

Chapel Presbyterian Church

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Purpose

Chapel Presbyterian Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the following practices, our goal is to protect the children of Chapel Presbyterian Church from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior, while also protecting our child care workers from false accusations.

Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen years. The term “worker” includes both paid and volunteer persons who work with children. The term “Chapel” refers to Chapel Presbyterian Church, Inc.

Mandated Reporters

All child care workers are mandated reporters and are required to follow the procedures outlined in this policy.

Selection of Workers

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

1 - Six-Month Rule

No applicant will be considered for any position involving contact with minors until he/she has worshipped regularly at Chapel for a minimum of six months. “Regular” is defined as at least 50% of the Sundays during this six-month period. The Session may provide exceptions to this rule on a case by case basis.

2 - Written Application

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file by Chapel.

3 - Personal Interview

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

4 - Criminal Background Check

Each adult applicant will be required to sign an authorization form for state and federal criminal background checks. If an individual declines to sign the form, he or she will not be allowed to work with children. The check will be done at Chapel’s expense. If an adult applicant has received state and federal background checks through his or her employer, he or she may submit *current* documentation of the checks to satisfy this requirement.

The determination of a disqualifying offense will be determined by the Chapel Session, in consultation with the administrator(s) for the background checks. Generally, convictions for offenses involving children and/or offenses involving violence, illegal substances, and indecency will preclude an applicant from being approved to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also result in disqualification from service.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file by Chapel.

5 – Minor Volunteers

Children and grandchildren of Chapel members and children of regular attenders who are between the ages of 11 and 17 may serve in the Children's Ministries according to the following guidelines:

- > They must demonstrate Christian character, maturity, and good judgement, as evaluated by the pastoral staff and/or ministry coordinator, and must complete a written application as requested.
- > They must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.
- > They are not to escort children to the restroom or change diapers.
- > Those between the ages of 11 and 13 may not serve in the infant nursery.

Regular Child Care Procedures

1 - Two Person Rule

Whenever children are being supervised during programs and activities at Chapel, two approved child care workers will be present at all times, except in situations where doors or windows allow for clear public visibility. (Exceptions to the two-person rule must be approved by pastoral staff and/or a ministry coordinator.) At least one of these workers must be an adult.

2 - Open Door Policy

Doors and windows should be positioned so that people can see inside the room where children are receiving care.

3 - Check-In/Check-Out Procedure

For children four years old and under, a security check-in/check-out procedure will be followed. The child will be signed in by a parent or guardian, who will receive a pager for the child. The parent or guardian must present the pager in order to sign out the child from our care. Another adult may check out the child only if he/she presents the pager and states the child's name.

From our programs for children Pre-K through 4th grade, children will be released to parents under the supervision of the Director of Children's Ministries or other ministry coordinator.

4 - Sick Child Policy

Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. 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.

5 - Medications Policy

Child care workers at Chapel are not permitted 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). Parents of such children should address their situation with a member of the Staff, Session, or Nursery Director.

6 - Discipline Policy

Child care workers at Chapel are not permitted to administer corporal punishment. If assistance is needed with disciplinary issues, workers should consult with a member of the Staff, Session or Nursery Director.

7 - Restroom Guidelines

Children four years of age and younger should be escorted to the restroom, and into the restroom. If a child requires assistance, the workers should leave the stall door open as they assist the child.

For children between the ages of four and ten, at least one adult should take the child to the restroom. The worker should remain outside the restroom door and escort the children back to the classroom.

For the protection of all, workers should *never* be alone with a child in a restroom with a closed restroom stall.

8 - 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 worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.

3 - 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.

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

Understanding the precious value of each image-bearer, and the life-long impact that maltreatment can have on an individual, Chapel PCA takes all indicators or suspicions of child abuse very seriously.

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 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.

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 his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at Chapel becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, or in the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at Chapel or during our sponsored programs or activities, this procedure will be followed:

1 - Civil authorities will be notified by calling 1-800-932-0313 and submitting a written report to the state Department of Public Welfare within 48 hours.

2 - A member of the Chapel Session will be notified.

- 3 - 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.
- 4 - The parent or guardian of the child will be notified. If the accused is a parent or guardian of the child, another parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
- 5 - Chapel's insurance company will be notified, and Chapel will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
- 6 - The Session will appoint an Incident Response Team.
- 7 - The Session will appoint one of its members as sole church spokesperson to the media.
- 8 - The Session will oversee pastoral care for all parties involved.
- 9 - Any person who is found to be directly or indirectly involved with abuse or misconduct will be prohibited from working with children or youth.

Social Media

Childcare workers are prohibited from social media contact with children under the age of 18, unless given permission by the child's parent or legal guardian.

Childcare workers are prohibited from posting pictures of children under the age of 18, unless given permission by the child's parent or legal guardian.

Training

Designated staff and volunteers will review the policy with each new volunteer, who will be required to read and sign it, indicating their understanding of, and agreement with, its terms.

Review

The Session will review and update this policy each year at its June Stated Meeting. Designated staff and volunteers will give the updated policy to ongoing volunteers each August, who will be required to read and sign it, indicating their understanding of, and agreement with, its terms.

I, _____ understand terms of this policy and I agree to abide by them and to protect the health and safety of the children or youth assigned to my care or supervision at all times. I acknowledge my obligation and responsibility to protect and nurture children and agree to never engage in behavior that may harm them. Furthermore, I agree to do my best to prevent abuse and neglect among children involved in Chapel activities, and to report any known or suspected abuse to appropriate church leaders and legal authorities in accordance with the Policy.

Signature

Date