

Southport Presbyterian Church

Policies and Procedures

Youth Protection Plan

We are committed to providing a church environment that is safe for children and youth and that will protect them from any abuse when they are involved in church-related activities with Southport Presbyterian Church (SPC).

SPC adopted the policies and procedures, not only to maximize safety and prevent child abuse within its church community, but also to guide and protect volunteers and employees from unwarranted allegations of child abuse.

The child/youth protection policy applies to all employees, volunteers, and any outside groups that may lease or otherwise use SPC's facilities. Employees are required to attend child/youth protection policy training and undergo background checks.

All volunteers who work with children and/or youth are required to attend child/youth protection policy training and undergo background checks. Session members, other church leaders, and parents are strongly encouraged to attend the training. Policy training is provided at various times and each session is one hour.

Terms and Definitions

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 - A form of abuse. Denial of food, water, cleanliness, clothing, and sleep are not appropriate means of discipline.

Physical Abuse - Any physical force applied by an adult or older youth in a position of care or authority to a child, youth, or vulnerable adult. Physical force (hitting, spanking, shaking, shoving, etc.) is not to be used by leaders in our programs.

Sexual Abuse - Any sexual contact or sexual interaction between a child (under the age of eighteen years); and an adult; any use of a child for the sexual simulation of an adult, a third person, or the child; any risqué jokes, innuendo, unacceptable visual contact, unwelcome casual touch, unwelcome and inappropriate hugs and kisses, and sexually suggestive pictures between an adult and a child, as deemed inappropriate by any reasonable adult. Even if a child, youth, or vulnerable adult, out of ignorance, innocence, or fear does not resist, it is still abuse.

Emotional Abuse - Inappropriately belittling, hateful, or angry words and/or actions directed toward a child, youth, or vulnerable adult. Discipline by humiliation is also emotional abuse.

Spiritual Abuse - Using religious references to shame or by guilt to motivate a child into a particular action or behavior.

Employee – Any person who works for salary or wages at Southport Presbyterian Church (SPC) (including, Welcome Place and SPCS).

Volunteer – Any person not employed by SPC 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 not limited to, Church School and Worship Enrichment, Nursery, Childcare, Junior and Senior High Ministries, SPC Sports Ministry, Children & Youth Choirs, Summer Camps & Conferences, Children & Youth mission trips, Weekday Preschool, First School.

Leader – An adult designated by SPC 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.

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 SPC, whether on-campus or off-campus.

Volunteer Ministry – Includes any church sponsored activity engaged in by a volunteer.

Child or Youth – Persons under 18 years old and considered a minor under the law. This term shall also include legally incompetent.

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. SPC employees and volunteers should not, during an SPC program, be alone with a single child where they cannot be observed by others.

In order to avoid situations where an individual is alone in a room with children, all children's and youth activities should be supervised by at least two adult leaders. Whenever possible, these adults should be unrelated. The presence of two leaders is to protect children and youth against situations in which abuse might occur, and to protect leaders against false allegations of abuse or neglect.

Classrooms, childcare rooms, and any area in which programs for children or youth are taking place may be visited without prior notice by church staff, parents, or other volunteer church workers. No windows may ever be totally blocked so as to prevent visual observation into the classroom.

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 or half-door from the room must be left open. The leader should not position himself or herself in the room such that other adults passing in the hallway cannot see him or her. Furthermore, at any counseling session with children or youth, the door or half-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.

Each classroom for children and youth should ideally have a door with an observation window or a half- door, such that the upper half may be kept open. If it does not, and two leaders are not present in the room, then the door must remain open at all times.

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. Teacher/caregiver-to-child ratios in our schools are mandated by state childcare laws.

Parental/Guardian Consent

Children and youth must obtain parental or guardian permission for involvement in church or school sponsored activities or programs that involve travel away from the church's or schools' physical facilities.

"Six Month" Rule for Volunteers

A volunteer must be a member of SPC, or have regularly attended SPC, 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 Christian Education Committee or the Director of Christian Education shall have the authority to waive this six-month rule upon request, where appropriate.

Policy Review

The provisions of this Policy shall be reviewed annually by the Christian Education Committee. Any proposed changes to the Policy will be brought to the attention of the Personnel Committee for its input, if any, prior to any such changes by the Christian Education Committee becoming final. The Christian Education Committee shall report periodically to the Session and recommend any changes deemed appropriate.

Code of Conduct

1. Staff and volunteers are required to adhere to the SPC Child Protection Policy guidelines in all their interactions with children and youth.
2. Staff and volunteers will respect children's rights not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable or that disregard their right to say no.
3. Staff and volunteers may not discipline children by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care.
4. Physical restraint is used only in situations necessary to protect the child, other children, or staff from harm.
5. While supervising children and youth participating in SPC programs, staff and volunteers should know where participants are at all times.
6. Restroom supervision: Whenever possible, volunteers will make sure any restroom used is not occupied by any suspicious or unknown individual before allowing children and youth to use the facilities. Always send children in pairs with a volunteer. The staff or volunteer, will stand in the doorway while children are using the restroom. This policy allows privacy for the children and protection for the staff or volunteer (not being alone with a child). Staff and volunteers shall strongly encourage parents to take children to the restroom whenever possible.
7. Diapering and potty training should be done primarily by staff members/paid caregivers. Volunteers may be asked to help in certain situations and should follow posted nursery guidelines when performing diapering.
8. Staff and volunteers should be alert to the physical and emotional state of children. Any signs of injury or possible child abuse must be reported according to the SPC Child Protection Policy.
9. Staff and volunteers are discouraged from being alone with children or youth without parental permission.
10. Under no circumstances should volunteers release children to anyone other than the authorized parent, guardian, or other individual authorized by the parent or guardian.
11. Consuming, using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while working or volunteering with children or youth is prohibited.
12. Impaired by legally prescribed drugs while working/volunteering with children/youth is prohibited.

13. Possessing or using concealed weapons or firearms while working or volunteering with children or youth is prohibited.
14. Smoking or use of tobacco *in the presence of* children, youth, or parents while working or volunteering is prohibited.
15. Staff and volunteers should not release children to any adult or family member, including older siblings, other than the child's parent/guardian unless prior verbal permission has been obtained from the parent.
16. Profanity, inappropriate jokes and media, sharing intimate details of one's personal life, and any kind of harassment in the presence of children, youth, or parents are prohibited.
17. 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.
18. Staff and volunteer adult and youth leaders shall wear appropriate dress when volunteering with children and/or youth.
19. Movies used in all church settings shall meet the voluntary movie rating system guidelines established by the Motion Picture Association of America for age-appropriate content.
20. Staff and volunteers may not date or be romantically involved with program participants or church members who are younger than 18 years of age.
21. Staff and volunteers are required to read, sign, and adhere to all policies related to identifying, documenting, and reporting child abuse and will attend training sessions on the subject.
22. Staff and volunteers are required to report any concerns or suspicions regarding their observations of any individual's interaction with a child. Except for concerns related to alleged or potential abuse, which require specific immediate reports, these concerns may be reported to the individual. If the concerns are not alleviated by a change in the individual's behavior, a second report must be made to the Directors of Youth or Children's Ministry.
23. If it is necessary for an adult to take a child or youth home after an event, all staff and volunteers shall abide by safe driving laws when transporting children or youth. Driving record history shall be obtained on all youth leaders and volunteers. An effort should be made to contact the family and inform them of the situation before transporting the child or youth. It is always advisable for leaders to give parents advance notice and full information regarding the event in which their child or youth will be participating.
24. In the event that a one-on-one child/youth to adult scenario arises, i.e., unexpected transportation needs, confirmation mentoring, or otherwise, parent permission should be granted in writing or by phone when possible. It is preferred to have mentors and confirmands meet in pairs or to meet in public places.

Reporting

Reporting Incidents

Any individual who observes or becomes aware of any alleged or potential incident of child abuse must, as soon as possible, report the matter to the staff member in charge of the program, the Director of Christian Education, or the Senior Pastor. Because of the importance of proper reporting, pastors, employees, Session members, and persons highly visible to church members and visitors should understand the terms of the policy and be ready to help direct any such reports or allegations to the appropriate persons.

Investigation

Upon receipt of a report or allegation of child abuse at SPC, the Director of Finance and Operations or the Director of Christian Education shall ensure that an appropriate investigation is commenced and appropriate procedures are followed as required by the State of Indiana. The process will include documenting all steps undertaken in handling the investigation, and a Report of Suspected Child Abuse form (Appendix B) shall be completed.

Confidentiality

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

Parental Notification

If an incident has occurred on church property or during a church-sponsored event, the parents of any minor involved in any allegation of abuse shall be immediately notified.

Potential Responses

Upon any report of potential or alleged child abuse by an employee or volunteer of SPC, any individual accused of such conduct may be temporarily relieved of any duties involving youth or children pending an appropriate investigation.

Off-Site Trips & Events

Permission Forms

Parent/Guardian Permission Forms and Medical Consent Forms must be completed prior to all trips. The two-adult rule must be followed throughout the trip with any foreseeable exceptions clearly stated and approved in advance by the parent or guardian. The total number of adults on each trip will be adjusted according to the requirements of the planned activities. Under no circumstances may one adult alone take or accompany minors on an overnight outing.

Ratios

The required adult to child/youth ratio for chaperones for any ministry with children or youth shall be 1:6. Gender balance is preferred. For overnight trips, an adult to child/youth ratio for chaperones of 1:4 is preferred, although 1:6 is permissible. Gender balance is required.

Rooming Arrangements

- Rooming arrangements should provide for children and youth of the same sex to room together and adults of the same sex to room together.
- When possible, adults' rooms shall be next to youth rooms and youth may be checked on during the night.
- Ordinarily, adults should not share rooms with children. An individual minor may share a room with an individual adult if the two are related (parent/child), or if written permission has been granted prior to the event by a parent or guardian (in such cases as Intergenerational Mission Trips).
- In situations where one large sleeping area is provided, two adults of the same sex shall accompany children or youth of the same sex.

Medical

- Each child, youth, adult volunteer, and staff must submit a completed medical/insurance form. Each minor's forms must have a parent or guardian's signature.
- Whenever possible, all activities with children and youth shall have a staff or volunteer adult leader with current-certification first aid/CPR training.
- Group leaders should have a copy of all medical forms for overnight or off-site events. These forms will be kept on the event site for the duration of the event.
- First Aid supplies will be available on the event site. All workers will be informed of the location of First Aid supplies/equipment and shall have access to information concerning specific medical conditions and concerns of participants.
- A written report will be completed in the case of any accident, medical emergency or injury.

Driving Rules/Travel

- As recommended by our church insurance company, it is suggested that all drivers of children and youth be over 21 and under 65. In situations where this is not possible, parent permission shall be obtained before the trip and vehicles shall travel together.
- When one vehicle is used for an event, the two-leader rule still applies unless parental permission is obtained prior to the trip. When several vehicles are taken for an event and two leaders are not available for every vehicle, keeping the other vehicle in sight at regular intervals is an acceptable substitution for the two-leader rule.
- Travel arrangements for off-campus events will be coordinated through the church.
- All adult drivers of children and youth will be screened through a driving history search. A valid driver's license will be required.
- All vehicles should remain parked throughout the duration of the activity except for transporting children and obtaining supplies.
- Seat belts will be provided for all passengers.

Outside Groups

All leaders of non-SPC sponsored groups and events that use SPC facilities and supervise children and youth are expected to adhere to these policies. Upon receipt of the policy from SPC, the leaders must review the Child and Youth Protection Policy and sign the Outside Group Leader's Release Form to acknowledge their review of it and to confirm their agreement to follow the policy. This includes, but not limited to, groups such as: Boy/Girl Scouts, Fit & Fun, as well as outreach groups, such as Reach Out First, groups renting church space, and visiting youth groups. Given the nature of the outside groups that use SPC facilities, SPC will not perform background checks, seek personal and professional references, review employment records, or obtain civil and criminal records for such groups. Leaders of outside groups will be invited to attend SPC's frequently scheduled training classes and are expected to conduct their own due diligence in this regard.

Youth Volunteer Acknowledgement and Agreement

I have read and understand the Southport Presbyterian Church Youth Protection Policies and Procedures, and agree to follow them completely. As far as I know there is no reason I should not be eligible to participate as a volunteer with youth and children.

Signature

Date

Printed Name