



Pine Ridge

Presbyterian Church

Child & Youth Protection Policy Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church Reviewed & Reapplied August 2015 – HR COMMITTEE Approved by Session September 2015

I. INTRODUCTION:

As Christians, we believe that God creates us to live in community with one another. We understand that life in the church is to be lived according to the rule of love. “Jesus said, ‘You shall love God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest commandment. And the second is like it. ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Matt 22:37-39)

As members of Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church (PRPC,) we are called to create a loving community of faith that seeks the welfare of its members and visitors. Therefore, we are committed to the protection of all children and other persons participating in the activities and programs of Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church. Abuse, exploitation or harassment in any form, physical, emotional or sexual, will not be tolerated. As part of our congregation’s baptismal vows, we covenant with each other to take responsibility for the nurture of faith. As such, the members of this church have pledged to uphold one another. In the spirit of Christ we teach, strengthen and support the individual’s relationship within the church family.

As our baptismal vows imply, we also undertake to preserve the integrity of each person within our church family. Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church is committed to the sanctity of all children. A well-implemented Child and Youth Protection policy not only protects children, but also the adults who minister to children.

This Child & Youth Protection Policy (CYPP) covers any person employed by or volunteering at Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church in any capacity involving children. Any outside organizations¹ using Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church facilities, but do not have PRPC children involved, are not required to follow this Child and Youth Protection Policy. In addition to assuring that outside group is able to provide proof of insurance, all outside groups must also show proof of a sexual misconduct clause in their insurance coverage.

II. DEFINITIONS OF IMPORTANT TERMS:

- A. Adult: a person at least 18 years of age.
- B. Child or youth: a person under 18 years of age or currently a part of the High School Youth Program.
- C. Child abuse: harm or threatened harm to a child’s health or welfare which occurs through non-accidental physical or mental injury, verbal abuse or sexual abuse.
- D. Appropriate conduct: conduct that one could reasonably assume would be acceptable and permissible by the child’s parent or guardian and the Session of Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church.
- E. Staff member: any person serving at Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church in an official paid capacity.
- F. Volunteer: an individual who of his/her own free will offer to help lead or provide child care for the children and youth who come under the care of Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church.

¹ Outside organizations are defined as organizations that are using space at PRPC but do not have interaction with PRPC children. If PRPC children are involved in an activity with an outside organization, PRPC representative(s) must be present that have completed the proper CYPP training and must meet the required screening.

III. REQUIREMENTS:

In order to provide a safe community for children and adults, the church requires all employees and volunteers working with children to comply with this Child and Youth Protection Policy adopted by the Session of Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church. In doing so, those individuals will be asked to comply with at least the Basic Screening Criteria and possibly more depending on the level of interaction with a child during service to the church (see Part VI) and review the attached “General Guidelines and Procedures” as part of their orientation and training. All employees will be under the supervision of the Head of Staff/Pastor , Associate Pastor and the Church Administrator. All qualifying volunteers will be under the supervision of the respective program staff persons and appropriate ministry.

IV. REVIEW:

The Church Administrator shall provide annual reports to the Session as to the effectiveness of this Child and youth protection Policy. (See Part X.)

V. CATEGORIES OF VOLUNTEER/EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIPS

- A. ***Category A Relationships*** include those individuals volunteering in situations where there will be at least two or more adults present in the company of children, such as Sunday School, Vacation Bible School and others. All employees and volunteers who qualify for a Category A Relationship shall undergo Basic Screening Criteria for suitability and protection to work with children.

Basic Screening Criteria include the following:

1. Completing and signing a written Screening Form for Volunteer and Staff.
2. Successfully completing a child safety training and educational event arranged by the church as outlined in Part IX.
3. Completing and signing Authorization to Release Information Form.

B. ***Category B Relationships*** include those individuals volunteering in a position that may include the following situations: any overnight activity with children (e.g., chaperoning retreats, trips, lock-ins), any potential one-on-one activities with a child (e.g., counseling, tutoring), and positions that involve driving or transporting a minor off church campus in either a personal, church vehicle or rental vehicle.

Employees and volunteers meeting the criteria for Category B Relationship positions will undergo additional screening which includes the following:

1. All Basic Screening Criteria (listed above)
2. Agreeing to a Criminal Records Check and any other background checks that are deemed necessary by the church including a National Criminal Records Check.
3. All potential drivers must provide a copy of a valid driver’s license.
4. Motor Vehicle Report will be performed on all PRPC drivers who are using a Church insured vehicle for all those transporting children.

C. ***Category C Relationships*** include all paid employees of the church. Those applying for employment and all current employees at Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church must satisfactorily complete the following:

1. All Category B Relationship screening criteria.
2. Child Abuse Prevention training for staff that interact with minors as a part of their job criteria.

VI. GENERAL GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

All activities involving children will be supervised or led by at least two adult staff or volunteer workers, one of which must be trained and screened. The only exception to this policy would be in a situation in which the contact occurs in a public place or other persons are able to clearly witness the interaction by being in and out of the area where the employee or volunteer is working with the child. *If a situation unexpectedly does not meet this criteria of the policy, then alternatives must be put into place so that the event is in compliance. Trained staff or trained volunteers must always try to remain compliant to the best of their ability.*

- A. A youth worker may be substituted for one of two required adult workers provided the youth is at least five years older than the child they serve. A youth worker may be in grades seven through twelve.
- B. The opportunity for a church member, whether child or adult, to share confidentially his or her private and personal concerns with another member can contribute significantly to his or her spiritual, emotional and physical well-being. Indeed, this may be the only time when a person may be willing to disclose any abuse he or she may be suffering. Such private and confidential conversations are an integral part of a caring and loving Christian community. On the other hand, such private conversations create a very high-risk environment for potential abuse situations to arise. If an unaccompanied pastor or program director meets with a single child to conduct a private discussion, that meeting shall be held at Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church when the church is open for activities or shall be held in a public place. In no case shall an unaccompanied pastor or program director meet with a single child at Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church unless there is at least one other employee, member, volunteer, or the parent or guardian of the child in the building and aware of the meeting.
- C. Volunteers and employees must read the "Child and Youth Protection Policy" of this church, agree to it by completing and signing the appropriate application form(s), and submitting to the appropriate level of screening.
- D. In accordance with Part VIII of this policy, employees and volunteers are required to report immediately any suspicious or inappropriate behavior that suggests (1) sexual abuse or exploitation, (2) neglect, (3) physical abuse, or (4) emotional abuse.
- E. Types of abuse that do not include touching, but are nonetheless improper and prohibited include: verbal comments of a sexual nature; pornographic video and pictures; obscene phone calls, emails and text messages; all electronic or other communication of a sexual nature; exhibitionism, voyeurism or allowing persons aged birth to 12th grade (or 18 years of age whichever is greater) to witness sexual activity.

VII. ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

- A. For On-Site Activities
 - 1. For overnight events, at least two adults, one male and one female, should be present when children of both sexes are represented in the event.
 - 2. Restroom use: Preschool age children shall be accompanied to the restroom by an adult who shall assist as needed. If the child needs assistance, the bathroom door will be left open. The child's teacher shall be informed of their destination at the time of exiting and returning to the classroom. Elementary school age children may choose a same sex "buddy" from their classroom or activity group to accompany them to the restroom, or with the child's teacher's approval, an elementary school aged child may use the restroom unattended. The child's teacher shall be informed of their destination at the time of exiting and returning to the classroom.
- B. For Off-Site Activities
 - 1. As each facility will be different, it will be the responsibility of the program director to determine how best to use the facility to comply with this policy.
 - 2. For overnight events, at least two adults, one male and one female, should be present when children of both sexes are represented in the event.
 - 3. All Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church sponsored off-site events for children, must have a minimum of two adult leaders present.
- C. For Transportation
 - 1. All volunteer and staff persons who drive and/or chaperone off-site trips involving children shall be in conformance with all aspects of the Child and youth protection Policy.
 - 2. Minors should be transported in groups. An unaccompanied adult should not drive a single minor (other than his or her own) in a church-sponsored activity without express permission, preferably in writing, from the child's parent or guardian. Children shall not drive other children without the express consent of both the driver's and rider(s) parents.

3. In the case of an emergency or with written permission of a parent or guardian, a staff member or volunteer will be allowed to drive a single minor.
 4. When transporting youth to and from home before/after a PRPC event, one of the following criteria must be met:
 - ◆ Have parent(s) pick up youth or arrange other transportation after an event that has no other PRPC workers available; wait in a public area for final pick-ups,
 - ◆ Have more than one PRPC worker in vehicle at all times until all youth have been dropped off,
 - ◆ If no other PRPC worker is available, only in the event that explicit parent approval/knowledge of lone PRPC worker transporting single child should occur.
- D. For Non-church Sponsored Use of the Church Facility
1. Any non-member or outside group who uses Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church facilities (i.e. Boy & Girl Scouts, youth groups, theater classes, tutoring or choir groups visiting) will be required to comply with the church's two adult rule as defined in this policy's "General Guidelines and Procedures."
 2. At the time an Outside Group contract is made with a non-church group or person to use the church facility, it shall be the duty of the Office Manager or Church Administrator to obtain written confirmation from the outside group's program director of their need to comply with Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church's policies.
- E. For Employees of Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church
1. It shall be the responsibility of the employee's supervisor to give each newly hired employee a copy of the Child and Youth Protection Policy.
 2. An obligation to comply with and enforce the Child and Youth Protection Policy shall be inherent in accepting employment at Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church.
 3. Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church employees and volunteers are not permitted to form dating relationships with children.
 4. The Church Administrator along with other Program Staff, shall review the implementation of the "Child and Youth Protection Policy" and report their findings to Session at least annually.

VIII. REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO REPORTS OF SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE ACTIVITY & DISCLOSURE

- A. Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect according to Federal Law – document available in the church office.
- B. Initial reporting of suspicious or inappropriate activity:
Suspicious or inappropriate activity brought to the attention of an employee or volunteer must be reported immediately to the appropriate paid staff person in charge of the event. The person receiving the report of the alleged abuse or suspicious activity shall then document the date, time and circumstances of the alleged incident on the Incident Report Form kept in a locked space.
- C. Responding to the initial report of suspicious or inappropriate activity:
 1. The person receiving the initial report of suspicious activity will report immediately to the paid staff person in charge of the event who will then report to the Responding Committee. In the case where either the Church Administrator or the Head of Staff is the alleged perpetrator, or where a member of either person's immediate family is the alleged perpetrator or victim, the Human Resources Committee Chair will replace that person as the individual to receive the report and on the Responding Committee.
 2. The current Human Resources Committee Chair, Church Administrator and the Head of Staff will make up the Responding Committee.
 3. The Responding Committee must comply with all state laws and shall not further investigate the reported incident to avoid compromising, interfering with or delaying a legal investigation.

4. All allegations shall be regarded as serious, and due consideration shall be given to the rights and privacy of both the alleged victim and the person being accused.
 5. The accused individual, whether staff or volunteer, will be required to refrain from participating in all child activities until it is determined if further action shall be taken. Care shall be taken to respond to all allegations in a professional manner.
 6. After reviewing the reported circumstances, action shall be taken as described in Section D, "Staff Response to Allegations of Abuse or Neglect."
 7. In the absence of the Pastor or Head of Staff, Church Administrator or the Chair of the Human Resources Committee, the Associate Pastor shall serve with the available representative of the Responding Committee in making this determination.²
 8. If a reported incident does not provide reasonable suspicion of abuse, the Responding Committee has the option to recommend appropriate action.
- D. Staff response to allegations of abuse or neglect
- If the Responding Committee determines there is reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, then the following steps shall be taken:
1. A report will be made immediately to the proper authorities, either law enforcement or the Missouri Department of Social Services.
 2. All allegations will be taken seriously and will be responded to in a professional manner .
 3. If necessary, the Responding Committee shall incorporate additional persons to assist the Head of Staff and Church Administrator in responding to the situation. Those individuals may include; 1)Associate Pastor, 2) one other member of Session appointed by the Head of Staff/Pastor or the Church Administrator , 3) legal counsel, 4) others as deemed appropriate by the Head of Staff/Pastor (i.e., additional pastoral counseling or mental health officials.)
 4. If appropriate under the law, under the strict guidance of the legal counsel and insurance carrier, the Responding Committee may also:
 - a) Assign a person to the Responding Committee for each of the accused individuals and the alleged victim as a contact and for support.
 - b) Contact the alleged victim's parents, if it will not put the child in jeopardy.
 - c) Maintain documents of all efforts to handle the situation.
 - d) Assign a committee member to be the spokesperson after the Responding Committee has fulfilled its legal reporting requirements. This person will be the sole individual communicating to outside authorities or other persons (including the Session, the congregation and the media) regarding the incident.
- E. Staff Care of Documents
1. All information shall be treated in a confidential manner. In the case of a response to a report of suspicious activity, only the Responding Committee, including the appropriate legal counsel, shall have access to the information on these documents.
 2. The documents shall be kept in secure storage.
 3. Personal interviews will be conducted by the Head of Staff or Church Administrator, application reviews and reference checks will be conducted by the appropriate program staff person(s), and any required background checks will be submitted by the Church Administrator. Approval will be documented on the attached form(s) prior to an individual beginning service.

F. Disqualification from Service

² *Under Missouri law, failure to report child abuse or neglect by a mandated reporter is a class A misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of \$1,000 and/or one year in county jail.*

1. Any person for whom the application, interview, or criminal background check discloses information indicating that said individual is presently under active investigation for, or placed on probation for, or has been convicted of (1) a felony, (2) a sexual offense, or (3) abuse or neglect will not be permitted to work or volunteer in any church-sponsored activity or program involving children or youth.
2. If information of a cautionary nature is revealed through a reference or background check, the person conducting the check shall note this information in writing for the application file and communicate it to the appropriate program director. The Church Administrator and the immediate supervisor of the employee or program director of the volunteer shall consider this information and decide on a course of action. The decision must be documented in writing, dated, and placed in the person's file. In such case, the person's application may be
 - a) Accepted unconditionally;
 - b) Accepted with clearly defined restrictions; or
 - c) Denied
3. The Church Administrator shall inform the employee/volunteer of the decision and its implications.
4. Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church reserves the right to exclude any person from working with children in a church-sponsored activity at any time for any reason, including upon information received as a result of screening or as a result of any other information or allegations of misconduct or violation of this policy.

IX. EDUCATION AND TRAINING OBJECTIVES FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

All employees and volunteers meeting any of the "Categories" assessment guidelines must complete Child and Youth Protection training. The training will:

1. Address critical aspects of Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church's Child and Youth Protection Policy and ensure that all employees and volunteers understand and are in compliance with the policy.
2. All staff and volunteers will have the ability to complete the CYPP training online. There is a required 25 question quiz at the end of the training to ensure that the Policy is understood and the training was comprehended. A certification will be received by the trainee once these requirements have been met.
3. For individuals who do not have access to a computer at home, Pine Ridge will supply a computer and a quiet space for such individuals to complete their online training. Such arrangements must be made with the Administrator, Office Manager or Associate Pastor.
4. All employees and volunteers of Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church should renew training and complete a background check to be rechecked every two years.

In addition to the policy's procedures and guidelines, Child and Youth Protection training for working with children will occur within two (2) months. Such training shall:

1. Include reasoning and Biblical/theological support for the training, as well as connections to our responsibilities as members of Christ's Church and to the baptismal vows we take with each baptism.
2. Include awareness training on issues related to child abuse, an overview of statistics and probabilities of infractions and occurrences, strategies for the protection of children, recommendations about provision of support, and guidance for the victims of abuse.
3. Include a question and answer time to address all trainee questions, needs for clarification, or interpretation of the policy and procedures, resources, helps, and/or concerns.

X. CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION TEAM

1. The Child and Youth Protection Team (CPT) is a sub-committee of the Human Resources Committee.
2. The Church Administrator is the primary staff person assigned to the CPT.

3. The CPT shall consist of a minimum of five members, including, but not limited to, a representative of the Children's Christian Education Committee, a representative of the Youth Ministries Committee, a representative of the Worship Committee, and two members of the Human Resources Committee.
4. The CPT shall meet at least semi-annually to conduct its business. Additional meetings may be called as needed.
5. The CPT shall report to the Session following each meeting.
6. The primary duties of the CPT include the following:
 - ◆ To receive reports at least annually from program staff persons and respective ministries as to the effectiveness of the Child and Youth Protection Policy (CYPP) of Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church.
 - ◆ To review recommendations for and/or to suggest changes to the CYPP.
 - ◆ To implement and supervise the screening procedures enumerated in the CYPP.
 - ◆ To conduct training classes as outlined in the CYPP for staff and volunteer workers with children and youth.
 - ◆ To implement and supervise risk reduction procedures outlined in the CYPP.