

Columbia Presbyterian Church

# Safeguarding Policy

Safeguarding Team

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Vision Statement

Columbia Presbyterian Church (CPC) seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for all ministry participants. We believe that all people are image bearers of God and are deeply loved by Him (Mark 10:13-16, Matt. 18:5-6). Relying on God's strength, our church is responsible to care for, raise, and teach the children that have been entrusted to us by Him. One way that we care for children is by protecting them and speaking on behalf of those who are vulnerable (Prov. 31:8).

## 1.2 Policy Introduction

This policy establishes the requirements for selecting Ministry Workers and guides individual children's ministries' practices. All CPC children's ministries must adhere to this policy.

The Safeguarding Team (SGT), composed of CPC members and reporting directly to the Session, was established in 2023. Safeguarding is at the very heart of Christian ministry. We see in the Scriptures Christ's consistent love and care for the vulnerable, especially children, during his earthly ministry. As the hands and feet of the Lord here on earth, the church must do the same. The SGT's purpose is to equip CPC with the best practices and processes to lovingly care for children and the vulnerable in our church ministries, to serve as the primary point of contact for any safeguarding related incidents, and to be a resource for all and particularly the vulnerable in the event of any need.

Therefore, the following procedures have been adopted to foster a culture where God is glorified and those who participate in our ministry can safely worship and grow in Him.

These procedures will be periodically reviewed (at least once every three years) by the SGT in cooperation with relevant parties. The SGT may consult with and assign certain responsibilities to the Children's Ministry Director and/or Youth Pastor. Any modifications must be submitted to the Session (and CPC legal counsel and insurance, as applicable) for final approval. Any such changes must be promptly conveyed to all persons affected by the modification. Final responsibility for the implementation of this policy rests with the SGT.

## 1.3 Definitions

**1.3.1 Child:** For the purposes of this policy, a "child" is anyone under 18 years of age. The term "youth" in this policy refers to a child who is in or entering into grades 6 through 12. When this policy references sex or gender of a child or other individual, it refers to the sex assigned at birth of the individual.

In situations involving conduct between children under this policy, factors considered in evaluating whether such conduct meets the definition of child abuse (sexual abuse, physical abuse, or neglect) under this policy shall include, but not be limited to, (1) any differences in age, responsibility, trust, power, development, awareness and understanding between the children, (2) whether one or more child used coercion or threats of any kind, and (3) any other factors relevant to the particular conduct involved. In addition, if there is an age difference of more than three years (1095 days) between the children involved and the conduct involved would otherwise

meet the definition of child abuse (sexual abuse, physical abuse, or neglect), then the case will automatically be investigated further as a case of potential child abuse.

**1.3.2 Vulnerable adult:** A person aged 18 or over who lacks the physical or mental capacity to provide for her or his daily needs. (MD Code, Family Law § 14-101, § 14-302)

**1.3.3 Child abuse:** The term “*Child Abuse*” in this policy includes but is not limited to: physical or mental injury of a child under circumstances that indicate that the child’s health or welfare is harmed or at substantial risk of being harmed and any act of Physical Abuse, Neglect, or Sexual Abuse, as defined in this policy. “*Child Abuse*” does not include the physical injury of a child by accidental means. (MD Family Law Code § 5-701)

**1.3.4 Child neglect:** The term “*Neglect*” in this policy means the leaving of a child unattended or other failure to give proper care and attention to a child by any parent or other person who has permanent or temporary care or custody or responsibility for supervision of the child under circumstances that indicate: (1) that the child’s health or welfare is harmed or placed at substantial risk of harm; or (2) Mental Injury to the child or a substantial risk of Mental Injury. (MD Family Law Code § 5-701).

**1.3.5 Child sexual abuse:** The terms “*Sexual Abuse*” in this policy includes any act that involves (1) sexual molestation or exploitation of a child or (2) sex trafficking of a child by any individual. Sexual Abuse may occur regardless of whether a child sustains any physical injury. “*Sexual molestation or exploitation*” includes (1) allowing or encouraging a child to engage in: (i) obscene photography, films, poses, or similar activity; (ii) pornographic photography, films, poses, or similar activity; or (iii) prostitution; (2) incest; (3) rape; (4) sexual offense in any degree; and (5) any other sexual conduct that is a crime. (MD Family Law Code § 5-701; MD Code Criminal Law: Section 3-602)

**1.3.6 Child physical abuse:** The term “*Physical Abuse*” in this policy includes any act that causes or threatens to cause a non-accidental physical injury to a child, or placing a child in a situation where the child experiences or faces the threat of a non-accidental physical injury. Conduct that causes or threatens to cause a non-accidental physical injury to a child that could be considered physical abuse includes, but is not limited to the following: hitting, beating, or slapping a child with hands or objects; shaking, kicking, or throwing a child; pulling a child by the hair; biting or scratching a child; burning/scalding a child; making a child unwell by making up symptoms or misusing medications. Physical Abuse also includes any physical injury sustained by a child as a result of cruel or inhumane treatment or as a result of a malicious act under circumstances that indicate that the child’s health or welfare is harmed or threatened by the treatment or act. (MD Family Law Code § 5-701; MD code Criminal Law Section 3-601)

**1.3.7 Mental injury:** “*Mental injury*” means the observable, identifiable, and substantial impairment of a child’s mental or psychological ability to function caused by an intentional act or series of acts, regardless of whether there was an intent to harm the child.

**1.3.8 Mandatory reporter:** Under State of Maryland law, every adult—including but not limited to a CPC staff member, clergy, Session member, Deacon, Trustee, coach, Ministry Worker, volunteer, member, or attendee of CPC—who has reason to believe that a child has been subjected to Child Abuse, is considered a mandated reporter and therefore obligated by law to report any instance of suspected Child Abuse to law enforcement and/or child protection services. It is CPC’s conviction that because of the Biblical call to protect the vulnerable

(e.g., Proverbs 31:8-9), all of its clergy (e.g., pastors, elders, Session members) are required, as part of their ministry service with CPC, to report any reasonable suspicion of Child Abuse to applicable government authorities. As a result, neither CPC nor any of its clergy shall assert any form of clergy-penitent privilege, whether under MD Family Law Code § 5-705(a)(3), MD Courts & Judicial Proceedings § 9-111, or any other law, to prevent the report or disclosure of any reasonable suspicion of Child Abuse to applicable government authorities.

**1.3.9 Self-neglect:** A vulnerable adult's inability to provide for his/her physical or mental health, which impairs or threatens their well-being.

**1.3.10 Bullying:** Intentional unwanted demeaning behavior (physical, verbal, non-verbal, psychological, or digital) that involves a perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated or highly likely to be repeated over time.

**1.3.11 Ministry worker:** The term "*Ministry Worker*" in this policy means any individual who has been screened, trained, and approved to work with children in accord with the provisions of this policy. It includes both volunteers and those who may be employed by CPC to work with children. Ministry Workers include those serving in any capacity in any ministry, program, or activity of CPC (whether on or off CPC property) that involves working with children (including youth).

## 2. Ministry Worker Application Procedures

### 2.1 Minimum Qualifications

Ministry Worker candidates must be regularly involved in CPC's congregation for six months or more before being considered for any Children's Ministry position. Ministry Workers serving in teaching or leadership positions must be CPC members in good standing. Regular attenders may serve in supportive roles and alongside a member. Any exemption to this requires prior approval from the Safeguarding Team and the Session.

### 2.2 Application Process

To be considered for a Ministry Worker position, each candidate who may be working with children or vulnerable adults should first discuss with the Leader of the specific ministry they are interested in serving with and then complete an application for that ministry and submit for a criminal background check. The application must include at least two references from non-family members.

#### 2.2.1 Background check

The background check shall be conducted at least once every three years.

An individual shall not be allowed to serve in any capacity at CPC in any activity, program, or ministry involving children (including youth) where the background check, references, or any other information reveals that the individual engaged in:

- any prior behavior as an adult constituting Sexual Abuse of a child;
- any crime as an adult of a sexual nature, involving violence, or against a child;

- any other behavior that reasonably indicates that this individual would pose a risk of Sexually Abusing a child, or any behavior that reasonably indicates that this individual would pose a risk of Child Abuse of any other kind, including without limitation, Physical Abuse or Neglect;
- any conduct resulting in a decision to deny legal custody of children for reasons of abuse or neglect; or,
- any conduct leading to the individual being currently under formal church discipline for any of the following: sexual misconduct, abuse, child abuse, child neglect or child sexual abuse.

In addition, no individual may serve with children in any capacity who is currently registered or has ever been required to register as a sex offender in any jurisdiction, or whose name has ever appeared on a Sex Offender Registry. Ministry Workers must report to the Session any criminal conviction, arrest, finding, or investigation of Child Abuse of any kind that has occurred since they began service with CPC.

## 2.3 Application Review Process

The relevant Ministry Leader, SGT, and Session will review all Ministry Worker applicants prior to the applicant beginning serving with a Children’s Ministry. Information from the interview, application, references, and background check will be carefully reviewed to determine suitability. Any potential flags for disqualifying conduct that are returned during the application process will be reviewed in the first instance by the SGT. The Session (or its designee) reserves the final decision, in its sole discretion, to determine whether an individual is spiritually fit, in accord with Biblical criteria, to serve as a Ministry Worker.

CPC will use reasonable measures to securely store information gathered during the application process for Ministry Workers consistent with the church’s data storage practices.

## 2.4 Serving as a Minor

Employees/volunteers who are under age 18 are a valuable resource in the care and nurture of our children. The following guidelines apply:

- Children’s Ministry Workers must be at least 6<sup>th</sup> grade or above. Nursery workers must be at least 13 years old.
- Minor candidates will apply and be screened as specified above with the exception of a background check. The Ministry Leader must confirm parental/guardian permission for any minor candidates.
- Minors must always serve with at least two (2) other adults. Minors do not count for compliance with the two-adult rule.

## 2.5 Culture of training

Each Ministry Worker is required to receive and read the Safeguarding Policy and sign the Code of Conduct Agreement before beginning service with CPC, as well as annually as long as the Ministry Worker continues to serve.

In addition, all Ministry Workers shall participate in child safety and protection training annually. This training shall be provided either face to face and/or via electronic means.

## 3. Supervision

### 3.1 Ministry Worker-child ratios

We will enforce the below Ministry Worker to Child ratios which are the minimum for all CPC children's ministries:

- Infants (0-1 years) – 1 worker:2 children
- Toddlers (1-3 years) – 1:5
- Children (4 years-5th grade) – 1:6
- Youth (6th grade-18 years) – 1:10

### 3.2 Two-Adult Rule

In any CPC activity involving children, at least two unrelated adult Ministry Workers must be present at every CPC activity involving children (including in each location, room, or other enclosed building area where such activity is occurring). If the two workers are related, a third adult (not a minor) must serve with them.

### 3.3 Visibility

Activities will be held in places visible to others, such as in rooms with windows or doors that have windows, or the door should remain open. One adult may never be alone with one child out of the view of others anywhere at any time for any reason. Under no circumstances should a child be left unattended.

### 3.4 One-on-one Contact

One-on-one contact (either in person meetings or electronic communication including but not limited to email, Zoom, texting, etc.) is prohibited for Ministry Workers and children younger than 6th grade. Any one-on-one contact with children 6th grade and above may only be between a child and Ministry Worker of the same sex. Any one-on-one meetings must be in public places with visibility, and a plan must be made between the parent/guardian of the child and Ministry Worker for accountability which specifies times and locations.

### 3.5 Transportation

An adult may never be alone in a car with a single child (other than his or her own child). At least two adults per vehicle would be optimal.

If a situation (e.g., emergency) arises where one Ministry Worker adult must transport one child, a plan must be made between the parent/guardian and Ministry Worker for accountability which specifies times and locations.

### 3.6 Off-campus/Overnight Events

Off-campus and overnight events will abide by the following rules:

- All off-campus or overnight events must be pre-approved by the Children's Ministry Director or Youth Pastor and documented using the "Off-Campus or Overnight Events" form.
- There will not be CPC overnight events for children younger than 3rd grade except for parent/child outings.

- All CPC overnight events must be chaperoned by at least 2 approved, unrelated Ministry Workers.
- Ministry Worker adult chaperones are never to be in a closed room one-on-one with any child.
- There must never be less than three individuals in a room or sleeping area for overnight events.
- If both male and female students are attending the overnight activity, there must be at least two male and two female Ministry Worker chaperones present.
- Males and females will be in separate sleeping rooms. Female chaperone(s) may only be in the females' room(s) and male chaperone(s) may only be in the males' room(s).
- Ministry Worker chaperones may not share a bed with a child.
- Groups must meet the minimum chaperoning requirements of the facility where they are staying (unless those rules violate this policy such as not requiring an adult in the room).

Any exceptions must be pre-approved by the Safeguarding Team with the knowledge of Children's Ministry Director or Youth Pastor in advance.

### 3.7 Attendance

A record of attendance for each CPC ministry event, including children and Ministry Workers, should be documented in the online church management system. One Ministry Worker in each room should conduct a head count at the beginning of each class or program/activity time. Head counts should be verified whenever the class or a portion of the class leaves the room or activity area for any reason.

### 3.8 Drop-off and Pick-up

During drop-off and pick-up times children will not be left alone with one adult. If one Ministry Worker is waiting alone with children before a second worker arrives, the first worker must wait only in visually accessible areas or combine children in a room with other Ministry Workers. Two workers will keep watch over those in their care until all have been picked up by an authorized person.

Ministry Workers are to release children 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and below in their care only to persons specifically authorized to pick up the child.

If there are custody concerns or there is a possibility an unauthorized person may try to pick up the child(ren), the parent/guardian should communicate with Ministry Workers at drop-off and provide details on who may or may not pick up the child(ren).

## 4. Bathroom Procedures

Ministry Workers should never enter a bathroom stall or single unisex bathroom alone with a child. A Ministry Worker may never touch a child's private areas unless necessary, as in the case of changing a diaper.

- Children under four years of age may be assisted as needed in the restroom and the door should be kept ajar.
- For children aged four through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, a Ministry Worker should check to make sure the restroom is empty and then wait outside the restroom until the child comes out. If the child needs help with clothing or hand washing, a Ministry Worker may assist with the door ajar.

## 5. Physical Contact Guidelines

Physical touch and affection are important to a child's physical and emotional well-being. They are essential to nurturing our children. However, there is an obvious danger with inappropriate touch or affection, either intentionally or inadvertently, in children's and youth ministry. As a general rule, if a child/youth initiates contact (ie. a hug) you may reciprocate in an appropriate manner. It is wise for an adult to ask the child's permission before touching a child, even in offering a celebratory hug. All physical affection needs to be in the presence of other Ministry Workers (or the child's parent/guardian). Physical touch or affection should always communicate respect for the child, be brief in nature, and never on a child's private parts. Children always have the right to decide how much physical contact they receive from others, except in exceptional circumstances of providing medical attention or preventing harm to an individual.

The following guidelines are to be promoted for pure, genuine and positive displays of God's love.

### 5.1 Permissible Contact

Limited physical contact such as sitting side by side, high fives, handshakes, fist bumps, special handshakes, side hugs, pats on the shoulder, carrying a small child on your hip are permitted. Kids on laps should be sitting on legs, not straddled over adult private areas. Children older than kindergarten age should not sit on a Ministry Worker's lap.

### 5.2 Prohibited Contact

#### 5.2.1 Inappropriate touch

A child should never be touched in an area covered by a bathing suit or on the stomach, thigh, genitals, or chest. Physical contact between a Ministry Worker and a child such as giving massages, kissing, tickling, prolonged embracing and the like are never appropriate. Sleeping or lying down in a bed with a child is prohibited. Showing affection in isolated areas or when alone with a child is prohibited.

#### 5.2.2 Sexual abuse

Any conduct or physical contact between a Ministry Worker and a child that would meet the definition of Sexual Abuse is prohibited, as is any touch that is intended to provide, any form of sexual gratification or any form of sexually suggestive game. Any exposure of private body parts is prohibited.

#### 5.2.3 Physical abuse

Any conduct or physical contact between a Ministry Worker and a child that would meet the definition of Physical Abuse is prohibited. This would include striking, spanking, shaking, slapping or other violent behaviors towards a child.

#### 5.2.4 Child-initiated inappropriate contact

If a child innocently initiates inappropriate touch, they should be redirected to an appropriate form of touch instead. If a child repeatedly initiates inappropriate contact, it should be documented in the ministry log and their parents should be notified.

## 6. Other Worker-Child Contact

### 6.1 Appropriate Communication

Any communication by any means between a Ministry Worker and a minor should be directly related to a CPC ministry purpose and must always be open to public scrutiny. No secret activities or private communication through any form of social media is acceptable with a minor that is part of a CPC ministry. No use of language or behavior towards minors that is unlawful, illicit, unsavory, pornographic, discriminatory, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, bullying, disrespectful, or demeaning is ever permissible.

#### 6.1.1 No confidentiality

Ministry workers are mandatory reporters under Maryland law and can never promise confidentiality to a minor. In addition to complying with state law regarding making any required reports to applicable governing authorities, Ministry Workers must report to the Ministry Leader if a minor discusses harm to self or others, committing a crime, or being abused, either in-person or via electronic communication. (See Section 9 for reporting suspected Child Abuse).

#### 6.1.2 Pornography

Showing minors images that are pornographic is prohibited. Accidental viewing of pornography when in the presence of minors should be reported to your Ministry Leader immediately. If Ministry Workers become aware of the existence of pornography in the hands of a minor, they should immediately report this to their Ministry Leader.

#### 6.1.3 Electronic communication involving youth.

Electronic communication is a major means of communication between youth and other youth as well as between youth and Ministry Workers. While such communication can be beneficial and edifying, its improper use can produce serious consequences. This policy is designed to enforce positive, encouraging, biblical communication while using electronic communication.

Except in emergency or extreme situations or in approved one-on-one discipling relationship approved by the youth's parents, Ministry Workers may not electronically communicate with youth unless another adult Ministry Worker or parent is also included on the communication.

Ministry Workers will discourage youth from using cell phones or other electronic devices during CPC organized youth activities except in an emergency, to contact a parent or guardian, or to place calls specifically approved by a Ministry Worker.

## 6.2. Video and Photography

Ministry Workers should not take any photos or videos at CPC ministry events unless at the specific direction of the Ministry Leader to do so. Digital media taken by Ministry Workers at CPC events are only for official CPC use. Ministry Workers may not use these photos or videos for personal use.

Media for official CPC use falls into two categories:

1. In-person use: hardcopy prints for display in church buildings or digital use in end-of-year slideshows, etc. Use of media for these purposes (which is not published or shareable online) is permitted without prior approval of the parents.
2. Online publication: digital media for publishing on social media, the church website, or other online or public forums is only permitted through official CPC accounts and requires parental permission in order to use images of children. No digital media of children may be shared in an online forum without parental consent.

## 6.3 Hazing and Bullying

Physical hazing and initiations are prohibited. Verbal, physical, and cyber bullying are prohibited.

## 6.4 Controlled Substances and Weapons

The use of tobacco, alcohol, drugs, and/or mind-altering substances with or while in the presence of minors is prohibited. Unless specifically authorized to do so by the SGT, Ministry Workers are not permitted to bring any weapons into any CPC activity or program involving children.

## 6.5 Close Emotional Relationships & Dating

Ministry Workers need to avoid developing close emotional relationships with minors of the opposite sex and exercise extreme caution in dealing with minors of the same sex. At no time shall any Ministry Worker pursue a dating relationship with a minor. Workers should be sensitive to minors with “crushes” and maintain clear boundaries.

## 6.6 Gift Giving

No gifts shall be given to individual children without the prior knowledge of a parent/guardian of the child. Because gift giving can be a form of buying loyalty or silence, gift giving should be done on a group basis, or for special occasions (Christmas, birthday) only. Report to the Safeguarding Team any gifts you observe that seem inappropriately given.

## 6.7 Accountability

Ministry Workers should monitor one other in the area of physical contact or other interaction with children and should help each other by pointing out anything that could be misconstrued.

Ministry Workers will be observant of grooming behaviors evidenced by steps an abuser takes to select a child, win the child's trust (and the trust of the child's parent or guardian), manipulate the child into sexual activity, and keep the child from disclosing or reporting the abuse or grooming behavior.

## 7. Discipline

The goal of discipline is to allow children to participate in all of the ministry activities in a meaningful, orderly way. Discipline is not meant to punish children, but to train them to behave in a way that they should. While discipline will be necessary at times, Ministry Workers should follow the pattern of their heavenly Father in disciplining children under their care. "My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights" (Proverbs 3:11-12). The motivation for any act of discipline should be love toward the child, and no act of discipline should be performed out of anger. The goals of discipline in the context of children's ministry include both shepherding the errant child and protecting any other children from harm. "But he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:10b-11).

A structured program of discipline that is constant across the variety of children's ministries, benefits both the individual child and the group as a whole. Children are not able to worship, study, or fellowship in an atmosphere of chaos. Children are happier when they are presented with guidelines to show which behaviors are allowed and which behaviors are not. Children feel more secure when they know an adult is in charge. When one child violates a rule, he disrupts the group. When a disruptive child is removed from the group, the group is able to function as it was intended.

CPC desires a successful discipline program. The following points are key:

**Prevention:** Stopping inappropriate behavior before it starts, and stopping minor problems before they escalate into major problems. This may mean seating active children between quiet children, or separating two children who antagonize each other.

**Fairness:** Expecting all children to follow the same rules and punishing all children in the same ways. All of the children need to understand that no child is allowed to violate a rule. They also need to know that all children who violate a rule will be treated in the same way.

**Consistency:** Enforcing all the rules all of the time regardless of the activity. When all workers and leaders endorse the same rules and consequences all of the time, the children do not need to test each individual teacher. When workers and leaders are consistent, the children always know what to expect. No training can be accomplished without consistency. No training can be accomplished with only repeated **warnings**. The same consequences must always follow breaking the rules.

Workers are never to spank, hit, grab, shake, engage in any form of corporal punishment, or otherwise physically discipline a child. Physical restraint should be used only in a situation where it is reasonably necessary to prevent a child from harming him/herself or someone else. Verbal discipline should be respectful and corrective, never derogatory.

Disciplinary matters must be reported to the worker's ministry leader who will discuss it with a parent or guardian.

Individual ministries must provide clear guidelines for handling discipline. Such guidelines must not be less than this policy but may be specific to the context. Any such guidelines must be shared with the Safeguarding Team for review and approval to ensure consistency with this policy.

## 8. Illness or Intent to Harm

### 8.1 Illness

Parents/guardians should keep their children home if they are experiencing symptom(s) associated with any communicable disease. For people with chronic conditions such as asthma, the symptoms should represent a change from baseline. Persons who are ill will not be permitted to participate in any ministry activity. If a Ministry Worker shows signs of sickness, he or she must take primary responsibility to secure an approved substitute to assume his or her responsibilities.

Anyone (including children and Ministry Workers) exhibiting any of the following symptoms within the last 24 hours may not participate in a CPC ministry program or activity:

- fever (100 degrees F or higher),
- sore throat,
- cough,
- difficulty breathing,
- diarrhea or vomiting,
- new onset of severe headache (especially with fever),
- new loss of taste or smell, or
- head lice.

If a child shows signs of contagious illness (including but not limited to those listed above), the sick child should be returned to their parents or guardians as soon as illness is discovered. If this is not possible, the sick child should be separated from the others in a manner that will allow supervision to continue until he/she can be returned to his/her parent or guardian. In addition, the Children's Ministry Director should be informed so that parents of other children who may have been exposed to the child can be notified.

### 8.2 Harm to Self or Others

If a child shows signs of interest or intent in harming themselves, use best judgement to respond appropriately in the moment within the specific ministry context. As soon as reasonably possible, inform the ministry leader and call the parents/guardian. If necessary, call 911.

If a child shows signs of interest or intent to harm others, separate the child from others for their safety and immediately call the parents/guardian and inform the ministry leader. If necessary, call 911.

## 9. Incident Reporting Process

CPC takes incidents seriously and seeks to respond appropriately. This includes involving the proper medical or legal authorities as needed. Afterward there should be documentation of the incident and communication between Ministry Leaders or CPC staff and the family(ies) involved. Outlined in this section is the response and reporting process for medical and behavioral incidents and reporting of any suspicion of Child Abuse.

Each children's ministry leader is responsible for maintaining a ministry notes log. The log will document all incidents and notes for other Ministry Workers. Each ministry log will be submitted to the SGT at the end of that ministry's year in the specified format. The ministry notes log is separate from a formal medical or behavioral incident report which is not always required.

The CPC Facilities Manager will be in charge of making reports to CPC's insurer as required for any incident that could involve a covered claim under CPC's insurance. Incident report forms will also be provided to the Trustees as needed when the incident involves CPC facilities.

### 9.1 Medical Incidents

Any Ministry Worker who becomes aware of an injury to a worker or participant will take steps to ensure proper medical attention is given to the injured person. Except in the case of a medical emergency, Ministry Workers may not give any medication to any child not their own.

**9.1.1 Non-emergency medical incidents:** If there is a physical incident that is not a medical emergency, after providing minor first aid as needed, complete a medical incident report and follow up with the family so they are aware of the incident. If the physical incident does not require any first aid (or "true" first aid—giving a band-aid does not meet the threshold of first aid), an incident form is not needed.

**9.1.2 Emergency medical incidents:** After calling 911 for a medical emergency, notify the family and ministry leader. When the immediate emergency is resolved, document all details in a medical incident report and follow up with the family.

### 9.2 Behavioral Incidents (Other than Child Abuse)

Behavioral incidents (other than those involving Child Abuse which are discussed below) will be reported to the Safeguarding Team who will defer them to the Session, as appropriate, for shepherding.

**9.2.1 Minor behavioral incidents:** Minor behavioral incidents are those that you are able to correct in the moment such as children arguing, fighting over a toy, emotions running high in the moment of a game, etc. Correct these behaviors as they occur, specifically identifying the wrong behavior and modeling the Christ-like behavior the child should use instead. Use best judgment to decide if the incident should be formally documented in a behavioral incident report and if parents should be notified. (If the behavior was outside the bounds of developmentally appropriate behavior, the parents should be notified).

**9.2.2 Major or chronic behavioral incidents:** Major behavioral incidents are those that put others at risk, such as physical fighting. There may also be chronic behavioral incidents such as bullying where it is a

repeated behavior. These incidents should be corrected in the moment, specifically identifying the wrong behavior and using the opportunity to teach and demonstrate appropriate Christ-like behavior. Document the incident in both the log book and complete an incident report. Inform the ministry leader and parents.

## 9.3 Child Abuse

**9.3.1** CPC will respond to every incident or report of suspicion of possible Child Abuse, no matter when the alleged abuse may have occurred. (As discussed above, the term Child Abuse includes Sexual Abuse, Physical Abuse, and Neglect, all as defined in this policy).

CPC's first priority in any instance of suspected child abuse is to ensure the safety of any affected children and to ensure that any potential victims and their families have access to compassionate and professional resources to provide them care.

In any case where there is a reasonable suspicion of child abuse involving a child entrusted to the care of CPC, CPC is committed to reporting any alleged perpetrator to applicable government authorities and cooperating with any government investigation.

If a Ministry Worker (or any other Mandatory Reporter as defined in this policy) suspects a child may be a victim of abuse or neglect (either from in person or electronic media contact, regardless of where or when it may have occurred), the worker shall immediately inform the ministry leader and the appropriate authorities (Child Protective Services (CPS) at 410-872-8700 or 911 if there is an immediate physical safety concern). The ministry worker who suspects abuse or neglect must be the person to make the report. (The ministry leader may assist them in reporting.)

**9.3.2** Any allegations of abuse shall be taken seriously and handled with due respect and discretion for all involved persons' confidentiality. All relevant Maryland legal statutes and ethical best practices shall guide our efforts.

**9.3.3** To make a report, obtain basic, essential information from the alleged victim and/or other individuals with relevant information, but do not conduct your own investigation or ask leading questions. The basic information needed to make a report of Child Abuse to government authorities will include some or all of the following information:

- Victim's name, Date of Birth (DOB) or approximate age, and contact information (if known)
- Offender's name, relationship to the alleged victim, and current location (if known)
- What happened?
- Where and when did the alleged abuse occur?

**9.3.4** After making an initial verbal report of abuse to government authorities, follow State authorities' guidance on any required documentation or follow-up.

In addition to reporting any suspected Child Abuse to government authorities, an incident report describing the alleged Child Abuse should be completed and provided to the Safeguarding Team, who will share it with the

Session. Upon receiving an incident report describing Child Abuse, the Safeguarding Team will verify that a report has been made to applicable government authorities.

Follow up on any allegation of Child Abuse will be led by the CPC Session, in consultation with legal counsel.

9.3.5 Whether or not government authorities undertake an investigation, CPC reserves the right to conduct its own investigation of any report of abuse involving a child entrusted to the care of CPC. The Session will be in charge of making this determination. In any CPC investigation of alleged child abuse, the role of the fact-finder is to determine if there is sufficient evidence that conduct meeting the definition of child abuse occurred applying the more likely than not standard. (More likely than not means there is at least a 50.1% likelihood that an event occurred; it is not the more onerous beyond a reasonable doubt standard that applies in criminal proceedings).

The Session will work with legal counsel or other appropriate professionals as needed to apply appropriate, consistent, and professional procedures for conducting any investigations of alleged Child Abuse.

Ministry Workers are expected to fully cooperate in any response and/or investigation process. Anyone who knowingly provides false or misleading information will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, including without limitation, termination of employment or volunteer service.

The CPC response and/or investigation process may necessitate that certain Ministry Workers or other individuals (e.g., those who have been accused of wrongdoing) be temporarily or permanently removed from employment or service, be restricted in what CPC activities they may participate in, or subject to other appropriate conditions that CPC, in its sole discretion, believes is necessary in order to ensure the safety of children. Similarly, where a child is accused of wrongdoing, that individual may be suspended, restricted from coming on CPC facilities or other appropriate action that CPC, in its sole discretion, believes is necessary in order to ensure the safety of children. Any CPC investigation and follow on actions will be conducted in accordance with guidance of the PCA Book of Church Order.

9.3.6 All Child Abuse in any form—sexual, physical, or neglect—by Ministry Workers or any other individual will not be tolerated. A single act of child sexual abuse by a Ministry Worker will result in permanent termination of service with CPC. Sexual abuse of a child by any member of CPC will also result in appropriate church discipline. A single act of child physical abuse or neglect by an employee or volunteer will result in appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination of service with CPC. Such abuse by any member of CPC may also result in appropriate church discipline. In the case of sexual or other form of child abuse committed by a child of a CPC member or visitor, a single act of abuse will result in appropriate administrative action and/or conditions at CPC's discretion, including conditions on the parents or other caregiver of that child.

In cases where CPC has determined or learned that a Ministry Worker has engaged in Child Abuse, CPC will share this information as part of its response to a reference request submitted to CPC or in response to a membership inquiry from another church. In the case of a Ministry Worker who holds a teaching or any other professional license, CPC will notify any licensing authority in instances where CPC has determined or learned that an employee or volunteer has engaged in Child Abuse.

## 10. Code of Conduct

The CPC Safeguarding Policy sets forth specific behavioral standards and procedures for Ministry Workers in their interaction with any minor under the care of CPC. Each Ministry Worker is required to receive and read the Safeguarding Policy and sign the Code of Conduct Agreement prior to serving in a CPC children's ministry as well as annually as they continue serving.

### Code of Conduct Agreement

As a Children's Ministry Worker of CPC, I acknowledge I will be held accountable to the following in the prevention of and response to any form of Child Abuse:

- I have read and will abide by the attached CPC Safeguarding Policy.
- I understand the definition of Child Abuse including the definitions of Sexual Abuse, Physical Abuse, and Neglect in the CPC Safeguarding Policy.
- I acknowledge that I am required to report a disclosure of any kind of Child Abuse or any suspicion of abuse of any child under the care of CPC.
- I confirm that I have not been accused of (to the best of my knowledge), investigated for, prosecuted, or found to have committed any form of Child Abuse (sexual, physical, or neglect) or any other form of inappropriate behavior with a child.
- I agree to cooperate fully with any investigation into any allegation of abuse involving a CPC child, employee, ministry worker, or volunteer.
- I understand and agree that CPC will report suspicions of any form of child abuse to government authorities. I understand and agree that CPC will report to any professional licensing authority any instance where CPC has determined or learned that I have engaged in conduct meeting CPC's definition of Child Abuse.
- I understand and agree that CPC will disclose to any church inquiring about membership or anyone requesting a reference concerning me in the future from CPC any instance where CPC has determined or learned that I have engaged in conduct meeting CPC's definition of Child Abuse.
- I understand that if I am approved to work with Youth that I will abide by the specific provisions of this policy, including those governing Electronic Communication.
- I agree to protect the privacy of any potential victims of Child Abuse and their families by maintaining confidentiality concerning my involvement in reporting any potential case of child abuse or participating in any response to a report of potential Child Abuse.

I have received and read the above Code of Conduct Agreement and hereby sign and attest that I understand and will abide by each of the provisions set forth above.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_