

**Presbytery of New Hope
2022 McDonald Ln.
Raleigh, NC 27608**

Child and Youth Protection Policy

Introduction

Jesus said, “Whoever welcomes (a) child ... welcomes me” (Matthew 8:15). Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of the church and in the realm of God.

Jesus also said, “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones..., it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 8:16). Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection for the little ones, the children. Children, youth, and adults without the capacity to consent must be protected from economic, physical, and sexual exploitation and abuse.

God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong. In response to this challenge, the Presbytery of New Hope offers this child, youth and vulnerable adult protection policy to reduce the risk of sexual abuse.

Statement of Covenant

As a Christian community of faith, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that enhance the safety and spiritual growth of all our minors and vulnerable adults as well as all who work with them. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will educate all who work with children and youth regarding the creation and maintenance of a safe environment (including first aid and methods of discipline); we will have a clear procedure for reporting any suspected incident of misconduct, and we will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

Definition of Terms

Child: a person between the ages of 0-11.

Youth: a person between the ages of 12-17.

Vulnerable Adult: a person over the age of 18 without the developmental or cognitive capacity to consent.

Participant: any child, youth, or vulnerable adult who is in the care of Presbytery staff or volunteers during official Presbytery activities, such as Presbytery meetings or Youth Council events.

Sexual abuse: The Book of Order defines sexual abuse as “any offense involving sexual conduct in relation to (1) any person under the age of eighteen years or anyone over the age of eighteen years without the mental capacity to consent; or (2) any person when the conduct includes force, threat, coercion, intimidation, or misuse of ordered ministry or position.” (Book of Order, D-10.0401c.)

Sexual Harassment includes: sexually oriented jokes or humor, graphic or degrading comments about a person’s physical appearance, verbal suggestions of sexual activity, questions or comments about sexual behavior, display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures, or repeated requests for unwanted social engagements.

Application Procedures

- Each individual seeking to work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults must be a regular participant in the life of the church.
- Childcare for Presbytery meetings is arranged by the host church. Host churches should already have abuse prevention policies in place, which will apply to the childcare workers.
- Individuals seeking to work with other Presbytery programs involving children, youth or vulnerable adults shall submit an application to the event leadership. Applications will be held on file at the Presbytery office.
- Applicants shall submit to a background check conducted by the Presbytery staff. Ministers within New Hope Presbytery already have background checks on file in the Presbytery office.
- Adults in charge of children/youth/vulnerable adults shall not have other responsibilities during the event. Responsibilities such as registration, food, and keynote shall be covered by separate teams of staff or volunteers.
- Adult volunteers serving a term as Youth Council volunteers shall attend an abuse prevention training. Healthy Boundaries training offered by the Presbytery, or Darkness2Light training offered by the YMCA shall qualify.

Reporting and Response Procedures

Reporting: A person who has reason to believe that a child, youth or vulnerable adult is being abused or neglected shall immediately report such information to:

- the Department of Social Services in which the child/youth/vulnerable adult lives
- the leadership of the particular activity or ministry
- the Commission on Ministry of the Presbytery of New Hope
- the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery. The Stated Clerk will then appoint an Investigative Committee.

Even if an individual has already made a report to the appropriate government authority, the Presbytery of New Hope will always make its own report of suspected abuse or neglect occurring at Presbytery-sponsored activities.

Anyone suspecting sexual harassment at a Presbytery event shall report to the leadership of the event, the Commission on Ministry, and the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery.

Response procedure:

- Upon receiving a report of suspected abuse, neglect, or harassment, the Stated Clerk appoints an Investigative Committee. If the report confirms misconduct, then the investigative committee turns over its report to the Presbytery Judicial Commission for disciplinary action.
- The individual suspected of abuse or misconduct is not to have any contact with the alleged victim until the committee reports.
- The Presbytery of New Hope will cooperate fully with government authorities in the investigation of abuse or neglect.

Standards of Conduct

Adults volunteering with children, youth, or vulnerable adults shall abide by these Standards of Conduct.

- All chaperones for Youth Council events shall be age 21 or older.
- All childcare rooms must have at least one worker who is age 18 or older in the room.
- Advisors and childcare providers shall work in pairs. In an emergency, an advisor or childcare provider may work alone if there is visual access (for example, an open door.)
- When indoors, activities shall take place in rooms with windows in the doors, or with open doors.
- Adults shall not sleeping quarters with children or youth. Event leadership will create and document a written agreement for any child, youth or vulnerable adult who requires a caregiver to be present during sleeping hours.
- Separate shower/hygiene times for males and females will be observed.
- Event leadership will work with any participant requesting special accommodations. Families with any concerns are strongly encouraged to contact event leadership well in advance of the event.
- Event leadership will communicate with parents/guardians in the event of an emergency.
- When an employee or volunteer for Presbytery activities transports participants, travel shall occur in groups: two adults in a vehicle with at least two participants is ideal. If a participant is to travel alone with an employee or volunteer, the express permission of the participant's parent or guardian must be obtained. Parental permission to travel with any employee or volunteer shall be obtained in writing annually.

- All employees and volunteers shall abide by the Electronic Communication Guidelines outlined below.

This brochure will be made available to congregations in the presbytery, and to all adults seeking to serve at presbytery events.

Electronic Communication

All communication between staff/volunteers and children/youth/vulnerable adults must be transparent. Particular attention must be given to electronic communication. The following are examples of appropriate and inappropriate electronic communication:

Appropriate:

- Communicating through group or public forums. Email listservs, text groups, and social media groups which include more than one adult advisor (and may include parents as well) are appropriate.
- Having designated photographers for events
- Only using personal electronic devices during approved breaks or emergencies, and not during program time (this applies to leaders and participants)
- Using discretion when posting photos of participants in swimwear.

Inappropriate:

- Harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning or humiliating comments
- Sexually oriented conversations
- Continual, private conversations between clergy, employees, and volunteers with individual youth
- Posting pictures of organization participants without permission
- Posting inappropriate comments on pictures
- Posting pictures of shower areas, or photos focusing on an individual's body.

This document approved by Presbytery of New Hope at its 105th stated meeting on October 27, 2018. With thanks to Salem Presbytery, the Insurance Board, and New Hope Presbyterian Church of Chapel Hill, NC for use of wording from their policies.