

**First Presbyterian Church of Petaluma**  
**Children and Youth Safety Policies and Procedures for Volunteers**  
**Revised 2/28/08**  
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**Children and Youth Safety Policies and Procedures for Volunteers**

**First Presbyterian Church of Petaluma  
Children and Youth Safety Policies and Procedures for Volunteers**

**Purpose:**

“But Jesus called the children to him and said,  
‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them,  
for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.’” - Luke 18:16

“Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters,  
for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.” - James 2:15

As a faith community, First Presbyterian Church is committed to providing a safe and secure place where all children, youth and adults are nurtured and protected as they explore and grow in their faith in God. Nurture and protection thrive in a supportive community of acceptance, openness and trust. Abuse and harassment are contrary to Christian community. Therefore, First Presbyterian Church will maintain policies and procedures that will direct the reporting, investigation and intervention for issues of child abuse, harassment and sexual harassment. The Session will review these procedures annually to see that policies correspond to changes in both the civil law and the congregational organization.

(from By-Laws of the Congregation/Corporation - First Presbyterian Church Of Petaluma, rev. Aug. 8, 2004)

The following policies and procedures pertain to all church officers and volunteers who work with children and youth in the church’s ministries or on the church’s campus.

**General Policies:**

1. In order to ensure a safe environment for children and youth, the church will take all of the following measures: 1) provide appropriate **training** for all leaders, staff and volunteers who work with children or youth, 2) provide means by which potential volunteers are **screened** before beginning their volunteer work, and 3) require safe **policies and procedures** for ministering with children and youth.
2. In cooperation with the laws of California, First Presbyterian Church prohibits registered sex offenders from working with children or youth. In addition, such persons are prohibited from being in close proximity to ministries with children or youth. Such persons are also prohibited from holding an office in the church; as such a role could involve supervision of ministries with children or youth.<sup>1</sup>
3. First Presbyterian Church also prohibits the following persons from working with children or youth: anyone who has been convicted of a felony or a violent crime, or any sexual offense (even if they are not required to register as a sex offender). In addition, such persons are prohibited from being in close proximity to child or youth specific ministries (does not apply to all church intergenerational activities), and from holding an office, as such a role could involve supervision of ministries with children or youth.

**Children and Youth Safety Policies and Procedures for Volunteers**

4. In the event that a volunteer with children and youth is legally charged with a felony or a violent crime, or any sexual offense, the volunteer must immediately be placed on temporary leave from ministry with children and youth until they have been cleared of all such charges.
5. Applicants whose volunteer application is rejected due to a felony conviction will have the right to appeal to Session by either submitting a request to meet with Session to explain the circumstances of the felony conviction and the reason they believe their application should be accepted or by providing Session with a written statement explaining the reasons why they believe their application should be accepted.

<sup>1</sup> Sex offender registrants whose sex crime was against a victim under age 16 are prohibited by law from working, as an employee or volunteer, with minors, if the registrant would be working with minors directly and in an unaccompanied setting on more than incidental or occasional basis or would have supervisory or disciplinary power over the child. If the registrant's crime was not against a victim under age 16, the registrant must notify the employer or volunteer organization of his status as a registrant. Failure to comply with this law is a misdemeanor offense. (Penal Code § 290.95.) (<http://www.meganslaw.ca.gov/registration/minors.aspx?lang=ENGLISH>)

**Children and Youth Safety Policies and Procedures for Volunteers****Application:**

These guidelines apply to all congregational activities for children and youth. “CHILD” or “CHILDREN” refers to minors participating in our congregation’s children’s ministries (birth through sixth grade). “YOUTH” refers to minors participating in our congregation’s youth ministries (seventh through twelfth grade). “YOUTH HELPER” see VBS Youth Helper Guidelines. “VOLUNTEERS” refers to those people who offer to help lead or provide childcare for the children and youth who come under the care of First Presbyterian Church of Petaluma (FPC). The term “VOLUNTEERS” shall include but not be limited to all teachers, drivers, chaperones, childcare providers, youth sponsors, youth leaders and mentors who work with children and youth. “ADULT” refers to persons aged 18 and older. “LEADER” refers to persons aged 21 and older. “OFFICER” refers to persons in the church serving as Pastor, Elder or Deacon. “ADULT VISITOR” see Adult Visitor Guidelines.

**Policy:**

The Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Petaluma adopts the following policies and procedures:

**Background Screening**

The first step in preventing sexual misconduct is to thoroughly screen the backgrounds of employees and volunteers. Therefore, we take the following actions with all volunteers who wish to work with children or youth in our ministries or on our church campus:

1. Adult volunteers who wish to work with children or youth must complete the following before beginning their volunteer ministry:
  - a. Complete FPC’s adult volunteer application form (see Appendix A1).
  - b. Provide three adult references who are not related to the volunteer.
  - c. Must agree to FPC performing a violent criminal/sexual misconduct record check (consent to be obtained on adult volunteer application).
  - d. Must read FPC’s Children and Youth Safety Policies and Procedures and sign the acknowledgement form which states that they have read the policy, understand its meaning, and agree to conduct themselves in accordance with the policy.
  - e. Must be notified that they have been cleared to work with children or youth by one of the following: staff or Elder overseeing the ministry area.
2. Youth volunteers who wish to work with children or youth must complete the following before beginning their volunteer ministry:
  - a. Complete FPC’s youth volunteer application form (see Appendix A2).
  - b. Provide three adult references who are not related to the volunteer.
  - c. Must read FPC’s Children and Youth Safety Policies and Procedures and sign the acknowledgement form which states that they have read the policy, understand its meaning, and agree to conduct themselves in accordance with the policy.
  - d. Must be notified that they have been cleared to work with children or youth by one of the following: staff or Elder overseeing the ministry area.

**Children and Youth Safety Policies and Procedures for Volunteers**

3. Megan's Law website is to be checked on all adult volunteers who work with children and youth. Anyone found on Megan's Law website will not be permitted to volunteer with children or youth. In addition, the church will ensure that they comply with the California law, which states:  
Sex offender registrants whose sex crime was against a victim under age 16 are prohibited by law from working, as an employee or volunteer, with minors, if the registrant would be working with minors directly and in an unaccompanied setting on more than incidental or occasional basis or would have supervisory or disciplinary power over the child. If the registrant's crime was not against a victim under age 16, the registrant must notify the employer or volunteer organization of his status as a registrant. Failure to comply with this law is a misdemeanor offense. (Penal Code § 290.95.)  
(<http://www.meganslaw.ca.gov/registration/minors.aspx?lang=ENGLISH>)
4. Additional criminal records checks may also be obtained in compliance with FPC Policies and Procedures.
5. There may be emergency situations when a volunteer is needed and there is not time to perform the required checks before the volunteer serves in ministry. In such a case, the ministry leader must receive approval for the volunteer to serve, in that instance only, from both the Pastor and Clerk of Session (verbal approval is okay). If one-time approval is granted, the volunteer will only be allowed to work with children/youth under the direct supervision of a children/youth leader. Under no circumstance would failure to plan constitute an emergency.
6. The Office Coordinator will perform the reference checks, background checks, record keeping and confidential dissemination of such information.

**Procedures for Volunteers Working with Children and Youth**

1. We require that any volunteer be a member or active attendee of First Presbyterian Church for at least six months before the volunteer has direct involvement with or supervises children or youth.
2. We require a minimum of two adult volunteers be present with children and youth at all times with an exception as noted in the procedures for drivers of children and youth.
3. The two adult volunteers should not be related. The second adult volunteer may be a youth who has been properly screened and trained only by approval of staff or elder overseeing the ministry area. This does not preclude related volunteers working together as long as there are two non-related volunteers present.
4. One-on-one meetings between adult leaders and children or youth must be approved in advance by the Elder overseeing the area of ministry and/or the Pastor. The Pastor must be notified of all such meetings within 24 hours. The only exception to this policy would be in a situation in which the contact occurs in a public place and other persons are in and out of the area where the adult leader is working with the child or youth.
5. Whenever possible, we require that activities for children and youth be held in central, highly visible locations.
6. Indoor activities and meetings must take place in rooms with windows; otherwise a door must be left open.

**Children and Youth Safety Policies and Procedures for Volunteers**

7. A responsible supervisor must randomly monitor all Sunday School and nursery activities. Supervisors should make frequent, unannounced visits.
8. Permission slips and medical authorization are required for all off campus church sponsored children and youth events.
9. Overnight events must be supervised by two adult leaders without exception. Males and females shall have separate sleeping arrangements and be supervised by two same gender adult leaders or one same gender adult leader and one same gender adult volunteer.
10. All Adult Leaders and Adult Volunteers are responsible for being aware of the people in the proximity of children and youth.

**Restroom Procedures**

1. In the Nursery, it is preferred that diapers be changed by the adult supervisor in charge of the Nursery. Diapers are to be changed only in designated areas and in the presence of other caregivers. All appropriate hygiene measures, as outlined in the Nursery Handbook, are to be followed.
2. Preschool through Kindergartners, if located in a room that includes a bathroom, should be accompanied to the bathroom by a teacher or helper who remains outside the door. If the child requires help, the adult helping that child should first notify their teaching partner of the situation.
3. If Preschool through Kindergartners are located in a classroom without a bathroom an adult classroom helper should escort students to the restroom two at a time (i.e., two boys or two girls). Make sure that the restroom is clear before allowing a child to enter. Ask adults who are entering the restroom to please wait until the children are finished. Teachers wait outside the bathroom for the children.
4. First through sixth graders may go the restroom in pairs (i.e., two girls or two boys) without adult accompaniment.
5. Youth should not accompany children to the restroom.

**Vacation Bible School (VBS) Youth Helper Guidelines**

Youth Helpers must be in 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Youth Helpers are always under the supervision of screened adults and are not permitted to be alone with children.

**Adult Visitor Guidelines**

Adult visitors are persons who are not cleared to volunteer to work with children and youth. Adult visitors can only observe children and youth activities under the supervision of a cleared adult volunteer or leader. Adult visitors cannot have supervisory responsibility over children and youth or be left alone with children and youth.

Examples of adult visitors: parents visiting Sunday School classes and youth events; church members and parents joining youth activities such as Operation Christmas Child.

**Children and Youth Safety Policies and Procedures for Volunteers****Procedures for Drivers of Children and Youth**

1. The following rules apply when transportation by volunteers is being provided for children or youth for designated FPC activities.
  - 1.1 One of the designated leaders of the event must know the driver.
  - 1.2 Driver must be at least 25 years of age and under 70 years of age.
  - 1.3 Driver must have a valid California's driver's license for the vehicle being operated.
  - 1.4 Driver must have proof of insurance.
  - 1.5 Driver must sign an acknowledgement form indicating that they have read the FPC Children and Youth Safety Policies and Procedures for Volunteers and will abide by the procedures.
  - 1.6 The designated leaders of the event will not permit anyone to drive who appears to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
  - 1.7 There must be at least three people in the vehicle, either two adults and one child or youth or one adult and two children or youth. A Leader of children and/or youth may drive a single child or youth only with the prior permission of the parent of the child or youth.
2. The applicant must be clear for the past three years of the following: reckless driving, driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol, leaving the scene of an accident or other similarly serious offenses. The applicant's history of speeding violations and at-fault accidents will also be taken into account prior to approving them to become a volunteer driver.
3. A copy of the driver's valid unrestricted California license and current automobile insurance policy declarations must be filed with the Church Office Coordinator, before a driver is approved to drive on church sponsored children or youth activities. Drivers must submit a copy of their insurance policy declarations to the church office annually, in January of each year.
4. All vehicles used to transport children and youth for designated FPC activities must be covered by a current automobile insurance policy with the following minimum coverages: liability insurance \$100,000/\$300,000; property damage \$50,000; medical coverage for passengers \$5,000.
5. All drivers are advised that in the event of an accident (by insurance rules) their insurance company is considered primary and the Church's insurance company is secondary.

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6. Drivers are responsible for providing a safe vehicle, including but not limited to the following:

- Minimum tread on tires (not bald or worn)
- Seat belts for all passengers
- Working lights, turn signals, mirrors
- Appropriate spare tire, highway flares or reflectors
- Normally operating engine
- Normal interior and exterior
- Normal mechanical systems, including steering and brakes

If the vehicle does not meet these safety expectations, it cannot be used to transport children or youth for designated FPC activities. It is the responsibility of the designated leaders of the event to decline the use of a vehicle that shows evidence of not meeting the above criteria.

7. The driver must confirm that all seat belts are fastened prior to departing and while the vehicle is in motion.
8. To drive a 10 passenger or more vehicle, the driver must have a current, valid California Commercial Class B or Class A driver's license.

**Procedures for Childcare Provided For Congregational Activities**

1. Childcare provided for congregational activities taking place on church campus must be staffed by two adult volunteers who have been properly screened and trained or by two paid staff nursery workers or an adult volunteer and paid staff nursery worker. If both childcare workers are not adults, childcare must occur in the same building as the event with open doors between the event and childcare location. Event leader(s) must make periodic unannounced visits to the childcare location.
2. If last minute cancellations result in one childcare worker, then childcare and the event must take place in the same room.

**Prohibited Acts**

The following acts are prohibited during any congregational activity for children and youth. Additional information about identifying child abuse and neglect is attached Appendix B.

1. Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of abusive conduct toward a child or youth.
2. Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any adult and a child or youth.
3. Infliction of physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to a child or youth.

**Children and Youth Safety Policies and Procedures for Volunteers**

4. Physical neglect of a child or youth, including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to congregational activities. Adequate supervision means the type of supervision a reasonable person would provide in the same or similar situation.
5. Causing mental or emotional injury to a child or youth.
6. Possessing or accessing obscene or pornographic materials at any congregational activity.
7. Possessing illegal drugs or being under the influence of any illegal drugs.
8. Consuming or being under the influence of alcohol while participating in any congregational activity designed for children and youth.
9. Any kind of verbal remarks with sexual connotations, overtones, or innuendo directed to or about a child or youth.
10. Carrying any type of weapon.

**Procedures for Reporting Suspicious Incidents/Accidents**

1. Any incident or accident taking place during congregational activities or on church campus involving an injury requiring medical treatment, emotional trauma, death, fire, explosion, vandalism, traffic violation, suspected crime (call police first), or suspected abuse is required to be reported to the Pastor by phone as soon as possible (within 24 hours). The person in charge of the event or ministry should give a written report to the Pastor within 7 days. Other eyewitnesses to the incident (preferably adults) may also fill out reports. See Incident/Accident Report in Appendix D. NOTE: If sexual misconduct is suspected, a Report of Suspected Sexual Misconduct form must be completed - see Appendix E.
2. If church volunteers have any concerns regarding the safety of a child or youth, they should report to the staff or Elder overseeing the ministry area and the Pastor. Although volunteers may not be legally mandated to report the abuse, everyone who has reasonable grounds to believe a child or youth has been or is being abused is directed to report the possible abuse.

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3. Any items of obvious concern relating to child abuse or neglect should immediately be reported to one of the following: staff or Elder overseeing the ministry area and the Pastor. All volunteers and paid staff who are involved in ministry to children and youth should report any such items of which they have knowledge or have observed within the scope of their duties. It is not the responsibility of the reporting person or the paid staff to substantiate any allegations or suspicions. Do not interview the child regarding the suspected abuse. Do not discuss the suspected abuse. Additional information about identifying child abuse and neglect is attached in Appendix B.

### **Health and Safety Guidelines**

Age-appropriate health and safety guidelines will be provided to volunteers. See Appendix C for guidelines.

### **Training/Education of Staff, Volunteers, Children, and Parents**

Children and Youth Safety Policy training will be provided annually and is required at least once within 12 months of a person becoming a volunteer. Volunteers are encouraged to take CPR or first aid training.