



Child & Youth Protection Policy

Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes a child in my name welcomes me." (Matthew 18:5). In the Presbyterian Church (USA) we ask the whole congregation at the time of a child's baptism if they promise to encourage and nurture the child into the faith of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, the news has made us aware that church is not always a safe place for children in today's world. The Book of Order now requires that all councils adopt and implement a child protection policy to ensure that PCUSA churches are places of safety for children and youth and to protect an adult from being falsely accused of inappropriate or negligent conduct. This policy has been adopted by the session and all those working with children and youth will follow it. Approved by the Session of Pine Ridge on August 20, 2019.

Definitions:

For the purpose of the is policy, "a child" is anyone under the age of 12 or 6th grade and below and "a youth" is anyone under the age of 18 or in 7th through 12th grade. The term "worker" is anyone paid or volunteer who has any interaction with children or youth.

Screening:

Anyone wishing to work with children or youth in the church will participate in the Pine Ridge Volunteer Screening. The worker can access our church account and the results of the background check will be sent to the church office. Anyone who will be transporting children or youth will be required to have additional screening. The results from these screenings will be kept in confidence in the church office. We do require that all volunteers be part of the church for at least six months before working with children and youth. Program staff has the authority to make an exception for volunteers who are non-members and/or have not been members for six months to serve in an assistant capacity, working with a member who meets the six-month requirement.

Two Adult Rule:

No adult should ever be alone in the church building with an unrelated child or a youth. Whenever possible, two non-related adults will be present in classrooms or during activities. If only one adult or two related adults are in a room, the door shall remain open. Only during a lock-down should any classroom door be locked.

Allegations of Abuse:

There are times when a child or youth may confide in a Sunday school teacher or youth worker about abuse. If this occurs, the pastor, church administrator, or human resource chair must be informed of the allegation as soon as possible and they will take any necessary action, including state mandated reporting.

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

1. The parent or guardian of the child or youth 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 and/or criminal authorities, and the church will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. The church will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by authorities.

Youth Workers:

Sometimes it is necessary or desirable for a youth to help in the nursery or preschool classroom. Youth will be screened by the program or activity director. An adult will supervise at all times and no youth should be alone with a child.

Restroom Guidelines

Children five years of age and younger should use the bathroom nearest the classroom. Workers should escort a group of children to the bathroom, not take a single child. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. The workers 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 worker should prop open the bathroom door, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child.

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 class.

Transportation:

Driver must have a valid state driver's license and current insurance for his/her vehicle. All traffic laws, including speed limit, will be followed when transporting for the church. No driver will use a cell phone while transporting children/youth from the church. Children and youth should be transported in groups. An unaccompanied adult should not drive a single child or youth (other than his or her own) to a church sponsored activity without expressed permission, preferably in writing, from the child or youth's parent or guardian. Youth shall not drive other youth without the express consent of both the driver's and rider(s) parents.

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, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an medical incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

Pick-up of Children/Youth

Any time children/youth are left at the church or a church approved location for activities, parents/guardians should fill out a form which states who has the right to pick-up the child. No child shall be relinquished to any adult whose name is not listed on the form. At least one adult will be responsible for ensuring that all adults who are picking up children are approved by the parent/guardian.

Training

Pine Ridge 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.

Technology & Social Media

Social Networking sites, texting, e-mailing and other forms of electronic communication are a reality in the lives of most of our students. They offer an opportunity to develop and deepen relationships in new ways and are therefore a vital part of youth ministry work. But their improper use can produce serious consequences.

1. Ministry workers may not transmit any content that is illicit, unsavory, abusive, pornographic, discriminatory, harassing, or disrespectful when communicating with each other or with minors.
2. If you choose to utilize any social networking site to communicate with students associated with Pine Ridge, invite other Pine Ridge workers to view and respond to the content. Parents of students should be aware of and how:
 - a. All information, images, or videos shared electronically through public ministry communications channels aren't considered confidential.
 - b. When possible, communication should be sent to entire groups, on their wall or in public areas – not in private messages – this includes images.
 - c. Consistency with all students on all platforms is of the utmost importance.
3. Video Chatting with students is strongly discouraged – if you must, be aware of what you're wearing and of your surroundings.
4. Your e-mails and texts should communicate facts not feelings. When the content of a received email or text raises concerns or questions share it with a member of the staff, Pastoral team, or supervisor.