

First Presbyterian Church **Children and Youth Protection Policy**

Wooster, Ohio

October 2016

The congregation of First Presbyterian Church of Wooster, Ohio is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy statements reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who would enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

Definitions

Children and Youth – All persons under the age of 18

Parent – A custodial parent or legal guardian of a child participating in an activity

Youth Group Age – Generally considered children/youth who are currently in the school equivalent of 6th grade or above or 12-17 years old.

Selection of Workers

All employees and all persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

1. Written Application

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application using a form to be supplied by us. The application will request basic information from the applicant. The applicant will be maintained in confidence on file at First Presbyterian Church. Form is attached as Appendix A.

2. Personal Interview

After the applicant has completed the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

3. Criminal Background Check

A national criminal background check is required for all employees and volunteers working with children. Administrative staff will review background checks and issue a letter to each individual only when he/she has NOT been cleared for work with children or youth. Each volunteer must complete the Background Consent Form (Appendix B) and turn in to the Director of Family and Children's Ministry or the church's Administrative Assistant.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS: Applications will be processed by the Director of Family and Children's Ministry and all related documentation will be stored in a locked, secure filing cabinet in the Administrative Assistant's office.

RENEWAL SCHEDULE: Renewal of a volunteer's application and background check is needed on a yearly basis.

Training of Staff and Volunteers

Training as to how to report suspected abuse or neglect is necessary for all staff and volunteers coming in contact with children on a regular basis. Training may include, at a minimum:

- A copy of the First Presbyterian Church Children and Youth Protection Policy will be provided to all staff members and volunteers prior to starting work. They will also sign that they have read the document. In addition, for each activity, guidelines will be given for acceptable and appropriate behavior.
- Those working with children may be trained on how to recognize signs and symptoms of neglect and of physical/sexual abuse prior to working with children.
- All volunteers will be given training on security plans including fire escape plans and intruder alerts.

Two Adult Rule

It is our goal to have a minimum of two unrelated adult workers in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open.

Transportation Policy

There shall be no less than one adult and two children in a vehicle at any time. In general, use of the church bus for transportation of youth is encouraged prior to use of private vehicles. For children who are younger than “youth group age”, parents should generally provide all transportation. Written permission must be given by a custodial parent or legal guardian for his or her child or youth to be transported by any representative of the church.

In the situation where children under “youth group age” are being transported by church representatives, all occupants of the vehicle must have appropriate child safety seats as required by Ohio Law as well as be wearing seat belts at all times while the vehicle is moving. Transportation to and from church sponsored events will not occur in 15 passenger vans. Note: the church bus is not legally considered a 15 passenger van. It is the custodial parent’s or legal guardian’s responsibility to sign their child in and out of all church events and/or specify designees (in writing). Each parent or guardian must also give written permission of his or her youth to be allowed to walk home for church events

Mission Trip, Retreat, and Lock-In Guidelines

During all overnight events involving both males and females, there shall be at least one leader of each gender. In those cases where only males or only females are involved, at least two chaperones of the same gender as the participating youth. During overnight events, youth and adults shall not utilize bathing facilities at the same time. Adult leaders will change clothing in the restroom facilities or other area separated from the youth. In situations where there are separate sleeping facilities for each gender, the gender of the adult supervisor should match that of the youth. Note: due to the two-adult policy, there shall be two-adults of each gender present when there are separate sleeping facilities. In situations where all participants are sleeping within the same room, adults of both genders shall be able to supervise. In all cases, participants in events sponsored by other institutions are required to abide by both the Child Safety and Protection Policies of First Presbyterian Church *and* any other sponsoring institutions.

Medicine Dispensing

Local: In the case of locally sponsored church activities, no medical attention other than basic first aid (band-aids, ice packs, soap and water) will be administered. In situations requiring more extensive medical attention, emergency services and/or parents will be contacted.

For Youth on Mission Trips: A first aid kit will be available that contains “basic” over-the-counter medication (including Tylenol/Ibuprofen, Pepto Bismol, Benadryl, Neosporin) as well as traditional first aid supplies. Parents will be asked to complete a medical form indicating OTC medication that adult volunteers are allowed to distribute to their child (including dosage and whether parents wish to be informed). It is the youth’s responsibility to self-medicate prescription medication after submitting a parental permission form. The youth shall obtain the prescribed medication from adult volunteers who will maintain possession of all medications until they are requested by the youth. Adult volunteers will exercise discretion when providing students with required medication.

Discipline Policies

1. **Reward good behavior.** Immediate praise and recognition for positive actions are effective ways to encourage more of the same. Inform parents when a child or youth does well or shows improvement.
2. Should inappropriate or disruptive behavior occur the following procedures should be followed:
 - a. **Remind** the child or youth of proper behavior. Remind him/her of the classroom/group rules and what is expected.
 - b. **Redirect** the child or youth. Move him/her to a different situation or area. Separate the child or youth from others when he/she is having difficulty following rules.
 - c. **Remove** the child or youth from the group using a designated time-out area within the classroom and

in view of volunteers. After an appropriate explanation of the child's behavior, allow the child or youth several minutes (one minute per each year of child's age) to spend time in the time-out area. Once the child or youth is settled, invite him/her to rejoin to group.

- d. **Return** the child or youth to a parent. If the preceding strategies fail to change behavior, the child will be taken to a parent for the remainder of the activity. After the activity/class, the teacher will explain the problem to the parents and reassure the child or youth that he/she is welcome to join the activity/class the next time. If a volunteer deems it necessary to return a child to his/her parent or guardian, the volunteer shall complete an incident report that will be submitted to the appropriate program director who will then follow-up with the family as needed.
- e. **Repeated Removal:** If a child repeatedly returned to his/her parents more than two times in two months, the relevant staff member will meet with the parents (and child, if appropriate) to discuss a long-range behavior management plan.

Reporting Procedures

Any person who learns of or who has reason to suspect that an incident involving sexual abuse or misconduct or violent behavior as described in ORC 109.572 has occurred shall immediately report the incident to the staff person supervising the activity, and/or, as appropriate, the Pastor. In the event the incident is reported to a program supervisor, he or she shall report the incident to a pastor.

In the event that the Pastor or the supervising staff person is unavailable or is considered a party to the incident, persons reporting shall contact the Clerk of Session. The identity of the reporting person, the accused, the alleged victim, and the details of the situation are confidential and limited only to those who have a legitimate reason to know. The Pastor, supervising staff person or Clerk of Session, after obtaining such professional advice (legal, denominational, insurance carrier, etc.), as he/she deems necessary, shall conduct an inquiry into the reported incident or charge.

If an allegation of child abuse, or misconduct in church groups or at a church function is supported by sufficient evidence to cause reasonable concern, then the alleged offender will be suspended immediately from all church duties involving minors until such time as the matter is resolved and the parents and/or guardians of the alleged child will be notified of the allegation. If the alleged offender is an employee, the suspension will be with pay.

The Pastor, supervising staff person or Clerk of Session, without undertaking further inquiry, shall report to the Session that an offense has been alleged. This report will not name the alleged offender or the nature of the alleged offense, but will request that the Session appoint an investigating committee in accordance with the Rules of Discipline of the Presbyterian Church (USA) Book of Order. Those persons involved in the report shall hold all information in strict confidence, subject to such disclosures as are required under First Presbyterian Church procedures, the polity of the Presbyterian Church (USA), or by the laws of the State of Ohio or of the United States of America.

Healing Process

It has been the experience of institutions where abuse has occurred that one obstacle to the healing process has been the absence of contact with the accuser, the victim, his/her family, and those affected by the offense. The Session of First Presbyterian Church will provide or make arrangements with others to provide for, the spiritual care of the accused, the accuser, the alleged victims and their families. The First Presbyterian Church will also provide benevolent services customarily provided by the church of Jesus Christ, including public worship and pastoral care.

Insurance

It is the Session's responsibility to assure that the church's liability policy includes all potential areas of coverage (including sexual misconduct).

Appendix A
Volunteer Application- Working with Youth and Children

Name _____

Address _____

Date of Birth _____ Daytime Phone _____

Mobile Phone _____ Email _____

Occupation _____ Student Yes _____ No _____

Previous Volunteer Experience _____

Reason for volunteering:

What qualities do you have that would help in your volunteer work?

Will you agree to have a background check?

Have you read and do you agree to abide by the First Presbyterian Church's Child and Youth Protection Policy? Yes _____ No _____

By signing below, I hereby authorize First Presbyterian Church to conduct a background check on me and verify all statements made on this application to be true. I hereby release First Presbyterian Church, and its employees and agents from all liability in connection therewith.

Sign _____ Date _____

Appendix B

DISCLOSURE and AUTHORIZATION – BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION

In connection with my application for employment or to serve as a volunteer with **First Presbyterian Church** (“Client”), I understand that a “consumer report” and/or “investigative consumer report”, as defined by the Fair Credit Reporting Act, will be requested by Client for employment or volunteer purposes, whichever is applicable, from Protect My Ministry, Inc., (“Protect My Ministry”), a consumer reporting agency as defined by the Fair Credit Reporting Act. These reports may include information as to my character, general reputation, personal characteristics or mode of living, whichever are applicable. They may involve interviews with sources such as my neighbors, friends or associates. The report may also contain information about me relating to my criminal history, credit history, driving and/or motor vehicle records, social security number verification, verification of education or employment history, worker’s compensation (only after a conditional job offer) or other background checks. Such reports may be obtained at any time after receipt of this Disclosure and Authorization and if I am hired or serve as a volunteer, whichever is applicable, throughout the course of my employment or volunteer service, as permitted by law and unless revoked by me in writing. I understand that I have the right, upon written request made within a reasonable amount time after the receipt of this notice, to request disclosure of the nature and scope of any investigative consumer report to Protect My Ministry, Inc., 14499 N. Dale Mabry Hwy., Suite 201 South, Tampa, FL 33618 or 1-800-319-5581. For information about Protect My Ministry’s privacy practices, see www.protectmyministry.com.

Acknowledgement and Authorization

By signing below, I voluntarily and knowingly authorize Client or its authorized agents to obtain or prepare consumer reports or investigative consumer reports about me. I acknowledge receipt of a copy of *A Summary of Your Rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act* and certify that I have read this Disclosure and Authorization as well as the summary explaining my rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act.

Signature

TODAY’S DATE

LAST NAME _____
FIRST NAME _____
MIDDLE INITIAL _____

HOME ADDRESS

CITY _____
COUNTY _____
STATE _____
ZIP _____

SSN _____
D/L or STATE ID _____
STATE ISSUED _____

EMAIL ADDRESS

For identification purposes only, please provide FULL DOB: _____

Please List Other Names Used _____

Protect My Ministry, Inc.
14499 Dale Mabry Hwy, Ste 201 South
Tampa, FL 33618
Phone: 800-319-5581 Fax: 800-319-5582
www.protectmyministry.com