

**POLICIES FOR
SAFEGUARDING
OUR CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

*STATE COLLEGE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
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I. Purpose

To express God's love of children and provide for their personal welfare, State College Presbyterian Church (SCPC) seeks to be a place of safety. Our goal, in response to Biblical Mandates and societal needs, is to maintain a safe, secure, and nurturing place, where children may grow, and where employee and volunteer teachers and leaders are equipped to minister to the needs of children and youth. As a church, it is our religious, moral and ethical obligation to take steps to prevent and respond to child abuse and neglect in any form. In that light, this policy is adopted to set and enforce behavior consistent with Scripture; to maintain a safe environment; to provide procedures for investigation and response; and to define a procedure by which employees and volunteers are recruited and supervised when working with children and youth.

II. Theological Affirmations

A. *Children ~ A Gift of God*

We believe that ~

All children are important, for they are God's gift to us, given for our care and love.

We strive to provide a healthy, safe, clean loving place in which children can thrive, and ultimately know that they are loved by God through us.

We believe that we are called to love one another and to be the family of God.

Scripture tells us to:

- * value the worth of all children, helping them develop healthy self-esteem and identity (Genesis 1:27; Matthew 19:14)
- * value the diversity that God has created (Genesis 1:31; Galatians 3:28)
- * and stand against injustice and oppression (Micah 6:8)

SCPC is to be a place where the children and youth are cared for, taught love and respect by example, and are introduced to the love of God and Jesus through songs, stories, and interaction with the care givers.

It is a ministry overflowing with rewarding hugs and smiles from children.

B. *Confessional Mandates*

The moral law doth forever bind all, as well-justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof, and that not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority, of God Creator who gave it. Neither doth Christ in the gospel any way dissolve, but much strengthens, this obligation. **The Westminster Confession of Faith (6:105)**

Q. Where is the moral law summarily comprehended?

A. The moral law is summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments.

- Q. What is the sum of the Ten Commandments?
A. The sum of the Ten Commandments is: to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind; and our neighbor as ourselves. **The Shorter Catechism (7.041, 7.042)**

In a broken and fearful world the Spirit gives us courage
to pray without ceasing,
to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior,
to unmask idolatries in Church and culture,
to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,
and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.

A Brief Statement of Faith (lines 65-71)

C. *Book of Order Mandates*

The great ends of the church are the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind; the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God; the maintenance of divine worship; the preservation of the truth; the promotion of social righteousness; and the exhibition of the Kingdom of God to the world.

Book of Order (G.1200)

Calls on the church and its members at all levels to advocate and support the development and implementation of public and private policies for the needs and rights of children, built on a prevention investment strategy aimed at meeting the needs of all children and families for . . . protection from abuse and exploitation.

The 203rd General Assembly (1991)

III. Definitions

1. Adult is anyone 18 years of age or older.
2. Child Care Giver/Youth Leader is any paid staff or volunteer who has been called by SCPC staff to work with children and youth at SCPC.
3. Mature Adult is anyone 25 years of age or older.
4. Minor is a child under 18 years of age.
5. Paid program staff includes the following: Director of Education and Program, Associates in Ministry, Director of Music & Worship, Stay and Play Director, part-time care givers, and anyone that has been hired by the Personnel Committee.
6. Supervisor is either a volunteer or paid staff person who is responsible for a program and the persons who lead/teach in the programs.
7. Mandated Reporter is the paid program staff who is responsible for contacting the Child Abuse Hotline with any suspected abuse.
8. Child Abuse - the term child abuse shall mean the following:
 - a) any recent act or failure to act by a perpetrator which causes non-accidental serious physical injury to a minor.

- b) an act or failure to act by a perpetrator which causes non-accidental serious mental injury to or sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a minor.
 - c) any recent act, failure to act or series of such acts or failures to act by a perpetrator which creates an imminent risk of serious physical or mental injury to or sexual abuse or exploitation of a minor.
 - d) serious physical neglect by a perpetrator constituting prolonged or repeated lack of supervision or failure to provide essentials of life, including adequate medical care, which endangers a child's life or development or impairs the child's functioning.
9. Child Sexual Misconduct of any person shall include, but not to be limited to, any contact or interaction between a person who is a minor and an adult, when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult person or third party. The behavior may or may not involve touching. It includes but is not limited to: offensive, obscene, or suggestive language or conduct; unacceptable visual contact; touching or fondling which is injurious to the physical or emotional health of the minor. Sexual behavior between a minor and an adult is always considered forced whether or not consented to by the child. The upper age limit for a minor is that set by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

IV. POLICIES

All paid and volunteer individuals who work with children and youth are to maintain the integrity of professional relationships and ministerial relationships at all times. Child abuse of any kind is not only a violation of the principles set forth in Scripture, but of these relationships. **Child abuse in any form is not permissible and will not be tolerated and will be reported promptly to appropriate officials.**

A. Hiring and Recruitment

- 1. All paid employees of SCPC must have a PA Child Abuse History Clearance and Criminal Record Check on file with Personnel.
- 2. Recruitment of all volunteers - persons may volunteer or be called, with final approval of the volunteer being made by the appropriate board or unit.
- 3. The Personnel Unit or Head of Staff reserves the right to require a criminal record check and a PA Child Abuse History Clearance for any volunteer.
- 4. All supervisors and paid employees must read and understand the State College Presbyterian Church safety policies and ensure that all volunteers and employees in their program understand and follow the policies and procedures.

B. Guidelines for Employees and Volunteers of Children and Youth

- 1. Two employees or volunteers should be present at all times when children and/or youth are present.

SCPC encourages the following ratios to be followed in all programs involving children and youth:

Infant: 8 children/2 adults
2-3's: 12 children/2 adults
4-5's: 20 children/2 adults
K-5th Gr: 25 children/2 adults
6th-12th Gr: 30 youth/2 adults

- a. If for some reason, these ratios are not possible, the supervisor must be contacted and should frequent the room.
 - b. If the activity or program that is being planned is active in nature, it is recommended that additional leaders be present for a safer, more enriching experience.
2. Only employees or volunteers, parents, or individuals designated by parents, are allowed in the classroom unless given prior approval by the Director.
 3. Each church program should have a policy regarding authorized pick up procedures.
 4. Children up to and including the third grade level need visual supervision at all times.
 5. Employees or volunteers should obtain verbal or written consent of the child's or youth's parent/guardian prior to spending time with the child in a non-program setting.
 6. All employees or volunteers shall report suspected child abuse in any form according to the requirements contained in these **Policies for Safeguarding Our Children and Youth.**

C. Discipline

1. All teachers of children and youth should attend teacher training sessions, and any adult classes/programs when offered. Many of our adult education classes are being recorded on cassette tape for anyone to check out.
2. No physical punishment shall be used with any child in our care. Some children may need to take a break and calm down, while others may need a reminder touch on the shoulder to pay attention.
3. Leaders should be responsible for the comfort of all those participating and should respond to behaviors which make others uncomfortable or feel unsafe.
4. If a child's or youth's behavior becomes disruptive, the teacher or leaders should inform the parents and then follow up with the staff member responsible.

D. Emergencies

1. Church School Evacuation Plan
The first and only responsibility of teachers, leaders and care givers is to see that all children, youth, and adults are moved safely to the Post Office truck parking lot. All persons in the church building will meet in the Post office truck parking lot for further instruction. Children are to stay with their teachers until parents arrive. Some rooms for younger children are equipped with blankets in case of evacuation during the winter months. Take these instead of searching for coats.
2. If there is a fire or other emergency, immediately pull the alarm system (located in the hall) and evacuate the class.
3. It is preferable for teachers to have with them a list of all students present in the classroom (which is another reason why taking roll is so important). Check to make sure ALL children have arrived safely at the Post Office parking lot.
4. TORNADO
In case of a tornado warning, all classes should go to the lowest level of the church building to sit on the floor in the main hallway, away from any windows.

E. Special Programs

1. Counseling Children and Youth
When counseling children or youth, the employee or volunteer must notify another adult who is a leader in the program or a staff person, as to where the counseling will take place. The door to any room where counseling is conducted should remain open. If possible, the employee or volunteer should speak to a child or youth in a public area, but out of public hearing (i.e.: a corner of a classroom filled with other children or youth).
2. Overnight Activities
 - a. Adult leaders must be present at a ratio of 1:8 for each gender. Leaders 18-24 years of age must be working with a Mature Adult Leader.
 - b. Each participant must have turned in a completed parental permission form.
 - c. Leaders must have all participants Completed Medical Release and Information forms during the program.
 - d. Subject to leader's approval, youth are permitted to bring one non-member friend, who must have all forms completed and returned to leader.
 - e. Adults must be on the same level of the building with youth at all times.
 - f. At least two adult leaders are to be awake while youth are awake. (One must be a mature adult leader)
 - g. Private sleeping areas must be utilized by each gender, with at least two leaders of the same gender in each area. If for some reason these arrangements are not possible, the supervisor must ensure safe sleeping arrangements are provided.

Transportation

- a. All drivers must be Mature Adults. If there is a special situation where a driver is only an Adult Leader, written permission must be obtained from Session and/or Head of Staff and from parents.
- b. At no time should a child or youth be alone in a vehicle with one employee or volunteer, unless parent/guardian permission is given in writing or verbally.
- c. All children and youth who will be transported by employees and/or volunteers must return a completed parental written permission form.
- d. Available safety belts must be worn by all passengers and drivers.
- e. There should be a First Aid Kit in each vehicle where children and/or youth are transported for overnight trips.

V. Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse

A. Procedures

If an employee or volunteer of State College Presbyterian Church suspects that any form of child abuse has occurred during Church-sponsored activities, either on or off Church premises, he/she shall report the incident immediately to the Pastor or other appropriate representative of the Church. If a parent or witness suspects that any form of child abuse has occurred during Church-sponsored activities, the parent or witness shall report the incident immediately to a Pastor or other appropriate representative of the Church. In addition to a verbal report, the reporting party will be assisted by the Pastor or other appropriate staff in completing a Confidential Report of Suspected Child Abuse. The report shall be made as soon as possible but no more than (24) twenty-four hours from the time the suspicion arose.

B. Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse to Appropriate Authorities

Upon receipt of a complaint, the Pastor or other appropriate representative of the Church, will report to appropriate authorities the suspected child abuse according to the Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse to Appropriate Authorities or as otherwise required by law. Additionally, the Mandated Reporter shall immediately report the suspected incident to the Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-932-0313).

C. Investigation of Complaints

1. Reported to Law Enforcement

Once suspected child abuse is reported to law enforcement or other investigative agency outside of the Church, the Church will not conduct a separate investigation but will await the completion of the law enforcement investigation. The Pastor and/or other appropriate staff will cooperate as needed with the agency conducting the investigation. Pending the outcome of the law enforcement investigation, the accused employee or volunteer will not be permitted to continue working or volunteering with children or youth in any Church-sponsored function.

2. Not Reported to Law Enforcement

Upon receipt of a complaint of suspected child abuse that is not required to be reported to law enforcement, the Pastor or other appropriate representative of the Church, will schedule a meeting with the alleged victim and his/her family. No less than two other representatives of the Church should be present to take notes regarding the alleged abuse.

The Pastor, or other appropriate representative of the Church, shall schedule a meeting with person accused of the abuse. No less than two representatives of the Church must be present at a meeting with the accused and should take notes regarding the accusations of abuse.

The Pastor, or other appropriate representative of the Church, shall interview witnesses and diligently and thoroughly investigate the alleged abuse.

Timely and appropriate notice of the alleged abuse shall be provided to the Church's insurance carrier in accordance with applicable reporting/notification requirements of the insurance carrier.

The Pastor, the Personnel Unit, and Members of Session shall determine whether the accused person should be suspended. If the Pastor determines immediate action is necessary, he/she may temporarily suspend the accused person until the Pastor can consult with the Personnel Unit and Members of Session. The employee or volunteer will not be permitted to work with children or youth at any Church-sponsored function.

All child abuse allegations shall be confidential, except as to carry out the requirements of these **Policies for Safeguarding Children and Youth** and to comply with reporting requirements under Pennsylvania law and the Church's insurance carriers. The Church shall maintain all records regarding allegations of child abuse. All records will be securely stored by the Pastor to maintain confidentiality.

D. Counseling for Victims and Families

The Pastor or other appropriate representative of the Church should offer to arrange any Pastoral counseling for the victim and his/her family. If the victim and his/her family choose counseling outside of the Church, the involved Pastor should provide information of qualified professionals to the victim and his/her family. If the victim and his/her family have financial concerns regarding the ability to pay a professional, the involved Pastor should provide a list of professionals who set fees based on a client's ability to pay.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT FORM

State College Presbyterian Church
132 West Beaver Avenue
State College, PA 16801
(814) 238-2422

Reason for report: _____

Date of incident: _____ Time: _____

Name of Reporter: _____ Class _____

Exact location of incident: _____

Name(s) of Child(ren) _____

Briefly describe what happened: _____

What action did you take? _____

Has the incident been resolved? _____ yes _____ no

Explain: _____

Were there any witnesses to the incident and/or initial report? _____ yes _____ no

Names: _____

Signatures of witnesses (if possible):

Name (print): _____ Signature _____

Name (print): _____ Signature _____

Name (print): _____ Signature _____

Report submitted to: _____

Report submitted by (print): _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Program _____

Year _____

STATEMENT OF INTENT

I, _____,
have received the “Policies for Safeguarding our Children and Youth” of the State
College Presbyterian Church.

I agree to read and comply with these policies prior to beginning or continuing my
involvement with children and youth at the State College Presbyterian Church.

Signature _____ Date _____