

**Policy to Protect Children, Youth and the Adults Who Work With Them**  
**Brookdale Presbyterian Church, St. Joseph, MO**

**PURPOSE**

To foster and maintain an atmosphere of trust and safety in its ministry to children and youth, the Brookdale Presbyterian Church of Saint Joseph has established this *Policy to Protect Children, Youth and the Adults Who Work With Them*. The church expects all workers to maintain high standards of professional, ministerial and moral behavior. Our ministry for children and youth should reflect the love of Christ and promote deeper faith and discipleship through caring, qualified workers.

**DEFINITIONS**

Child: A person in grade six or younger.

Youth: A middle school or high school student.

Adult: A person eighteen years or older and not in high school.

Worker: Any adult or youth in a paid or volunteer position with responsibility for ministering to, teaching, leading, supervising, transporting, or interacting in with children and/or youth in a ministry or activity sponsored by Brookdale Presbyterian Church.

Abuse: Any physical injury, sexual abuse, or emotional abuse inflicted on a child other than by accidental means by those responsible for the child's care, custody, and control.

Sexual Abuse: Any sexual use or exploitation of a child or youth, such as fondling or intercourse, verbal harassment, showing a child or youth pornography, exposing oneself, or performing a sex act for a child or youth to see.

**SCREENING AND TRAINING**

1. Screening potential workers carefully helps prevent the abuse of children and youth. Potential workers must complete an application form, provide references, and consent to a criminal background check and an abuse and neglect check. All written or printed information shall be retained in a confidential file at Brookdale Presbyterian Church.
2. Brookdale Presbyterian Church Director of Student Ministries or Director of Children's Ministries shall review all information gathered for each potential worker before allowing him or her to be involved with children or youth at Brookdale Presbyterian Church.
3. A potential worker who has previously been an abuser of a child or youth shall not be eligible to be a worker.
4. Brookdale Presbyterian Church reserves the right to turn away any person for volunteer service for any reason.
5. Any worker who transports a child or youth in a motor vehicle must also submit a valid driver's license, proof of insurance, and consent to an examination of his or her driver's record by Brookdale Presbyterian Church staff.
6. Membership of Brookdale Presbyterian Church is not required of workers, but is encouraged.

7. Brookdale Presbyterian Church Staff may waive the screening requirements as follows:
  - a. A family member may participate in individual activities with their child or youth if the family member is under the direct supervision of a worker who is fully qualified under this policy.
  - b. In activities with other churches, workers from those churches may work with Brookdale Presbyterian Church youth and children under the direct supervision of a fully qualified Brookdale Presbyterian Church worker.
  - c. Special guests, such as guest speakers, are exempt from the screening requirements.
  - d. All other exceptions must be approved in advance at a staff meeting.
8. All workers shall complete training as required by Brookdale Presbyterian Church staff. Each worker shall review and sign a copy of this policy annually and the signed policy will be kept on file at Brookdale Presbyterian Church.

### SUPERVISION

1. If at all possible, at least two workers shall be present at any ministry or activity involving children. If at least two workers cannot be present, the worker must be with at least two children in an open or public space with notification to staff.
2. At least two workers shall be present at co-ed middle school and senior high scheduled activities.
3. Workers, including paid staff, must always have a worker of the opposite sex present when meeting one-on-one with a child or youth of the opposite sex.
4. A worker meeting alone with youth of the same sex outside of scheduled activities must meet in a public place or in a church office during office hours with other staff nearby.
5. No worker shall be alone in a vehicle with a child or youth of the opposite sex. Another worker or two children or youth is required.
6. At least two workers must be present on any overnight event for children or youth.

### PROGRAM SUPERVISION

1. Parents are encouraged to be a part of any and all services and programs in which their children are involved at Brookdale Presbyterian Church. Parents are always welcome to observe programs and activities in which their children are involved. However, parents who desire to have ongoing contact with their child's programs in the Church will be required to complete the volunteer application process.
2. Workers under the age of 21 must work under the direction of an adult supervisor who has attained at least 21 years of age.

### GUIDELINES:

The following guidelines are intended to assist workers in making decisions about interactions with children and youth in church-sponsored and affiliated programs. They are not designed or intended to address the interactions within families. For clarification of any guideline or any inquiry about behaviors not addressed here, workers should contact their immediate supervisor. These guidelines do not supersede state law.

1. Ministry to children and youth within the church is at the service of the parents who have the first responsibility to care for and educate their children. Therefore, activities with children and youth are to be conducted with the explicit knowledge and consent of parents or legal guardians.

2. Workers are to immediately report uncontrollable or highly unusual behavior of children and youth during church sponsored functions to parents.
3. While working with children and youth, workers are prohibited from the use of, or being under the influence of, alcohol or any illegal drugs. They are also prohibited from furnishing alcohol or illegal drugs to children and youth or permitting children and youth to use such in their presence.
4. Workers are prohibited from speaking to children and youth in a way that is or could be reasonably construed as, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. Workers are to refrain from using inappropriate language in the presence of children and youth.
5. Workers are prohibited from possessing any media that is both sexually oriented and morally inappropriate media on church property or in the presence of children and youth.
6. Workers are prohibited from sharing personal details of their own sexual activity. Faith-based discussion for the purpose of educating children and youth regarding sexuality is considered to be an appropriate aspect of ministry to youth.
7. Adult workers may not have contact with children or youth between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. on school nights or between 1 a.m. and 6 a.m. on non-school nights, unless the children or youth are attending a church-sponsored event during those hours.
8. Children and youth attending church-sponsored events that include the non-contact hours must have parental consent via a signed parental consent form.
9. Unless an exception is approved by the school office and parents/guardians, any contact via social media between children or youth and adult workers during school hours will be limited to announcements regarding church events and programming.

#### EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION DURING NON-CONTACT HOURS:

All workers may sometimes deal with children and youth who believe they are emotionally or personally vulnerable in some way or in crisis or emergency situation. Brookdale Presbyterian Church encourages its personnel to nurture safety by being attentive to self-care, education, boundary issues, and the importance of referring those in need to supportive and helpful resources.

1. On these rare occasions, a worker may answer a communication from a child or youth during non-contact hours to determine if a true crisis or emergency exists.
2. The worker will copy or forward all text or e-mail messages pertaining to the emergency or crisis to either the Senior Pastor or Chair of Personnel Committee.
3. The worker will complete a Non-Contact Hours Emergency Communications form and submit it to the Senior Pastor by noon the following day.

#### UNDUE ATTENTION

Certain conduct by workers can result in inappropriate relationships with children and youth. Singling out children and youth or showing them excessive attention is prohibited. Some examples of this behavior are:

1. Excessive communication to a single child or youth.
2. Presenting gifts to only one child or youth (relatives excluded).
3. Repeatedly singling out only one child or youth for special meals, events, trips or outings.

## REPORTING VIOLATIONS OF THIS POLICY

Workers: All workers are required to report suspected violations of the *Policy to Protect Children, Youth and the Adults Who Work With Them* to the Senior Pastor or head of Personnel Committee.

Parents: Any parent or legal guardian who believes the *Policy to Protect Children, Youth and the Adults Who Work With Them* is or has been violated is encouraged to contact the Senior Pastor or Chair of Personnel Committee immediately.

## REPORTING OF SUSPECTED ABUSE

1. When reporting suspected abuse, the protection of children and youth must be the paramount concern.
2. When a worker or other adult suspects that abuse has occurred, he or she may report the abuse directly to the Department of Social Services, Children's Division ("Children's Division"). The worker shall then notify the Senior Pastor of the report. If the worker or other adult does not contact Children's Division directly, he or she shall report the suspected abuse to the Senior Pastor, who will contact Children's Division. If the pastor is unavailable or suspected of the abuse, the worker shall report the suspected abuse to the Clerk of Session. The Clerk of Session will then contact Children's Division.
3. If a Brookdale worker (paid or volunteer) is suspected of the abuse, the reporting party (worker, Senior Pastor or Clerk of Session) will notify the Brookdale Sexual Misconduct Response Team.
4. The worker suspected of abuse shall be immediately suspended from children's/ youth ministries (with pay, if applicable) until an appropriate investigation has been completed.
5. The Senior Pastor (or Clerk of Session, when appropriate) shall notify the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the alleged victim concerning the allegation.
6. The Senior Pastor (or Clerk of Session) shall document the report of suspected abuse. Documentation shall include:
  - a. the name and address of the person making the report of suspected abuse and the substance of that report;
  - b. the alleged victim's name, age, and address;
  - c. any statement made by the alleged victim, including the name of the alleged perpetrator and the time, place, and nature of the alleged abuse;
  - d. photographs of the abuse;
  - e. the date, time, place and substance of pertinent conversation, if any, with the alleged perpetrator;
  - f. any action taken (i.e.,) suspension of the accused;
  - g. the date and the contact with Children's Division, name of the Children's Division worker spoken to, and case number assigned.
6. The Senior Pastor (or Clerk of Session) shall promptly notify legal counsel and insurance carrier of the allegation.

Legal counsel or the Senior Pastor, under the advisement of legal counsel, shall be responsible for any and all statements made to the congregation and/or media regarding allegations of abuse.

7. Any allegation of abuse shall be taken with the utmost seriousness and Brookdale Presbyterian Church shall cooperate with investigating agencies. Brookdale Church's goal shall be to provide appropriate care to both the victim and the accused and to restore such persons to wholeness.

**DISSEMINATION**

*The Policy to Protect Children, Youth and the Adults Who Work With Them* will be given to all Brookdale Presbyterian Church workers (employees and volunteers).

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

I have read and understand the *Policy to Protect Children, Youth and the Adults who Work With Them*. I voluntarily agree to abide by these standards and conduct myself in complete accord with them.

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

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Must be signed by all workers (employees and volunteers) working with children and youth.