

Grace Presbyterian Church, PC(USA) Child Protection Policy
Adopted November 2011, revised April 2015, revised in Personnel Policies 2018
Excerpted from Grace Personnel Policy Manual

Background and Purpose

As the Body of Christ, we covenant with one another to create a community where all people experience the security, love, and acceptance of our Christian community. We have a special responsibility to protect those in our community who are most vulnerable.

The purpose of this Child Protection Policy is to provide a safe, nurturing environment for children and other minors and to safeguard the employees and volunteers who work with and care for them. Although there are other dimensions to creating a safe, nurturing environment, this policy is intended to guard specifically against sexual abuse by those coming into contact with children and other minors.

This policy applies to all programs and activities of Grace Presbyterian Church (GPC), whether on the church campus or not.

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

- *Minor or minors* refers to those legally considered to be minors; that is less than 18 years of age, as well as those considered to be legally incompetent.
- *Employees* are individuals hired full, part-time, or per diem to work for the church for salary or wages.
- *Volunteers* are individuals, members or non-members, who provide services to GPC and who receive no monetary remuneration.
- *Abuse* refers to physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse.
- *Physical abuse* is causing injury to a child, or failure to prevent physical injury, or suffering, to a child, including deliberate hitting, beating, shaking, throwing, burning, drowning, suffocating, or poisoning.
- *Neglect* is endangering of a child's life through failure to provide age-appropriate care and includes withholding of food, education, or emotional support.
- *Mental/emotional abuse* is causing adverse effect on the emotional and behavioral development of a child by persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment.
- *Sexual abuse* is the engagement of a child in sexual activities for which the child is developmentally unprepared and cannot give informed consent. Abuse may be physical or can be accomplished without force or touching, for example, through exhibitionism, voyeurism, or using a child in the production of pornography.

Standards of Conduct

1. At all times, unrelated two adult volunteers or employees will work in pairs in a classroom or activity involving minors. If two unrelated adults are not available, an unrelated minor sixteen years of age or older may serve as the second participant.
2. In order to protect minors, volunteers and employees in one-on-one situations with a minor are discouraged. If no other unrelated adult is available, it is recommended that the meeting occur in a public location with doors left open and other adults must be informed of the situation beforehand or as soon after as possible.
3. Minors must be transported in groups for church activities rather than alone, when this transport is provided by volunteers or church employees. Prior to any minor's participation

in church transportation or any activity, the minor's parent or guardian will provide a written permission slip and waiver of liabilities.

4. All overnight activities must have a minimum of two unrelated adult chaperones present of the same sex as the minor participants; for mixed youth overnights there must be both a male and female chaperone, unrelated to each other, present.
5. Employees and volunteers caring for minors shall not touch, interact with or otherwise communicate with minors in any way that is intended or may be interpreted to be sexually stimulating. Common expressions of affection (side hugs), affirmation (pats on the back), support (prayer), or physical care taking (changing diapers or clothing of young children) are permitted as long as respect for the minor's personal wishes, or the wishes of the minor's parent(s)/guardians(s), about being touched are honored, and those expressions are not excessive, or imposed upon the minor.

Supervision and Accountability

1. All session committees and employees will seek volunteers in sufficient numbers to staff church programs consistent with this policy.
2. Volunteers who are asked to serve in a role in which they interact with minors should be a member of the church for six months or longer and will be well known to the supervising volunteer or employee.
3. The Session shall approve a list of volunteers, teachers, youth advisors, nursery caregivers, and others who work with the minors of this church.
4. Communication and explanation of this policy will be included annually in all training and orientation programs for employees and volunteers. In addition, this policy will be sent to all Elders, kept on file in the church office, and each new member class will be provided with a copy of the policy. Each year, employees and volunteers will receive training on this policy.
5. Volunteers working with children and youth will read and sign the policy on an annual basis (generally in September as the program year begins).
6. Volunteers working with children and youth will attend preventive training no less than once every two years. Preventive training will be offered annually.
7. All applicants (for both employee and volunteer positions) seeking to be employed by GPC or participate in any programs connected to the church that involve minors will be required to complete and sign a release form to undergo a background check that will review criminal history, sex offender registries, child abuse/neglect registries and any other relevant databases and to allow GPC to contact reference. Following the background check and reference check, GPC may ask the applicant for an interview to address any concerns raised. Completion of the background review process is a condition of working in GPC-related programs involving minors. GPC reserves the right to request a background check at any time during employment or volunteer service and to remove any employee or volunteer at any time

Reporting of Sexual Abuse

Anyone reasonably suspecting that sexual abuse has occurred shall immediately report the information to the Pastor or appropriate staff person. All allegations of sexual abuse will be taken seriously and all reasonable allegations will be reported to the appropriate government authority as required by law. The Pastor or Clerk of Session will also inform the National Capital Presbytery. GPC will cooperate fully with government and church authorities in the investigation of allegations of sexual abuse. All persons involved in the investigation should hold information in strict confidence, subject to such disclosures and required by county/state law and PC(USA) procedures.