

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Purpose

The members of New Castle Presbyterian Church believe that we are called by God to create a safe place for all the children and youth in our care, nurturing, protecting, and empowering them through faith and trust. This commitment includes taking appropriate steps to reduce the risk to the young people in our care. The following policy, to be implemented for all church sponsored events, is intended to minimize the risk of any of our children being subjected to sexual, physical, or mental abuse. These policies and procedures are also intended to respect the rights afforded due process to person accused of improper conduct.

Definitions

1. Child means anyone under the age of 18 and/or any adult who is developmentally disabled.
2. Child safety and protection means “preventing physical, mental and/or emotional injury to a child, including the prevention of sexual abuse.”
3. Workers means any person providing his or her time or services to the church with or without compensation at events oriented to.
4. Child Care Workers means any person providing his or her time or services to provide child care, nursery care, or babysitting for children both paid or unpaid for a church sponsored activity.
5. Work with children means teaching, supervising, chaperoning, or otherwise serving in a class, program, or event involving one or more children.
6. Activities mean classes, programs or events presented or sponsored by the church.

Selection of Workers

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

- a) Six Month Rule. No person will be considered for any volunteer position involving contact with minors until she/he has been involved with New Castle Presbyterian Church for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.
- b) Application. Once an individual has expressed interest in volunteering the Pastor and/CE Committee will ensure appropriate steps are taken
- c) Background Checks. Refer to the Sexual Misconduct Policy - Part II - C (1).

Behavior & Leadership Expectations

1. At all times, workers, to the best of their abilities, shall ensure the safety of the children

and youth. The following examples of inappropriate actions are not intended to be all inclusive:

- o Smoke or use tobacco products in the presence of children and/or youth.
- o Use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol.
- o Use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs at any time.
- o Pose any health risk to children and/or youth (i.e. no fevers or other contagious situations).
- o Use profanity in the presence of children or youth
- o Leave youth or children unsupervised

2. Workers shall model positive and appropriate behavior.

3. Workers shall behave respectfully toward others and the property of others.

4. Leadership, chaperones, and advisors engage only in positive and appropriate forms of

showing affection. Workers are encouraged to seek verbal permission from a child or youth before providing positive physical affection. The following examples are not intended to be all inclusive.

• Some examples of positive and appropriate forms of affection are listed below:

- o Brief hugs.
- o Pats on the shoulder or back.
- o Handshakes.
- o "High-fives" and hand slapping.
- o Verbal praise.
- o Sitting beside small children.

• Some examples of inappropriate behavior with children and youth are:

- o Any form of unwanted affection.
- o Lengthy embraces.
- o Kisses on the mouth.
- o Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers.
- o Occupying a bed with a child or youth.
- o Wrestling with children or youth.
- o Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic, social media) that relate to physique or body development.
- o Giving/receiving personal gifts or money to individual children or youth outside of special events (i.e. birthdays, graduations).

5. Children or youth shall remain at the site of an event for the duration of the event. No child or youth shall leave an event early without permission. Permission will be granted only with written consent of a parent or guardian.

6. Safety concerns may infrequently require staff and volunteers to employ physical measures. Leadership, chaperones, and advisors may only employ the minimum amount of physical measures required to ensure the safety of all those involved.

7. Corporal punishment (e.g., spanking, hitting, kicking) and verbal and/or emotional abuse are prohibited.

Two Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two adult workers who are not married to one another will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open and there should be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation. In that case, counseling must take place with the knowledge of the pastor or event leader, and must take place in an area where both can be seen by other adults without being overheard.

For the purposes of the Two Adult Rule rooms 201 and 203 of the Christian Education Building shall be considered one room when the door between them is open.

One adult transporting one child or youth in a vehicle to or from a church-sponsored event shall be prohibited. One adult driver may transport two or more children or youth, or two adults may transport one child or youth.

Open Door Policy

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Unless there is an imminent threat, doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

Photography Policy

Only those with express permission from the Pastor, the event leader, or the Session will be allowed to take photos or video of children for official church purposes. Before any photographs are published or distributed in any way, each child in said photos must have a signed photo release on file. While we cannot restrict parents or friends from photographing their own children, parents or family members who take photos at church events are strongly encouraged to publish only photos of their own children or to obtain permission from parents/guardians of other children.

Teenage Workers

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

- Must be at least four years older than the children/youth they are supervising.
- Must be under the supervision of an adult and should not be left alone with children.

Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at New Castle Presbyterian Church. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children 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; and/or
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease.

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

Medications Policy

It is the policy of New Castle Presbyterian Church not to administer either prescription or nonprescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy. Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with the teacher, event leader, and/or Pastor to develop a plan of action.

Discipline Policy

It is the policy of New Castle Presbyterian Church not to administer corporal punishment. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children at any church-sponsored event. Workers should consult with the Pastor or event leader if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

Accidental Injuries to Children

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 basic 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.

2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned and the Pastor should be notified as soon as possible.

Responding to Allegations of Non-Sexual Child Abuse

Please also refer to see Sexual Misconduct Policy – Part III for additional actions related to any alleged or suspected sexual abuse of children

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:

- Physical abuse – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- Emotional abuse – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- Neglect – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

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 this church 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. If there is no regular pastor currently employed, reports should be made to the Clerk of Session.

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

1. The parent or guardian of the child shall be notified if they are not present for the incident.
2. The worker or church member alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation. He or she should be instructed to have no contact with the victim or with witnesses.

3. All allegations of abuse should be reported to the proper authorities, and the organization will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. NCPC will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. The insurance company will be notified, and NCPC will complete an incident report.
5. Session will designate a spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. The advice of legal counsel will be sought before responding to media inquiries or releasing information about the situation to the congregation. All other representatives of the organization should refrain from speaking to the media.
6. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it. This should be for the purpose of providing pastoral support during the time of crisis and not for the purpose of investigating the incident or influencing the investigation.
7. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth. Other restrictions may be determined by Session and the Pastor.

Policy Monitoring and Review

The Christian Education Committee shall review these guidelines and recommend changes, as necessary, to the Session. Our goal is to ensure that all I leaders adhere to these guidelines and to ensure that our children are well cared for.