

Child and Youth Protection Policy
Adopted by the Session of First Presbyterian Church on May 21, 2012
This version supersedes the version of December 17, 2007

The purpose of this policy is to provide the safest environment possible for our children and volunteers. The policy provides processes and procedures for the conduct of youth programs. The Christian Education Ministry Team (CEMT) is responsible for the implementation of this policy.

Section 1: Scope. This policy applies to lay volunteers and staff serving in any church activity, regardless of location, for children age birth to 18.

Section 2: Volunteer selection.

- A. Volunteers called to serve child or youth ministries shall exhibit the following characteristics. They should be loving, trustworthy, patient, and nurturing. They should demonstrate Christian tenets by example, be guided by the doctrines of the church, and respectful of the polity of the church. Primary leader/lead teachers should be members of First Presbyterian Church for at least one year. Volunteers will be at least five years older than the children or youth they serve. Church leaders charged with the responsibility of calling volunteers for children's and youth ministries shall prayerfully respond to God's call to seek members who demonstrate these characteristics. Volunteer candidates will provide the information on the "Volunteer Form" (appendix 1). The Session of FPC will approve all teachers (Sunday School, Wednesday night Bible study activities, etc.) The Christian Education Ministry Team will approve all other volunteers.
- B. First Presbyterian Church will conduct a criminal records check on all child and youth volunteers and staff within 30 days of approval by the session and prior to serving with the children or youth. Volunteers and/or staff must agree and authorize a criminal background check as requested. Volunteers and/or staff are required to report to a pastor of First Presbyterian Church as to any arrests or other criminal background check additions within fifteen (15) days of the event and agree that the Church holds, in its discretion, the authority to continue or discontinue their services or volunteer activities accordingly.
- C. The CEMT may accept satisfactory prior criminal records checks conducted by other organizations within the past year (of the start date of the volunteer/staff member service with the church) such as schools, Boy Scouts of America, other churches, or the U.S. armed services.
- D. The church staff will maintain in a secure location a roster of completed criminal record checks with only the general finding of "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory". The church Christian Education elders and Senior Pastor will make the determination of what is deemed unsatisfactory. In the event of an unsatisfactory finding, the senior pastor and a CEMT elder will counsel the individual, and ensure that the individual does not serve as a child or youth volunteer.

Section 3: At no time will one adult and one child be alone together. Two adults will be called to child or youth classes or other meetings.

Section 4: Training.

- A. Volunteers: First Presbyterian Church will conduct training for new volunteers before they serve. Volunteers shall attend the training or make arrangements with the church to make up the training. Training will cover this policy, child abuse awareness and prevention, severe weather plans, building evacuation, and basic first aid. All volunteers and staff will review the policy annually.
- B. Parents are encouraged to educate themselves and their children on child abuse awareness and prevention.
- C. Emergency evacuation routes will be posted in classrooms and severe weather drills will be practiced annually.

Section 5: Volunteer Drivers. All volunteers who serve as a vehicle driver shall have a current license and shall obey traffic laws. A copy of driver's license and insurance will be maintained by the church staff. Volunteer drivers shall be at least 25 years old. At no time will one adult and one child or youth be in a vehicle alone. When driving the church bus, all bus policies and procedures will be followed.

Section 6: Overnight trips and chaperones. Volunteers who serve as chaperones for overnight trips shall be at least 25 years old. If the event includes both genders, then chaperones will be of both genders, with at least one chaperone for every eight children or youth. Sleeping accommodations shall be such that chaperones sleep with their corresponding gender group.

Section 7: Suspected abuse reporting procedure. Any volunteer who suspects an incident of child abuse has occurred shall notify the staff member in charge of the activity and one of the pastors. The pastors shall notify the Columbus Department of Family and Children Services within 48 hours. Appendix 2 of this policy is an abuse report form to be used as a guide in reporting suspected abuse.

- A. Any volunteer personally witnessing any occurrence of or encountering a situation which presents suspicion of the occurrence of abuse is required to report the situation to the staff member in charge of the activity and a pastor immediately after the occurrence. The staff member in charge of the activity will complete a "Suspected Abuse Incident Report Form" (appendix 2).
- B. Any report of abuse made by a minor about their care or treatment by a parent, guardian, youth, adult, or FPC volunteer, despite the fact that the issue has not yet been investigated no matter how unlikely the report may seem, the report shall be relayed to the staff member in charge and a pastor immediately after the occurrence or the report. If required by the incident and law, the staff member in charge of the activity will complete a "Suspected Abuse Incident Report" noting the words originally spoken by the minor and

the minor's conduct and demeanor observed concerning the incident. In addition, the following steps should be taken to ensure the security of the children and youth involved and to protect against physical, emotional, or psychological injury to all persons involved:

- Safeguard the child or youth.
- Report the incident immediately to the activity staff member in charge and a pastor.
- Do not leave the child or youth unsupervised while reporting the incident.
- Under no circumstances should the accused be given access to the alleged victim.
- Do not personally confront the alleged violator.
- Follow the instructions of the staff member in charge and the pastor.

C. Violations of this policy other than as mentioned in paragraph 7.B shall be brought to the attention of FPC children and youth program director / manager or ordained staff.

Appendix 1 to First Presbyterian Church Youth Protection Policy
Volunteer Form

By signing this form, I affirm that the information I have given is true, complete and correct in all respects, and I understand and agree that:

- A. I have read the First Presbyterian Church Youth Protection Policy, I understand it, and I agree to comply with the guidelines set forth in it.
- B. All information I have provided may be verified. I agree to release from liability any person or organization that provides information regarding my volunteer service. I do hereby agree to indemnify and hold harmless, First Presbyterian Church of Columbus, Georgia, its employees, representatives and agents from any claims or causes or action relating in any manner to the verification of or attempts to verify the information provided.
- C. I hereby give my permission for First Presbyterian Church of Columbus, Georgia, to obtain information relating to my criminal history record through the appropriate agency. The criminal history record, as received from the reporting agencies may include arrest and conviction data as well as plea bargains and deferred adjudications. I understand this information will be used, in part, to determine my eligibility for a volunteer position with the church. I also understand that I will have the opportunity to review the criminal history, and a procedure is available for clarification, if I dispute the record as received. I, the undersigned, do for myself and heirs, executors and administrators, hereby release and forever discharge and agree to indemnify the investigating agency and each of their officers, directors, employees, and agents and hold them harmless from and against any and all causes of actions, suits, liabilities, costs, debts and sums of money, claims and demands whatsoever, and any and all related attorney's fees, court costs and other expenses resulting from the investigation of my background in connection with my application to become a volunteer.
- D. I have no past conviction of or pending proceeding addressing an allegation of child abuse or neglect.

Volunteer Name: _____

Volunteer's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 2 to First Presbyterian Church Youth Protection Policy

Suspected Abuse Incident Report Form

Completing this *Suspected Abuse Incident Form* will assist First Presbyterian Church in responding to the concern or allegation. All information on this form will be provided on a confidential basis to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

Name of person observing or receiving disclosure of child abuse (Reporter):

Street Address of Reporter: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone Number of Reporter: _____

Date of incident or statement: _____ Time: _____

Location of incident or statement: _____

Name(s) of Minor(s): _____ Minor's Age: _____

Name(s) of those suspected of abuse or causing neglect: _____

Relationship of the accused to the minor: _____

Date/Place of initial conversation with/report from minor: _____

Minor's statement (quote relevant statements made by the minor):

Describe the minor's demeanor and/or appearance:

What immediate action was taken:

Does anyone else have relevant information? Were there any witnesses?

NAME

PHONE NUMBER

Report Submitted to: _____

Reporter's Signature: _____ Date: _____