

**CHILD & YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY  
ORCHARD PARK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
INDIANAPOLIS, IN**

Approved by the Session – December 2016

## **General Purpose Statement**

ORCHARD PARK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (OPPC) seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children and youth of ORCHARD PARK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations.

## **Definitions**

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” include all persons through grade 5. The term “youth” includes all persons from grade 6 through grade 12 (or until age 18). The term “worker” includes both paid persons (staff) and unpaid persons (volunteers) who work with children and youth at the church or on behalf of ORCHARD PARK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH during classes, activities, camps, overnight retreats, mentoring, and other projects or programs that take place away from the church building. The term “designated adult” includes a person who is at least 18 years of age who has been designated by the parent or legal guardian to drop off and/or pick up his/her child from the nursery, child care, or other program at OPPC. The term “designated person” includes a person of any age (for example, an older sibling of the child who is being cared for) who has been designated by the parent or legal guardian to drop off and/or pick up his/her child from classes, child care, or other OPPC program.

## **Selection of Workers**

Persons who have become involved in the congregation and have the gifts and desire to work with children or youth will be encouraged to fill volunteer positions that match their gifts and abilities. All persons who are interested in working with the children and youth in our programs and activities will be screened. Screening may include an interview with a staff member and/or a request for references from other churches or organizations where the person has volunteered. Screening for adult workers will always include a criminal background check.

### **Criminal Background Check**

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and adult volunteers as defined above. Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing the church to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will not be permitted to work with children and youth. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will disqualify anyone from working with children and youth.

If any person has a conviction to disclose, s/he is encouraged to share the circumstances with the appropriate staff member or elder prior to submitting the authorization form.

A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children and youth will be determined by the staff members and elders responsible for children and youth programming in consultation with the Pastor/Head of Staff on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in a confidential file at OPPC.

## **Two Worker Rule**

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated workers will be in attendance at all times when children and youth are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some classes may have only one worker in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom shall remain open and there should be no fewer than two students with the worker.

## **Rule of Three**

The "rule of three" specifies that there should always be at least three persons present - i.e. one worker and two children/youth or two workers and one child/youth. In order to protect workers and children/youth, at no time may a staff person or volunteer be alone with a single child or youth where they cannot be observed and/or interrupted by others. If an adult finds her or himself alone with a child or youth, s/he should promptly move to a location where the rule of three will be met. During classes and activities, workers should keep the rule of three in mind and take care not to inadvertently leave another worker alone with one child/youth in a classroom or private area. The Rule of Three applies, not only on the church premises, but also during all church-sponsored outings and trips.

If for any reason, a child/youth needs to be transported alone by a worker (staff or volunteer), prior verbal or written permission must be obtained from a parent or guardian of that child/youth.

## **Workers under the Age of 18**

There may be times when it is necessary or desirable for workers (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children and youth during programs or activities. At those times there must be at least one adult present in the church building whose location is communicated to the youth, is available by cell phone, and is aware of the number of children in the care of the workers. If any incidents occur that need to be communicated to parents of children/youth being cared for, the adult and the worker will communicate the incident or concern together.

## **Restroom Guidelines**

While it is preferable to take children to the restroom in groups, there will be times when one child in a class asks to go. In those instances, a worker should escort the child to the restroom, check inside the restroom to be sure no one else is present, then allow the child to enter the restroom alone. The worker should remain outside the door (in the hallway) with the bathroom door propped open if that allows sufficient privacy for the child. If a child requires assistance, the worker should find another worker to come into the restroom. Assistance shall then be given with the stall door open and both workers present. Workers should never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom before class.

## **Discipline Policy**

It is the policy of ORCHARD PARK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children/youth. Workers should never respond to misbehavior by screaming, belittling, or threatening to harm a child/youth. Workers should be mindful of their tone of voice and refrain from using sarcasm to communicate frustration or disapproval to children/youth. If assistance is needed with disciplinary issues, workers should consult with the staff person in charge of children or youth ministry.

## Check-in/Check-out Procedures

The Children's Ministry Committee will ensure that safe, effective check in and check out procedures are in place for the Sunday morning nurseries, preschool rooms, and Sunday School classrooms as well as for Route 45, Parents' Night Out, and other church activities.

## Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children and youth at OPPC. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children and youth when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children and youth with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours;
- Green or yellow runny nose;
- Eye or skin infections;
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease.

Children and youth who are observed by our workers to be ill may be separated from other children and youth and the parent or guardian may be contacted and asked to remove the child/youth from the activity.

## Safety Procedures

### Transportation

1. If for any reason, a child/youth needs to be transported alone by a worker (staff or volunteer), prior verbal or written permission must be obtained from a parent or guardian of that child/youth.
2. OPPC does not permit the use of 15 passenger vans for transporting children or youth during church sponsored outings or trips. NHTSA has reported that these vans have an increased risk of rolling over due to their design. Therefore, OPPC has determined that they are not safe enough for transporting our children or youth.
3. Each vehicle used to transport youth or children on church sponsored outings must have a working seat belt for every passenger of the vehicle. All passengers are expected to wear a seat belt while traveling.
4. All safety policies (including transportation safety) will be regularly reviewed and updated by the Children's Ministries Committee and the Youth Ministries Committee.

### Emergency and Evacuation

Emergency and evacuation procedures will be communicated to parents, included in teacher training, and regularly reviewed and updated by the Children's Ministries Committee and the Youth Ministries Committee.

### Accidental Injuries to Children and Youth

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child/youth is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be notified in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.

3. In the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional, an incident report will be completed and kept on file at the church once the child/youth has received appropriate medical attention.
4. If an injury is caused by another child/youth, the parent(s) of that child/youth will be informed of the incident and the circumstances surrounding it. The parent(s) of the child/youth who was injured will be informed of the involvement of another child/youth, but the identity of the child/youth who caused the injury will not be included in that report.
5. If a child/youth consistently hurts other children/youth, the Nursery Coordinator and/or the staff person for Children's Ministry or Youth Ministry will talk with the parent(s) to discuss the circumstances surrounding the behavior and strategies for addressing it.

## Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child/youth's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- **Physical abuse** – In the state of Indiana, physical abuse is defined as the intentional infliction of physical injury or allowing another to do so.
- **Emotional abuse** – In the state of Indiana, emotional abuse is defined as the chronic attitude or acts of a caretaker which are detrimental to the child's development of a sound and healthy personality.
- **Sexual abuse** – In the state of Indiana, sexual abuse is defined as the use of a child for sexual gratification by an adult or older child in a position of power, or permitting another person to do so.
- **Neglect** – In the state of Indiana, neglect is defined as the chronic failure to meet a child's basic needs for food, clothes, shelter, medical care, education or supervision.

In the event that an individual involved in the care of children and youth at ORCHARD PARK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the staff person in charge of children's ministry or youth ministry (depending on the age of the child/youth). That staff person will assist the worker in contacting Child Protective Services to make a report as mandated by state law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at ORCHARD PARK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. Civil authorities will be notified, and the church will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. The church will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
2. The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children and youth, pending the completion of the investigation.
3. Church staff will work with our insurance company to determine what information and reports need to be filed with the company.
4. The session of ORCHARD PARK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH will determine who will be our spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. We will seek the advice of legal counsel before responding to media inquiries or releasing information to the congregation. All other representatives of the church should refrain from speaking to the media.

5. Once Child Protective Services has completed their investigation and given pastoral staff permission to be in contact with the parents/family, then a pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.
6. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth.

## **Training**

ORCHARD PARK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH will provide training on this child and youth protection policy to all staff and volunteers who work with children and youth. Church leadership will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All workers are strongly encouraged to attend these training events.