

**Child and Youth Safety Policy
First Presbyterian Church (Ann Arbor)**

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION 2
PURPOSE: 2
DEFINITION OF VOLUNTEERS: 2
REQUIREMENTS OF EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS IN THE CHILDREN AND YOUTH
MINISTRIES:..... 3
CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES 3
CHILD AND YOUTH VOLUNTEER APPLICATION: 9
CHILD AND YOUTH VOLUNTEER APPLICATION SHORT FORM 12
PERMISSION TO OBTAIN A BACKGROUND CHECK..... 14

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE:

First Presbyterian Church (Ann Arbor) is a spiritual community that takes seriously its responsibility to provide a safe and nurturing environment for children and youth who participate in our ministries. This policy statement covers the obligations of church employees and volunteers who work with children and/or youth. All employees and volunteers of First Presbyterian Church (Ann Arbor) must comply with Parts 1 and 2 of the "Child and Youth Safety Policy," and complete the appropriate application form(s) in Part 3.

All are encouraged to participate fully in the lives and ministry of children and youth. However, the church has an overriding obligation to safeguard all children and youth under its care from abuse and neglect. The following, (1)"Requirements of Employees and Volunteers in the Children and Youth Ministries," (2)"Child and Youth Safety Guidelines and Procedures," and (3)"The Child and Youth Ministry Application Form(s)," reflect the commitment of First Presbyterian Church to provide a safe environment for all children, youth, employees, and volunteers who participate in any church-sponsored activity or ministry. These three (3) parts plus the Introduction constitute the Child and Youth Safety Policy.

DEFINITION OF VOLUNTEERS:

For the purpose of this policy, "volunteers" are defined as those people who of their own free will offer to help lead or provide child care for the children and youth who come under the care of First Presbyterian Church (Ann Arbor). The term "volunteers" shall include but not be limited to all teachers, drivers, chaperones, childcare providers, hall monitors, youth sponsors, youth leaders and confirmation mentors who work with children and youth, as well as minors who volunteer their time as well (we often have youth volunteer with children).

For the purpose of this policy, childcare providers who are not regular paid employees of the church but are monetarily reimbursed for their occasional service shall be included in the term "volunteers."

All volunteers who are in leadership roles in these ministries are living out the vows taken when children are baptized to nurture our children and youth in the Christian faith. Every volunteer plays a key role in fostering spiritual development of children, youth and families in our church community.

REQUIREMENTS:

In order to provide a safe community for children, youth, and adults, the church requires all employees and volunteers to comply with the "Requirements of Employees and Volunteers in the Child and Youth Ministries" and the "Child and Youth Safety Guidelines and Procedures" adopted by the Session of this church. In doing so all employees and volunteers will be asked to complete the appropriate application (see Part 3). All employees and volunteers will review the attached "Guidelines and Procedures" at an orientation session or meet with the appropriate staff person. All employees and volunteers will be under the supervision of the respective professional staff persons.

All volunteers will be vetted by a professional company that does background checks. Any person who is currently under investigation for, or has been convicted of (1) criminal sexual conduct, (2) neglect of a child, or (3) physical abuse, will not be permitted to work or volunteer in any church-sponsored activity or program involving children or youth.

REVIEW:

The Faith Formation Committee shall review the Child and Youth Safety Policy and its implementation annually and report to Session.

REQUIREMENTS OF EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS IN THE CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRIES:

- A. At no time shall one employee or volunteer be allowed to be alone with a child or a youth. The only exception to this policy would be in a situation in which the contact occurs in a public place and other persons are in and out of the area where the employee or volunteer is working with the child or youth.
- B. All employees and children and youth volunteers must read the "Child and Youth Safety Policy" of this church; agree to it by completing and signing the appropriate application form(s), and attend an orientation session or meet with the appropriate staff person to review the "Guidelines and Procedures."
- C. If a person who wishes to volunteer with First Presbyterian's children or youth is a non-member, or has been a member for less than 6 months prior to volunteering, then they must complete and sign "The Child and Youth Safety Policy," and supply an additional reference. This is provided for in item four (4) of the Child and Youth Volunteer Application. They must also attend an orientation session or meet with the appropriate staff person to review the guidelines.
- D. All volunteers, whether members or non-members, must be active participants in the life of the church prior to volunteering their services to the children and youth ministries.
- E. Employees and volunteers are required to report immediately to their supervisors any suspicious or inappropriate behavior of suspected (1) criminal sexual conduct, (2) neglect of a child, or (3) physical abuse.
- F. All volunteers will be vetted by a professional company that does background checks.

CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

- I. On-site procedures
 - A. At no time shall one employee or volunteer be allowed to be alone with a child or a youth. The only exception to this policy would be in a situation in which the contact occurs in a public place and other persons are in and out of the area where the employee or volunteer is working with the child or youth.
 - B. Each floor containing classrooms for children (Up to 5th Grade) shall have a Hall Monitor present during Church School hours.
 - C. Restroom use: Pre-school age children will be accompanied to the restroom by the Hall monitor who will wait at the door for the child. (If a pre-school age child needs assistance in the restroom, the teacher shall provide the assistance necessary, first encouraging the child to handle as much of the process as he/she can.) Elementary school age children may choose a "safe buddy" to accompany them to the bathroom. The Hall Monitor shall be informed of their destination on the way to and from the restroom.
 - D. From 9:30am-12:00pm on Sundays, all rooms on classroom floors that do not have hallway windows shall have their doors either locked and closed or blocked open. The only exceptions shall be the adult restrooms on the LL, 100, & 300 levels. At these times, the women's restroom on the 300 children's wing, and the men's and women's restrooms on LL shall be off-limits to adults. Adults can use the single-use, non-gendered restroom on the 300-level music wing, and the single-use non-gendered restroom on the LL (but must keep that bathroom locked, teachers and custodial staff will have a key for use).
 - E. If a situation unexpectedly does not meet the criteria of this policy then alternatives must be put into place so that the event is in compliance. The following examples are meant as illustration only and are not to be perceived as the only possible solutions.

Example: If only one teacher and one child/youth shows up for a Sunday school class then the supervisor could recommend these solutions:

- a. the teacher and child/youth could join another class for the morning
- b. the supervisor could join the teacher and child/youth
- c. the teacher and child/youth could attend church (Example: The mentor/confirmand partners must find ways to meet the criteria of the policy)
- d. the confirmand could meet the mentor in a public place such as a coffee shop
- e. the confirmand/mentor pair could meet with another confirmand/mentor pair

II. Off-site procedures when the children and youth are part of the First Presbyterian Church community

- A. At no time shall one employee or volunteer be allowed to be alone with a child or a youth. The only exception to this policy would be in a situation in which the contact occurs in a public place and other persons are in and out of the area where the employee or volunteer is working with the child or youth.
- B. As each facility will be different it will be the responsibility of the supervisors to determine how best to use the facility and comply with the church policy.
- C. Overnights: Individuals with same gender identity shall be segregated during sleeping time. If it is deemed necessary for adults to share sleeping accommodations with the children/youth, a minimum of two adults, the same genders as the children/youth to be chaperoned, shall sleep in each area.
- D. All drivers and chaperones on children/youth off-site trips shall be included in all parts of the Child and Youth Safety Policy.

III. Off-site procedures when the employees or volunteers are representing First Presbyterian Church (Ann Arbor) but the children and youth are not a part of the First Presbyterian Church community (e.g. Granddale Church of the Master, Haiti mission trips, Philippines mission trips)

- A. At no time shall one employee or volunteer be allowed to be alone with a child or a youth. The only exception to this policy would be in a situation in which the contact occurs in a public place and other persons are in and out of the area where the employee or volunteer is working with the child or youth.
- B. When representing the church all employees and child/youth volunteers must comply with the Child and Youth Safety Policy.
- C. As each facility will be different it will be the responsibility of the supervisors to determine how best to use the facility and comply with the church policy.
- D. Overnights: Individuals with same gender identity shall be segregated during sleeping time. If it is deemed necessary for adults to share sleeping accommodations with the children/youth, a minimum of two adults, the same genders as the children/youth to be chaperoned, shall sleep in each area.
- E. All drivers and chaperones on children/youth off-site trips shall be included in all parts of the Child and Youth Safety Policy.

IV. Non-church sponsored use of the church facility procedures

- A. Anyone who uses the First Presbyterian facility for non-church sponsored activities with children or youth (e.g. Triangle-licensing, Scouts BSA, AAYC) will be required to comply with the church policy, which states: At no time shall one employee or volunteer be allowed to be alone with a child or a youth. The only exception to this policy would be in a situation in which the contact occurs in a public place and other persons are in and out of the area where the employee or volunteer is working with the child or youth.
- B. At the time a contract is made with a non-church group or person to use the church facility, it shall be the duty of the Staff Representative to obtain written confirmation from the users of their need to comply with the above.

- C. The staff liaison for the outside group will be responsible to make sure there is an on-file written confirmation from the outside group of their agreement to comply with our Child & Youth Policy.

V. Committee Responsibilities

- A. It shall be the responsibility of the church Personnel Committee to give each newly hired employee a copy of the Child and Youth Safety Policy. A copy of the policy will be included in the Personnel Manual under "Exhibits."
- B. An obligation to enforce the policy shall be written into the contract of each employee who has significant responsibility for supervising employees or volunteers who lead children or youth (e.g. the Director of Children and Family Ministry, the Associate Pastor/Director of Youth & Families, the Music Director, the Assistant Music Director).
- C. Ministerial and Program staff members, along with other employees who work with children or youth, will review the implementation of the "Child and Youth Safety Policy" each September.
- D. Members of Session will receive a copy of the Child & Youth Safety Policy. All members of Session, committees and work groups must review the Child & Youth Safety Policy. Staff liaisons for each committee are responsible. The Faith Formation Committee will remind committee chairs and staff liaisons of this annual review.

VI. Initial reporting of suspicious or inappropriate activity

- A. Suspicious or inappropriate activity brought to the attention of an employee or volunteer must be reported immediately (within 24 hours) to the appropriate professional staff person.¹
- B. The appropriate person(s) to whom to make this report to are:
 - 1. Children's Ministry staff person
 - 2. Director of Youth or the Pastor/Lead Pastor
 - 3. Other individuals who may have supervisory responsibilities
- C. The person making the report of the alleged abuse or receiving the report of suspicious activity shall then document the date, time and circumstances of the alleged incident.
- D. The person receiving the initial report of suspicious activity will report immediately to the Pastor/Lead Pastor, who will inform the church legal counsel and the church insurer.
- E. The Christian Education Staff person, or Director of Youth, or individuals who may have child/youth supervisory responsibilities and the Pastor/ Lead Pastor, will determine what, if any, further action shall be taken.
- F. All allegations shall be regarded as serious, and due consideration shall be given to the rights and privacy of both the alleged victim and the person being accused.
- G. The person who is being accused will be required to refrain from participating in all child and youth activities until it is determined if further action shall be taken. Care shall be taken to handle this in a discreet manner.
- H. After reviewing the reported circumstances, if the appropriate person receiving the report and the Pastor/ Lead Pastor determine that there is reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect (as defined by the State of Michigan Child Protection Law), then further action shall be taken as described in Section VII entitled "Staff Response to Allegations of Abuse and Neglect" and in a manner consistent with the Book of Order (Section D – 10.0000 et seq.)

Revised and approved by Session December 13, 2023

- I. Even if the allegation is not sustained, the professional staff persons making the decision have the option to recommend another appropriate action, which could include removal from the program, a review of the process in that program, and /or further education.

¹ The Michigan Child Protection Law requires certain persons who have reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect to make immediately by phone or otherwise, an oral report to the Family Independence Agency or a law enforcement agency. Ministers and Church Educators are included as required reporters in the law. All persons are permitted to report suspected child abuse or neglect to the Family Independence Agency or a law enforcement agency.

VII **Staff response to allegations of abuse or neglect**

If it is determined that there is reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, then the following steps will be taken:

- A. All allegations will be taken seriously and will be handled in a manner that is considerate and protective (see n.1).
- B. A Response Team will be assigned to take further action. The Response Team will consist of: (1) the Pastor/Lead Pastor, (2) the church administrator, (3) at least two members of Session appointed by the Pastor/ Lead Pastor, (4) legal counsel, and (5) others as deemed appropriate (e.g. a mental health professional).
- C. The Response Team will promptly:
 - 1. Ensure appropriate contact and cooperation with local and state civil and criminal authorities as required by law, and consistent with the Book of Order (Section D – 10.0000 et seq.) (see n.1). If appropriate under the law, under the guidance of the church legal counsel and insurance carrier, the Response Team may also:
 - 2. Interview all appropriate persons.
 - 3. If it will not put the child in jeopardy, contact the alleged victim's parents.
 - 4. Maintain documents of all efforts to handle the situation.
 - 5. Appoint a spokesperson, who will present a clear position statement of the church regarding child abuse and include policies and established safeguards. This person will be the only person communicating to the press and authorities. The spokesperson will also give information to the congregation as appropriate.
- D. The ministerial staff will provide appropriate counseling.

VIII. Staff Care of Documents

- A. Only the child and youth professional staff will review page 2 and 3 of the completed Volunteer Application. The child and youth professional staff is defined as the Director of Children's Education, the Director of Youth, the Coordinator of Youth, Music Professionals who supervise children/youth, and an appointed support staff person.
- B. Requests for references for an individual wishing to volunteer with children or youth, may be sent by those authorized by, and under the supervision of, the Children and Youth professional staff.
- C. The responses to these requests will only be reviewed by the Children and Youth professional staff.
- D. All information will be treated in a confidential manner. Except in the case of a response to a report of suspicious activity, only the appropriate professional staff shall have access to the information on these documents. In the case of a report of suspicious activity, the Response Team and the appropriate legal authorities will have access to the information.
- E. The documents will be kept in secure storage.
- F. References may be contacted by the appropriate staff persons before the individual begins service.
- G. Volunteers will be required to complete a Child and Youth Volunteer Application form once every five (5) years. In the interim years volunteers will be required to complete a "Child and Youth Volunteer Short Form," verifying that the information provided in their application is still accurate and truthful.
- H. All volunteers will be vetted by a professional company that does back-ground checks.

IX. Technology & Social Media

- A. Social Networking sites, texting, e-mailing and other forms of electronic communication are a reality in the lives of most of our students. They offer an opportunity to develop and deepen relationships in new ways and are therefore a vital part of youth ministry work. But their improper use can produce serious consequences.
 - a. Ministry workers may not transmit any content that is illicit, unsavory, abusive, pornographic,

discriminatory, harassing, or disrespectful when communicating with each other or with minors. Any conversation from staff/volunteers should include another adult, and/or should be sent on a tool that can be monitored by other staff.

- b. If you choose to utilize any social networking site to communicate with students associated with First Presbyterian Church, utilize FPC pages, where other staff have access to view and respond to the content. Parents of students should be aware of and how:
 - i. All information, images, or videos shared electronically through public ministry communications channels aren't considered confidential.
 - ii. When possible, communication should be sent to entire groups, on their wall or in public areas – not in private messages – this includes images.
 - iii. Consistency with all students on all platforms is of the utmost importance.

X. LGBTQ Inclusion/Protection

A. As we seek to provide a safe and secure environment for all participants, intentional steps are needed to address LGBTQIA+ participants. Open communication between LGBTQIA+ youth, their parents, and the group's main leader is strongly encouraged before attending the retreat. Education is important so brief definitions are provided below.

- a. At overnight events, participants typically sleep in lodging areas according to their gender. Transgender youth will be allowed to sleep in the room according to their gender identity, but there is not a “one-size-fits-all” housing policy for transgender or gender non-conforming youth. Some transgender/gender non-conforming youth may feel more comfortable housing with the gender that correlates with their gender expression, others with their biological sex. Thus, it is vitally important for the group leader to openly communicate with said youth (and ideally, their parents) before the overnight about their sleeping preference in order to facilitate inclusion. While it is not required that a parent inform FPC staff about a transgender or gender non-conforming youth participant, the Associate Pastor working with Youth is available for such a conversation in order to aid the child in having a positive experience.
- b. All participants will use the bathroom that corresponds with their expressed gender identity. Any youth or adult who has a need or desire for increased privacy, regardless of the underlying reason, should be provided access to a single user restroom. However, no participant shall be required to use such a restroom because they are transgender or gender nonconforming.
- c. FPC youth and leaders will receive training for best practices regarding anti-bullying as well as the inclusion of LGBTQ participants. The goal is to provide an emotionally and physically safe environment for all.

B. Definitions

- a. **LGBTQIA+** is a combination of letters meant to represent persons who identify in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and the + holds space for the expanding and new understanding of different parts of the very diverse gender and sexual identities in our communities.
- b. **Gender identity** is the personal sense of one's own gender. Gender identity can correlate with a person's assigned sex at birth or can differ from it.
- c. **Gender expression** is the external appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, haircut or voice.
- d. **Gender non-conforming** means exhibiting behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits that do not correspond with the traits typically associated with one's sex; having a gender expression that does not conform to gender norms.
- e. **Transgender** is a term used to describe people whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex at birth.

CHILD AND YOUTH VOLUNTEER APPLICATION:

CHILD AND YOUTH VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

Confidential

First Presbyterian Church (Ann Arbor)

Please answer each question in full. Your responses will be kept confidential.

FULL NAME with Middle Initial _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____ CELL PHONE NUMBER _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

1. Are you a member of First Presbyterian Church (Ann Arbor)? ___yes no
If no, how long have you attended? _____
2. Please list any past experience you have working with children and youth. Include name and place of the institution(s) or organization(s).
3. Please provide **names, addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses** for two non-relatives who are familiar with your character as it relates to working with children and youth. References may be checked.
4. Members of less than 6 months and non-members, please additionally provide the **name, address, phone number, and e-mail address** of an additional reference that is familiar with your character as it relates to working with children and youth.
5. Please list the name and address of other churches you have attended regularly during the past five years.
6. Is there any circumstance that might call into question your being entrusted with the leadership and spiritual development of the children and youth of First Presbyterian Church (Ann Arbor)?

CHILD AND YOUTH VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

Name _____

7. Are you currently under investigation for a crime involving children or youth?

_____yes _____no

8. Have you ever been convicted of, or pled guilty or no contest to any crime after having been accused of any incident involving children and youth?

_____yes _____no

9. Have you ever been found responsible or guilty in any court for neglect or abuse of a child?

_____yes _____no

A "no" response to any of the following six questions would preclude an applicant from volunteering with children or youth.

10. As a church volunteer, do you agree to observe all church policies regarding work with children or youth?

_____yes _____no

11. Have you read, and do you understand and agree to abide by, the "Child and Youth Safety Policy?"

_____yes _____no

12. Do you consent to a criminal background check?

_____yes _____no

13. Do you consent to background inquiries by First Presbyterian Church (Ann Arbor) to persons named by you and any other person, or to verify any information supplied by you?

_____yes _____no

14. Do you authorize persons contacted by First Presbyterian Church (Ann Arbor) in conducting background checks to speak freely to callers from the church inquiring about background checks?

_____yes _____no

15. I consent to a professional background check.

_____yes _____no

16. Complete attached "Permission to Obtain a Background Check."

Volunteer Signature Date

Please print name

Parent Signature Date

(Required for volunteers under the age of 16)

Note: If you have any concerns about the requested information, please feel free to speak to any member of the program or ministry staff.

ADDENDUM TO EMPLOYEE APPLICATION REGARDING APPLICANT'S EXPERIENCES WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

1. Is there any circumstance that might call into question your being entrusted with contact with the children and youth of First Presbyterian Church (Ann Arbor)?

2. Are you currently under investigation for a crime involving children or youth?

_____yes _____no

3. Have you ever been convicted of, or plead guilty or no contest to any crime after having been accused of any incident involving children and youth?

_____yes _____no

4. Have you ever been found responsible or guilty in any court for neglect or abuse of a child?

_____yes _____no

5. **Please provide** names, addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses **for two non-relatives who are familiar with your character as it relates to working with children and youth. References may be checked.**

A "no" response to any of the following six questions may preclude an applicant from employment at First Presbyterian Church.

As a church employee, do you agree to observe all church policies regarding work with children or youth?

_____yes ____no

Have you read, and do you understand and agree to abide by, the "Child and Youth Safety Policy?"

_____yes ____no

Do you consent to background inquiries by First Presbyterian Church (Ann Arbor) to persons named by you and any other person, or to verify any information supplied by you?

_____yes ____no

Do you authorize persons contacted by First Presbyterian Church (Ann Arbor), in conducting background checks, to speak freely to callers from the church inquiring about background checks?

_____yes ____no

I consent to a criminal background check.

_____yes ____no

Complete attached "Permission to Obtain a Background Check."

Applicant Signature

Date

Please print name

CHILD AND YOUTH VOLUNTEER APPLICATION SHORT FORM

First Presbyterian Church (Ann Arbor)

To be completed by Volunteers if they have signed a Child and Youth Volunteer Application form within the last 5 years. I have read the Child and Youth Safety Policy.

Yes_____No_____

The last time I volunteered with a child or youth activity at First Presbyterian Church (Ann Arbor) was:

I verify that the information that I provided on the Child and Youth Volunteer Application is still correct and truthful.

Volunteer signature

Date

Print Name

Revised and approved by Session December 13, 2023
VOLUNTEER DRIVER INFORMATION FORM
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (ANN ARBOR)

This form is to be completed by all First Presbyterian Church Volunteers who will be driving children or youth for church sponsored activities.

Full Name _____

Social Security Number _____

Date of Birth _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Driver's License Number _____

Expiration Date _____

Vehicle to be driven (if not rented by the church)

Model and Make _____

Year _____

License Plate _____

Registration Expires _____

Owner of Vehicle _____ Insurance Company _____

Policy Number _____

Expiration Date _____

Liability Limits of Policy _____

I agree to the following:

I am 21 years of age or older

I have read and agree to follow the Children and Youth Safety Policy

I will wear and agree to require all passengers to wear seat belts at all times.

I will drive in a safe and responsible manner, and will not exceed posted speed limits. I consent to a driving record and/or criminal background check.

Signature

Date

Note: If you have any concerns about the requested information, please feel free to speak to any member of the program or ministry staff.



Revised and approved by Session December 13, 2023

PERMISSION TO OBTAIN A BACKGROUND CHECK

(This form authorizes the church to obtain background information and must be completed by the applicant. The church must keep this completed form on file for at least five years after requesting a background check.)

In the interest of safety and security I, the undersigned applicant (also known as "consumer"), authorize The First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor through its independent contractor, First Advantage, to procure background information (also known as a "consumer report and/or investigative consumer report") about me, prior to, and at any time during, my service to the organization. This report may include my driving history, including any traffic citations; a social security number verification; present and former addresses; criminal and civil history/records; and the state sex offender records.

I understand that I am entitled to a complete copy of any background information report of which I am the subject upon my request to First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor, if such is made within a reasonable time from the date it was produced. I also understand that I may receive a written summary of my rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act.

Signature: _____ Date _____

Identifying Information for Background Information Agency (also known as "Consumer Reporting Agency")

Print Name

First Middle Last

Other Names Used (alias, maiden, nickname):

Current Address:

Street/P.O.Box City State Zip Code County Dates

Previous Address:

Street/P.O.Box City State Zip Code County Dates

Social Security Number: _____ - _____ - _____ Daytime Telephone Number: _____ - _____ - _____

Driver's License Number: _____ State of Issuance: _____

Date of Birth: ____ / ____ / ____ Gender _____