

St. Andrew Presbyterian Church
Purcellville, Virginia
CHILD PROTECTION POLICY
Approved by the Session, Month day, Year
(revised January 8, 2008)

Policy Statement and Purpose

St. Andrew Presbyterian Church (SAPC) and its members are committed to the safety, welfare, and protection of all children and youth participating in the activities and programs of the Church. During each baptism of an infant, child or adult, the congregation pledges to uphold that person in the household of God. To these ends, the Session hereby adopts reasonable policies and procedures in order to minimize the possibility that any child or youth (meaning all those 17 years of age and younger) will be subjected to physical or emotional abuse or neglect by Church staff, paid childcare workers, teachers, or volunteers while engaged in church programs or activities. SAPC cannot, nor can any institution or organization, absolutely guarantee that no harm will befall a child entrusted to its care. However, SAPC can, and through adherence to this policy does, make every effort to assure that the persons placed in positions of trust and responsibility with respect to the children of the church are persons deserving of that trust and responsibility. The intention of this policy is to protect children from child abuse and to ensure that those working with children are not subjected to false or unwarranted charges of child abuse.

Additionally, organizations affiliated with SAPC (e.g., the Cub Scout Pack chartered by SAPC) or using the facilities shall adhere to the policy and provide a safe and nurturing environment for children and those working with children.

*This policy shall be distributed to all current members of SAPC
and will be provided to new members.*

Explanation of Terms

For the purposes of the Child Protection Policy:

- **Affiliated organization** means a group, association, or entity that is either chartered by or sponsored by SAPC and that regularly utilizes SAPC's facilities.
- **Child** means any individual who is considered to be a minor under the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, including an individual who is legally incapacitated.
- **Child abuse** includes the following:
 - (1) Any assault, battery, the encouragement and planning of such activity or failure to attempt to prevent such activity after knowledge is acquired that such activity is, or is about to occur;
 - (2) Any infliction of or threat of assault or battery;
 - (3) The refusal to provide care necessary to the health of a child, or the abandonment of a child, in one's care.
 - (4) The commission or permitting of any act of sexual exploitation or any sexual act upon a child. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered forced whether or not the child consents to it.
- **Child Protection Policy Review Team (CPP Review Team)** means a group of individuals appointed by the Session to maintain, review and recommend changes to this policy as necessary and appropriate to adhere to local and Commonwealth law. Any changes to the policy must be presented to Session for approval. The team shall include the Pastor and/or Associate Pastor, Director of Children's Ministry, a

Christian Education Elder, a member of the Personnel Committee, and the Clerk of Session. The membership is encouraged to make recommendations related to procedures and protocols in our programs to minimize risks and improve the safety and preventive measures to reduce any possible injuries or situation dangerous to children.

- **Employee** "is the comprehensive term used to cover individuals who are hired or called to work for the church for salary or wages." *Presbytery Policy, Appendix B.*
- **Supervision** includes direct observation or control of activities and may include visual monitoring of activities via open or windowed doors.
- **Volunteer** "is the term used for those who provide services for [the church] and who receive no benefit or remuneration." *Presbytery Policy, Appendix B.*

Standards of Conduct

- No employee or volunteer shall engage in any act of child abuse.
- No employee or volunteer shall touch, interact with, or otherwise communicate with a child or youth in any way that is intended to be sexually stimulating, emotionally demeaning, or exploitative.
- Common expressions of affection and affirmation (including hugs and pats on the back), support (prayer), or physical care (including diaper changes and first aid) are appropriate in this and any other community of caring Christians. Care must be taken, however, that physical expressions of affection are not excessive or imposed on another individual.
- Employees and volunteers who work with children are tasked with guarding the physical and emotional safety of those in their care and with being alert for signs of each child's well-being.
- No employee or volunteer shall use corporal punishment on a child during any program or activity conducted by SAPC.
- To the maximum extent practicable, there shall be visual access into each room in which activities with children are being conducted. When only one adult and/or one youth is working with children, it is recommended, if practicable given noise levels, that the door to the room should remain open.
- To the maximum extent practicable, employees and volunteers who work with children shall work in unrelated pairs, with two or more adults present with children at all activities.
- If an unaccompanied employee or volunteer meets with a single child to conduct a private discussion, that meeting shall be held at SAPC when the church is open for scheduled group activities or shall be held in a public place. In no case shall an unaccompanied employee or volunteer meet with a single child at SAPC unless there is at least one other employee or volunteer in the building who is aware that the private meeting is being held and the location of that meeting, although the identity of the child may remain confidential.
- With respect to any church-sponsored activity for which SAPC arranges transportation, one employee or volunteer may transport children as long as there are two or more children in the vehicle. Children will be picked up and dropped off as a group at SAPC or at other designated, central locations. Exceptions to this clause may be made in the case of medical or family emergencies, or with written permission of a parent or guardian and with acknowledgement of responsibility by an employee or volunteer. (Privately arranged transportation is not addressed by this clause.)

Procedures for Handling Allegations of Child Abuse

- Any individual who has a reasonable suspicion of child abuse shall promptly report the suspicion to the proper authorities in accordance with applicable Commonwealth and local law. In Purcellville, the report is to be made immediately to the Child Protective Services Hotline (703-771-KIDS) or after hours to the Sheriff's Department (703-777-0407). By law, reports of child abuse are strictly confidential.

- If the abuse occurred on church property and the church is notified, the Clerk of Session shall notify the General Presbyter and Stated Clerk of National Capital Presbytery if an allegation is raised against an ordained minister, an employee, or member of SAPC. The Clerk of Session or another person designated by the Session shall request guidance on the procedure to be followed in processing any allegation and, if necessary, for obtaining a moderator for the Session.
- The Pastor (or, in the absence of the Pastor, the acting head of staff) or the Clerk of Session, as applicable, also shall contact the Presbytery's Response Coordinating Team (or any successor team).
- In each case of alleged child abuse, the Pastor (or, in the absence of the Pastor, the acting head of staff) or the Clerk of Session shall contact and involve SAPC's liability carrier and verify that Child Protective Services has been notified and that the proper written documentation of the allegations and proceedings is maintained.
- The Pastor (or, in the absence of the Pastor, the acting head of staff) and/or the Clerk of Session or such other person(s) as designated by the Session who are determined to be not involved in the allegations shall be responsible for maintaining contact with the police and with the family of each alleged victim and for determining further actions in consultation with the Session. Additionally, the Pastor and/or the Clerk of Session or such other person(s) as designated by the Session shall speak on behalf of the Session in the event of an allegation that requires speaking to the congregation and/or the community.
- SAPC will cooperate fully with government authorities in the investigation of any suspicion of child abuse.
- Any employee or volunteer against whom an allegation of child abuse is made shall be requested to discontinue all involvement with children and youth until the investigation of the allegation is complete. If, through the investigation, it is proven that the employee or volunteer is guilty of the allegation, then the employee or volunteer shall never be permitted to participate in activities at SAPC where opportunities for additional abuse or neglect of children and youth could occur. If through the investigation it is found that the employee or volunteer is not guilty, then the CPP Review Team shall make a determination concerning the employee's or volunteer's future participation in the ministry to children and youth at SAPC.

Implementation

- A copy of this policy and the Child Protection Covenant shall be provided to each employee and to each volunteer participating in any program or activity involving children.
- Each employee shall submit to SAPC a signed copy of the Child Protection Covenant and shall submit to a background check as a condition of employment. (Attn: Personnel Committee)
- Each applicant for employment shall submit to SAPC a signed copy of the Child Protection Covenant as part of his or her application for employment and shall be willing to submit to a background check as a condition of employment. (Attn: Personnel Committee)
- An individual who seeks to be a volunteer in any program or activity involving children shall submit to SAPC a completed copy of the volunteer application and a signed copy of the Child Protection Covenant and shall be willing to submit to a background check. An applicant who is a minor shall have the application and Child Protection Covenant co-signed by a parent or guardian.
- In general, an application by an individual to volunteer in any program or activity involving children shall be accepted only after six months of frequent involvement in the life and activities of SAPC. An exception may be made at the discretion of the Session or a body authorized by the Session to allow for the short-term involvement of an individual in an activity involving children (such as a service project, Vacation Bible School, Sunday morning childcare, etc.). In any case, this volunteer shall be paired with an employee or a veteran volunteer.
- All employees and volunteers must undergo Sexual Misconduct Prevention Training provided by SAPC.
- Session member training shall include a review of the Child Protection Policy and session members responsibility related to the Policy.

- Organizations affiliated with SAPC shall agree to abide by SAPC's Child Protection Policy, maintaining their own application records.

Accident Documentation

- When accidents occur during program activities requiring any special attention, a report should be completed on what occurred, what injury was noticed, how injury was treated.
- In the event of an incident that points to a need for maintenance or procedural changes, an incident report form should be completed and shared with the Pastor, Director of Children's Ministries, and a representative from the Trustees so the item or procedure may be repaired or remedied, respectively.

Administration

- The CPP Review Team shall administer this policy.
- All documentation associated with this policy (including applications, background checks, and documentation associated with allegations of child abuse or misconduct) shall be strictly confidential and shall be kept secure by the CPP Review Team. All documentation will be kept in locked storage in the church building and applications will be kept on file for a five year period past the declared inactive date of the volunteer.
- The CPP Review Team is responsible for review and subsequent approval or disapproval of each volunteer application. If the CPP Review Team determines that an application should not be approved, that determination shall be reviewed with the Pastor to determine what, if any, additional actions are necessary beyond notification to the applicant and the affected committee. If the application is disapproved, the CPP Review Team will first notify the applicant of the CPP Review Team's determination and subsequently notify the committee through which the application was submitted. The maintenance of confidentiality is vital. The Pastor shall work with the volunteer to direct his or her spiritual gifts to other areas suited to him or her. If the application is approved, no notification is required.
- The CPP Review Team 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 and shall be reminded of this policy annually with an announcement during worship on National Children's Sabbath, the third Sunday in October.
- This policy, the Child Protection Covenant, the Child Care Guidelines, and the volunteer application form shall be made available on the Internet website of SAPC at www.standrew-pres.org.
- This policy and the Child Protection Covenant shall be published annually in *Loaves and Fishes* newsletter.
- A copy of this policy, the Child Protection Covenant, and the volunteer application form shall be provided to each participant in each new members class.
- Each employee and each volunteer who works with children shall be requested to review this policy and sign the Child Protection Covenant not less than annually.
- A review of the policy shall be included in
 - (1) an annual Sunday School teacher training session;
 - (2) training sessions for childcare, music, youth, or worship volunteers; and
 - (3) training sessions for new elders and deacons.
- Training for volunteers on the Policy shall be provided four times each year consistent with Sunday School leader trainings in the fall, winter and spring and for Vacation Bible School volunteers in the early summer.
- A copy of this policy shall be posted in a central location at SAPC.

- A copy of the Child Care Guidelines will be kept in each child care room and provided to each child care employee and volunteer.

Child Protection Covenant

I ACCEPT the responsibility to nurture the Christian faith and well-being of the children and youth of St. Andrew Presbyterian Church and to care for them as Christ cares for me. "I...will tend the flock of God that is in my charge, exercising the oversight...willing, as God would have me do it..." I Peter 5:2

I AGREE to submit to the authority of the Session of St. Andrew Presbyterian Church in all matter related to child protection.

I HAVE READ and UNDERSTAND and AGREE TO ABIDE BY the Child Protection Policy of St. Andrew Presbyterian Church.

I DO HEREBY authorize the Session of St. Andrew Presbyterian Church to conduct any background checks deemed necessary for the safeguarding of children who participate in church programs.

Printed name

Signature Date

Signature of Parent/Guardian if applicant is under 18 years old. Date