

Child Safety Policy

We desire to protect and support those who work with our children. These policies to prevent child abuse, neglect or any unfounded allegations against workers or teachers address these major areas:

1. Worker selection
2. Worker practices
3. Reporting obligation

Selecting Children's Workers

- All volunteers will be screened according to procedures outlined in the Staff and Volunteer Background and Screening Policy & Procedure guidelines approved by the Session of First Presbyterian Church. Volunteer background checks will be redone every 5 years. Ten Commandments of Child Safety will be redone yearly.

Safety Policies for Children's Ministries

- All parents whose children are participating in Sunday school, Vacation Bible School or other church events should sign a child release and/or registration form.
- Each group of children should have at least two workers, at least one being an adult, present at all times.
- For children, infant through kindergarten age, the desirable ratio is one worker for every five children. For grades one through six, the desirable ratio is one worker for each eight children.
- Classroom doors are to be shut and locked during teaching time. A supervisor or designated adult representative will circulate where children's activities are occurring.
- When taking children to the rest room, it is preferable for workers to supervise children of the same gender when possible. The worker should stay out of the rest room at the open door until the child is finished in the stall. Workers enter to assist only when necessary.
- In the nursery, diapers are to be changed only in designated areas and in the presence of other caregivers.
- At the end of each class, children will only be released to their parent or designated guardian.
- No worker is permitted to use any type of corporal punishment to correct or discipline a child. As a general guideline, workers should only touch children on parts of the body that would not be covered by a bathing suit. If non-corporal methods such as positive incentive, talking to the child or time-outs are ineffective in changing disruptive behavior, teachers or other workers should bring the child to the parent and inform their supervisor of the problem.

Reporting Obligation and Procedure

1. All caregivers are to be familiar with the definitions of child abuse (see below).
2. If a caregiver suspects that a child has been abused, the following steps are to be followed:
 - Report the suspected abuse to your supervisor.
 - Do not interview the child regarding the suspected abuse. Trained personnel will handle the interview process.
 - Do not discuss the suspected abuse. It is important that all information about the suspected child abuse (alleged victim and abuser) be kept confidential.
3. Caregivers reporting suspected child abuse will be asked to complete the Suspected Child Abuse Report provided by their supervisor. Confidentiality will be maintained where possible. This report must be completed within 24 hours of reporting the suspected abuse.
4. Once a suspected child abuse case has been reported by a caregiver to a supervisor, it will be reported to the designated reporting agency.
5. Whenever possible, in cases where the suspected abuser is the victim's parent that parent will be encouraged to report themselves to the Department of Social Services. This should be done in the presence of the supervisor or pastor to whom the abuse was originally reported. Both abuser and victim will also be referred to other local social services specializing in family counseling and abuse prevention.

Definitions of Child Abuse

As defined by The National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse, "child abuse" includes:

Physical Abuse

Non-accidental injury, which may include beatings, violent shaking, human bites, strangulation, suffocation, poisoning or burns. The result may be bruises and welts, broken bones, scars, permanent disfigurement, long-lasting psychological damage, serious internal injuries, brain damage or death.

Neglect

The failure to provide a child with basic needs, including food, clothing, education, shelter, and medical care; also abandonment and inadequate supervision.

Sexual Abuse

The sexual exploitation of a child by an older person, as in rape, incest, fondling of the genitals, exhibitionism, or pornography. It may be done for the sexual gratification of the older person, out of a need for power, or for economic reasons.