

**Christ the King Presbyterian Church
Lexington, South Carolina**

CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION POLICY

Approved by Provisional Session, September 2025

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”

~ II Timothy 3: 14-15

Policy Purpose

The officers, Employees, and members of Christ the King Presbyterian Church (“CTK”) are committed to maintaining a safe environment in which Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults are protected from any type of Child or Vulnerable Adult Abuse, as further defined below, in Church Sponsored Activities. This policy applies to all individuals who are employed and/or volunteer in Church Sponsored Activities which involve Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults. This policy does not constitute a contract between CTK and its Employees, Volunteers, or any other party. It is a statement of policy and guideline which CTK will follow. Although CTK will strive to ensure compliance with this policy, it makes no guarantee to any party that all aspects of this policy will be followed in every situation. CTK is not responsible for the intentional or willful acts of any Employee or Volunteer who violates this policy.

CTK adopts this policy not only to maximize safety and prevent Child or Vulnerable Adult Abuse from occurring within its church community, but also to guide and protect Volunteers and Employees from unwarranted allegations of Child or Vulnerable Adult Abuse.

Terms and Definitions

Child or Vulnerable Adult Abuse - An act or omission committed by a parent, caregiver, or person in a position of trust (even though he or she may not care for the Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult on a daily basis) which is not accidental and which harms or threatens harm to a Child’s, Youth’s, or Vulnerable Adult’s physical or mental health or welfare. Types of Child or Vulnerable Adult Abuse may include, but are not limited to: Physical Abuse, including physical injury or threat of injury; Neglect of Basic Needs, such as failure to provide necessary care to a child; Sexual Abuse; Mental Abuse or Neglect; Emotional Abuse; and Spiritual Abuse.

Neglect of Basic Needs - A form of abuse. Denial of food, water, cleanliness, clothing, and sleep are not appropriate means of discipline.

Physical Abuse - Any physical force applied by an adult or older youth in a position of care or authority to a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult. Physical force (hitting, spanking, shaking, shoving, etc.) is not to be used by Leaders in Church Sponsored Activities.

Sexual Abuse - Any sexual contact or sexual interaction between a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult and an adult; any lewd jokes, innuendo, unacceptable visual contact, unwelcome casual

touch, unwelcome and inappropriate hugs and kisses, and sexually suggestive pictures between an adult and a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult, as deemed inappropriate by any reasonable adult. Even if a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult, out of ignorance, innocence, or fear does not resist, it is still abuse.

Emotional Abuse - *Inappropriately belittling, hateful, or angry words and/or actions directed toward a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult. Discipline by humiliation is also emotional abuse. Mental Abuse or Neglect – Any form of abuse defined above that leads to neglect, isolation, humiliation, intimidation, and/or domination.*

Spiritual Abuse- *Using religious references to shame or by guilt to motivate a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult into a particular action or behavior.*

Employee – Any person who works for salary or wages at CTK.

Volunteer – Any person not employed by CTK who, at any time during the year, teaches, supervises, or helps with Church Sponsored Activities for Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults. These activities include, but are not limited to, Sunday School, Nursery, Childcare, Children and Youth Choirs, Summer Camps and Conferences, Athletic Events, Vacation Bible School, and Children and Youth mission trips.

Leader – An adult designated by CTK or by a sponsoring organization to have responsibility for Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults. The adult must be a minimum of 18 years of age. Leaders of overnight trips must be approved by the Director of Youth Ministries or the Christian Growth and Nurture Committee.

Church Sponsored Activity - Includes all gatherings that arise from any worship, educational, childcare, fellowship, administrative, pastoral, mission or recreational event generated or organized by CTK, whether on-campus or off-campus.

Child or Youth – A person under 18 years old and considered a minor under the law.

Vulnerable Adult – A person eighteen years of age or older who has a physical or mental condition which substantially impairs the person from adequately providing for his or her own care or protection. This includes a person who is impaired in the ability to adequately provide for the person's own care or protection because of the infirmities of aging including, but not limited to, organic brain damage, advanced age, and physical, mental, or emotional dysfunction.

Screening Employees: Background Requirements

Applicants for full-time or part-time paid employment at CTK will be required to provide, complete or undergo the following:

- An Application to Work with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults form, which will include information regarding past employment and prior convictions for crimes;
- Sign the Worker's Pledge attached to this policy;
- A reference check covering, where possible, the two immediate past employers, or personal references unrelated to the applicant if no information can be obtained from past employers;

- Prior to hiring an applicant, CTK will obtain a criminal record report for that individual. Every three years, CTK will perform national criminal database searches and national sex offender registry searches on existing Employees, and each employee shall be required to execute any documents that CTK might request for such purpose; and
- Upon being hired, each new Employee will be required to sign an acknowledgement that he or she has received a copy of the CTK Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy, understands it, and will comply with its terms.

Any candidate for employment who has a past conviction of or pending proceeding addressing an allegation of Child or Vulnerable Adult Abuse cannot be employed by CTK. Conviction for any of the following will automatically disqualify an individual from employment: drug-related, pedophilic behavior, incest, rape, assaults, indecent exposure, pornography, sodomy or abuse of a minor. CTK reserves the right to decline to employ any candidate for employment for any other reason CTK determines, in its sole discretion, to be appropriate.

Screening Volunteers: Background Requirements

Volunteers working with Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults of the church in any Volunteer Ministry will be required to provide, complete, or undergo the following:

- An Application to Work with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults form, which will include information regarding past employment and prior convictions for crimes;
- Sign the Worker's Pledge attached to this policy;
- Prior to becoming a Volunteer, CTK will obtain a background check for that individual; and
- Each new Volunteer, prior to beginning any volunteer role, will be required to sign an acknowledgement that he or she has received a copy of the CTK Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy, understands it, and will comply with its terms.

Any candidate for volunteer service who has a past conviction of or pending proceeding related to an allegation of Child or Vulnerable Adult Abuse MAY NOT work with Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults at CTK. Refusal to complete the Application to Work with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults form or a conviction for any of the following will automatically disqualify an individual from Volunteer service with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults: drug-related activity, pedophilic behavior, incest, rape, assaults, indecent exposure, pornography, sodomy, or abuse of a minor.

Leaders of other groups of Children or Youth (e.g., Community Bible Study, Trail Life, American Heritage Girls Society) who use CTK's facilities will also be required to read the Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy and sign the Worker's Pledge.

Supervision: Two-Leader/Open-Door Rule

Whenever possible, any adult who is present in a Church Sponsored Activity for Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults should be accompanied by another adult. CTK Employees and Volunteers should not, during a Church Sponsored Activity, be alone with a single Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult where they cannot be observed by others.

In order to avoid situations where an individual is alone in a room with Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults, all Children's, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult activities should be supervised by at least two adult Leaders. Whenever possible, these adults should be unrelated. The presence of two Leaders is to protect Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults against situations in which Child or Vulnerable Adult Abuse might occur, and to protect Leaders against false allegations of Child or Vulnerable Adult Abuse.

Classrooms, childcare rooms, and any area in which Church Sponsored Activities for Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults are taking place may be visited without prior notice by church Employees, parents, or other Volunteer church workers. No windows may ever be totally blocked so as to prevent visual observation into the classroom (exception would be for special decorations during VBS or other events but two Leaders must be present at all times).

In the event that two Leaders cannot be present in the room, such that one Leader is alone in a room with one or more Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults, a door or half-door from the room must be left open. The Leader should not position himself or herself in the room such that other adults passing in the hallway cannot see him or her.

Furthermore, at any counseling session with Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults, the door or half-door of the room used must remain open for the entire session. The session should be conducted at a time when others are nearby, even if they are not within listening distance.

Each classroom for Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults should ideally have a door with an observation window or a half-door, such that the upper half may be kept open. If it does not, and two Leaders are not present in the room, then the door must remain open at all times.

Ratios

The recommended adult/Volunteer-to-Child/Youth ratio, based on best practices, is 1:6. Teacher/caregiver-to-Child ratios in our schools are mandated by state childcare laws. The *minimum ratios*, by age bucket, as given by the South Carolina Department of Social Services Division of Early Care and Education are shown below:¹

CHILD'S AGE	CAREGIVER-TO-CHILD RATIOS
BIRTH TO ONE YEAR	1:5
1 - 2 YEARS	1:6
2 - 3 YEARS	1:8
3 - 4 YEARS	1:12
4 - 5 YEARS	1:17
5 - 6 YEARS	1:20
6 - 12 YEARS	1:23

¹ Available at <https://www.scchildcare.org/providers/licensing-requirements>. Last visited September 4, 2025.

Code of Conduct

1. Employees and Volunteers are required to adhere to the CTK Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy guidelines in all their interactions with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults.
2. Employees and Volunteers will respect Children's, Youths', and Vulnerable Adults' rights not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable or that disregard their right to say no.
3. Employees and Volunteers may not discipline Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care.
4. Physical restraint may be used only in situations necessary to protect the Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult, other Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults, or Employees from imminent harm, and only until the risk of harm is abated.
5. While supervising Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults participating in Church Sponsored Activities, Employees and Volunteers should know where participants are at all times.
6. Employees and Volunteers should be alert to the physical and emotional state of Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults. Any signs of injury or possible Child Abuse must be reported according to the CTK Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy.
7. Employees and Volunteers are discouraged from being alone with Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults without parental permission.
8. Employees and Volunteers will be mindful of the content on any portable electronic device, social networking pages, or other electronic media that might be accessible to any Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults. This includes types of music played in vehicles during travel to off-campus events.
9. Employees and Volunteers should not contact Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults through social media platforms, nor should they engage in one-on-one texting or messaging in any app. If it is necessary for an Employee or Volunteer to communicate with a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult through text messaging, a parent should always be included as a group chat.
10. Employees and Volunteers may not date or be romantically involved with Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults.
11. Employees and Volunteers are required to read, sign, and adhere to all policies related to identifying, documenting, and reporting Child or Vulnerable Adult Abuse.
12. Employees and Volunteers are required to report any concerns or suspicions regarding their observations of any individual's interaction with a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult. Except for concerns related to alleged or potential abuse, which require specific immediate reports, these concerns may be reported to the individual. If the concerns are not alleviated by a change in the individual's behavior, a second report must be made to the Pastor.
13. If it is necessary for an adult to take a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult home after an event, all Employees and Volunteers shall abide by safe driving laws when transporting Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult. An effort should be made to contact the family and inform them of the situation before transporting the Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult. It is always advisable for Leaders to give parents advance notice and full information regarding the event in which their Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult will be participating.

Reporting

Reporting Incidents

Any individual who observes or becomes aware of any alleged or potential incident of Child or Vulnerable Adult Abuse must, as soon as possible, report the matter to the Employee or Volunteer in charge of the Church Sponsored Activity, an Elder, or the Pastor. Because of the importance of proper reporting, pastors, Employees, Session members, and persons highly visible to church members and visitors should understand the terms of the policy and be ready to help direct any such reports or allegations to the appropriate persons.

Investigation

Upon receipt of a report or allegation of Child or Vulnerable Adult Abuse at CTK, the Session shall ensure that an appropriate investigation is commenced and appropriate procedures are followed as required by South Carolina law. The process will include documenting all steps undertaken in handling the investigation.

Confidentiality

All investigations shall be conducted in as confidential a manner as is compatible with a thorough investigation of the report or allegation.

Parental Notification

If an incident has occurred on CTK property or during a Church Sponsored Activity, the parents of any minor involved in any allegation of Child or Vulnerable Adult Abuse shall be immediately notified.

Potential Responses

Upon any report of potential or alleged Child or Vulnerable Adult Abuse by an Employee or Volunteer of CTK, any individual accused of such conduct may be temporarily relieved of any duties involving Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults pending an appropriate investigation.

Off-Site Trips & Events

Parental/Guardian Consent

Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults must obtain parental or guardian permission for involvement in Church Sponsored Activities that involve travel away from the church's physical facilities.

Permission Forms

Parent/Guardian Permission Forms and Medical Consent Forms must be completed prior to all trips. The Two-Leader/Open-Door Rule must be followed throughout the trip with any foreseeable exceptions clearly stated and approved in advance by the parent or guardian. The total number of adults on each trip will be adjusted according to the requirements of the planned activities. Under no circumstances may one adult alone take or accompany minors on an overnight outing without written permission of the parents.

Rooming Arrangements

- Rooming arrangements should provide for Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults of the same sex to room together and adults of the same sex to room together.

- When possible, adults' rooms shall be next to Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult rooms, and Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults may be checked on during the night.

Medical

- Each Child, Youth, Vulnerable Adult, Volunteer, and Employee must submit a completed medical/insurance form. Each Child's, Youth's, or Vulnerable Adult's forms must have a parent or guardian's signature.
- Group Leaders should have a copy of all medical forms for overnight or off-site events. These forms will be kept on the event site for the duration of the event.
- First Aid supplies will be available on the event site. All workers will be informed of the location of First Aid supplies/equipment and shall have access to information concerning specific medical conditions and concerns of participants.
- A written report will be completed in the case of any accident, medical emergency or injury.

Driving Rules/Travel

- As recommended by our church insurance company, it is suggested that all drivers of Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults be over 21 and under 65. In situations where this is not possible, parent permission shall be obtained before the trip and vehicles shall travel together.
- Travel arrangements for off-campus events will be coordinated through the church.
- All vehicles should remain parked throughout the duration of the activity except for transporting Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults and obtaining supplies.

Outside Groups

All leaders of non-CTK sponsored groups and events that use CTK facilities and supervise Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults are expected to adhere to these policies. Upon receipt of the policy from CTK, the leaders must review the Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and sign the Worker's Pledge Form to acknowledge their review of it and to confirm their agreement to follow the policy. This includes, but not limited to, groups such as: Community Bible Study, Trail Life, American Heritage Girls Society, etc. Given the nature of the outside groups that are authorized to use CTK facilities, CTK will not perform background checks, seek personal and professional references, review employment records, or obtain civil and criminal records of employees or volunteers of such groups. Leaders of outside groups are expected to conduct their own due diligence in this regard.

Policy Review

The provisions of this Policy shall be reviewed annually by the Session. Any proposed changes to the Policy should be brought to the attention of the Session for its consideration and final approval.

CONFIDENTIAL

**Christ the King Presbyterian Church Application to Work
with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults**

(To be completed by all applicants for any paid or volunteer position involving the supervision or custody of minors
or vulnerable adults)

Date_____ CTK Presbyterian Member Since_____

Name_____ Date of Birth_____
(Print) Last First Middle

Place of Birth_____ Sex: ____Male ____Female

Social Security #:_____-_____-_____ Driver's Lic. #:_____ State Issued_____

Current Address_____
Street City State Zip

Years at this Address_____ Home or Cell Phone_____ Work Phone_____

Previous addresses for the past seven (7) years. You may use the back of this page.

List all previous work involving Children and/or Youth; be specific. You may use the back of this page.

Please provide at least two (2) personal references, including name, address, and phone number.

Worker's / Volunteer's Pledge

I have not been charged with or convicted of any crime of sexual, physical, or other abuse involving a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult. I have not been nor am I currently involved in any abuse of a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult. I have received a copy of the Christ the King Presbyterian Church Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy, have read and understand the policy, and agree to observe all church policies and procedures regarding working with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults. I understand that Christ the King Presbyterian Church may conduct a thorough investigation into my background using all available methods of investigation, including a criminal SLED check and a check of the DSS Child Abuser Registry. I release any of these sources (including Christ the King Presbyterian Church) from any liability pertaining to this search.

Date_____

Signature of Individual Authorizing Release