

**Standard Of Conduct Of The First Presbyterian Church Of La Grange, Texas
For The Protection Of Children**

1. General Purpose

The First Presbyterian Church of La Grange, Texas (hereafter “First Presbyterian”) seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for children and adults who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect all participants from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and workers.

2. Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the term:

- a. “child” or “children” shall mean all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years, or persons who have been found to be mentally incompetent.
- b. “worker” shall mean both paid and volunteer persons participating in Church activities.

3. Selection of Workers For Children’s Activities

All persons who desire to work with children participating in our programs and activities shall be subject to the following screening:

a. Six Month Rule

No volunteer will be considered for any position involving contact with minors until she/he has been involved with First Presbyterian for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation of suitability of the applicant for working with children.

b. Written Application

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by First Presbyterian. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous church affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application will include an authorization for First Presbyterian to complete a criminal background check. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at the church.

c. Personal Interview

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

d. Reference Checks

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, references will be checked. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence at the church.

e. Criminal Background Check

- i. A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and for the following categories of contractors:
 - (1) those who will be involved in our nursery; and
 - (2) those who will be in involved in overnight activities with children.
- ii. If an individual declines to sign an authorization form for a criminal background check, they will not be considered for any position.
- iii. What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Session of First Presbyterian on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.
- iv. The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at the church.

4. **Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse**

- a. For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:
 - i. Physical abuse – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental.
 - ii. Emotional abuse – emotional injury when the child is subjected to verbal injury, such as constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
 - iii. Sexual abuse – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
 - iv. All provisions of the Texas Family Code section 261.001 (a copy of which is attached to and incorporated into this document as Exhibit A).
- b. Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at First Presbyterian becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the Pastor for further action including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law. First Presbyterian shall comply with all requirements of the Texas Family Code regarding reporting abuse and neglect of children (a copy of section 261.101 through 261.109 is attached to and incorporated into this document as Exhibit B).

- c. In the event an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at First Presbyterian or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:
 - i. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
 - ii. The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation.
 - iii. Legal authorities will be notified, and First Presbyterian will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. First Presbyterian will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by law enforcement.
 - iv. Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
 - v. The Pastor will be the spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he or she is alleged to be involved. We will seek the advice of legal counsel before responding to media inquiries or releasing information to the congregation. All other representatives of First Presbyterian shall refrain from speaking to the media.
 - vi. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.
 - vii. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth.

5. **Open Door Policy**

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room. We do not allow any unrelated child to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity. In the event such a situation should occur, a designated Church representative will be contacted to assist the adult.

6. **Teenage Workers**

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- a. Must be at least age 14
- b. Must be screened as specified above.
- c. Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

7. **Check-in/Check-out Procedure**

Each child who is left in the care of First Presbyterian shall be delivered by a parent or other relative and shall speak directly with the care provider. That child shall only be released to a parent or the same relative that originally delivered the child at the conclusion of the Church activity.

8. **Sick Child Policy**

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all children at First Presbyterian. The child care provider shall refuse to allow any child who appears to be ill to be left with the child care provider. Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be immediately located to take possession of their child. The child care provider shall be given the cell phone number of a designated Church representative who is in the Church building for each occasion that the care is being provided for any child. That designated representative shall be immediately notified of any incident related to any child in the care of the Church.

9. **Medications Policy**

No medications, either prescription or non-prescription, will be administered by any worker.

10. **Discipline Policy**

Discipline shall be verbal only. There shall be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of a child.

11. **Restroom Guidelines**

- a. Children five years of age and younger should use a classroom bathroom if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, workers should escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom. They should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child.
- b. For children over the age of five, at least one adult male should take boys to the restroom and at least one adult female should take girls. The worker should check the bathroom first to make sure that the bathroom is empty, and then allow the children inside. The worker should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom.

- c. For the protection of all, 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 prior to each class.

12. Accidental Injuries to Children

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

- a. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
- b. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian shall immediately be summoned in addition to the designated Church representative. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
- c. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

13. Training

First Presbyterian will provide training on this child protection policy to all new childcare workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All workers are required to attend these training events. Each worker will be given a copy of this Standard of Conduct and will agree to the provisions herein.

Session Approved: _____

By: _____
Clerk of Session