

Child and Youth Protection Policy Presbytery of Northern Kansas

During baptism, we participate in Jesus' death and resurrection, becoming new creations. We die to what separates us from God and are raised to newness of life in Christ. . . . Baptism points us forward to the same Christ who will fulfill God's purpose in God's promised future. (*Book of Order*, W-2.3002) The congregation as a whole, on behalf of the Church universal, assumes responsibility for nurturing the baptized person in the Christian life. (*BOO*, W-2.3013) Part of fulfilling our baptismal covenant with all persons of the church is insuring that our community life is safe and healthy for all persons, especially our children and youth.

Purpose: Through our actions and our faith, as a community of believers working together, we endeavor to protect all persons participating in church activities from harm. The focus of this policy is the protection of children and youth from abuse by adults working with them during programs of the Presbytery of Northern Kansas. The policy recognizes the vulnerability of adults to false accusations of wrongdoing. This policy attempts to balance these interests in favor of the protection of children and youth while encouraging adult members of the church to participate fully and without fear in children and youth-centered programs of the church. The guidance provided by this policy will help to assure children and youth participating in programs of the Presbytery of Northern Kansas are treated in ways that encourage their healthy growth and development.

This policy is supplemental to the Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy of the Presbytery of Northern Kansas, which is incorporated by reference.

Policy: The Presbytery of Northern Kansas sponsors many programs designed to bring together children, youth and adults as a community for worship, study, celebration and nurture. This can only be accomplished in an environment free of physical, sexual and emotional abuse. It is the policy of the Presbytery of Northern Kansas to provide many varied opportunities for education, fellowship and spiritual nurture that take place free of any abuse. To accomplish these ends, the Presbytery of Northern Kansas acknowledges the potential for abuse to occur, establishes processes intended to prevent abuse, defines certain prohibited practices, maintains vigilance in an effort to assure that all programs of the church are carried out free from physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and establishes processes to assure instances of suspected abuse will be addressed through internal and external resources.

Guidelines and Procedures

Application and Training

All adults, whether volunteer or compensated, who work with children and/or youth are required to:

1. Complete the Application Form;
2. Successfully complete prescribed child protection training appropriate to his/her duties; once every three years,
3. Be a member or a staff person of a church in the Presbytery of Northern Kansas at least six months, or have a letter of recommendation from his/her previous church, and
4. Annually, read and sign a copy of this policy acknowledging understanding of the Child Protection Policy and stating intent to abide by the policy.

Presbytery staff shall review and approve applicants for volunteer participation. Reference and background checks may be made as deemed appropriate by the reviewing Presbytery staff person. All application forms and the results of reference and background checks will be regarded as confidential. Confidential information will be available only to the Presbytery staff and appropriate program directors as determined by the Presbytery staff. The standard for release of confidential information to program directors is the need to know in the protection of children and youth. Release of this information shall not be made to any other party without specific written authorization of the applicant or pursuant to court order.

Applicants who have been convicted of a crime against persons, including, but not necessarily limited to, child abuse and neglect or violent crimes against people are excluded from working with children and youth.

The required training program (#2 above) will cover at a minimum all of the following items:

- The role of lay adults in children and youth programming;
- A review of the policy emphasizing prevention of abuse, preferred strategies for adults, observation of others' behavior and its role in preventing abuse of children, and reporting of suspicion of abusive behavior;
- A review of the guidelines for church events;
- Information about resources and strategies when the adult(s) have questions or are faced with situations that make them uncomfortable;
- Methods of reporting behavior outside the policy guidelines;
- How to protect children when making a report.

(Note: Resource are available in the Presbytery Resource Center for training.)

Guidelines for Presbytery Events

These guidelines reflect desirable practices. Deviation from these practices is permissible, but it is recommended that any deviation be carefully considered in consultation with the Presbytery staff and program directors.

1. As often as practicable, all activities involving children or youth will be supervised or led by at least two adults.
2. If one-on-one interaction is required between an adult and a child or youth, this should be done in an observable area with the knowledge of another adult.
3. All events must be approved in advance by the Presbytery Council. At least two adults of each gender should be present when children of both sexes are represented in the event.
4. Disruptive behavior will be handled with positive verbal instruction defining behavioral expectations and/or time outs. Physical discipline, isolation and abusive verbal correction are prohibited.
5. All workers with children and youth should actively guard against becoming involved in situations that could give rise to the perception or appearance of inappropriate behavior.
6. Young adults who are leaders or supervisors should be at least five years older than the children or youth they serve.
7. All supervisors should be 25 years or older.
8. All drivers should be 25 years or older, unless there is written permission from the passengers' parents to ride with a driver under 25.

Prohibited Practices

The following practices are prohibited:

1. Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between an adult and a child or youth or between children;
2. Infliction of physically abusive behavior to a child or youth, including failure to provide adequate supervision;
3. Toleration of physically or verbally abusive behavior between children &/or youth (i.e. bullying);
4. Language or behavior toward children or youth that is belittling, demeaning or harshly critical;
5. Possessing obscene or pornographic materials in proximity to children or youth;
6. Possessing, using or being under the influence of any illegal drugs or chemicals;
7. Processing, consuming or being under the influence of alcohol; and
8. Using profane, vulgar or obscene language or gestures.

Response and Reporting

Concerns about alleged violations of the Prohibited Practices or deviations from General Guidelines enumerated above should be directed to the Presbytery Council.

In the event anyone witnesses or is told of an event of abuse or a violation of the prohibited practices relating to individual conduct, the following actions will be taken to the extent appropriate under the circumstances:

1. Personally and immediately secure the safety of the child or youth and any other child that may be at risk in the situation;
2. Do not leave the child alone to report the incident;
3. When the child(ren) or youth are safe, immediately inform the Presbytery staff person who oversees the particular program and report the incident to law enforcement. See #6 below.
4. Do not discuss the event with anyone else and do not personally confront the alleged violator.
5. The appropriate staff member or his/her designee will then provide guidance regarding:
 - a. Notifying the child's parent(s) or guardian(s);
 - b. Completing the "Suspected Abuse Incident Form";
 - c. Follow-up with appropriate authorities (law enforcement or Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services);
 - d. Notifying the church's legal counsel and insurance carrier; and
 - e. Making any communication on behalf of the Presbytery.
6. If the accused violator is a paid staff member, then the Head of Staff will be notified. The Head of Staff will then, in turn, notify the Chair of the Personnel Committee. If the accused is the Head of Staff, then the Chair of the Personnel Committee will be notified. In any event in which the paid staff member is accused, then the regulations as set forth in the *Book of Order*, the *Sexual Misconduct Policy for the Presbytery of Northern Kansas* will be followed.
7. In the event that any adult is accused of violation of the Child and Youth Protection Policy, then he or she will be suspended, (with pay, if applicable) from all activities dealing with children and youth pending the results of an investigation. A favorable result of the investigation will be cause for immediate reinstatement of duties. An unfavorable result will be cause for permanent suspension of volunteer work, and in the case of paid staff, may result in termination.

Kansas Statutes mandate that paid child care providers report any reasonable suspicion of abuse. Therefore, any volunteer or paid worker of this Presbytery may choose to report an incident directly to the appropriate authorities on his or her own initiative. This policy also requires that a report be made to the appropriate Presbytery staff member.

Child and Youth Protection Policy Commitment

I have read the Child and Youth Protection Policy and agree to abide by its guidelines, rules and procedures.

Signed _____

Date _____

Volunteer/ Employee Application Form For Workers with Children and Youth The Presbytery of Northern Kansas

General Information

Name (Last, First, Middle, Maiden) _____

Current Address _____

If you have been a member of your current congregation for less than six months, what is the name, address, phone number and pastor of your previous congregation?

Name and Address of Current Employer:

How long have you worked in your current position? _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Questions

Your honest answers to the following questions will assure our church family, parents and children of the finest care and nurture that we can provide.

1. In what area of ministry with children or youth do you wish to serve and why?

2. What gifts, experience and/or desires do you bring to this ministry?

3. Have you ever been convicted of a misdemeanor or a felony crime against persons? If yes, please explain. (If you respond yes to this question, you will be interviewed by a member of the Presbytery staff.)

4. Is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question trust with you supervising, guiding or caring for young people?

References: Please list the names of three individuals who can give you a character reference. Indicate the capacity in which you know each reference.

1. Reference _____ Relationship: _____

Address _____ Phone Number: _____

2. Reference _____ Relationship: _____

Address _____ Phone Number: _____

3. Reference _____ Relationship: _____

Address _____ Phone Number: _____

It is your responsibility to attend a scheduled training session regarding Child Protection before you work as an employee or as a volunteer.

To my knowledge, all information in this application is true and accurate.

Signed _____

Date _____

Suspected Abuse Incident Report

The Presbytery of Northern Kansas

Name and Address of Reporter: _____

Date of Alleged Incident: _____ Time: _____

Place of Alleged Incident: _____

Names of Child(ren)/ Youth Involved

Please describe the alleged incident, including the names of those suspected of abuse.

Quote the child/youth's first words verbatim:

Describe the child or youth's demeanor/ appearance/ condition:

What action has been taken at this writing?

Were there any witnesses? What are their names?

Report submitted to: _____

To my knowledge, this report is accurate and true:

Signed _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

*Approved by the Presbytery of Northern Kansas: 4/20/2004
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