

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY
Trinity Presbyterian Church
Norfolk, Virginia

Approved by the Session January 9, 2007

Purpose

As a caring Christian community, Trinity Presbyterian Church (TPC) is committed to providing a safe and nurturing environment for all children who come into our care and supervision from time to time in the congregational life of our church and its various ministries. Therefore, we have adopted this Child Protection Policy to help create such an environment and to protect children under our supervision from abuse.

Definitions

Child means anyone under the age of eighteen (18) and also includes individuals over the age of eighteen who are legally incapacitated.

Child abuse includes the following:

1. The actual infliction, the threat to inflict or create, or permitting another to inflict or threaten to inflict or create a physical or mental injury upon a child, by other than accidental means, or the creation of a substantial risk of death, disfigurement, or impairment of bodily or mental function.
2. The refusal to provide care necessary to the health of a child, or the abandonment of a child in one's care.
3. The commission or permitting of any act of sexual exploitation or any sexual act upon a child.

Child Protection Policy Committee (CPPC) means a person or group of people appointed by the Session to administer this policy on behalf of the Session. In the absence of such a person or group the Session is the CPPC.

Employee means a person who is hired or called to work for TPC for salary or wages.

Member volunteer means a volunteer who

1. has been a member of TPC for not less than 6 months; and
2. has been cleared by the CPPC to work with children.

Provisional volunteer means a volunteer who

1. is not a member of TPC; or
2. has been a member of TPC for less than 6 months; or
3. has not been cleared by the CPPC to work with children.

Supervision means direct observation, control, and visual monitoring of activities.

Volunteer means a person who provides services to TPC without monetary compensation.

Standards of Conduct

1. No employee or volunteer shall engage in any act of child abuse.
2. No employee or volunteer shall touch, interact with, or otherwise communicate with a child in any way that is intended to be sexually stimulating, emotionally demeaning, or exploitative.
3. Common expressions of affection and affirmation, such as hugs and pats on the back, holding of the hands or physical care (including diaper changes and first aid) are appropriate and expected. Physical expressions of affection should never be forced on a child.
4. Employees and volunteers who work with children are tasked with guarding the physical and emotional safety of those in their care and should always be alert for any threats to that safety.
5. Employees and volunteers shall not use corporal punishment on a child in their care during any program or activity of TPC.
6. To the maximum extent practical, there shall be visual access into each room in which activities with children are being conducted.
7. To the maximum extent practical, employees and volunteers who work with children shall work in pairs, with two or more adults present with children at all activities.
8. Each provisional volunteer who works with children shall work under the supervision of an employee or a member volunteer at all times.
9. If an unaccompanied employee or member volunteer meets with a single child to conduct a private discussion, that meeting shall be held at TPC when the church is open for activities or shall be held in a public place. In no case shall an unaccompanied employee or volunteer meet with a single child at TPC unless there is at least one other employee, member volunteer, or the parent or guardian of the child present in the building and aware of the meeting.
10. With respect to any church-sponsored activity for which TPC arranges transportation, one employee or member volunteer may transport children as long as there are two or more children in the vehicle and provided all required vehicle and insurance information is on file with TPC. Exceptions to this requirement may be made in the case of medical or family emergencies or with the written permission of a parent or guardian.

Allegations of Child Abuse

1. TPC will cooperate fully with government authorities in the investigation of any suspected incidents of child abuse.
2. Anyone who suspects or has received a report of child abuse shall promptly report it to the pastor, an assistant pastor, or the clerk of session. If the alleged offender is an employee, the report shall be made to the clerk of session. If the person making the report is not comfortable reporting to the above named individuals the report may be made to any active elder.
3. The pastor or the clerk of session shall ensure that any credible allegation of child abuse is reported to the proper law enforcement authorities and/or the Department of Human Services as appropriate not later than 72 hours after the report is made.
4. If the allegation is against an ordained minister, and employee, or a member of TPC, the clerk of session or another person designated by the session shall notify the Stated Clerk of the James River Presbytery.
5. In each case of alleged child abuse, the pastor or the clerk of session shall contact and involve TPC's liability insurance carrier and maintain proper written documentation of the allegations and proceedings.
6. The pastor and/or the clerk of session or such other person as designated by the session shall be responsible for maintaining contact with the police and with the family of each alleged victim and for recommending further actions to the session. Such person shall also speak on behalf of the session in the event of an allegation that requires speaking to the congregation and/or the community.
7. Any person against whom allegations are brought under this policy shall not work with any children during the investigation.

Implementation

1. A copy of this policy shall be provided to each employee, families with children and to each member volunteer participating in any program or activity involving children.
2. Each employee shall submit a signed copy of this Child Protection Policy to the CPPC and consent to a background check as a condition of employment.
3. Each applicant for employment shall submit a signed copy of this Child Protection Policy to the CPPC and consent to a background check as part of his or her application for employment.

4. Anyone who seeks to be a member volunteer in any program or activity involving children shall submit a completed volunteer application and a signed copy of this Child Protection Policy to the CPPC and submit to a background check. An applicant who is under the age of 18 shall have his/her application and Child Protection Policy co-signed by a parent or guardian. An applicant may work as a provisional volunteer under the direct supervision of an employee or a member volunteer pending the review of his/her application.
5. In general, an application by a volunteer for any program or activity involving children shall be accepted only after a minimum of 6 months of active membership at TPC by the volunteer. Exceptions may be made at the discretion of the session or session's designee to allow for the short term involvement of a volunteer in an activity involving children (such as a service project, Vacation Bible School, Sunday morning childcare, etc.). In any such case, provisional volunteers shall be teamed with an employee or a member volunteer.

Administration

1. The Child Protection Policy Committee shall administer this policy.
2. All documentation associated with this policy (including applications, background checks, reference contact notes, and documents associated with allegations of child abuse or misconduct) shall be strictly confidential and shall be kept secure by the CPPC.
3. The CPPC shall be responsible for the conduct of appropriate clearances on employees, applicants for employment, and volunteers participating in programs or activities involving children. The clearance process shall allow applicants the opportunity to correct or respond to information obtained from a background check. For purposes of the initial implementation of this policy, the CPPC shall determine the manner in which initial clearances shall be conducted.
4. The CPPC shall establish a schedule for conducting and updating clearances.

Member Awareness

The congregation shall be informed of this policy upon its adoption by the session.

This policy and the volunteer application form shall be made available on the internet website of TPC.

A copy of this policy and the volunteer application form shall be provided in each new member packet.

A copy of this policy shall be posted in a central location in the church building and offices of TPC.

Employee/Volunteer Statement

I ACCEPT the responsibility to nurture the Christian faith and well-being of the children of Trinity Presbyterian Church and to care for them as Christ cares for me.

I AGREE to submit to the authority of the session of Trinity Presbyterian Church in all matters related to child protection.

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND AND AGREE TO ABIDE BY the Child Protection Policy of Trinity Presbyterian Church.

Signature

Date

Printed Name