



Child Protection Policy

We, as the congregation of CHPC, believe our commitment for nurturing all God's children a serious one. Consequently, we are implementing the following policy. This policy is created to improve the existing ministries to the children and youth at CHPC. We strive to provide the utmost care specific to the safety, welfare, and protection of any child or youth within our ministries. The policy stipulates guidelines and training to discourage any form of abuse and outlines a procedure for reporting any instances of alleged abuse.

I. Definitions:

A. Children: 0-5th grade

1. **Nursery**- infant-toddlers
2. **Preschool**- 2 years- k
3. **Elementary**: 1-5th grades

B. Youth: 6-12th grade

1. **Middle school**: 6-8th
2. **High School**: 9-12th

C. Adult: 18+ or has graduated from high school

D. Youth & Children Volunteers

1. Long-term

Any adult who will have greater than normal contact with children and youth that places them in a position of responsibility, authority or supervision. This includes teachers and leaders for Sunday school, Kids Club, youth group, VBS and choirs. This also includes volunteers for trips, retreats, and fellowship activities (day trips and overnight events) both inside the church building and out.

2. Short-term

These are "auxiliary service" volunteers who will have contact with children or youth but have no responsibility. This includes, but is not limited to carnival game volunteers, VBS station leaders, and other task oriented jobs around children and youth.

E. Staff

Staff includes paid professionals who will work with youth and children. This shall include the Director of Christian Education, Director of Student Ministry, Music Director, and Pastor.

F. Child/Youth Abuse

1. **Physical Abuse:** Abuse in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to a child. Examples may include violent battery with a weapon, burning, shaking, kicking, choking, fracturing bones, and any of a wide variety of non-accidental injuries to a child's body.
2. **Emotional Abuse:** Abuse in which a person exposes a child to spoken and/or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty. Emotional abuse sends a message to the child of worthlessness, badness, and being not only unloved but undeserving of love and care.
3. **Neglect:** Abuse in which a person endangers a child's health, safety, or welfare through negligence. Neglect may include withholding food, clothing, medical care, education, and even affection and affirmation of the child's self-worth.
4. **Sexual Abuse:** Abuse in which sexual contact between a child or adult (or another older or more powerful youth) occurs. The child is never truly capable of consenting to or resisting such sexual acts. Examples of sexual abuse include fondling, intercourse, incest, and the exploitation of and exposure to child pornography or prostitution.
5. **Ritual Abuse:** Abuse in which physical, sexual, or psychological violations of a child are inflicted regularly, intentionally, and in a stylized way by a person or persons responsible for the child's welfare.

II. Screening and Selection of Staff & Volunteers

A. Requirements for Long Term Volunteers and Staff:

1. Submit to a background check and motor vehicle record search if driving
The volunteer and staff must sign a consent form before the check is performed. There will be three levels of checks.
Volunteer: general Social Security scan, county & state search
Driving volunteer: volunteer check plus motor vehicle record search
Staff: SS scan, county search, MV record, education verification
2. Complete volunteer application form (appendix 1), provide two reference checks and complete an interview.
3. Sign Volunteer Covenant Statement (appendix 2)
4. Commit to a minimum of 6 months time frame for a defined job
5. Complete child abuse prevention and policy training
6. Be at least 5 years older than the group they are working with
7. Be a member of CHPC for 6 months before serving

B. Process

1. After recruitment by the ministry team, the personnel team (a ministry team of Stewardship, Finance & Administration) will organize the background search and screening interview. All information will be confidential and the committee will be expected to handle information with integrity and respect. Volunteers should be rescreened every 5 years.
2. After the initial screening process, the volunteer or staff prospect will meet with the ministry area to match spiritual gifts to needs of ministry.

C. Training

All volunteer and paid staff shall be required to attend annual training focused on the church's protection policy, appropriate discipline and boundaries with children and youth, and abuse reporting responsibilities and procedures. The CE committee shall be responsible for scheduling and leading this training.

D. Requirements for Short Term Volunteers

Short Term volunteers will be required to sign a Covenant Statement before engaging in tasks involving children.

III. Supervision of Children and Youth

A. General Rules

1. **Two Adult Rule:** There shall always be two screened non-related adults* (see exceptions) while youth and children are present.
2. **Open Door Policy:** The door shall remain open or cracked. In the nursery, the top Dutch door must remain open. Because of our multi usage space, if outside noise is a distraction, then the window of the door must be visible. This shall be an exception and not the normal procedure.

B. Check-in/Check Out Procedure

1. Parents will be required to check their children in and out of programming in a designated "holding area" (ex. Kids Connection room) up to 15 minutes before it starts. This is for children up to 4th grade. Upon signed permission from parents, 5th graders can check themselves in and out. Children will only be released to designated adults listed on their child's information sheet.
2. Nursery parents will be given a check-in tag to redeem for pick up.

C. All Church Fellowship Events

At all-church fellowship or family oriented events, there shall be a minimum of 2 screened adults present to monitor the event although most volunteers will be "short-term" volunteers.

D. Restroom Guidelines

Parents should encourage their children to use the restroom before programming begins. A child five years and younger should utilize the nursery restroom. Elementary children should utilize the Kids Connection restroom. If the hallway restroom must be used, a volunteer shall escort a child to the restroom, check to see if it is empty and wait outside until the child is done.

E. Overnight Retreats and Fellowship Trips

1. There shall always be two adults present, preferably three for emergency situations. If both genders are present, then leadership shall include both genders.
2. It is recommended for overnights that a single adult shall not sleep in the same room as youth. When only one sleeping area is available, then males and females shall sleep in separate areas.
3. Emergency medical forms or emergency contact information shall be carried by the trip leader.

F. Ratios

1. *General Christian Education* (Sunday school, Youth Group, mid-week programs, & VBS)

Youth and Elementary Children: 1:10

2 years- K: 1:7

Nursery-Toddlers: 1:3

2. *Overnight Retreats and Fellowship Trips*

Youth and Elementary Children: 1:6

G. Exceptions

1. In the case when the two leaders are related, the program must take place within the building while other adults are present AND the welcoming/check-in volunteer shall be allowed to periodically check in on the class.

H. Nursery

1. Only approved workers and parents of nursery children shall be in the nursery during programming.

2. Diaper changes shall be done on the mobile changing table by approved workers or in separate changing room with two adults present.

3. Approved Nursery workers that are youth must be at least in 6th grade.

IV. Responding to allegations and suspicions of Child Abuse

****Please note that most steps will be done simultaneously****

A. If a child discloses abuse or there is reasonable suspicion, you are ***required by law*** to report suspected cases of child abuse.

1. Report the abuse to the Ministry area director immediately.

2. Report the suspicion of abuse to the Department of Children's Services (1-877-54-ABUSE) or law enforcement (if there is immediate danger suspected).

3. A report shall be made with the personnel ministry team that a report has been made with the Department of Children's Services.

B. In a case where abuse is by a volunteer, then the following steps should take place:

1. Report the incident immediately to the Ministry area director. The director will take the report to the Personnel ministry team to discuss the proper procedures internally.

2. The volunteer will be removed from his/her services until an investigation is complete.

3. The insurance company should be notified and an incident report completed.

4. If the parent(s) haven't been notified, then the recommendation is the Pastor or Associate Pastor informs the parents of the suspected incident and resolution.

5. The identity of the victim, their family and the accused offender shall be held in the strictest confidence. Also, all parties will need pastoral care and should not be forgotten but treated with respect, care, and support to prevent any further hurt.

C. If the accused is a non-ordained staff person, then the incident shall be reported directly to the head of staff and then to the personnel team. If the accused is clergy, then the guidelines found in the Book of Discipline should be followed.

Photo Release:

Colonial Heights Presbyterian Church frequently photographs or videos church events for the purpose of promoting future events and internal communications. It is possible that you and/or your child will be photographed/videoed during your participation in a CHPC event. Colonial Heights Presbyterian Church assumes that all families by nature of their participation consent to the use of their image(s) in promotional materials. If you DO NOT want your image being used in promotional materials please contact our church office at 423.239.9194