

## **Child and Youth Safety Policy for the Presbytery of Long Island**

### I. Statement of purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure as safe an environment as possible for children and youth when they are in the care of representatives of Long Island Presbytery during meetings, retreats and other Presbytery-sponsored events. Policies also apply to any trips or events involving children or youth that are partially or fully funded by funds from the Presbytery of Long Island. Any group planning an event involving children and/or youth, including any activities seeking Partnership Funds are required to abide by these policies. When an event is sponsored by a higher governing body of PC(USA) whose child and youth safety policy provisions differ from these, the policies of the higher governing body supercede these.

It is hoped that the paper will also serve as an outline for churches preparing to write their own child safety policies.

### II. Definitions and references:

DEFINITIONS (Including quotations from the Presbytery Policy on Sexual Misconduct.)

Child Abuse is any treatment of a child under the age of 18 that threatens the child's safety or leaves the child's life with physical or emotional scars. It constitutes any physical contact, sexual contact or communication by any adult through the use of authority over a child. Abuse can also occur between two children. It is still abuse, even if a child cooperates out of ignorance, innocence or fear.

Child Maltreatment: The responsible person is not providing minimal care for the child, with the result that the child's physical, mental or emotional condition has been impaired or is in danger of becoming impaired. This includes excessive corporal punishment or abandonment of the child, or loss of control of one's own actions due to drugs or alcohol.

Child Sexual Abuse includes but is not limited to any contact or interaction between an adult and a child wherein the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult or of a

third person. The behavior may or may not include touching. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered forced, whether or not consented to by the child.

Sexual Harassment: Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal and physical conduct constitute sexual harassment when submission to such conduct is made, either implicitly or explicitly a condition of an individual's employment or status... or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment based on the declared judgment of the affected individual.

Sexual malfeasance: Genital contact with those for whose spiritual welfare one is responsible by one's position in the church. Mutual seduction resulting in mutual victimization is also considered misconduct.

Sexual impropriety: Sexual advances toward those for whose spiritual welfare one is responsible by one's position in the church. Such behavior can be verbal or physical conduct of an inappropriately sexual nature (e.g: risqué jokes, innuendoes, insults, ingratiating and over solicitous behavior, including sexually inappropriate visits and phone calls, seductions and fondling).

## REFERENCES

\_\_\_Policy and Procedures on Sexual Misconduct Approved by Long Island Presbytery, June 2, 2001 as presented by the Sexual Misconduct Response Team

Guidelines for ChildCare at Church Sponsored Meetings suggested by the 1995 General Assembly, as prepared by the Presbyterian Child Advocacy Network.

### III. Policies for Supervised Child Care during Presbytery one-day or partial day Events.

#### A. Standards for Child Care Space

When a church takes on the responsibility for hosting a Presbytery meeting or event, it also assumes the responsibility for providing space for childcare for anyone attending presbytery that requires it. The space must meet the criteria outlined in C2 below. If such space is not available, the Host Church should advise the Stated Clerk and ask for a waiver of a particular requirement. Exceptions must be granted by the Presbytery Council.

B. Child Care workers

Caregivers will be recruited and paid by the Presbytery. Any individual who provides childcare at any meeting of Presbytery (workshops, events, regular or special meetings of the Presbytery) will be required to complete an application form and be trained in Child Protection Policies provided by the Council on Education of the Presbytery of Long Island.

When Child Care workers are recruited to work at a presbytery meeting or event, they are subject to the provisions of this policy, the Policy on Sexual Misconduct of the Presbytery of Long Island, and to the specifications of the Presbytery's Liability Insurance.

C. Limits of Liability

1. Any Church hosting a meeting of the Presbytery at which children or youth will be cared for or involved should be fully conversant with the Guidelines for Presbytery Meetings of the Presbytery of Long Island and the provisions of this policy.
2. Any Church, Council, subgroup or entity requesting Partnership Funds should be fully conversant with all provisions of the Presbytery's Child Protection Policy and should advise the Stated Clerk of any inability to abide by its provisions.
3. It is expected that any Church in which events or meetings are held carries its own liability insurance, including insurance against Sexual Misconduct, and abides by the provisions thereof.

D. Qualifications and Selection of Child Care Workers

1. Child Care Workers will be selected from a pool of persons prescreened and trained by Presbytery. Persons selected to be Childcare workers must:
  - a. Be healthy, able-bodied, experienced, preferably trained in childcare for children of various ages.
  - b. Complete an Application form including sexual misconduct statement, authorization to check credentials, and Social Security Number.
  - c. Be a member of a particular church of the Presbytery for at least one year,

with validation of the pastor or session of that church.

d. If a caregiver is not church member, the applicant must give permission to verify credentials, including a criminal background check and supply the names of at least 3 references.

e. Be at least 21 years of age, and at least 5 years older than the children they attend.

f. Persons who are unable to sign Sexual Misconduct Release Form, or who are known to have committed a previous act of sexual misconduct or child abuse are prohibited from supervising or caring for children either on a paid or volunteer basis.

g. Complete training in the Presbytery's Child Protection Training.

2. Security of Records.

All application forms or other information obtained about an individual from any source will be retained according to the Personnel Policies of Presbytery.

E.. Number of caregivers required

1. A minimum of two childcare workers/adult advisors will be assigned. No child, group of children, or group of youth should ever be alone with a single worker.

2. One child caregiver will be assigned for each 3 children under the age of 2; One caregiver for each 6 children over 2 – 11. One adult supervisor will be assigned for each 8 youth, junior and senior high grades, gender specific.

F. Space:

1. The host church is responsible for providing adequate space for the number and ages of children registered as of 1 week before the event. The space should:

a. Be clean, including floors clean enough for children to crawl on.

b. Have a consistent, comfortable temperature and ventilation.

c. Be secure (out of traffic areas with no exits to outside areas).

d. Consist of rooms with visible access and subject to observation.

e. Contain cribs with clean linens, facilities for changing diapers, sanitary toys appropriate to various age groups.

f. Have access to bathrooms.

g. Have access to telephone; list of emergency numbers.

- h. Contain a First Aid kit.
- i. Display information about a fire escape route, location of fire alarm, extinguisher, etc.
- j. Electrical outlets should be covered.

2. Outdoor and Off-site play during meetings:

If outdoor space is used, it should be completely and securely enclosed, and contain only that equipment specifically designed for the children who might use it. Prior parental permission must be obtained for any activity outside the specifically identified space.

3. Log:

a. Presbytery will provide a sign-in sheet and log to be used for any child left in its care. This log must be completed by an adult leaving the child in care, and will state clearly who may pick up child. The caregiver will release a child only to a person whose name is on the log.

b. Any time a child leaves the childcare area, an adult must sign the log. At mealtimes, the adult must sign the child out and sign in again at the conclusion of the meal.

4. Provision of food if necessary.

Neither the church nor the caregiver is responsible for providing food for children unless specifically requested by Presbytery. If a child is to eat with the adult group, it is the parent/guardian's responsibility to accompany the child and supervise the child during the meal hour.

G. Instructions for persons seeking Child Care

1. Presbytery requires at least 1 week advance notification of any need for childcare, including the name, age, special needs, and the time child-care is needed.

2. If a child becomes ill or other plans change, a responsible adult should advise Presbytery that childcare will not be needed. Adults are urged NOT to bring children who are ill or have been exposed to a contagious disease.

3. When a child is brought to the caregiver, the adult must complete a registration form including any special information about allergies, preferences,

and special needs. The adult must also advise the caregiver where he/she will be sitting during the meeting.

4. Be specific about naps, snacks, meals, toileting, illnesses.
5. Designated adults should pick up children promptly according to arrangements made. If the caregiver requests that the adult leave the meeting for special circumstances, adults are expected to comply without question.
6. Parents are expected to supply special snacks, meals, etc.
7. Objects left in the childcare room (diaper bags, stuffed toy, blanket) should be clearly marked with child's name

#### IV. Policies for Trips and Overnight Events for Children and Youth

The following apply for any trip, overnight event or sleepover planned by the Presbytery or any of its units or workgroups.

A. For groups planning trips or overnight events for youth, including those seeking Partnership Funds:

1. Every group planning a trip or overnight event should appoint an Event Coordinator. If the Event Coordinator is planning to go on the trip, an At-Home Coordinator must also be named.
2. The Event Coordinator should assure that all necessary permission slips and leader applications are completed, and that training requirements are met.

B. Every youth attending a Presbytery sponsored or partnered event, trip, retreat or overnight meeting, must complete a Permission Slip/Medical Release Form and submit it to the Event Coordinator prior to the beginning of the event. The Permission Slip will be retained by the At-Home Coordinator, with a copy given to a leader who is going on the trip.

C. Anyone assigned to work as a leader with youth must meet all qualifications stated in Section III D above. (If deemed adequate, documented Child Protection Training completed in other settings may be substituted for Presbytery-conducted training.)

D. Anyone assigned the responsibility for driving one or more youth, regardless of the distance involved, must meet the following requirements:

1. Be over age 25.
2. Provide a copy of a current driver's license.
3. Complete the Driver's Covenant, and a Sexual Misconduct Release Form.
4. Attest to a safe driving record.

E. Any vehicle used to transport children or youth, regardless of the distance, must meet the following requirements:

1. Vehicle must be legally registered and have adequate current insurance.
2. One or more persons must be authorized to drive the vehicle when transporting children or youth. No other person may drive the vehicle while in use by the sponsoring group.
3. The vehicle is to be driven only to and from site, or on trips for which permission has been granted.
4. Only the number of passengers for which the vehicle is designed may be transported.
5. Under no circumstances will an adult be asked to drive alone with a single unrelated child or youth.

F. Requirements of Supervising Leaders

1. The ratio of youth/leaders standard is 8 youth/1 adult, gender specific.
2. All leaders must complete training in Child Protection Policies before serving.
3. At no time will one adult and one youth be isolated from the group.  
At no time will a child or youth be left behind alone or with one adult.
4. Any injury, action, illness or mishap that takes place while a child or youth is under the supervision of a staff member or volunteer must be reported by the Event Coordinator to the At-Home Coordinator or a staff member within 24 hours of the incident.

V. Reporting

Any inappropriate behavior, observed, suspected or experienced, or any accusation or suspicion of child abuse or maltreatment will be reported as outlined in the Presbytery

Sexual Misconduct Policy, which includes immediate reporting to the appropriate civil authorities. Where appropriate, it will also be reported to the Clerk of Session of the host church, the director of the campsite or the sponsoring organization.

9/04