

Title: Child & Youth Protection Policy

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Policy Purpose:

Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes a child ... welcomes me" (Matthew 18:5). We pledge during each baptism to guide and protect our children; this policy seeks to secure their welfare. Our congregation is committed to the safety and spiritual growth of our children and youth. We are also committed to protect those staff members and volunteers who work with them from false or unwarranted charges of abuse.

A. Standards of Conduct

Adults working with our children and youth shall conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to protection of our children and youth and promotion of their spiritual growth. Respect for the children and youth shall be shown by paid staff and volunteers at all times. Paid staff and volunteers shall not physically, mentally, or sexually abuse any child and youth nor physically punish (spanking) any child and youth. Common expressions of affection and affirmation (hugs and pats on the back), physical care giving (diaper changes or first aid), and support (prayer) are appropriate in this caring church community. However, care shall be taken that physical expressions of affection are not excessive or imposed upon a child and youth without his or her consent. This policy considers "child" or "children" and youth to mean anyone under eighteen years of age or younger and adults with mental disabilities.

B. Implementation & Communication of Standards of Conduct

The Pastor, Associate Pastor, the Personnel Committee of Session, Christian Education Committee of the Session, the Director of Children's Ministries and Youth Director shall oversee the implementation of these standards.

Written information about this policy shall be sent to all church members and posted in an accessible location. A copy of this policy will be included in Inquirers class materials.

Before beginning employment or volunteering with children or youth, all employees and volunteers must sign and deliver to the church the Participant Covenant. The Participant Covenant requires applicants for employment and volunteers 1) to state whether they have ever been convicted or pleaded guilty or no contest to a felony or crime involving sexual or physical abuse, and 2) to state they have read this policy and agree to abide by it. In the event any charges of this nature are brought against the participant, the participant shall advise the church in writing immediately and before any further contact with persons covered by this policy. A criminal background check also will be conducted on each applicant for employment.

All records, including applications and results of reference and background checks, will be kept confidential and stored in secure files.

Leaders of community groups of children and youth who use the church facilities must submit a signed and dated statement that acknowledges they have been notified of this policy and agree to abide by it. Church facilities will not be available to groups whose leaders refuse to sign a statement.

When Nursery services are provided during worship services, the Nursery will be staffed with one adult and one additional person at least 14 years of age.

Non-members and new members should be paired with experienced volunteers for six months before they may lead church school, youth programs, or other positions relating to the care of children and youth. An "experienced volunteer" is one who has participated in church programming relating to children for six months or more in the life of Covenant Presbyterian Church.

C. Responding To Allegations

Anyone who suspects a violation of the standards shall immediately report the suspected violation to the Pastor, Associate Pastor or Youth Director who shall report the allegation to the Pastor and Chair of the Personnel Team. A prompt investigation of the reported incident or charge will be conducted by an appropriate person or persons designated by the Personnel Team. Information obtained during the investigation shall be treated as confidential, to the extent possible, subject to such disclosures as are required under church procedures or required by law. Upon conclusion of the investigation, appropriate action shall be taken.

Retaliation against any person who reports a suspected violation of the standards is prohibited and should be reported immediately to the Personnel Team. Retaliation is itself a violation of the standards and is subject to appropriate sanctions.

Further action may be taken in accordance with Covenant Presbyterian Church's personnel policies, applicable provision of the Book of Order, and the legal requirements of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

References & Attachments:

Not in any way does this policy change or replace the terms and provisions of Covenant's Child Protection Policy.

Attachment: Participant Covenant

Original Implementation Date:
Reviewed/Revised Date: 12/17/17

_____/_____
Chair of the Personnel Committee / Date