegations, and we are cooperating with the investigation. To protect the integrity of the Social Services' investigation, the Church has no further comment at this time."

E. Follow-up Care

The Church recognizes the potential trauma and stress that victims and their families suffer when an abusive situation is reasonably believed to have occurred. If the Church deems it appropriate, the Church may offer counseling for the victim and his or her family. This should not be interpreted as an admission of guilt or liability on the part of the Church.

F. Church Facilities being rented or used by non-Church groups

When a non-Church group uses any of the Church's facilities, that group is fully responsible for its own programming, supervision, child protection, safety procedures and emergency preparedness. Although a Child Protection Policy cannot be readily enforced with non-Church groups who use the facilities, it is still our duty to help protect children and youth. Therefore, contracts for use of the facilities will include a provision stating that any staff member who suspects or knows of a possible allegation of abuse on any Church property, the Church has the right to question the leadership of the group to ensure proper attention has been given and will make a hotline call to the Division of Family Services if abuse is witnessed or takes place in the presence of a staff member, or if there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is being/has been abused or neglected.

G. Screening Process and Training for Staff and Volunteers Who Work Directly with Children and Youth

1. Position Description

Each applicant will receive a position description that defines the qualifications for that position.

2. Application

A complete application should be on file for each staff and volunteer.

3. Interview

Whenever logistically possible, a face-to-face interview will be conducted with applicants.

4. Background Checks

Background checks shall be conducted for all staff and volunteer applicants in the states in which they have resided for the past five years. Any known history of having perpetrated child abuse will exclude a volunteer or staff member from working with children or youth.

Should it be necessary to start the applicant (paid or volunteer) in his/her position prior to the results of background checks being received, the applicant will be staffed on a conditional

basis. Applicants will be informed that their continued employment/service is contingent upon the receipt of an appropriate background check.

5. Training

Staff and volunteers who work with children shall be trained by the appropriate director of either youth or children's ministry on the contents of this policy prior to working with children at the Church or at Church events. Annual refresher training shall also be conducted.

H. Supervision of Children or Youth

Programs that involve children and youth must always have adequate supervisory personnel. Events that do not have adequate supervising adults should be canceled. **When questions arise, contact the Child Protection Coordinator: Head of Staff, Paul Rock. Paul Rock's phone numbers are: (913) 722-7746 (cell) and (816) 363-1300 (office).**

I. Guidelines for Conduct with Children and Youth

Except as otherwise noted, the following guidelines shall apply to all staff and volunteer youth workers, including, but not limited to adults who occasionally accompany youth on trips and other special activities.

1. Unless authorized by the child's/youth's parent(s) or guardian(s), all meetings involving a worker and an individual child/youth should occur in a public place where other people are present. Some examples of public places where other people are gathered include restaurants, a park bench, or a sporting event.
2. When providing rides to children/youth, workers should have a third person in the car whenever possible. Although situations often require the driver to be alone in a car with a student (i.e., picking up the first student or dropping off the last student), this should be the exception rather than the norm and written (including digital) parental consent must be obtained. Care should be taken to PLAN AHEAD to avoid finding oneself in these situations.
3. As a general rule, workers shall not be alone in a room with an individual child/youth. If the situation becomes unavoidable (e.g., last one out of the cabin or dorm), the adult shall wait outside the room or close to an open front door or window if reasonably possible.
4. In group sleeping arrangements (e.g. Camp, youth group trips, Missions trips) two adults must be present with any number of youth during the stated "lights out" time. Under no circumstances shall any worker share a bed with a youth.
5. Although physical affection can have an appropriate place in ministry, workers shall use discretion as to the frequency and type of physical affection they provide to children/youth.
6. An adult/leader:child/youth ratio of 1:12 (maximum) with a minimum of 2 leaders for overnight events, shall be observed. A leader may occasionally be a minor. Any leader who is a minor must be under direct adult supervision at all times. A leader who is a minor must be at least four years older than the other youth in order to be considered a leader.
7. Touching should be in response to the need of the child/youth and not the need of the adult. It should always be with the child's permission. A worker shall never touch a student's breasts, buttocks, or groin or vice versa.

8. Corporal punishment is never permissible. Physical restraint should be used only in order to protect the health and welfare of the student, other students, volunteers or staff.
9. When operating a motor vehicle to transport minors on behalf of the Church, staff and volunteers are not allowed to use a portable (cell) phone.
10. Social Networking (IM's, Facebook, Texting, Twitter, Etc.) should be used with care when communicating to children and youth. (See the Church's current Advisory on Social Networking and Digital Communication). Youth workers should try to keep digital communication public, during normal waking hours, and appropriate to the student. All digital communication is a permanent record and can be interpreted wrongly. Be above reproach.

**When questions arise, contact the Child Protection Coordinator, Head of Staff, Paul Rock. Paul Rock's phone numbers are: (913) 722-7746 (cell) and (816) 363-1300 (office).**