

Child Protection Policy / Safe Sanctuaries Policy First Cumberland Presbyterian Church (CPC) Dyersburg, Tennessee

As Christians, we live according to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “Anyone who welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me. And anyone who welcomes me doesn’t welcome only me but also the One who sent me.” (Mark 9:37)

DEFINITIONS OF CHILD ABUSE

Child Abuse may be any act committed by a person in a position of trust (parent, care giver, Sunday School teacher, Pastor, or other) which harms or threatens to harm a child’s welfare, physical, spiritual or mental health.

We recognize child abuse may fall into one or more of the following four categories:

1. **PHYSICAL ABUSE** occurs any time a child’s physical health or welfare is harmed or threatened with harm. Physical abuse refers to the infliction of physical pain, and may include injury, disfigurement, impairment of a bodily organ, or death.
2. **SEXUAL ABUSE** occurs any time a minor is used for the sexual stimulation of an adult or older minor. The minor is powerless either to consent to or resist such sexual acts. This includes fondling, sexual intercourse, participation in sexual acts, incest, exploitation for the purpose of pornography or prostitution and/or exposure to adult sexual activity.
3. **EMOTIONAL ABUSE** deeply affects a minor’s self-esteem by submitting him/her to verbal assault or emotional cruelty. Emotional abuse most often occurs in conjunction with another form of abuse, but is the only kind of abuse that can occur alone. It does not always involve injuries we can see.
4. **NEGLECT** - or harm through lack of action – refers to a failure to supply the child with adequate food, clothing, shelter, education, supervision or healthcare.

STANDARDS

MINIMUM AGE: The following standards for Authority Figures are designed to separate Authority Figures from the group they are serving by age or enough years to reinforce recognition of the Authority Figure’s role. CPC adopts the following standards for Authority Figures and Assistants.

1. **AUTHORITY FIGURES** – the primary leaders of youth and children’s activities.
 - a. To work with youth (7th grade and above), the Authority Figure must be a minimum of 21 years of age.
 - b. To work with children (infant – 6th grade), the Authority Figure must be a minimum of 18 years of age.
2. **ASSISTANTS** – persons who lend aid to the Authority Figure and act at the direction of the Authority Figure, including volunteers. Whether working with youth or children Assistants must be:

In the judgment of a CPC staff member, competent to assist in the activity.

TWO ADULT RULE: Two adults are to be present during all church sponsored programming with children and youth. All adult/child ratios must be followed (see below). Where it is impossible to staff two adults in every room, an additional adult must serve as a floater with visual and physical access to all areas.

While mentoring and counseling are encouraged and supported, adults and authority figures should take every precaution to never be alone with a child or youth in inaccessible areas. This can include, but is not limited to:

- An automobile while taking a child home
- A classroom with windowless/locked doors

ADULT CHILD RATIOS: The following adult child ratios should be observed at all church sponsored programming and ministry with children and youth.

1. NURSERY/CHILD CARE

An adult is defined as an Authority Figure/Assistant who is also at least 18 years of age. Adults must meet the Authority Figure/Assistant guidelines outlined above.

For these programs, CPC recommends the following ratios:

- Infants (non-handicapped & not walking) – 1 adult to 4 infants
- Toddlers (walking, non handicapped) – 1 adult to 6 toddlers
- 2 years of age – 1 adult to 7 children
- 3 years of age – 1 adult to 9 children
- 4 years of age – 1 adult to 13 children
- 5 years of age – 1 adult to 16 children
- 6 years of age & older – 1 adult to 20 children

MIXED AGE GROUPS:

- 6 wks to 30 months – 1 adult to 5 infants
- 2 to 4 years of age – 1 adult to 8 children
- 2 ½ to 3 years of age – 1 adult 9 children
- 2 ½ to 5 years of age – 1 adult to 11 children
- 3 to 5 years of age – 1 adult to 13 children
- 4 to 5 years of age – 1 adult to 16 children
- 5 to 12 years of age – 1 adult to 20 children

2. CPC EVENTS (OFF CAMPUS)

- Grades K to 3 – 1 adult to 8 children
- Grades 4 to 6 – 1 adult to 10 children
- Grades 7 to 8 – 1 adult to 10 youth
- Grades 9 to 12 – 1 adult to 12 youth

A parent and or staff person must be present at all events

3. PARTICIPANTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

In the judgment of CPC staff, and in consultation with the parent, the above ratios may be adjusted depending on the nature and degree of participants' special needs.

ROOMING

The Two Adult Rule will be followed when groups are staying in cabins, tents, etc on overnight trips. In the event of a hotel room, 1 adult can be with 2 or more youth with parental consent. These adults must be the same sex as the children or youth. Adults cannot sleep in the same bed with children or youth, unless it is a father-son or mother-daughter situation.

SIX MONTH RULE

All adult volunteer authority figures involved with children or youth of our church must have been an active part of the congregation for at least six months before beginning a volunteer assignment. Persons not meeting this minimum requirement may serve only as an assistant with another trained adult.

POLICY INSTRUCTION

All volunteer and paid staff will be required to attend an annual orientation for policy instruction before working with children and youth. In the case that this is not possible, the staff person/volunteer may only serve as an assistant with another trained adult and under the stipulation that they attend the next training session. All volunteers and staff are required annually to review this policy, to attend a policy instruction session and to sign a new participation statement kept on file at the church.

SCREENING PROCEDURE

An essential component of preventing abuse by Authority Figures, Assistants and Staff is careful screening. Although we recognize the integrity of an overwhelming number of persons with discerned calling to ministries with children, youth and vulnerable persons, we realize that abuse may occur in the church. Therefore, we believe that all Authority Figures, Assistants and all employees must be properly screened. Students under eighteen will complete a modified application and will be interviewed, but no background check or reference check will be required of them. It will be the responsibility of the programs to ensure compliance.

The following steps are used for screening volunteers and paid applicants:

1. COMPLETE AN APPLICATION FORM [Appendix A]

A completed application form will be required of Authority Figures, Assistants and all employees and will be kept on file at the church.

2. EACH APPLICANT SHOULD ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ON APPENDIX B

3. CONDUCT AN INTERVIEW WITH APPLICANTS [refer to Appendix C]

An interview will be conducted with all applicants. The interviewer should not ask for information about marital status or handicapping conditions as stated in Federal/State discrimination guidelines. The interviewer should also be sensitive to age and sex discrimination guidelines; however adequate information may be requested to ensure compliance with this policy's minimum standards.

The interviewer needs to be able to explore issues as they arise during the interview and to depart from the set of prepared questions to do so.

4. COMPLETE BACKGROUND CHECKS ON ADULTS AND COLLEGE STUDENTS

Background checks may include, but are not limited to:

- Criminal histories
- Motor Vehicle Record
- Registered Sexual Offenders

5. FEDERAL AND STATE LAW

The requirements of any and all Federal laws or State laws affecting or relating to employment or child abuse must be complied with, and in any case where there is a conflict between such laws and the procedure outlined in this document, said laws shall prevail and the procedure outlined in this document shall be modified to the extent

necessary to eliminate such conflict. This policy is subject to all Federal and/or State laws relating to employment and child abuse.

REPORTING ABUSE/ALLEGED ABUSE

All reports of suspected child abuse must be taken seriously. Whenever a person has reason to suspect that a person has been abused, reports must immediately be made to Children's Services and the Senior Pastor. In the event the victim feels uncomfortable reporting to the Senior Pastor or if the suspected abuse involves the Senior Pastor, reports may also be made to the other program staff or the personnel committee. The Senior Pastor, program staff and/or the personnel committee are also responsible for reporting the suspected abuse to the Department of Children's Services.

INVESTIGATION [APPENDIX D]

Upon receiving a report of suspected abuse, Senior Pastor, program staff and the personnel committee shall obtain the following information:

1. Names, ages, addresses and telephone numbers of both the accused and the abused.
 2. The nature of the alleged abuse, with dates where possible
 3. The factual details of the report
 4. The name of the person making the report and the date that the information was received.
- A sample form of information to be obtained is attached.

The Senior Pastor, program staff and the personnel committee shall conduct or direct an investigation into the suspected abuse. Interim measures may be taken during the investigation to safeguard the potential victim or victims. At the conclusion of the investigation, appropriate actions shall be taken. Depending upon the findings, this may include termination of employment.