

SAFE CHURCH

Child Protection and Sexual Misconduct Policy for Cornerstone Presbyterian Church

General Purpose Statement

Cornerstone Presbyterian Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children of Cornerstone Presbyterian Church from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers(workers).

Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen years. The term “worker” includes both paid and unpaid persons who work with children. This term “volunteer” means anyone involved in caring for children, in overnight activities involving minors, in counseling of minors, or in one-on-one mentoring of minors.

Overview for Church Employees

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened.

A. Written Application

All persons seeking to work with children (Pastor, Children’s Ministry, Youth Ministry, Nursery Workers, Office Administrator) must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by us. The application will request basic information from the applicant. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at Cornerstone Presbyterian Church

B. Personal Interview

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position

C. Safe Gatherings Training

All employees working with children will be required to undergo training from the Presbytery of New Hope's Safe Gathering. This training includes videos and quizzes that will determine ability to understand safe space and reporting law, a reference check and a background check. This needs to be renewed every 36 months. The training can be found here, where the employee will set up an account: [Safe Gatherings](#). The fee of \$29 will be covered or reimbursed by Cornerstone Presbyterian Church.

D. Criminal Background Check

In addition to the Safe Gathering training, we will require an employee background check through Trusted Employees.

A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by ***the pastor and session*** on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at the Cornerstone Presbyterian Church

Overview for Volunteers

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened.

A. New Volunteers

All volunteers serving with children or youth should be known within the congregation or provide references from members who can speak to their character. Ministry leaders and/or members of Session will follow up as appropriate to ensure each volunteer is suitably prepared and supported for their role. This time of interaction between our leadership

and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

B. Written Application

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by us. The application will request basic information from the applicant. This can be distributed as VBS registration, Volunteer registration, or with the office. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at Cornerstone Presbyterian Church

C. Criminal Background Check

A national criminal background check is required for all volunteers. Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing the church to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will be unable to work with children.

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The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at the Cornerstone Presbyterian Church with the "Trusted Employees" account.

D. Safe Church Training

Rather than a video training like the employees receive, volunteers and workers with the children and youth will receive a group training each year. This training will review the "Safe Church Policy," and allow for questions about specific scenarios. This training can be offered by the pastor, children's minister and/or youth minister, and will have at least two leaders. It will be offered at least twice a year, before Vacation Bible School and before the fall kick-off. Throughout the year, the policy

can be reviewed with a staff member at will, as long as it is signed by the volunteer/worker.

Two Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open and there should be no fewer than **two students** with the adult teacher. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation.

Open Door Policy

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

Teenage Workers

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- Must be at least **age 12**
- *Must be screened as specified above*
- Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

Check-in/Check-out Procedure

For children in the nursery, a security check-in/check-out procedure will be followed. The child will be signed in by a parent or guardian and signed out again. For special events, like Vacation Bible School and Kid's Night Out, this process will also be followed.

Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all the children at Cornerstone Presbyterian Church. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours;
- Green or yellow runny nose;
- Eye or skin infections; and/or
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease.

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

Medications Policy

It is the policy of Cornerstone Presbyterian Church not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with the child care provider to develop a plan of action. ***The other exception is for overnight trips where medication will be needed, again the parent should address their situation with the child care provider to develop a plan of action.***

Discipline Policy

It is the policy of Cornerstone Presbyterian Church not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with the ***VBS director, children's minister, youth director, nursery chair or the parent or guardian of the child*** if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

Restroom Guidelines

Children five years of age and younger should use a classroom bathroom if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, workers should escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom. They should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. The worker should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child.

For children over the age of five, at least one adult male should take boys to the restroom and at least one adult female should take girls. The worker should check the bathroom first to make sure that the bathroom is empty, and then allow the children inside. The worker should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom.

For the protection of all, workers should never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each program.

Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, and ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

Outside Groups

Cornerstone hosts many outside groups that include children run by both employees and volunteers. The organization's leadership will be required to provide evidence of background checks and training to the Cornerstone office. If this is not already completed, they will use and pay for background checks through our system. The staff and workers will also receive a copy of Cornerstone's Safe Church Policy to review and sign. ***For long term rentals, further training may be required.***

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- **Physical abuse** - any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns and biting.
- **Emotional abuse** - emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- **Sexual abuse** - any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest and pornography.
- **Neglect** - depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at Cornerstone Presbyterian Church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the **children's minister, youth minister** and ultimately the **pastor** for further action, including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at Cornerstone Presbyterian Church or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.

- 2.** The worker or church member alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation. He or she should be instructed to have no contact with the victim or with witnesses.
- 3.** All allegations of abuse should be reported to the civil authorities, and the organization will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. The organization will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
- 4.** The insurance company will be notified, and the organization will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
- 5.** The organization will designate a spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. The advice of legal counsel will be sought before responding to media inquiries or releasing information about the situation to the congregation. All other representatives of the organization should refrain from speaking to the media.
- 6.** A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it. This should be for the purpose of providing pastoral support during the time of crisis and not for the purpose of investigating the incident or influencing the investigation.
- 7.** Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth.

Training

Cornerstone Presbyterian Church will provide training on this child protection policy to all new childcare workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All workers are strongly encouraged to attend these training events.

SafeChurch - Child Protection and Sexual Misconduct Policy for Cornerstone Presbyterian Church

I have read the Child Protection and Sexual Misconduct Policy for Cornerstone Presbyterian Church and agree to follow the guidelines.

Signed:

Full Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date : _____