

Presbytery of Coastal Carolina

Child & Youth Protection Policy (2017)

1 BACKGROUND

1.1 THEOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION:

As Scripture tells us, “Children are a heritage from the Lord” (*Psalms 127:3*). The covenant of baptism unites all Christians in a commitment to care for and nurture our children. Recognizing that nurturing and protecting children and young people is paramount, the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina (“the Presbytery”) seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for children and youth who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the practices in this directive, the Presbytery affirms our commitment to protect the children and youth in our care from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior, while at the same time protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations.

1.2 BOOK OF ORDER

This policy is developed so that we are in compliance with the PCUSA *Book of Order*: “All councils shall adopt and implement a ... a child protection policy.” (G-3.0106) These guidelines do not apply to programs, events, activities, or ministries that are sponsored by sessions or congregations of the Presbytery, as each session must be guided by its own child protection policy required under the Book of Order (G-3.0106). This policy does not apply to Monroe Camp and Retreat Center, Inc. and Camp Kirkwood which now operate independent of the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina, Inc.

1.3 REPLACING OF PRESBYTERY PREVIOUS POLICY STATEMENT:

This 2017 “Child and Youth Protection Policy” is to replace one previously referenced in the Presbytery’s Sexual Misconduct Policy of 2013 (see page 3) where it stated:

“4. Youth Leaders’ Policy: Presbytery commends to the Division for Outdoor Ministries and the Division for Educational Ministries, for the guidance of camp staff and youth leaders, the ‘Statement of Policy for Leaders of Youth and Children’s Activities Within the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina, With Reference to the Issue of Sexual Misconduct,’ which the Division for Educational Ministries adopted on October 10, 2000 and presented to Presbytery Council on November 1, 2000. (See Attachment B)”

This paragraph in the “Presbytery’s Sexual Misconduct Policy” of 2013 should be considered null and void.

1.4 LIMITATIONS

This policy applies to meetings, events or activities that are explicitly coordinated by the staff of the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina and its committees when such events include or involve children or youth under the age of 18, either as the focus of the event or in a separate child care setting during an adult event. Hereafter in this policy these meetings, events or activities are known as “event(s).”

In instances where youth gather for an event of less than 3 hours in length, chaperones attending with the youth and children from a particular church are assumed to be cleared under the child and youth protection policy of their local congregation. At these short events, these adult chaperones are expected to be with their youth from their church for the duration of the event.

1.5 TIME FRAMES

Adults that are approved per this policy normally retain that approval for a period of 3 years. After 3 years, new background checks and training programs are required. The right to revoke these privileges at any time is retained. If any new information arises about an individual that casts suspicion or violates these policies, the approval will be revoked or suspended immediately.

1.6 APPROVED TRAINING PROGRAMS

Adults seeking approval are asked to complete one of these training programs:

1. Safe Gatherings, an online training program at www.SafeGatherings.org. This program includes reference checks and background check in addition to the training.
2. Programs offered by local public school systems or nationally accredited programs on youth safety and appropriate conduct.
3. The training Program of the Boy Scouts of America found at <https://my.scouting.org/> (membership in the scouts is not required to take it)
4. Classes offered in a local congregation if at least 3 hours in length and a satisfactory outline of materials covered is given to and approved by the General Presbyter.
5. Other training programs may be considered adequate if reviewed and approved by the General Presbyter or the Associate for Youth Ministry in consultation with one another.

Optional Supplemental Training & Learning Resources:

- “Preventing Youth and Child Sex Abuse” (20 Min) by Church Mutual Insurance Co. youtu.be/ELtAMEQXbiA
- Articles found at National Sexual Violence Resource Center: www.nsvrc.org/projects/child-sexual-assault-prevention/preventing-child-sexual-abuse-resources#Education%20Training%20Materials

1.7 POLICY AVAILABILITY

This policy shall be publically available on the Presbytery’s website and by request through the Presbytery Office. It should be reviewed and updated as needed, at least once every 3 years.

2 PREVENTION PROCEDURES

2.1 LEADERSHIP SCREENING

- A. Persons who are (1) 18 years of age or older and (2) are no longer in High school (or equivalent) and (3) are members of any congregation of the Presbytery and have been known to that congregation for at least six (6) months are eligible to apply to volunteer to work with children and youth for Presbytery-sponsored events. There shall be no exceptions to the 6-months rule. The timeline for eligibility of minister members of the presbytery is determined by the General

Presbyter based on reference checks made with presbytery of membership or of care and length of service.

- B. All child/youth workers, whether on a paid staff, contractor, or volunteer basis, shall be subject to a criminal background check.
- C. Completion of a background check is sufficient for an adult to provide leadership at up to two (2) “day” events in one calendar year. If an adult’s participation will extend beyond two days, completion of Safe Gathering or equivalent training is required (see 1.6 “Approved Training” above).
- D. For overnight events, a child/youth worker, whether on a paid staff, contractor, or volunteer basis, shall be subject to a criminal background check and will complete (pass) one of the “Approved Training” programs listed above in section 1.6.
- E. With written certification of a satisfactory background check and completion of a training program from the congregation of membership, a volunteer may be approved for Presbytery events. The certification from a church’s screening and training program must be in writing using the form found in the forms section (appendix) and the form must be signed by the appropriate church leader, or Pastor, or Moderator of Session, or Clerk of Session.
- F. Alternatively a background check may be conducted by the Presbytery or through the Safe Gatherings training.

2.2 PERMISSIBLE, MANDATED AND PROHIBITED PRACTICES

A. **Two Adult Rule**

The normal practice is to have at least two adult leaders/chaperones present for any activity and such additional adult volunteers as are required to provide adequate supervision and care appropriate to the number of children and youth participating. If it is impractical to have more than one adult constantly present, the event organizer is responsible for arranging for another adult to check in periodically on the child care setting to ensure appropriate protection standards are being maintained and that the adult is maintaining an appropriate environment.

B. **Age Difference**

Normally, at least one of the leaders will be at least three years older than the oldest child or youth being supervised.

C. **Ratios: Adult to Child**

The adult to youth ratio for all youth-related events/activities is 2:10. There shall also be one adult of each gender when there is one or more minors of each gender in a group. Only in emergency situations may the ratios and gender diversity be compromised. The minimum age to be considered a leader in fulfilling this ratio is 16.

D. **One-on-one interactions:**

Because most abuse occurs when an adult is alone with a child, ***private one-on-one meetings with a child are prohibited*** unless absolutely necessary *and another adult is notified*.

When so necessary or permitted, the following guidelines shall apply to one-on-one interactions:

- 1) When meeting one-on-one with a child, always do so in a public place in full view of others.

- 2) Keep doors open.
- 3) Avoid all physical signs of affection that can be misinterpreted (see below).
- 4) If meeting in a room or office, leave the door open or move to an area that can be easily observed by others passing by.
- 5) Never be the only two in a building – go outside or meet at another time and place or call someone to be with you in the building.
- 6) Inform other employees and volunteers that you are alone with a child and ask them to randomly drop in. (Ask to be supervised.)
- 7) Document and immediately report any unusual incidents, including disclosures of abuse or maltreatment, behavior problems and how they were handled, injuries, or any other interactions that might be misinterpreted. Submit this documentation to the Associate for Youth Ministries or the General Presbyter within 3 days of the incident.

E. Physical Interactions -- showing Approval and Affirmation:

In providing approval or affection, the following guidelines apply:

Appropriate Physical Interactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Side hugs • Shoulder-to-shoulder or “temple” hugs • Pats on the shoulder or back • Handshakes • High-fives and hand slapping and Fist Bumps • Verbal praise • Pats on the head when culturally appropriate • Touching hands, shoulders, and arms • Arms around shoulders • Holding hands for prayer or for escorting young children <p>At any time, these permissible interactions may be inappropriate if unwanted by the child or the employee or volunteer.</p>

Inappropriate Physical Interactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kisses • Showing affection in an isolated area • Lap sitting • Wrestling • Piggyback rides • Tickling • Allowing a child to cling to an employee’s or volunteer’s leg • Any type of massage given by or to a child • Any form of affection that is unwanted by the child or the employee or volunteer • Compliments relating to physique or body development • Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas <p>NOTE: This list is not exhaustive.</p>

- F. **Verbal Interactions** -- showing Approval and Affirmation:
 The manner of speaking with children establishes respect.
 The following guidelines apply:

<i>Appropriate Verbal Interactions</i>	<i>Inappropriate Verbal Interactions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive reinforcement • Appropriate jokes • Corrective Discipline • Encouragement • Praise • Prayer • Written Thanks • Teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name-calling • Discussing sexual encounters • Secrets • Cursing • Off-color or sexual jokes • Shaming • Belittling • Derogatory remarks • Harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate children • Derogatory remarks about the child or his/her family • In any way involving children in your personal problems or issues of other employees and volunteers

G. Social Networking Code of Conduct

Each person who leads using the resources of social media to interact with youth or leaders shall comply with this Social Networking Code of Conduct:

- 1) Adult leaders are discouraged from establishing direct social media connections with youth or children and are instead encouraged to interact openly in the Presbytery Youth Council (PYC) Group page so that all comments are public.
- 2) Comments that are, or could be, construed by any observer to be harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating shall never be posted to or about any participant or chaperone or staff member.
- 3) All sexually oriented conversations or discussions about sexual activities are prohibited.
- 4) Adults are prohibited from posting inappropriate pictures (for example, sexually suggestive, exploitive, or voyeuristic) or making inappropriate comments on pictures.
- 5) It is inappropriate for volunteers to privately message a youth unless it is expressly about Presbytery events and meetings. The Associate for Youth Ministries may interact with youth over the age of 13 about pastoral matters but should inform the General Presbyter or the child’s pastor of such interaction, if it will continue for more than 2 weeks.
- 6) **Private messages between employees/volunteers and children or youth are subject to review by the General Presbyter or the Associate for Youth Ministries upon request.**
- 7) These rules apply to all social media platforms including but not limited to Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, text messaging, facetime, and others.
- 8) If a person fails a background check at any point, they shall immediately disconnect themselves from all social media and email and text connections with youth that were established through Presbytery activities or events.

- 9) If an adult whether paid staff or volunteer or pastor moves out of the Presbytery or transfers membership to a non-PCUSA congregation, they shall immediately disconnect themselves from all social media and email and text connections with children or youth that were established through Presbytery activities or events.
- 10) On all social media platforms, if approved youth leaders (whether paid staff, contractor, or volunteer), post or use images of drunkenness, lude behavior, or crass language in their personal accounts, these posts or images may be considered sufficient grounds for removal as a youth leader.**

H. Overnight arrangements, sleeping rooms

- 1) Violation of these overnight rules and requirements will result in the immediate removal of the adult from the current, and all future, youth events of the Presbytery.
- 2) For overnight events, adults are to stay in separate rooms from the youth. If adults must share the same room: there must be at least 2 adults of the same gender as the youth in the room.
- 3) Under no circumstance is an adult to share a bed with a youth.
- 4) The minimum age for youth staying overnight at any Presbytery events is 11 years of age and in middle school or higher (grade 5 and up).

I. Infants and Young Children

Presbytery is not equipped or prepared to care for children who are under the age of 4. Such infants and young children must be cared for by adults who have met local church requirements and are under the child protection policy of a local congregation or cared for by the child's parent during Presbytery activities.

3 TRANSPORTATION PROCEDURES

- A. Buses and Vans used for Presbytery events must be used in accordance with the church policy and insurance company requirements of the church that owns the bus or van.
- B. The Presbytery will not allow 15 passenger vans to be used for Presbytery transportation.
- C. The Presbytery may from time to time employ a professional bus service for away events like Montreat Youth Conference, Mission Trips, Triennium or other away trips.
- D. For all bus, mini-bus or van use, two adults must be on the vehicle; the driver may be one of the two.
- E. This policy does not apply to churches who bring their youth to and from events in their vehicles as these drivers must comply with the standards of their congregation over which the Presbytery has no control.
- F. Presbytery chaperones normally should not use personal vehicles for transporting youth during an event. If picking up from home or taking a child/youth home in a personal vehicle is necessary then, for the child's safety, the parent(s) should be notified with a phone call and asked to give their approval.

4 REPORTING PROCEDURES

A. Who to tell? REPORTING

Any adult (i.e. parent, chaperone, presenter, volunteer or paid staff) suspecting or having knowledge of a violation of this policy, or of any occurrence of child abuse, must report such violation to any leader of the presbytery sponsored event or to the General Presbyter. Written notes should be made about any incidents and the reports made of the incident.

Any child or youth who suspects, or has knowledge of, any type of abuse is invited to share their knowledge with their parent, any adult leader of the presbytery event, their pastor, or the General Presbyter.

Anyone who has knowledge or suspicion of child/youth abuse should be made aware that state law requires the immediate reporting of such abuse to the civil authorities.

Any adult receiving information under this section shall share that information immediately with the General Presbyter who may activate the full response procedure outlined in other Presbytery Policies and the Book of Order.

B. Written Notes – RECORDING

If an incident occurs in your presence or is reported to you. Immediately make notes including the following information:

- 1) What happened? (Describe in detail what you saw, heard or thought happened.)
- 2) Who was present – both involved in the incident and as witnesses?
- 3) What action was taken at the time of the incident to stop it, get medical care or provide safety?
- 4) When were the parents informed and by whom?
- 5) What follow-up action is expected, mandated or needed?
- 6) **See the reporting form guide in the appendix**

NOTE: It is a class C Felony to fail to report child abuse or neglect (Physical, Sexual or verbal) in NC Code: NCGS 7B-301(b) found at www.ncga.state.nc.us/enactedlegislation/statutes/html/bysection/chapter_7b/gs_7b-301.html

C. Book of Order 2015-2107 Requirements

“G-4.0302 Mandatory Reporting *Any member of this church engaged in ordered ministry and any certified Christian educator employed by this church or its congregations, shall report to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities knowledge of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity when (1) such information is gained outside of a confidential communication as defined in G-4.0301, (2) she or he is not bound by an obligation of privileged communication under law, or (3) she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of future physical harm or abuse.”*

5 RESPONDING PROCEDURES

The response to allegations of misconduct shall be undertaken in accordance with the Sexual Misconduct Policy of the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina as are established and maintained by the Presbytery and the Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church USA and in compliance with the Laws of the State of North Carolina.

6 DEFINITIONS

Child/Children are persons ages 5 and including age 10.

Youth are persons age 11 to 17.

Minor is a person who has not turned 18 years of age.

Adult all persons 18 years and older.

7 FORMS – APPENDIX A

Presbytery of Coastal Carolina

Incident Reporting Form Guide

Name of Person Completing the form: _____

How can you be contacted: _____ (phone/email)

1. At what event did this incident happen? (Event Name, Date, Location)
2. What Child (or Children) were involved in the incident? (first and last name please)
3. What happened? (Describe in detail what you saw, heard or thought happened.)
4. Who was present – both involved in the incident and as witnesses?
5. What action was taken at the time of the incident to stop it, get medical care or provide safety?
6. When were the parents informed and by whom? (please name the parent that was informed)
7. What follow-up action is expected, mandated or needed?

Date you completed and sent or emailed this form to the Presbytery Office. _____

Please use additional paper to give a complete report of what happened and other helpful details.

Please 1. **Keep a confidential copy** of this form for your records 2. **Give a copy to** the General Presbyter or Associate for Youth Ministries. c/o Presbytery Office, 807 W King street, Elizabethtown, NC 28337

NOTE: It is a class C Felony to fail to report child abuse or neglect (Physical, Sexual or Verbal) See NCGS 7B-301(b) found at www.ncga.state.nc.us/enactedlegislation/statutes/html/bysection/chapter_7b/gs_7b-301.html

Presbytery of Coastal Carolina
Child/Youth Worker
Background Check Certification Form

Name: _____ (Please print or type)

Current Residential Address: _____

Phone: _____ Age: _____

Church of Membership: _____

Presbytery Event(s): _____

Yes **No** This person has been a member of our congregation for more than 6 months.

Yes **No** The person listed above has successfully passed the congregation’s background check for volunteers or staff working with children and/or youth. DATE OF COMPLETION:

Yes **No** **Not applicable** The person listed above has successfully passed the congregation’s motor vehicle check (if applicable to the duties expected at the event).

Yes **No** **Not applicable** The person listed above has certified that he or she has NOT previously renounced the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as the accused in the midst of a disciplinary proceeding as a **teaching elder** (minister of Word and Sacrament), pursuant to G-2.0509 of the Book of Order.

Comments/Notes/Other Information:

By signing this form you are affirming that there no reason known to you why this persons should be barred from serving as a chaperone at Presbytery events.

Signature of Congregation’s Staff Member, Pastor, Clerk, Moderator or Ruling Elder Responsible for Background Checks and Training:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Print Name: _____ Position: _____

This form is to be mailed or faxed to
Associate for Youth Ministries,
Presbytery of Coastal Carolina, 807 W King Street, Elizabethtown, NC 28337
or FAX to: 855-899-7210 or email scanned copy to General Presbyter or the Youth Associate

Presbytery of Coastal Carolina

Child/Youth Worker Receipt of Policy Form

Yes, I, _____ (name) have received a copy of the "Child & Youth Protection Policy" of the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina on or about _____ (date).

Initial all that you can affirm:

____ I have read the policy.

____ I have been an active member of _____ Presbyterian Church (USA) for more than 6 months.

____ I am seeking permission to be a youth leader *for overnight trips*.

____ I am seeking permission *only for day events* and understand that I am limited to 2 per year.

____ I affirm that I am willing to comply with the terms of this policy in my own interaction with youth and children and in social media.

____ I attest that my own social media accounts do not have any images, comments, or posts that would be considered to be showing or promoting drunkenness, lude behavior, or crass language.

____ Furthermore, if I am aware of, or witness, violations of this policy I will report such violations to the General Presbytery or the Associate for Youth Ministries as soon as reasonably possible.

____ If I am personally a witness to an incident involving a child or am told by a child of abuse, neglect or misconduct, I will report the incident according to the guidelines of this policy including a written report submitted to the General Presbyter or the Associate for Youth Ministries.

____ I understand that the approval to work with youth and children at Presbytery events is valid for 3 years and that it is renewable.

I **(have or am planning to)** complete _____ training program.

When a background check is conducted on me this item may be found:

For which I give this statements of clarification:

Signature

Print Name

Date

This form is to be mailed or faxed to **Associate for Youth Ministries, Presbytery of Coastal Carolina, 807 W King Street, Elizabethtown, NC 28337**