

Youth & Children's Ministries Policies for



First Presbyterian Church, Stanley, NC

Introduction to the Youth & Children Protection Plan:

We should have the attitude of JESUS. The gospels give three important instructions to us defining our relationship with children:

1. To WELCOME the children/youth.
 "Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives Him who sent me." – Jesus (Matthew 9:48a)
2. To PROTECT the children/youth.
 "...but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea." – Jesus (Matthew 18:1-10)
3. To allow children/youth FREE ACCESS TO JESUS CHRIST.
 "And they were bringing children to Him that He might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, He was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." And he took them in His arms and blessed them, laying His hands on them." (Mark 10:13-16)

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Goals for our Youth & Children Protection Plan:

We have been called to care for our children and youth and to honor the name of Christ. To this end, these policies have been developed to ensure a safe, loving environment where Jesus is glorified and enjoyed by all His people. While we rely ultimately on the sovereign protection of our Lord, we also recognize that He has called us to exercise wisdom and prudence in our care for His children. We have created these policies in order to enhance our ministries and protect our most vulnerable attendees as well as our church from harm.

Staff Leadership:

All **Staff & Sessional leaders** will complete a background check to serve in their positions.

Youth Ministry Coordinator:

The Youth Ministry Coordinator should be doctrinally sound, a mature Christian, committed to team ministry with a zeal for working with youth. The Coordinator will supplement and enhance the ministry of volunteer youth workers for our middle school and high school youth by

- Assisting in recruiting, training and supporting the volunteer youth leadership
- Organizing and/or participating in occasional special events for youth
- Seeking out inactive youth for assimilation into church life
- Developing and implementing strategies for discipling of youth
- Developing and implementing strategies for retaining older youth in active church participation
- Work within a team of individuals (known as the Youth Ministry Team) to create and maintain policies that will enhance our youth ministry
- Be in constant prayer for self, youth, leaders, parents and church
- Must submit the names of all of those who want to volunteer for the church year to the CE Committee/Session for approval before service can begin, as well as train and verify background check completion

Children's Ministry Coordinator:

This person should be doctrinally sound, a mature Christian, committed to team ministry with a zeal for working with children. The Coordinator will supplement and enhance the ministry of volunteer children's workers for our birth through 5th Grade students by

- Assisting in recruiting, training and supporting the volunteer children leadership
- Organizing and/or participating in occasional special events for children
- Seeking out inactive children and encouraging their families to attend
- Developing and implementing strategies for discipling of children through Image Bearers and Sunday School
- Work within a team of individuals (known as the Children's Ministry Team) to create and maintain policies, events, and practices that will enhance our children's ministry
- Be in constant prayer for self, youth, leaders, parents, and church

- Must submit the names of all of those who want to volunteer for the church year to the CE Committee/Session for approval before service can begin as well as train and verify background check completion

Volunteer Leadership in Youth & Children's Ministries:

Volunteer Leader Requirements:

- Defined as anyone who is volunteering in any capacity to spend time with our children/youth ages 0-18 years of age.
- A volunteer must be a member of FPC. (This will exclude temporary positions, such as a coach in Soar, as long as they are approved by the Ministry Coordinator, receive a full back ground check, and agree to abide by all policies and the Code of Conduct).
- They should be mature Christians with a love for young people.
- They should seek to establish a good rapport with all parents and youth/children, not favoring or showing preferential treatment to particular youth/children.
- Volunteers under the age of 21 must be paired with an adult leader at all times. There must also be a minimum of TWO adult leaders (defined as over the age of 21) at every event and in every area that youth/children are present.
- They should sign a Code of Conduct annually - indicating their knowledge of and agreement with FPC policies for youth and children's ministry safety.
- Background checks (as determined by the Safety & Security Committee) will be completed for all children/youth volunteer leaders (who are 18 years or older) before service can begin and every third year afterward. Background check results will only be delivered to Pastor Steve Jessen. If discussion for approval needs to take place, he will do it with a small group of Elders.
- They will submit to any decisions made by the Youth Coordinator or Children's Ministry Coordinator where safety is concerned. If there are questions to be raised, there are proper channels for that afterwards.
- Attend annual training session (before each new year begins) and make every effort to attend any training that will be promoted throughout the year.

Guidelines for the Safety and Protection of our Young:

The staff and volunteer leaders are responsible for the supervision of children/youth at all times during ministry activities.

There must always be two adults (related adults count as one adult) present when supervising one or more students (i.e. small groups, etc.). This may be one adult who is paired with a younger leader. (This excludes interactions between immediate family members.)

As much as possible, ministry with youth/children ought to occur in highly visible areas.

Respect, safety and appropriate boundaries are the guiding principles for physical contact between youth ministry leaders and students. Some positive and appropriate forms of affection for young people are:

- Pats on the shoulder or back, brief hugs
- High-fives, fist bumps
- Verbal praise
- Arm around shoulders
- Holding hands during group prayer

Some inappropriate forms of affection are:

- Lengthy embraces/full body hugs
- Wrestling, Tickling, Piggyback rides, kissing
- Showing affection when alone with a young person or in isolated/private areas
- Touching buttocks, chests, genital areas, or thighs
- Inappropriate comments that relate to physique or body development
- Flirtatious or seductive looks
- Sleeping in bed with youth
- Any inappropriate or unwelcomed electronic contact

Consuming, using, possessing or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while working with youth or children is prohibited. This includes all church affiliated events, including, informal, and off-campus activities, that can be associated in some way with the church.

All forms of tobacco are prohibited from our campus (and on any church sponsored activities), including smoking, smokeless tobacco and vaping.

Profanity, inappropriate jokes and media, sharing intimate details of one's personal life in the presence of youth is prohibited.

Discipline:

Church Staff and Volunteer Leaders are prohibited from using physical punishment in any way for behavior management of children and youth. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting or any other physical force. Physical force may only be used to stop a behavior that may cause immediate harm to the individual or to a child, youth, or others. If you are in need of discipline help, please contact the Children's Ministry Coordinator, Youth Ministry Coordinator, or your immediate supervisor quickly.

Providing Transportation:

When driving, all traffic laws and seatbelt rules are to be obeyed (including on the bus per state law). The number of passengers in a vehicle is limited to the number of seat belts installed.

Parental permission must be obtained prior to transporting a youth to any location. This can be done on an annual basis with a form covering all events for the upcoming church year.

Transportation will be directly to the destination in caravan style. Emergency bathroom stops should be cleared with group leader.

Youth will not be allowed to drive a volunteer's car.

Youth are not to provide transportation for other youth without prior permission from both sets of parents (this excludes sibling transportation).

Volunteers are never to be alone in a car with any youth under the age of 18 (this excludes immediate family members and sibling transportation).

Anyone driving students for ministry activities (defined as leaving the church property, going to a destination, and returning to church property) must be at least 21 years old and have had a valid driver's license for 3 years.

Volunteers may not provide transportation after midnight, unless it is a youth special event with prior approval. The exception to this rule would be in a medical emergency situation.

Any vehicle used to transport youth/children should be registered through the church office and must be covered for full liability through an insurance company.

Consequence of Violations:

Any violation of this policy or the Code of Conduct will be reviewed by the appropriate Ministry Coordinator and the Elder assigned to the ministry. Violations will also be reported to the Session. Consequences may include dismissal from service position and loss of volunteer status and if actions are in violation of the law, proper authorities will be notified and legal action pursued.

Ineligibility Guidelines:

Policy requires that all persons working in and with the infants through 12th graders have a background check conducted. The background check process includes, but is not limited to, Nationwide criminal history, reference checks, personal history checks regarding experience, physical ability, employment, credit, residence stability and moral character. First Presbyterian Church of Stanley has the right to qualify or disqualify applicants based on the circumstances and findings of all background checks, and for any other reason deemed appropriate.

Cleared background checks will not need review.

In the event the background check, reference check or personal history check reveals a criminal/civil action conviction(s), the review will begin with a subcommittee which will include an FPC Pastor, a Deacon representative, and an Elder representative. This subcommittee will have the authority to immediately disqualify any volunteer/staff candidate if any of the following criteria are applicable:

1. Any sexual related crimes, whether or not the crime is against a child.
2. Registered sexual offender.
3. Any form of child abuse crimes, whether or not sexual related.
4. Conviction of assault, inflicting bodily injury, or domestic assault, whether or not against a child.

5. Any criminal action against the applicant that resulted in a guilty verdict including: sexual crimes, crimes against children, assault, and domestic (50b).
 6. Any PENDING felony or misdemeanor charges, including but not limited to: sexual crimes, crimes against children, drug related crimes, assault, domestic (50b) or alcohol related charges.
 7. Any criminal action against the application that resulted in a guilty verdict within the Last TEN years including: drug related charges and alcohol charges.
 8. Any pending trial and/or conviction for the sale/delivery/providing of alcoholic beverages, tobacco products and/or vaping products to minors or persons under the legal age of possession (21 years for alcohol, 18 years for tobacco and vaping products) within the last TEN years.
 9. Any pending trial and/or conviction for the possession, sale and/or distribution of legal or illegal drugs or narcotics within the last TEN years.
 10. Any pending charges or convictions of contributing to the delinquency of a minor in the last TEN years.
 11. Any issued restraining orders.
 12. Any involuntary mental health commitments.
13. Any known mental disorders, moral character issues and/or reputation concerns that would be considered a hindrance in the ability to perform ministry based upon Biblical principles.

In consultation with the Safety and Security Committee the Subcommittee can recommend to the Session that exceptions be made to the above criteria and approval granted in certain cases. Final determination for eligibility in these cases will rest on the Session with documentation in the minutes of reason for exception.



Youth Ministry specific policies:

**This section is still under development. Once a Youth Ministry Team has been formed, and a staff person hired, there will be more updates to this.*

Goals:

Our goal is to reach every young person for Christ and equip them to serve. We want each one to feel welcomed and loved in our church family. We desire to protect them and provide multiple opportunities for them to grow in their faith and to explore and use the gifts God has given them.

Counseling:

When in a counseling role with a youth, always protect confidentiality except in areas which demand parental involvement (such as sexual immorality, addictions, harm to self or others, eating disorders, etc.). When in doubt, consult the Youth Ministry Coordinator.

Relationships between Youth Leaders/Youth:

Staff and volunteers may not date or be romantically involved with a youth who is younger than 18 years old.

Mentorship Age Restriction:

When in small groups, mentorship will be restricted for those volunteers who are under the age of 21. Volunteers aged 18-21 will be allowed to mentor the small groups of their own sex who are in middle school only and will be directly supervised by an adult leader at all times. High School age student small groups must be mentored by two adults who are 22 years or older.

Electronic Usage at church sponsored events:

Be mindful of the content of any portable electronic device, social networking pages, or other electronic media that might be accessible to any youth.

**Children's Ministry specific policies:**

Goals: At First Presbyterian of Stanley, we strive to grow every child to become like Christ. We do this by LOVING the children who are brought to us. We keep them safe and teach them sound Biblical Doctrine. We do this by KNOWING who Christ is and who He wants your child to become. Christ values your child at whatever stage of development that they are in, and so do we! We teach our children to LIVE for Christ every day. We pray and seek out activities and lessons that will GROW your child in their understanding of themselves, others, creation, the church, and God.

Sunday School exception to the two-adult rule:

If a class during the Sunday School hour must be taught with only one adult, the door to the classroom is to remain open, the Coordinator notified, and someone put in charge of keeping a check on the situation. This would only be allowed with veteran teachers whom prior permission has been granted by the Session, the CE Committee, and the Children's Ministry Team.

Youth Assistance in Children's Ministry:

There will be an occasional opportunity for our Youth to assist in a classroom. This should be done sparingly, giving the youth an opportunity to attend the events that are age appropriate for them. If a youth requests to serve on a regular basis, that will need to go before both the Youth & Children's Ministry Teams, as well as the CE Committee.

Youth are encouraged to assist in temporary assignments like nursery and VBS. We love their help! We do ask that each person under the age of 18 be partnered with a specific adult at all times. This adult will be responsible for making sure the policies are followed.

Children's Ministry Illness Policy:

We all want our kiddos to share...but when it comes to illness, we want to keep any sharing to a minimum! So we ask that parents help us out by not bringing a sick child to church youth programs. Doing so creates the risk of sharing the illness with other children, and it's also rough for the sick child who'd be better off resting in the comfort of his or her own home. It's also important to remember that we have children and adults among us who are immune-suppressed and cannot fight off illnesses as easily as normally healthy people. Wondering whether or not your child is too sick to participate? The answer is probably 'yes' if the child displays one or more of the following symptoms:

- fever above 100 degrees Fahrenheit during the past 24 hours
- signs of possible severe illness such as uncontrolled coughing, difficulty breathing, wheezing, persistent crying or lethargy
- diarrhea, such as loose or runny stools including a stool that runs out of a diaper
- vomiting (once a child has vomited, most health providers recommend or require that the child not return to school or daycare for a minimum of 24 hours)
- any rash, especially one accompanied by a fever or behavior change
- any communicable disease (in this case, please notify the church so that parents of exposed children can be alerted)

Nursery Check-in and Pick-up:

Children who are 0-3 years old should be checked in by parents at our nursery door. They will sign up on the sheet listed with their child's name, and parents name. If at that time there are custody issues or pick up instructions, they should be written next to the children's information. Each parent will then be assigned a pager and instructed on what to do if their pager is activated. Any dietary issues should be noted as well as information provided about the best way to comfort your child.

Parents (or other designated and prior approved adults) are expected to drop off and pick up our babies/toddlers. Volunteers should check to make sure appropriate person is picking them up before releasing child. When in doubt, please page the Children's Ministry Coordinator who will always have pager number 8.

Nursery Safety:

A child should not be removed from the nursery room for any reason other than when he or she is picked up by the caregiver or to use the bathroom. If a child is fussy or in need of something outside the classroom, please page the Children's Ministry Coordinator.

Diaper Changing/Potty Training Safety:

Below are our standard policies and procedures regarding changing diapers/potty training.

- Only female adult volunteers may change diapers/assist in wiping
- Diapers are only changed in classrooms with children 3 years and under
- Diapers are only to be changed on the changing stations
- NEVER leave a child unsupervised while on the changing table
- Use a fresh piece of wax paper on the table with each diaper change
- Change the diaper quickly and efficiently, providing as much dignity and privacy to each child as possible
- Check each child frequently to see if their diaper is soiled
- Use diapers and materials the parents have supplied
- Spray down the changing table and clean before and after each shift, or after a particularly nasty diaper

Soiled Clothes - Remove immediately and place in plastic bag. (Ask another adult/assistant to help if needed. Remember never leave a child alone on the changing station.) Next, check the child's diaper bag to see if extra clothes have been provided and place the bagged soiled clothes in the proper diaper bag. If there are no extra clothes provided, please page the Children's Ministry Coordinator who has a collection of clothing that may be appropriate. Be sure and inform the parents of the incident. NEVER use negative language to the child or parent when an accident occurs.

Diaper Rash - If when changing a child, you notice the diapering area is oozing, bleeding or concerning in any way, please page parents immediately. Note: staff and volunteers are not allowed to apply any ointments, powders, or creams of any type to children.

Alterations to Policy:

Original approval by Session, July 2017

Session added that all Staff/Deacons/Elders must receive background checks – November 16, 2017

Session added "Ineligibility Guidelines" – May 17, 2018

Session updated "Ineligibility Guidelines" – February 21, 2019

Code of Conduct

for all Youth & Children's Ministry Staff & Volunteer Leaders

Statement of Purpose: Our goal is to protect the precious little ones that Jesus welcomes with open arms (Mark 10:14). Children and teens are vulnerable and need protection. As adults it is our task to ensure that children and youth are safe by abiding by the following code of conduct.

Accountability: When it comes to protecting children, we all ought to be accountable to one another for our actions. It is our individual and collective choices that will determine whether our church is a safe environment for young people. We honor the Lord when we hold each other accountable for the purpose of protecting children made in his image. Whenever children are present, two unrelated adults must be present to ensure accountability. Every ministry activity ought to be open and interruptible. All adults, whether an employee or volunteer, and all student volunteers are subject to this code of conduct. All Safety/Security Policies set forth in our church will be adhered to.

Visibility: As much as possible, ministry with children and youth ought to occur in highly visible areas. Observability is a key factor in minimizing the risk of abuse. This means utilizing open spaces, classrooms with big windows, and avoiding isolated areas.

Restricting One Adult-One Child Situations: Most abuse happens in one adult-one child situations. We strive to eliminate all of these situations because they are such high risk. This does not mean there cannot be any private conversation between an adult and a child. However, these conversations need to take place in an open and observable area. There may be opportunities where one adult is in a classroom. At this time the door will remain open and someone should be in the hallway. This should be limited and approved by the Youth Ministry Coordinator, Children's Ministry Coordinator or CE Committee. For our purposes, any related adults shall count as one adult. (Immediately family members of volunteers are excluded from this restriction when with a sibling or parent.)

Appropriate and Inappropriate Touch: By God's design, appropriate touch is an important way for us to understand that we are loved. Appropriate touch is observable by other adults. A hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors. Touch should be welcomed by the child/teen. Any resistance by the child/teen should be immediately respected. Because healthy, caring touch is valuable to children/youth but unhealthy touch is abusive, the following guidelines apply:

- Touch shall be open rather than secretive.
- Touch should show care for the child/teen rather than meet a need in the adult.
- Touch should be age- and developmentally appropriate.
- Touch should always communicate respect for the child/teen.
- Touch should immediately cease if the child is in any way uncomfortable. Adults and other youth or children should not hit, slap, pinch, push, hold against their will, or otherwise assault children.

The following signs of affection are generally appropriate within the guidelines above:

- Verbal praise
- Brief hugs
- High fives and fist bumps
- Pats on the shoulder, back, or head

For smaller children, the following are generally appropriate with other adults around and within the guidelines above:

- Touching hands, shoulders, and arms
- Hugs
- Holding them when others are present

The following behaviors between employees or volunteers and children are inappropriate, or they may at least be perceived as inappropriate. Please refrain from:

- Touching buttocks, chests, genital areas, or thighs
- Full body hugs
- Kissing
- Tickling

- Showing affection in isolated areas or when alone with a child
- Sleeping in bed with a child
- Inappropriate comments that relate to physique or body development
- Flirtatious or seductive looks
- Showing sexually suggestive content or playing sexually suggestive games
- Any form of affection that is unwanted by the child/teen
- Any behavior that could be interpreted as sexual in nature

Adults shall monitor each other, youth, and older children in the area of physical contact, helping each other follow these guidelines and pointing out anything that could be misinterpreted.

Appropriate and Inappropriate Speech: Words are a wonderful way to build one another up. Words can give encouragement and impart grace to the hearer (Ephesians 4:29). We must speak words that give life, such as praise, positive reinforcement, and speaking the truth in love. At the same time, we must avoid words that harm. We will all commit to refrain from inappropriate verbal interaction such as: shaming, belittling, name calling, using harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate a child, cursing, or making derogatory remarks about a child/teen. Inappropriate verbal interaction also includes telling off-color or sexual jokes, making sexually suggestive comments, telling inappropriate secrets, or inappropriately discussing sexual encounters or desires with children.

Adults shall avoid favoring or showing preferential treatment to particular children or youth.

Discipline: Discipline ought to be corrective and not punitive. We do not permit anyone other than a parent to administer corporal punishment to a child. Furthermore, discipline should never include yelling, shaming, or in any way belittling a child. If there is a serious incident that requires discipline, it is always wise to involve the parent.

Technology: Any employee or volunteer working with children or youth is responsible to ensure that any technology is used appropriately. We must monitor any use of phones, the internet, TV, and movies when children are in our care. Technology can quickly be turned from a proper use into something that is used for exploitation. All pornography and any other sexually explicit or suggestive content is strictly prohibited. Any bullying, online or otherwise, will not be tolerated and should be reported to parents and appropriate staff. Adults should refrain from

developing a relationship with a child or youth primarily over electronic media (text, IM, etc.), since this is not open and observable. Any sexual conversation between an adult and a child over electronic media is abusive and is strictly prohibited.

Rules Specific to Bathroom Use (Children’s Ministry): All main bathroom doors will remain OPEN during children’s ministry events. No adult should enter the bathroom alone with a child who is capable of completing the process on their own.

Elementary children should preferably be sent to the bathroom in groups of at least two or three. If a child is potty training, an adult should ensure the bathroom is safe before allowing such a small child to enter alone. Encourage the child to go on their own. If the child needs assistance, make sure the door is open as is modestly possible. When assisting, allow for accountability while respecting the privacy of the child as much as possible.

Rules Specific to the Nursery: Small children are extremely vulnerable. We must ensure there is good visibility and adequate staff and volunteers to supervise the nursery. We encourage women to change diapers unless the man is the father of the child. When changing diapers, inform another nursery worker, and change the diaper quickly and with respect for the child. Diapers should only be changed in designated areas where we can maintain the boundaries of openness and observability.

Supervision: Regular supervision helps reduce risk. Every activity is interruptible and we are all accountable to one another. Program supervisors shall frequently and randomly stop in to observe the nursery, classrooms, and other areas where children and adults are together.

I, _____, acknowledge that these practices are for the protection of myself, the children/youth I am responsible for, the church, the community and the Gospel. I agree to abide by all restrictions and suggestions in this Code of Conduct as well as any and all policies in the First Presbyterian Youth & Children Safety Policy Manual. If at any time, I feel like I cannot fulfill the requirements put upon me by my service position, I will immediately inform the Ministry Coordinator. I also agree to be held accountable to these safety standards as well as hold my fellow co-laborers accountable.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Ministry Coordinator/Supervisory Signature: _____