

**Child Safety Policies**

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Complete the highlighted forms, clearances and training to work or volunteer in our children/youth programs. For your records, please record the date you complete each step.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ FPCA Primary Screening Form (Application) APPENDIX 1

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ PA Disclosure Statement Application for Employees APPENDIX 2

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ PA Disclosure Statement Application for Volunteers APPENDIX 3

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ FPCA Child Abuse Screening Instructions APPENDIX 4

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ PA Request for Criminal Record Check APPENDIX 5

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\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ FBI Federal Criminal History (if required) APPENDIX 7

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ PA Report of Suspected Child Abuse APPENDIX 8

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ FPCA Acknowledgement of Receipt & Certification APPENDIX 9

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ FPCA Child Safety and Mandatory Reporting Training

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First Presbyterian Church of Ambler

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**THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AMBLER**

 **CHILD SAFETY POLICY FOR THOSE INVOLVED IN MINISTRY**

# SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The Session of First Presbyterian Church of Ambler adopts this policy on child safety for the use of the Church.

**1.1** **Purpose.** The purpose of the Child Safety Policy is as follows:

A. to help assure a loving, warm, open atmosphere for adults, youth, and children to worship, study, and carry out their Christian faith;

B. to set and enforce standards of ethical behavior consistent with Scripture and secular law;

C. to provide procedures for inquiry and effective response to allegations of breach of emotional, spiritual, and physical care and protection of children and youth which lies on all who interact with children or youth on behalf of the Church;

D. to serve as a guide for prevention of child abuse, including child sexual abuse; and

E. to demonstrate pastoral concern for victims of child abuse, as well as those accused of child abuse.

**1.2 Scriptural Foundation.** The people of God live out their faith in the midst of a particular historical reality. Inherent in every time is promise and possibility, opportunities for the ministry and the mission of the church of Jesus Christ to be carried forth. Recent times have demanded that we deal with issues related to human sexuality. While affirming that God created us to live together in ways which proclaim the worth and dignity of each individual; human sexuality has been a basis for opposition, degradation, violation and injustice: manifestations of our sin.

Our sexuality is a gift from God and when rightly used, leads to the wholeness of life which God intends for all people. Those who serve through the offices of the Church bear particular responsibility in making manifest the goodness of God's gift of sexuality. The directives provided by the church in the area of sexual conduct have been vague and general.

The ethical conduct of all who minister in the name of Jesus Christ is of vital importance to the church, for through these representatives and understanding of God and the gospel, good news is conveyed. First Presbyterian Church of Ambler has developed this Child Safety Policy in response to PA law, the statistical information regarding child sexual abuse, the number of cases of child abuse in the Church, and God’s call for justice. Simply stated, the Church's desire is for the best spiritual environment for all persons -- children, youth, and adults.

**1.3 Theological Affirmations.** Who we are and what we do is based on our understanding of God, known in the prophets and priests of the Old Testament, proclaimed by Jesus Christ in the New Testament, manifested by the Holy Spirit who informs and sustains the Church today. It is this triune God who calls us to share the good news of the gospel with love and integrity. This policy is based on the following understanding of God:

A. Our human sexuality is a gift from God who created all things good.

B. God entered into covenant relationship with the people of Israel. That covenant was based on God's act of liberation and the people's response through obedience to ethical regulations on which the community's life was to be based.

C. To live in covenant relationship with God is to know *shalom* which is, health, wholeness, unity and peace.

 D. A broken covenant (disobedience, separation from God) brings the consequences of sin: oppression, injustice, pain and death.

E. From the prophets sent by God comes forth the call to repentance and the promise of forgiveness.

F. All are sinners, falling short of the ethics of the Kingdom.

G. Forgiveness and redemption are offered to all people through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

H. God has particular concern for the poor, the oppressed, the abused and the harassed.

I. The Holy Spirit is God's gift to the church today to enable faithful adherence to the desires of God as we live out our lives as sexual creatures on earth.

**SECTION 2: CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES LAW (CSPL) DEFINITIONS**

**2.1. The Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) Identifies Two Components of Child Maltreatment:**

 A. **Definition of a Child:** A **child** is defined as an individual under 18 years of

 age.

B. **Definition of Maltreatment:** An **act** of harm to a child and the **failure to act**

to prevent harm to a child.

1. An act is something that is done to harm or cause potential harm to a

 child.

2. A failure to act is something that is not done to prevent harm or

 potential harm to a child.

**2.2. CPSL Definition of Child Abuse:** According to Child Protective Services Law

 (CPSL), Child Abuse is *intentionally, knowingly,* or *recklessly* doing any of the

 following:

 A. Causing **bodily injury** or the *likelihood* of bodily injury to a child through

 any recent act or failure to act – and bodily injury is defined as impairment

 of physical condition or substantial pain.

 B. Fabricating, feigning, or intentionally exaggerating or inducing a **medical**

 **symptom or disease** which results in a potentially harmful medical

 evaluation or treatment to the child through any recent act.

C. Causing or contributing to serious **mental injury** to a child through any act

 or failure to act which can render a child chronically or severely anxious,

 agitated, withdrawn, or psychotic and seriously interferes with the child’s

 ability to achieve age appropriate developmental and social tasks.

 D. Causing **sexual abuse or exploitation** of a child:

 1. through the employment, use, persuasion, inducement,
 enticement, or coercion of a child to engage in or assist another
 individual to engage in sexually explicit conduct which includes
 but is not limited to:
 (a)  looking at the sexual or other intimate parts of a child or
 another individual for the purpose of arousing or
 gratifying sexual desire in any individual;
 (b)  participating in sexually explicit conversation either in
 person, by telephone, by computer or by a computer-
 aided device for the purpose of sexual stimulation or
 gratification of any individual;
 (c)  actual or simulated sexual activity or nudity for the
 purpose of sexual stimulation or gratification of any
 individual;

 (d)  actual or simulated sexual activity for the purpose of
 producing visual depiction, including photographing,
 videotaping, computer depicting or filming.

 (These conducts do not include consensual activities between a child who is 14 years of age or older and another person who is 14 years of age or older and whose age is within four years of the child's age.)

 2. through any of the following offenses committed against a child:
 (a) rape;
 (b) statutory sexual assault;
 (c) involuntary deviate sexual intercourse;
 (d) sexual assault;
 (e) institutional sexual assault;
 (f) aggravated indecent assault;

(g) indecent assault;
 (h)  indecent exposure;
 (i)  incest;
 (j)  prostitution;
 (j) sexual abuse;
 (k) unlawful contact with a minor;
 (l) sexual exploitation.

E. Causing serious **physical neglect** of a child that endangers a child’s life or health, threatens a child’s well-being, causes bodily injury, or impairs a child's health, development, or functioning through a repeated, prolonged, or egregious failure to supervise a child in a manner that is appropriate considering the child's developmental age and abilities, or a failure to provide a child with adequate essentials of life, including food, shelter or medical care.

 F. Additional **specific recent acts** that include:
 (a) kicking, biting, throwing, burning, stabbing or cutting a child in a

 manner that endangers the child
 (b) unreasonably restraining or confining a child
 (c) forcefully shaking a child under one year of age
 (d) forcefully slapping or striking a child under one year of age
 (e) having a child present where illegal activity is occurring (i.e.

 methamphetamine laboratory)

**SECTION 3: SUPERVISORY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

**3.1 Team Approach.** Any church group activity involving children shouldbe attended by at least two approved adults, or one approved adult and two approved children fourteen years of age or older, who remain present except in cases of emergency that require that one adult leaves for a brief period. At no time, shall one adult be alone with one child not related to him or her without the written permission of the parent or legal guardian of that child.

**3.1a Volunteers Less Than Fourteen Years of Age:** A volunteer under the age of fourteen may assist in special programs under the discretion of paid staff and when paired with two approved adults.

**3.1b** **Private Conversation with a Child and Director of Children’s or Youth Ministries or Pastors.** A private conversation between Pastors and Directors of Children’s and Youth Ministries and a child in the Children’s or Youth Ministries must occur in a room with an open or windowed door, or in a public setting. Directors of Children’s and Youth Ministries should not be involved in providing formal or professional counseling to a child involved in the Children’s or Youth Ministries.

**3.1c** **Private Conversation with a Child and VOLUNTEER in Children’s or Youth Ministry.** A private conversation between a volunteer and a child in the Children’s or Youth Ministry must occur in a room with an open or windowed door, or in a public setting. Volunteers who may engage in a planned private conversation, which would occur at a future time and date, will require written permission from the Director of the program. A volunteer should not be involved in providing formal or professional counseling to a child involved in the Children’s or Youth Ministries.

**3.2 Membership in Church.** No person shall be allowed to work with children, or to serve in a volunteer role unless he or she has been a member of the Church or has been associated with the Church on a regular basis for at least the prior six months. The directors of Youth Ministry or Children’s Ministry may make exceptions to this requirement in consultation with their respective committees. Persons granted such an exception must follow through on the screening procedures discussed in Section 5 of this policy. In addition, they must be paired with a person who has been a member of the Church for at least the prior six months and meets all requirements of the child safety policy.

**3.3 Parental Permission.** Children must have the written permission, electronic signature acceptable, of the child’s parent or legal guardian for involvement in church sponsored activities, programs, including transportation of the child to off-site activities and programs. Parental permission must be obtained for the use of photographs in FPCAmbler publications, FPCAmbler website, FPCAmbler Social Media forums and videos of children from infancy through age seventeen.

**3.4 Reporting Suspicious Behavior and Suspected Abuse.**

The Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law (CPSL), initially enacted in 1990, is designed to define how Pennsylvania responds to child abuse. Effective on January 1, 2014, this law has been amended to significantly expand and further define mandatory reporters and the reporting process, increase penalties for those mandated to report suspected child abuse who fail to do so, and provide protections from employment discrimination for filing a good faith report of child abuse.

**3.4a** **Who Should Report Child Abuse and Neglect?** There are two types of reporters:

 1. **Mandated Reporters** who are required by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect

 2. P**ermissive Reporters** who are strongly encouraged to report suspected child abuse or neglect.

**3.4b Definition of a Mandated Reporter:** The Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law has expanded the definition of a mandated reporter and the list\* now includes:

*An individual paid or unpaid, who, on the basis of the individual's role as an integral part of a regularly scheduled program, activity or service, accepts responsibility for a child.*At First Presbyterian Church of Ambler, that means that **ALL ADULTS** involved in any aspect of Children’s Ministry, Youth Ministry, or other activities (i.e. Inter-Faith Hospitality Network) involving children and youth **are mandated reporters**.

**3.4c What Does it Mean to be a Mandated Reporter?** Anyone may report suspected abuse. Mandated reporters are those people who are required by law to report suspected child abuse. Mandated reporters are held to a higher standard of responsibility and may receive serious consequences for not reporting suspected abuse. Pennsylvania’s Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) was amended in 2014, including substantial changes to the list of people who are mandated reporters.

**3.4d How to Determine Whether to Make a Report of Abuse.** The CPSL stipulates that an adult shall make a report of suspected child abuse if that person has **“reasonable cause”** to suspect that a child is a victim of abuse. Mandated reporters are required by law to report when they have ***reasonable cause*** to suspect a child is the victim of abuse. A mandated reporter who willfully fails to make a report of suspected child abuse could face legal penalties, including fines and/or incarceration.

**3.4e How Do I Report Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect?** To report suspected child maltreatment:

**1. First, immediately and directly make a report to ChildLine.** ChildLine accepts reports of suspected abuse and neglect and refers these reports to the appropriate investigating agency to ensure the safety and well-being of the children of Pennsylvania. ChildLine also refers to the proper county agency a child who may be in need of other services in order that the needs of that child may be fully assessed. ChildLine accepts reports of child maltreatment from public and professional sources 24 hours per day, seven days per week. ChildLine is available at 1-800-932-0313. As a mandated reporter, you must provide your name and contact information when making the call. Within 48 hours of making the oral report, mandated reporters must follow up with an electronic report or a written report completed on the CY-47 form (<http://www.pa-fsa.org/Portals/0/Docs/Mandated-Reporters/CY47%20Final.pdf>). You can also make a report to ChildLine electronically via the Child Welfare Information Solution Portal (<https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home>).

**2. Second, call the local police department AND the Montgomery County Detective Bureau** (610-278-3368) to report suspected child maltreatment in order to ensure that a Mission Kids interview is set up for the child and that communication is coordinated between the agencies.

**3. Third, notify the staff person in charge of the program** that you have made a report to ChildLine. For example, contact the Director of Children’s Ministry or the Director of Youth Ministry. If they are not available, contact the Senior Pastor, directly.

**4. Fourth, the staff person will contact the Senior Pastor,** whose responsibility it is to facilitate the cooperation of the church with any investigation.

**3.4f What Happens After I Contact ChildLine?** ChildLine is responsible for determining the disposition of a report. It is NOT a reporter’s role to consider next steps. Reporters are protected by strict confidentiality provisions;

Pennsylvania law protects all reporters of suspected child abuse. When a report is made in “good faith,” a reporter is immune from civil or criminal liability. The law imposes penalties if any person attempts to intimidate, retaliate, or obstruct an individual from reporting suspected child abuse, and a reporter may also take action for appropriate relief if discharged from employment or discriminated against in any other way as a result of making a report of suspected child abuse. A mandated reporter who makes a report of suspected child abuse has the right to receive information about the final status of the report and about services provided or arranged to protect the child.

**3.5 Nursery Identification Procedure.** The Church has instituted an identification procedure for children in the nursery through pre-kindergarten classes that clearly identifies the child and the child's parent or legal guardian. Children are only released to a properly identified and pre-authorized adult. The nursery, whether used by the church or outside organizations, must have two adults with children at all times.

**3.6** **Overnight Rule.** All adult chaperones and supervisors on overnight activities involving children where the parents are not directly responsible for their own children, must be cleared with the director of children’s ministry, the director of youth ministry or other staff members of the Church, and must have completed all required training and clearances. No adult leader shall ever share a bed with a child who is not a closely related member of that adult leader’s family.

**3.7 Open Door Policy.** In classrooms and other areas used by children that do not have glass windows, doors should be left open during activities. In such areas that do have doors with glass windows, the windows should not be covered or obstructed.

**3.8 Disciplinary Procedures.** If there is reasonable suspicion of child abuse by a paid staff or volunteer, a report will be made immediately to ChildLine. Pending an investigation and resolution by the proper authorities in accordance with applicable law, (i) if there is any evidence of child abuse by paid staff, the staff member will be suspended immediately; and the matter will be referred to the Personnel Committee or (ii) if there is any evidence of child abuse by a volunteer, the volunteer will be prohibited from participating in any Church activities with children.

# SECTION 4: Recruiting, Training and Screening Paid Church Workers

**4.1 Job Application Procedure - Generally.** An applicant for employment by the Church shall complete and submit an employment application in a form approved by the Session, undergo a personal interview and provide reference checks. Each reference shall be contacted and a written record of the results of each such contact shall be maintained in the Church’s records. Each applicant shall complete Child Abuse Clearances as described in **Section 4.2.** The Church shall confirm the applicant's identity by requiring photographic identification such as a driver's license. Each applicant shall also be given the Sexual Harassment Policy and asked to sign a receipt thereof. The Session may from time to time establish other procedures and requirements relating to employment in its sole discretion.

**4.2 Child Abuse Clearances.**  Prior to hire, applicant shall complete and submit to the Church Business Administrator

(a) Employment Application

(b) PA Disclosure Statement Application for Employees (Appendix 2)

(c) PA Request for Criminal Record Check (Appendix 5)

(d) PA Child Abuse History Clearance (Appendix 6). See Appendix 4 for instructions on completing online.

(e) FBI Clearance Criminal History (Appendix 7) which includes fingerprinting. See Appendix 4 for instructions.

(f) Acknowledgement of Receipt and Certification of the Child Safety Policy. (Appendix 9).

The Church will cover the costs for all clearance checks. After hire, each employee shall attend a presentation and training session on the Church’s Child Safety Policy and also complete an online course for Mandatory Reporter Training. https://www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu

**4.3 Retroactive Application.** All current employees shall complete and submit the Child Abuse Clearance forms identified in Section 4.2 by December 31, 2015. The Church will reimburse each current employee for the fees incurred in submitting the documents identified in Section 4.2(b) and Section 4.2(c) to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. All current employees will attend a presentation and training session on the Church’s Child Safety Policy and Mandatory Reporting Training and shall complete and submit an Acknowledgment of Receipt and Certification of the Child Safety Policy in the form attached hereto as Appendix 9.

# SECTION 5: Recruiting, Training and Screening of Volunteer Workers

**5.1 Child Abuse Screening for Volunteers Who WORK With Children.** All volunteers who work with children must complete and submit the following to the Church Business Administrator.

(a) Primary Screening Form (Appendix 1);

(b) PA Disclosure Statement Application for Volunteers (Appendix 3);

(c) PA Request for Criminal Record Check (Appendix 5);

(d) PA Child Abuse History Clearance (Appendix 6). See Appendix 4 for instructions to complete online;

(e) Acknowledgement of Receipt and Certification of the Child Safety Policy (Appendix 9).

**If the volunteer has NOT been a resident of Pennsylvania for the entirety of the previous ten (10) years, they must also complete the following:**

(a) FBI Federal Criminal History, which includes fingerprinting (Appendix 7). See Appendix 4 for instructions.

**5.1a Screening Procedure for a Child Volunteers Fourteen Years of Age or Older Who WORK With Children.** Child volunteers fourteen years of age or older must complete a face-to-face Child Safety Policy Training and Mandatory Reporting Training with an approved church facilitator.

**5.2 References:** References for volunteers in the Youth Ministry will be checked by the Director of Youth Ministry and references for volunteers in the Children’s Ministry will be checked by the Director of Children’s Ministry. For individuals volunteering in both ministries, the directors will determine who will check references.

**5.3 Prior Criminal Record.** Any person who has been convicted of or pleaded guilty to child sexual abuse, physical abuse or any other form of sexual misconduct will not be allowed to work with children in a volunteer capacity at the Church.

**5.4 Right to Modify Procedure.** The Session reserves the right to modify the screening procedure for individuals working with children in its sole discretion from time to time.The Session must authorize a review of this policy every three years. All individuals working with children must be advised of any changes or additions to this policy and must sign off that they have read and understand the aforementioned changes and/or additions.