

Child and Youth Protection Policy*

Purpose Statement

First Presbyterian Church of Royal Oak seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth who participate in our programs and activities. All people who participate in activities of the church are worthy of dignity and respect. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children and youth of First Presbyterian Church of Royal Oak from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations. All are encouraged to practice their baptismal vows to nurture children and youth in the Christian faith and to participate fully in the lives and ministry of them. However, the church must safeguard all children and youth under its care from abuse and neglect. We acknowledge the potential for abuse in our world but still seek to prevent it.

The Christian Education Committee, Pastor(s), and the Director of Christian Education shall review the Child and Youth Protection Policy and its implementation annually and report to Session in June of each year.

Definitions

Accused is the person against whom a claim of sexual misconduct is made.

Accuser is the person claiming knowledge of sexual misconduct by a person covered by this policy. The Accuser may or may not be the Victim of alleged sexual misconduct. A person such as a family member, friend, or colleague of the Victim may be the Accuser whose information initiates an inquiry.

Child Abuse is the term meaning a child is harmed by someone else physically, psychologically, sexually or by acts of neglect. It includes Child Sexual Abuse, which is sexual conduct between a child or youth and an adult, or between a child or youth and another child or youth at least four years older than the victim and at least twelve (12) years of age.

Employee is any person who works for salary or wages at FPCRO.

Mandated Reporter, according to Michigan Child Protection Law, requires certain professionals to report their suspicions of child abuse or neglect to Children' Protective Services (CPS) at the Department of Human Services (DHS, phone number 855-444-3911). Mandated Reporters are required by law to make an immediate verbal report to CPS (Child Protective Services) and a written report within 72 hours when they suspect child abuse or neglect. The identity of the reporter is kept confidential.

Non-Victim Accuser is the person, such as a parent, guardian or other advocate for the person who has been the alleged Victim of sexual misconduct, may be an Accuser.

Sexual conduct (including, but not limited to, sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other kinds of verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, such as obscene or suggestive language or behavior, use of church property, computers and other equipment for sexual or pornographic purposes, unacceptable visual contact, touching or fondling) that is unwelcome and/or repeated when the person engaged in the conduct knows or has been informed that the conduct is unwelcome or offensive to the recipient. In the case of children, youth, or

developmentally disabled persons, all sexual conduct is considered to be non-consensual and unwelcome for the purposes of this policy.

Sexual Harassment in this Policy means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when: 1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or a condition of an individual's employment or volunteer service, 2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting the individual, or 3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance by creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

Victim is the term used to identify the person alleged to have been injured by sexual misconduct.

Volunteer is the term used for those who provide services for FPCRO and receive no benefits or remuneration. The term "volunteer" shall include but not be limited to all teachers, drivers, chaperones, childcare providers, advisors, and leaders who work with children.

Youth is a person under eighteen years of age and considered a minor under the law and persons 18 years of age or older who are still in high school.

For purposes of this policy, the terms "child" or "children" include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.

For the purposes of this policy, "volunteers" are defined as those people who of their own free will offer to help lead or provide child care for the children who come under the care of FPCRO. The term "volunteer" shall include but not be limited to all teachers, drivers, chaperones, childcare providers and youth leaders who work with children.

The "Church" or "FPCRO" refers to the First Presbyterian Church of Royal Oak

Selection of Workers

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

1) Six Month Rule

- a) *Ordinarily, an individual will be considered for a volunteer position once they have completed a background check and have been an active participant at FPCRO for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.*
- b) Individuals with fewer than six months of attendance may serve in a classroom at which an established volunteer or staff person is present at all times, provided that such individual is interviewed by a staff member and a background check is completed prior to such service.
- c) *A parent of a church school student may be present in their child's classroom on a regular basis if necessary for the health, safety, and/or physical or emotional well-being of their child or others, provided that they are interviewed by a staff member and a background check for them is completed as soon as possible.*

- d) Any person who is currently under investigation for, or has been convicted of suspected physical abuse, sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult, sexual abuse perpetrated by another youth, emotional abuse, and/or neglect is not permitted to work or volunteer in any church-sponsored activity or program involving youth.

2) Personal Interview

Upon completion of a criminal background check, a face-to-face interview with the Director of Christian Education and/or a Pastor may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position. All employees and youth volunteer(s) will be under the supervision of the respective staff person.

Criminal Background Check

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a background check application supplied by FPCRO. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at the church. If an individual decline to sign the authorization form, she/he will not be permitted to work with children.

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and for all volunteers who work with children and youth. This includes:

- Those who will be involved in any of the preschool, elementary and youth programs
- Those who will be involved in overnight activities with minors
- Those counseling minors
- Those involved in one-on-one mentorship of minors
- Those having occasional one-on-one contact with minors (that is church sponsored athletic team coaches, music coaches, vehicle drivers, etc.)

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Pastor, Associate Pastor, Director of Christian Education, and the Clerk of Session on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, excessive traffic violations, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with minors. 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 the church. Criminal background checks will be reviewed every two (2) years for volunteers and staff.

Two Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two volunteers or staff persons will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. One of the two volunteers or staff people may be a hall monitor, provided that the hall monitor actively patrols the Christian education areas while children and youth are present. When only one adult teacher is in attendance during the class session, doors to the classroom shall remain open and

there should be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation. If a situation unexpectedly does not meet the criteria of this policy, then alternatives must be put into place so that the event is in compliance. The following examples are meant as illustration only and are not to be perceived as the only possible solutions.

Example: If only one teacher and one child show up for a Sunday school class then the Sunday school coordinator could recommend these solutions:

- 1) The teacher and child could join another class for the morning.
- 2) The Sunday school coordinator could join the teacher and child in the classroom.

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 or youth’s physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- **Physical abuse** – any physical act that causes or threatens to cause injury to a child or youth which is not accidental. Physical abuse includes, but is not limited to slapping, beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- **Sexual conduct** – offensive, obsessive or suggestive language or behavior, unacceptable visual contact, unwelcome touching or fondling that is injurious to the physical or emotional health of another, including but not limited to activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- **Emotional abuse** – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of bullying, constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- **Sexual abuse** – any sexual conduct between a child or youth and an adult, or between a child or youth and another child or youth at least four years older than the victim and at least twelve (12) years of age.
- **Misuse of technology** – use of technology that results in sexually harassing or abusing another person, including texting or emailing suggestive messages and images to persons with whom one has a ministerial relationship. It is never appropriate to view pornography on church property. When this includes a person under the age of eighteen, it is considered child abuse. There is never an expectation of personal privacy when using technological equipment owned by a church or church entity or within the context of ministry.
- **Neglect** – depriving a child of their essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

All ruling elders, deacons, Christian educators, and teaching elders are required to report knowledge of child abuse to the civil and ecclesiastical authorities according to the *Book of Order* (G-4.0302).

When any ruling elder, deacon, Christian educator, or teaching elder or any other individual involved in the care of children at this church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child or youth, this must be reported immediately to the Pastor, Director of Children's Ministries or Associate Pastor for Youth (or Clerk of Session, if the allegation/report is directed against one of these individuals) for further action including reporting to authorities as mandated by state law. Session will be informed of the incident immediately. The first person to learn of an incident of sexual misconduct should not undertake an inquiry alone or question either the victim or the accused unless the incident is divulged in the process of pastoral care, counseling, or a therapy session. Protocols shall be interpreted in conjunction with the Book of Order (Section D – 10.000 et seq.) and, in case of conflict, the Book of Order shall control. Notification to the Presbytery of Detroit, Committee on Ministry shall be made in appropriate cases.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at this church or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed (as soon as possible, and in no event later than 24 hours after report of such incident is made to the Pastor, Director of Children's Ministries or Associate Pastor for Youth (or Clerk of Session, if the allegation/report is directed against one of these individuals).

- 1) The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
- 2) The individual alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an 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 stated in the Michigan Child Protection Law.
- 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, the pastor, in consultation with Session, will form a team 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 not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct, either in a criminal proceeding or in a disciplinary proceeding under the Book of Order, will be barred from working with children or youth. Employees will be subject to discharge.
- 7) The Pastor (or Clerk of Session should the allegations be directed against the Pastor) or the Pastor's designee will be the spokesperson to the congregation, media and community concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he or she is alleged to be involved. All other workers must refrain from speaking to the media or to the public.
- 8) A pastoral visit will be offered to all parties involved in the allegation.
- 9) In responding to allegations of child abuse, members, officers, and employees of the church should seek to uphold the dignity of all persons involved, including persons who are alleging harm, persons who are accused of child abuse, and the families and communities of each.

10) Because of the potential threat to other children and youth, the policies in this section shall be followed even if the victim was a minor but has achieved the age of majority by the time he or she alleges child abuse.

Open Door Policy

Classroom doors must 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. The only exception for locked doors is in the event of an emergency

Teenage Volunteers

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

- Teenage volunteers must be at least age 14.
- Teenage volunteers will be asked to complete a background certification with parental signature. Teenage volunteers must be under the supervision of an adult or staff member.

Check-in/Check-out Procedure

A check-in/check-out procedure will be followed for all children. The check in process will be done by adult leaders. Parents, guardians, or other persons as expressly permitted by a parent or guardian are to pick up children at the end of a class or event.

Discipline Policy

There shall be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Volunteers should consult with the Director of Christian Education and/or the Associate Pastor if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

Restroom Guidelines

Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

An Adult is not to be in a closed bathroom with a child. An adult should escort children to the hallway door of the bathroom and wait outside the bathroom door. If a child needs assistance while in a bathroom, either doors should be left open or another person should be present while assistance is given.

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) For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, staff/volunteers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) 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.
- 2) For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian and the supervising staff member on site will immediately be notified. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.

- 3) Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment from a first aid kit or by a medical professional. The incident report will be filed with the church administrator with a copy to the Pastor / Head of Staff.

Training

FPCRO will provide mandatory training on this child and youth protection policy to all volunteers, childcare workers, staff and elected governing officers and will provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis for those required to attend such training. Educational opportunities will be provided to children, youth, and congregation members as well.

Implementation Guidelines for Staff and Volunteers

As a Christian community of faith committed to protecting our children and youth while they are in our care and under our supervision, First Presbyterian Church of Royal Oak (FPCRO) requires the following conduct of our staff and volunteers. While this code of conduct includes specific actions, it is also meant to represent a greater spirit of responsible care for our children and youth as we try to facilitate and embody healthy, safe relationships in the life of the church. While we cannot cover every contingency in this code of conduct, we do pray that volunteers and staff would seek to do more than abide by the “letter of the law” but also to live by the Spirit that leads us to protect our children and youth in this way.

- Staff and volunteers are required to adhere to the FPCRO Child and Youth Protection Policy (CYPP) in all their interactions with children and youth.
- Staff and volunteers will respect children and youth’s rights not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable or that disregard their right to say no.
- Consuming, using, possessing or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while working or volunteering with children or youth is prohibited.
- Possessing or using concealed weapons or firearms while working or volunteering with children or youth is prohibited.
- Smoking or use of tobacco products in the presence of children or youth while working or volunteering is prohibited.
- Staff and volunteers should use age-appropriate language with children and youth, avoiding the use of profanity.
- 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 during church events. They will be held responsible for the presence of such media should children gain access to it. During events, staff and volunteers should aim to be off their phones and present to the children and youth in the room.
- Staff and volunteers over 18 may not date or be romantically involved with program participants or church members who are younger than eighteen years of age. Clergy must follow the Presbytery of Detroit’s policy which prohibits relationships between clergy and congregants regardless of age.
- Staff and volunteers are required to report any concerns or suspicions inside or outside the church building related to alleged or potential abuse. Volunteers or staff are required to specifically and immediately report concerns or suspicions to staff. See pages 4 and 5 of the CYPP under the title, “Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse.”
- 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 contact. “G” rated movies for preschool and elementary age children; “G” and “PG” rated movies for middle school students; “G”, “PG”, and PG13” rated movies for high school students. Any deviation from this will be at the discretion and approval of the pastoral or teaching staff.

Supervision of Children and Youth

FPCRO strives for a “two-adult” rule for the supervision of our programs for children and youth. See page 3 of the CYPP for more information.

FPCRO only allows one-on-one meetings with children and youth for counseling situations. In that case, it is mandatory that the child/youth and adult meet in a public place in view of other people or in the church building but with the room door open.

Staff and volunteers may not discipline children or youth by use of physical or verbal punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care. Verbal reprimands must be appropriate for the age of the child and the offense committed. Please refer to the CYPP for more information. Physical restraint is used only in situations necessary to protect the child, youth, other children or adults from harm.

For restroom supervision, please refer to the CYPP for information.

Staff and volunteers should be alert to the physical and emotional state of the children and youth. Any signs of injury or possible child abuse must be reported. See page the CYPP for the complete instructions for reporting.

Under no circumstances should staff or volunteers release children to anyone other than the authorized parent, guardian or other individuals authorized by the parent or guardian.

Off-Site Trip and Events

All forms of participation at off-site venues, which include any that are required by the venue must be completed prior to the time of departure.

Adult/Student Ratio

The required adult to child/youth ratio for adult chaperones for any event or program shall be 1:6. Gender balance is preferred. For overnight trips, the adult chaperone to child/youth ratio of 1:4 is preferred, although 1:6 is permissible.

Rooming Arrangements

For overnight events, sleeping rooms will be divided by gender. If adults are staying in the same room as non-familial children and youth, arrangements must comply with the two-adult rule/three-person rule (at least two adults or at least one adult and at least two children or youth).

Medical

- For off-site or overnight events, adult chaperones shall have a copy of all medical and other forms that are required by FPCRO and the off-site venue.
- First aid supplies will be available at the event site. Leaders 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. A copy of the report will be given to the parent or guardian and one copy to the staff. See page 6 of the CYPP for more information.

Driving Rules/Travel

- When one vehicle is used for an event, the two-adult rule applies.
- Each vehicle shall have a list of cell phone numbers for the leaders and volunteers participating.
- A valid driver's license and a copy of current insurance vehicle coverage will be required.
- All vehicles used must have seat belts for the driver and each passenger.
- Drivers of all off-site events must be at least twenty-one years of age.
- If it is necessary for an adult to take a child or youth home after an event, the two-adult rule/three-person rule still applies. In addition, an effort should be made to contact the parent or guardian to inform them of the situation before transporting their children or youth home. Exceptions to this requirement include (1) when a parent or guardian has given express permission to another adult to take a child or youth home and has informed the church of such permission, and (2) when a youth is sixteen or older and has a valid driver's license and is driving his/her self.

FPCRO Live Video Conferencing/Telecommunicating Policy for Children and Youth

This policy covers all events and activities hosted on behalf of FPCRO that involve children and youth up to the age of 18 years.

- All events must have at least two adults present in the conversation.
- Children 13 years and younger should be logged in with a parent present or through a parent's account.
- Parents must be notified via phone or email in advance of the event. The date, time and a description of the event should be provided.
- The adult leader of the event should make every effort to use the software owned by FPCRO.
- Parents are asked to refrain from recording or taking any kind of screenshots or pictures of the screen.
- All Live Video Conferencing/Telecommunicating with children is considered an event of FPCRO and any photos taken by church representatives can be used unless a Photo Opt Out Request is on file with the church office.

FPCRO Staff and Volunteer Acknowledgment Form

I acknowledge that I have received, read and understand the FPCRO Child and Youth Protection Policy. I understand that as a member of the staff or volunteer working with children and/or youth at FPCRO, I am subject to a thorough background check including criminal history. I understand that any action inconsistent with this Policy or failure to take action mandated by this Policy may result in my removal as a volunteer with children and/or youth or termination of my employment.

Signature

Date