

Hope Presbyterian Church Child/Youth Protection Policy

General Purpose Statement

Hope Presbyterian Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing these practices, our goal is to protect the children and youth of Hope 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 under the age of eighteen (18) years. “Session” includes church Elders. “Ministry Leader” includes Nursery Coordinator, Children’s Minister, Youth Minister. “Parent” includes legal guardians.

Selection Of Workers

Beginning December 1, 2008, all new employees and all new persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes:

- a. Three Month Rule
No volunteer will be allowed to work with children until s/he has been a member or regular attendee of Hope Presbyterian Church for a minimum of three (3) months or are approved by the Session. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and 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 we provide. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, reference information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at Hope Presbyterian Church.
- c. Personal Interview
Upon completion of the written application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.
- d. Reference Checks
Before a new applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicants’ references will be checked. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at Hope Presbyterian Church.
- e. Criminal Background Check
A national criminal background check is required for all employees and for the following categories of volunteers:
 - Those who will be involved in overnight activities with minors;
 - Those counseling minors;
 - Those involved in one-on-one mentorship of minors;
 - Those having occasional one-on-one contact with minors (i.e., vehicle drivers)

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form. If an individual declines to sign, s/he will be unable to work with children. The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at the Hope Presbyterian Church.

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Ministry Leader 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.

Classroom Supervision

It is desirable to have two adult workers in attendance when supervising children. However, due to the size of the program and the demands on adult leaders, this is not always feasible. Therefore, when two adult workers are not present, the classroom door must be left open if the door doesn't have a window allowing an unobstructed view of the classroom and the participants.

Travel

Adult Leaders who are unrelated to a youth may NOT transport a youth without at least verbal permission of the youth's parent or guardian. The leaders is asked to relay that permission along to the Youth Minister. Whenever possible, an adult leader is asked to take another leader of the opposite gender with them as they transport the youth.

Overnight Events

No adult will ever share a bed with a youth unless they are related and of the same gender. Even then, unless the relationship is parent/child, parental permission must be obtained to allow this to take place. No males will share a room with females or vice versa. Adult leaders will sleep on the floor when the group spends the night in a hotel or similar accommodations. It is not always possible to have two adult leaders in each room. On some occasions the youth and adult leaders will spend the night at a local church or other multi-purpose facility. At that time, the youth will be separated by gender and a clearly defined dividing line will be established, and adult leaders strategically placed to ensure the two genders do not sleep with or beside each other.

Student Drivers

No youth is allowed to drive a personal vehicle to or from any sanctioned youth event, unless given prior approval by the parent/guardian and the Youth Minister.

Personal Space Boundaries

Relational ministry often means an embrace or hug to show the student is welcome, loved and cared for. However, no youth is allowed to sit on the lap of an adult leader of the opposite gender for an extended period of time. No adult leader will ever be allowed to engage in a physical relationship with a youth.

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

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

- Physical abuse – any physical injury to a child which 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.
- 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.
- Neglect – depriving a child of their 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 Ministry Leader for further action including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

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 will be notified.
2. 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.
3. Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report.
4. We will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists.
5. We will cooperate with any investigation of the incident by state or local authorities. In the event there is no investigation of the incident by state or local authorities, a team will be formed to investigate the circumstances of the incident. The team should act only in consultation with our insurance company and/or attorney.
6. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position with children or youth.
7. The Pastor will be our spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he or she is alleged to be involved. All other workers should refrain from speaking to the media.
8. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.

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.

Youth Workers

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

- Youth workers must be in at least the 6th grade.
- Youth workers will be screened as specified above.
- Youth workers must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

Check-in/Check-out Procedure

For children attending Hope Presbyterian Church Nursery, parents/guardians are required to sign in their child and list any allergies or medical concerns. Parents should write their child's name on a name tag for their child and place it on their back. Name tags are provided by the church at the Nursery entrance. Parents must be present to pick up children.

Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at Hope 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 24 hours
- Green or yellow runny nose
- Eye or skin infections
- 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.

Infection Control Procedures

- Use **NON-Latex** disposable gloves when changing diapers or dealing with any other fluid. Discard in trash after use.
- Sick children should not be in childcare. If you suspect a child is sick, please notify Coordinator and request that parents come and pick up their child.
- If a child spits or bites, notify the Coordinator immediately so that they can request parental attention for all children involved.
- Wash your hands frequently during your shift to cut down on transmission of disease-causing organisms.
- Clean children's hands before & after snack and after using the restroom. Use hand sanitizer if there is not a sink in your classroom.
- Use only diaper changing pad to change diapers. Do not change diapers on the floor, or leave a child unattended on the pad.
- Prior to diaper change, place a new disposable pad on the diaper changing pad, underneath the child.
- Use appropriate cleaner to disinfect diaper changing pad after each change and on all food contact surfaces before preparing food and after eating.
- Children are not allowed to share snacks brought from home, to prevent allergic reaction or possible transmission of germs.

Scheduling and Absences Procedure

If you know in advance that you will be absent, contact another worker/teacher or ask parents of the children in your class to substitute. Let your Coordinator know who the replacement is. You need a substitute if you have had a fever within the past 24 hours; if you have a communicable illness such as: chicken pox, ringworm, pinkeye or poison ivy/oak/sumac or a draining lesion on the skin that cannot properly be bandaged to prevent drainage.

If you are sick on Sunday, contact your Coordinator:

- Margaret Ann Speakman
- Deanne Trollinger 336 768 8297

Medications Policy

It is the policy of Hope Presbyterian Church not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions) and a *Permission to Administer Medicine Form* should be completed. Parents of such children should address their situation with the Ministry Leader to develop a plan of action.

Discipline Policy

It is the policy of Hope 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. Workers should consult with Ministry Leader if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

Restroom Guidelines

Children four years of age and younger should utilize 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 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 he/she assists the child.

For children ages 5 and 6, workers should escort a group of children to the bathroom, remain outside the bathroom door and then escort the children back to the classroom.

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.

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 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 in addition to the Ministry Leader. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an *Incident Report Form* will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.