

# FAIRVIEW PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

(PCA)

## CHILD SAFETY POLICY

### **Purpose of the Policy**

This policy is intended to protect children participating in events and programs sponsored by Fairview Presbyterian Church (FPC). This policy applies to compensated FPC staff or FPC volunteers who have the responsibility of supervising the activities of minors ages 18 and below. It is the mission of FPC to protect our youth and little ones from sexual/physical abuse or neglect, and to promote a safe and loving atmosphere in honor of our Lord Jesus Christ. This policy does not constitute a contract between FPC and its employees/volunteers or any other party. It is merely a statement of policy and general guideline which FPC will seek to follow. FPC makes no guarantee to any party that all aspects of this policy will be followed in any given situation. FPC is not responsible for the individual acts of any employee/volunteer.

### **Definition of Terms as defined by SC Statutes related to child abuse and neglect**

#### **Child Abuse – SC Code Section 63-7-20**

**(6) "Child abuse or neglect" or "harm" occurs when:**

**(a) the parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the child's welfare:**

**(i) inflicts or allows to be inflicted upon the child physical or mental injury or engages in acts or omissions which present a substantial risk of physical or mental injury to the child, including injuries sustained as a result of excessive corporal punishment, but excluding corporal punishment or physical discipline which:**

**(A) is administered by a parent or person in loco parentis;**

**(B) is perpetrated for the sole purpose of restraining or correcting the child;**

**(C) is reasonable in manner and moderate in degree;**

**(D) has not brought about permanent or lasting damage to the child; and**

**(E) is not reckless or grossly negligent behavior by the parents;**

- (ii) commits or allows to be committed against the child a sexual offense as defined by the laws of this State or engages in acts or omissions that present a substantial risk that a sexual offense as defined in the laws of this State would be committed against the child;
  - (iii) fails to supply the child with adequate food, clothing, shelter, or education as required under Article 1 of Chapter 65 of Title 59, supervision appropriate to the child's age and development, or health care though financially able to do so or offered financial or other reasonable means to do so and the failure to do so has caused or presents a substantial risk of causing physical or mental injury. However, a child's absences from school may not be considered abuse or neglect unless the school has made efforts to bring about the child's attendance, and those efforts were unsuccessful because of the parents' refusal to cooperate. For the purpose of this chapter "adequate health care" includes any medical or nonmedical remedial health care permitted or authorized under state law;
  - (iv) abandons the child;
  - (v) encourages, condones, or approves the commission of delinquent acts by the child including, but not limited to, sexual trafficking or exploitation, and the commission of the acts are shown to be the result of the encouragement, condonation, or approval; or
  - (vi) has committed abuse or neglect as described in subitems (i) through (v) such that a child who subsequently becomes part of the person's household is at substantial risk of one of those forms of abuse or neglect;
- (b) a child is a victim of trafficking in persons as defined in Section 16-3-2010, including sex trafficking, regardless of whether the perpetrator is a parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the child's welfare. Identifying a child as a victim of trafficking in persons does not create a presumption that the parent, guardian, or other individual responsible for the child's welfare abused, neglected, or harmed the child.

**Employee** shall be defined as any individual who is paid by FPC on a full or part-time basis and is serving in any position involving the supervision or custody of minors.

**Child, children, youth and minor** shall be defined as any individual age 18 and under.

**Volunteer** shall be defined as any individual who is not paid by the church and is serving in any position involving the supervision or custody of minors.

## **Selection and screening process**

FPC is dedicated to the screening and selection of our FPC staff and or volunteers to ensure the safety of all children and participants involved in church activities and programs. FPC will follow preventive measures including screening, training and supervision of all employees/volunteers and a commitment to eliminating opportunities for abuse within church programs and church sponsored events. This screening includes the following:

1. Potential volunteers are required to be a member of FPC for at least six months prior to serving with children. Exceptions may be made for spouses of members on a case by case basis.
2. All potential staff members and any potential volunteers, 18 years of age and older, involved in the care of children must complete our Nursery/Child Worker Application form. This application asks questions related to criminal history and includes a request for personal references. Once completed, the application is to be submitted to the designated background check person. Those actively involved with children at the time this policy is implemented are exempt from completing the application but are required to submit to the background screening outlined in this policy. References will be contacted and FPC may contact others as circumstances dictate.
3. A national criminal background screening will be performed on all staff members and any volunteers desiring to work with children.
  - Background screening will be conducted by Protect My Ministry, an independent, fee-based service. Oversight of the screening process will be performed by the designated person.
  - Background screening will be completed and updated annually.
  - If information is reported within the background screening which is a potential cause of concern, the designated background check person will discuss the situation with the individual and provide the findings to the Session.

- The Session will be responsible for making decisions on individuals with alerts noted on their background screening results. Adults who have been convicted of either sexual or physical abuse are not permitted to work with children of any age.
4. All staff members and any volunteer desiring to work with children will receive a copy of this policy. They will be asked to sign a statement that they have read, understood and agree to abide by this policy.
  5. Information obtained during the screening process will be kept confidential. Access will be limited to the Nursery/Children Leader and the Session.

### **Training**

Instruction and review of FPC child protection policy will be offered annually during scheduled training sessions.

- Mandatory training will be provided through Protect My Ministry for individuals 18 years and older. This training is required to be completed one time, prior to the start of volunteering or within 30 days after beginning employment, whichever is applicable.
- Once this training has been completed, volunteers are able to serve in children's ministry.

### **Volunteers who are Minors**

Volunteers, who are themselves under age 18, are a valuable resource in the care and nurture of our covenant children. They may also be at an age to be mentored as they participate in ministry. The following guidelines apply to this volunteer.

- b) Minor volunteers shall be screened and trained as specified above with the exception of a required criminal records check.
- c) Applications submitted by a minor volunteer must be signed by their parent/legal guardian where indicated.

### **Supervision**

FPC has zero tolerance for abuse in its programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every employee and volunteer in children and youth ministries to

act in the best interest of all minors in every program. The following requirements shall be applicable to all employees and volunteers who have contact with minors participating in any program at the church or a church sponsored event.

- Individuals involved in the custody and care of children must observe the “two-person rule” This rule prohibits one-on-one interaction between a staff member or volunteer and a child in secluded or isolated areas. The “deacon of the week” will maintain a presence in the nursery and children’s church area to monitor and become that second person when necessary and will remain in the area until all children are dismissed.
- A parent may accompany any child who is attending children church for the first time, or may fill out an information sheet to provide needed information for the teaching staff.
- All rooms used by adults and minors together should be accessible (unlocked doors) and have open visibility (a window in the door or the door left wide open).
- Ministry leaders and designated individuals will observe and periodically make unannounced visits to classrooms and other meeting places where children are present with volunteers or staff.
- Parents or legal guardians are welcome to observe any activity involving their child.
- Children in nursery must be signed in and contact information for the parent or guardian during the service or event must be provided. Children may only be released to one of their own parents or to those to whom the parents have given permission.
- If assisting children with the bathroom, employees and volunteers should not enter the bathroom with one child alone, but rather another adult or child should be present.
- No staff member or volunteer is ever to administer corporal punishment while acting under the authority of FPC under any circumstances on a child who is not their own.

- No staff member or screened volunteer is ever to be in a car with only one child who is not their own. There should always be another adult or group of children present.
- We acknowledge that as our children get older, there is valuable discipleship and interaction that can take place during one-on-one meetings. For this reason, employees or volunteers may meet with a child in a public area with the permission of a parent.
- In instances of counseling where circumstances dictate that counseling would be most effective on a one-on-one basis, an appropriate staff member or volunteer may meet individually with a child with the knowledge of at least one other staff member. At any counseling session with children, the door of the room used must remain open, unless there is a glass window in the door that gives a clear view of the room.

### **Consequences of Violation of Child Protection Policy**

Any employee or volunteer accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by FPC to be harmful to a minor, may be suspended immediately from participation in any church ministry for minors by the pastor or session. The session shall review the suspension at its earliest convenience. Any employee or volunteer found in violation of FPC's Child Protection Policy may be prohibited from future participation as an employee or volunteer in all church ministries for minors. If the person is an employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from the church.

# Fairview Presbyterian Church (PCA)

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## Code of Conduct for Child Safety

### **What is a Code of Conduct?**

All staff and volunteers who work with children are expected to interact with children in a mature, capable, safe, caring, responsible manner, with a high level of accountability. This Code of Conduct describes how adults will interact with children and the boundaries they are expected to observe.

This Code of Conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following expectations of staff and volunteers. By being vigilant in following the Code of Conduct, we will help protect children from abuse. The most effective way to reduce abuse of children is to be vigilant.

### **Accountability**

All adult staff and volunteers are responsible for giving and accepting feedback from others in order to maintain our high level of professionalism. As an adult working with children, you agree to interact with the children by observing these principles. It is our expectation that you understand your responsibility to observe the interaction between adults and children and when you see interaction that is questionable, inappropriate or crossing a child's boundaries, you will intervene on behalf of the child. Such intervention may include:

- Remaining present with the child in order to provide him/her a sense of security;
- Redirecting the child to join other children in a different area;
- Speaking to the adult and stating the boundary violation you have observed and reminding them of the responsibility to abide by this code of conduct; or
- Speaking to the ministry director regarding your observation.

You also give permission to the other adults in our programs to take these intervening actions if you are seen crossing safe boundaries or violating this code of conduct.

### **Visibility**

All work with children shall be planned and carried out in a way that minimizes risks as far as possible. This includes being visible to other adults when working with children. Adults shall not be in a room alone with a child with the door closed, or in any area of our property that is secluded or hidden from view.

## **Overcoming Isolation**

To protect our children, staff and volunteers, at no time during a program may an adult be alone with a single child where others cannot observe the adult. We expect all adults to reduce isolation by having a minimum of two children present, informing the child's parent of any meeting you wish to have with the child, and doing it during a time and/or in a location where your interaction with the child is visible to others. Isolation could be overcome, for example, by taking two or more children to the bathroom together rather than only one, dropping off siblings last in a carpool, or taking your own child or spouse along when providing rides. We expect an adequate number of adults to supervise youth events, especially overnight activities.

When ministry to a child involves one-on-one contact, the following procedures shall be followed, as applicable:

- Always be accountable to other adults regarding your interactions with youth or children by informing the ministry leader and or parents when, where and for how long your one-on-one interaction will be.
- The activity must be in a public place that is visible to others, never in a private or secluded location, such as a room with the door closed or in a home alone with the child or student.
- Counseling or other necessarily confidential meetings with children shall be done in an office with a window in the door and only when another adult is in close vicinity, aware that the meeting is occurring, and willing to stay in the vicinity until it is completed; and
- Parents and/or supervisors are to be notified beforehand of any activities with youth or children.

In an emergency situation, find someone to go with you if at all possible, or notify any available adult.

## **Parent Involvement**

Parents are responsible for knowing where their children are at all times. Therefore, parents shall be informed of planned activities. Parents shall be encouraged to make unannounced visits to program activities as a way of reducing isolation and monitoring the interaction between adults and children.

## **Supervision**

Supervision reduces risk. Program administrators shall periodically and randomly inspect classrooms, offices, work areas and other areas where children and adults are together.

## **Technology**

Technology should be used appropriately to protect children or youth from abuse and exploitation. Volunteers and staff shall not engage in social networking, texting or any



other means of private communication with children and youth without the permission of the parents or guardian. All electronic communication must not be erased or deleted and made available for review upon request by the ministry leader or Pastor.

## **Discipline**

Discipline should be used to teach and correct rather than punish. It should not include slapping, hitting, shaming, yelling at, or belittling a child.

## **Touch**

Because healthy, caring touch is valuable to children, but unhealthy touch is abusive, the following guidelines apply:

- Touch shall be open rather than secretive.
- A hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors.
- Touch should be in response to the need of the child, and not the need of the adult.
- Touch should be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child rather than the adult.
- It should be with the child's permission and any resistance from the child should be respected.
- Touch should always communicate respect for the child.

Adults should avoid doing things of a personal nature for children that they are able to do for themselves, including personal hygiene and bathroom breaks, dressing, bathing, etc.

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 specific contexts: verbal praise, side hugs, shoulder to shoulder hugs, pats on the shoulder, back, or head (when culturally appropriate). For smaller children, touching their hands, faces, shoulders and arms, arms around their shoulders, hugs, or holding them when others are present.

The following behaviors between staff or volunteers and children are inappropriate or may be perceived as inappropriate and shall not be engaged in: touching buttocks, chests, genital areas, or thighs; 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; any form of affection that is unwanted by the child; showing sexually-suggestive videos or playing sexually-suggestive games with any child; any behavior that could be interpreted as sexual in nature.

Adult members shall monitor each other in the area of physical contact, helping each other by pointing out anything that could be misinterpreted.

## **Showing Favoritism**

Adults shall avoid favoring or showing differential treatment to a particular child or youth to the exclusion of others.

Adults shall not give gifts to any child or youth without requesting and receiving permission from that child or youths parent or legal guardian.

## **Verbal Interaction**

Words can also be used to support and encourage a child, such as praise, positive reinforcement, and appropriate jokes. Inappropriate verbal interaction includes the following: shaming, belittling, humiliating, name calling, using harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate the child, cursing, or making derogatory remarks about the child. Adults shall avoid favoring or showing differential treatment to particular children or youth to the exclusion of others.

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.

## **Reporting of Abuse**

When anyone has reason to suspect or has knowledge of child abuse within the scope of Fairview Presbyterian Church's work and ministry, he or she must make a report according to our Reporting Protocol. The Reporting Protocol is attached.

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## CHILD SAFETY POLICY

### Reporting Protocol

South Carolina law requires that certain professionals report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. These individuals are known as “Mandated Reporters.” Mandated Reporters of child abuse or neglect in South Carolina include, but are not limited to physicians, nurses, dentists, emergency medical services personnel, mental health or allied health professionals, teachers, counselors, principals, school attendance officers, childcare worker, foster parents, police or law enforcement officers, undertakers, funeral home directors or their employees, film processors, computer technicians, judges, and clergy (i.e. pastors) (subject to laws governing privileged communication).

**When to Report** – A report must be made to the proper authorities when a Mandated Reporter has “has received information that gives him reason to believe that a child has been or may be abused or neglected” (SC Code Section 6-7-310). A decision to report must be based upon a reasonable belief that a child has been or may be abused or neglected. Thus, Mandated Reporters need not have conclusive proof that a child has been abused or neglected prior to reporting abuse or neglect to the proper authorities.

**Who is to Report** – While not every individual is a Mandated Reporter, the law encourages all persons to report, and the moral imperative to protect children extends to all situations where abuse is suspected, reported or discovered. The safety of our children is the responsibility of all staff members and volunteers who work with children. Both staff members and volunteers are responsible to report all suspected, reported or discovered cases of child abuse, including injury suspected to have been occurred as a result of corporal punishment. Failure to do so endangers children and in some cases is a violation of South Carolina law.

**Course of Action** – In the event of suspected, reported, or discovered child abuse, the following course of action shall be taken:

A. LISTEN

- Compassionately – The child has potentially been hurt to a great degree.
- Carefully – Inform the person that you may write down things in order to remember and attempt to record as much of the victim's actual words as is possible.
- Specifically – The role at this point is not of investigator. Focus on the following questions for an initial report of the known facts:
  - a. Who - child's name, age, date of birth, address, present location, names and ages of siblings, parent's name and address, reason(s) for concern, any known history of violence in the home, the alleged name of the perpetrator if known.
  - b. What – what happened to the child? Do not ask leading questions. Rather, restate what the child is saying and then say things like, “tell me more about that.”
  - c. Where – where did the alleged abuse occur?

B. THINK

- Does the information you have received lead you to suspect that abuse has or may have happened? Remember, you are not required to have conclusive proof! The law states that you must only “have a reason to suspect.” If so a report must be made.
- If in doubt, review the story with pastoral staff or a designated volunteer or contact the Department of Social Services (DSS) Child Abuse Hotline (864-467-7750) or law enforcement, as appropriate.

C. SPEAK

- Do not make commitments or promises to the victim.
- Do communicate hope and continued care for them.
- Do communicate that you have to report the abuse.

## D. DO

If the child is in immediate danger, call law enforcement or 911 immediately. Once law enforcement has been called, you then follow the reporting protocol below.

### PROTOCOL FOR ADULT VOLUNTEERS

If you have received a disclosure of abuse, you have observed abuse, or you have reasonable suspicion of abuse, you must report it immediately to either the ministry director or to the Pastor. The person making the report will be referred to here as the “Reporter.” If the pastor not is on site to hear the verbal report, then the verbal report must be given to the individual in charge of the event. *Please be aware that reporting to the church staff does not relieve you of the responsibility to report to law enforcement.*

### PROTOCOL FOR PAID STAFF/MINISTRY DIRECTORS

If you have received a disclosure of abuse, you have observed abuse, or you have reasonable suspicion of abuse, you as the “Reporter” must report it immediately to the Pastor.

Promptly complete a written Incident report of information received regarding the incident and provide it to the Pastor or Session within 24 hours.

- If the alleged perpetrator is a parent, guardian or person acting as a parent, report to DSS (864-467-7750). If the alleged perpetrator is any other person, inform local law enforcement, Greenville County Sheriff’s Department (864-271-5210)
- If you have any questions before calling to report, please contact the Pastor or Session. Otherwise advise the designated background check person and the Pastor or Session of action taken.

## E. RESPONSE

- The care and safety of the victim is our first priority. We will not confront the accused without the approval of the local child protection service or law enforcement authorities.
- We will not prejudge any person accused, but we will take any allegation of child abuse seriously and will reach out in love and support to the victim and the victim's family.
- We will fully cooperate with any authorities investigating an allegation of child abuse.

- We will treat the accused with dignity and respect. If the accused is a volunteer, that person will be temporarily relieved of his or her duties during the investigation. If cleared by the authorities, the individual may resume regular ministry service upon approval of the Session. If the accused is a staff member of FPC, the individual will be temporarily relieved of his or her duties; however compensation will be maintained during the investigation process. The staff member may return to work once cleared by authorities and upon approval of the Session. Nothing in this policy shall require the church to retain a staff member who may have been cleared by legal authorities but who showed a lack of discretion or violate church policy.
- With consent of the Session, the pastor will be the official spokesperson of FPC. All inquiries or requests for information from the media, attorneys or any other parties shall be referred to the official spokesperson. No third party other than the official spokesperson is to release any information regarding any alleged incident of child abuse without the express approval of the official spokesperson.
- All communications by the official spokesperson to the media, congregation, and the public will protect the privacy and confidentiality of all involved. All efforts in responding to the alleged incident of child abuse shall be documented by the official spokesperson and maintained in a secure and confidential file.
- Nothing in this policy shall impede the church discipline process.

# Code of Conduct

## Acknowledgement Form

I acknowledge that I have read the Fairview Presbyterian Church Code of Conduct and the Child Safety Policy. I understand the importance of the material included in this policy. I support and will choose to honor and abide by this policy while serving or working at Fairview. In addition, it is my responsibility to read and comply with any future updates to any and all of our child protection documents.

I confirm that I have not been accused of (to the best of my knowledge), been investigated for, or prosecuted for instances involving any form of abuse or inappropriate behavior with a child.

I agree not to engage in any such behaviors.

I further agree that as an individual who has engendered trust from a child, I will not tolerate physical, emotional or sexual child abuse or neglect.

I understand the importance of accountability to the other adults who work with children. Therefore, I give my permission for anyone who observes any inappropriate or questionable interaction between me and a child to speak to me regarding their observation. I will not take offense when approached by someone with concerns about my interaction, because I understand that the protection of each child must be my first priority.

I agree to immediately report to the appropriate leadership any reasonable suspicion of or disclosure of inappropriate behavior between an adult and a minor or between two minors when one has power over the other by virtue of age or physical abilities, in accordance with our Reporting Protocol.

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Name/Signature

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Date