

**CHILD/YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY
OF
CAPE FEAR PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

General Purpose Statement:

Cape Fear Presbyterian Church PC(USA) seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the following practices, our goal is to protect the children and youth of Cape Fear Presbyterian Church PC(USA) from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting those employed as child care workers and volunteers from false accusations.

Definitions:

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term “worker” includes both paid employees and volunteer persons who work with children/youth.

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:

a. **Six Month Rule**

No volunteer will be allowed to work with children until he/she has been a member or regular attendee of Cape Fear Presbyterian Church PC(USA) for six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

b. **Personal Interview**

A face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

c. **Criminal Background Check**

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and for the following categories of volunteers who work with children:

- I. Those who will be involved in our nursery, Sunday school for children/youth and all children's/youth programs.
- ii. Those who will be involved in overnight activities with children/youth.
- iii. Those who represent Cape Fear Presbyterian Church PC(USA) while working with children/youth in Vacation Bible School.
- iv. Those having occasional contact with children/youth (such as vehicle drivers).

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to electronically sign an authorization form allowing Protect My Ministry, on behalf of Cape Fear Presbyterian Church PC(USA), to run the check. The form will request basic information from the

applicant including the applicant's driver's license number. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, he/she will be unable to work with children/youth.

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Safeguard Committee on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children/youth and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event. The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at Cape Fear Presbyterian Church PC(USA).

d. **Online/In-Person Training**

Cape Fear Presbyterian Church PC(USA) will provide training on this child protection policy to all new childcare workers, as well as their roles and responsibilities and will strive to provide appropriate training on an annual basis.

Two Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers (over age 18) will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised in the nursery, Pre-K classes, as well as Vacation Bible School when there are more than three (3) children. Some youth classes and children's church (when applicable) may have only one adult teacher in attendance. During these times the classroom doors should remain open and with no fewer than three (3) children in attendance. We do not allow children to be alone with an adult on our premises or during youth sponsored activities.

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action (or lack of action) which endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- a. **Physical Abuse** - any physical injury to a child which is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- b. **Emotional Abuse** - emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- c. **Sexual Abuse** - any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four (4) years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest and pornography.
- d. **Neglect** - depriving a child of their essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at Cape Fear Presbyterian Church PC(USA) becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the Sunday School Superintendent and New Hanover County Department of Social Services as mandated by North Carolina state law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at Cape Fear Presbyterian Church PC(USA) or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation and remain away from the premises during the investigation.
3. Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report.
4. We will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists.
5. We will cooperate with any investigation of the incident by state or local authorities. In the event there is no investigation of the incident by state or local authorities, a team will be formed to investigate the circumstances of the incident. The team should act only in consultation with our insurance company and/or attorney.
6. Any person who is found guilty of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position with children or youth.
7. Our Clerk of Session will be our spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he or she is alleged to be involved. All other workers should refrain from speaking to the media.
8. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.

Open Door Policy

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

Teenage Workers

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for helpers (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- a. Must be at least age fourteen (14).
- b. Must be screened as specified above in the subparagraphs b, c, and d in the section entitled "Selection of Workers."
- c. Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

Vacation Bible School Volunteers

Volunteers who are members of Cape Fear Presbyterian Church PC(USA) must be eighteen (18) years of age or older and must have prior approval of Cape Fear Presbyterian Church PC(USA) and be approved through the volunteer screening process.

Volunteers who are non-church members must be eighteen (18) years of age or older. They must attend a training session to take place no later than the Sunday before the start of Vacation Bible School and provide a reference (other than a family member). A commitment form must be completed and they must be approved through the volunteer screening process.

Junior Leaders (those younger than 18, but no younger than 12), must be under the direct supervision of an approved worker at least 18 years of age or older and must be known to a church member. Requirements of a Junior Leader Applicant are: 1) Complete a Junior Leader Registration Form to provide basic personal information and a Medical Authorization Form, both of which require a guardian's signature; 2) Provide two (non-related) personal references; and 3) Attend a training course held by Cape Fear Presbyterian Church PC(USA) prior to the start of Vacation Bible School.

Check-In/Check-Out Procedure

For children in the nursery and Pre-K Sunday school class as well as Vacation Bible School, a security check-in/check-out procedure will be followed.

Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at Cape Fear Presbyterian Church PC(USA). Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care.

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children. Toys and other surfaces are routinely wiped with a diluted bleach solution. Latex gloves are used for diapering.

Medications Policy

It is the policy of Cape Fear Presbyterian Church PC(USA) not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy. Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with the child's teacher or adult in charge to develop a plan of action.

Discipline Policy

The policy of Cape Fear Presbyterian Church PC(USA) is not to administer corporal punishment. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with the parent of the child if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

Restroom Guidelines

The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, then allow the children inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door and leave the stall door open as he/she assists the child.

For the protection of all, workers should *never* be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. Refer to the child's/youth's Medical Authorization Form. This form should be updated in August of each year.
2. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care. A First Aid kit is mounted on the wall in each of the children/youth classrooms.
3. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
4. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

Driving Rules/Travel

When one vehicle is used for an event, the two worker rule still applies unless parental permission is obtained prior to the trip. When several vehicles are taken for an event, keeping the other vehicle in sight at regular intervals is an acceptable situation for the two worker rule.

Travel arrangements for off-campus events will be coordinated by the church. Youth driving themselves must ride alone unless permission is given by a parent or guardian to a member of the youth staff or worker.

All adult drivers will be screened through the Division of Motor Vehicles in their state of residence. A valid driver's license will be required.

Youth may not leave the site of the youth activity without explicit permission from a member of the youth staff or designated adult worker.

All vehicles should remain parked throughout the duration of the activity except for transporting youth and buying supplies.

Overnight Trip Rule

Permission Forms - Parent/Guardian Permission Forms and Medical Authorization Forms must be completed prior to all trips. The two worker rule must be followed throughout the trip with any 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 can one adult alone take or accompany minors on an overnight outing.

Rooming Arrangements

Rooming arrangements should provide for youth (ages 11 - 18) of the same gender to room together and adults of the same gender to room together.

Ordinarily, adults would not share rooms with youth. 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 parent or guardian (in such cases as Intergenerational Mission Trips).

Where possible, middle school youth and senior high youth will be housed separately.

Youth are to be housed with adults rooming in close proximity to provide adequate supervision.