

Capitol Hill Presbyterian Church

Policy to Safeguard Children

SUMMARY

Capitol Hill Presbyterian Church (CHPC) is committed to providing a safe, secure and nurturing environment for children participating in the activities of the church. At every child's baptism, we as a congregation affirm our responsibility to nurture the child in Christian life.

The policy described below is made necessary by increased awareness that child abuse in churches is much more common than previously thought, as is litigation against churches, church staff and volunteers. Child protection measures lessen the likelihood of harm to children in our care as well as the likelihood of groundless or predatory litigation.

- *No employee or volunteer at CHPC will inflict or allow anyone to inflict physical or mental harm on any child. This prohibition includes touching or interaction with a child -- or between children -- for the purpose of sexual stimulation.*

To insure that this policy is carried out:

All employees and volunteers are required to receive a copy of the policy regarding children and to acknowledge in writing that he or she has received and understands it.

Volunteers must receive Session approval for work with children. A volunteer must have been affiliated with the church for at least six months, must complete a simple background statement, and must have had an electronic background check. In addition, all employees will be subject to the electronic background check.

For volunteers between the ages of 16 and 18, no electronic background check is needed, but the young person's statement must be signed by a parent or guardian affirming that the young person has not been involved in a juvenile offense involving force or sexual abuse, and has permission to work with children at CHPC.

All children's activities will be supervised by two approved persons -- employees and/or volunteers. The two must not be a married couple or unmarried partners. This "two-adult rule" can be waived, however, when (1) the parents or guardians of the children have signed a special consent form, (2) the activity is taking place in a public location, or (3) there is a genuine emergency.

If the two-adult rule is not being followed and consent forms have not been received for all the children present, then activities involving children must be conducted in open areas, rooms with open doors or with doors that have transparent upper panels.

Groups using church facilities for children's programs will indemnify CHPC in the event of a lawsuit stemming from any allegations of child abuse in their programs .

- The Session will appoint two Designated Reporting Members - at least one of whom is a member of the Session - who will receive all complaints of alleged child abuse and report credible allegations to an appropriate government agency, to the Session and the

parents. Allegations against an ordained minister will also be reported to the Presbytery Stated Clerk

- The church will protect the privacy of all records regarding child protection, and records will be stored separately in the church administrator's office. The Personnel and Administration Committee will review this policy at least once a year.

This summary is provided as an aid in reading and understanding the policy statement set out below. Any variation between the summary and the full policy statement is unintentional and the actual policy statement takes precedence over the summary.

Capitol Hill Presbyterian Church
Policy to Safeguard Children

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Capitol Hill Presbyterian Church

Policy to Safeguard Children

PURPOSE

Capitol Hill Presbyterian Church (“CHPC”) has a rich history of ministry to children that affirms the importance and worth of each individual as a child of God. During each baptism of an infant, child or adult into this covenant community of faith, the members of CHPC pledge to uphold that person in Jesus Christ and to teach, strengthen and support the individual's relationship within the household of God. The Session and Congregation affirm our commitment to the safety, welfare and protection of all children participating in the activities and program of the church.

The policy and procedures described below are intended to lessen the risk of any form of abuse or harassment of any child, whether physical, mental or sexual, by any employee, teacher or volunteer of this church while on church property or while engaged in church activities or programs. They are adopted for the protection of our children, our employees, our volunteers and our church family as a whole.

DEFINITIONS

Adult - Any person 18 years of age or older.

Appropriate government agency in the District of Columbia - Allegations of child abuse in the District of Columbia are investigated both by the Division of Child and Family Services within the Department of Human Services and the Metropolitan Police Department. To report child abuse, call (202) 671-SAFE.

Approved person, or approved adult - Employee or volunteer approved by Session of CHPC to lead or assist with activities with children.

Child or Children - Person or persons younger than 18 years of age.

Child Abuse - Dist. of Co I. Code § 16-2301(23) provides: "(A) The term 'abused', when used with reference to a child, means: (i) infliction of physical or mental injury upon a child; (ii) sexual abuse or exploitation of a child; or (ii) negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child." Examples include:

- deliberately inflicting, threatening to inflict, or permitting another to inflict or threaten a child with physical or mental injury;
- creating a substantial risk of death, disfigurement, or physical or mental injury;
- refusal to provide care necessary to the health of the child or abandonment of a child left in one's care;
- touching or non-touching interaction between a child and another child, or between a child and an adult, for the purpose of sexual stimulation - always considered forced when the interaction involves a child and an adult, regardless of whether the child consented.

Designated Reporting Member (DRM) - One of two CHPC members who has been designated by the Session as a person to review the information generated in the screening of volunteers and to whom all suspicions of child abuse are to be reported; and who, after prompt consultation with

the other Designated Reporting Member, is responsible for reporting the abuse as provided in this policy statement.

Electronic Background Check - A review of, and report on, public criminal records related to a particular individual to reveal any adult felony convictions.

Employee - Any person who works for CHPC for salary or wages, including persons who are classified as self employed for income tax purposes, both ordained and lay persons, and both full and part time employees. The term does not include an employee of a firm contracting with CHPC to perform specified improvements to the building and equipment.

Public Relations Advisor - The CHPC member or other person designated by the Session to respond to inquiries from press and public or to advise the Pastor and Clerk of Session when an incident of Child Abuse has occurred.

Volunteer - An adult who has agreed to engage in an activity under the auspices of CHPC, without compensation, that involves regular interaction with children, including, but not limited to, church school teachers, unpaid child care providers, and youth group leaders, trip supervisors and drivers.

Volunteers under the age of 18, or "young volunteers" - Church members between the-age of 16 and 18. A young volunteer may be paid an hourly wage for occasional work and does not become an employee within the meaning of this policy statement solely for that reason.

CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES AND POLICIES

A. General Provisions.

1. Public policy. The CHPC Policy to Safeguard Children will be posted and maintained accessible to the congregation and visitors in ways including but not limited to the following: a) posting on CHPC and Washington Seminar Center web sites; b) a statement in Sunday worship service bulletin that the Policy may be requested from the pastor or a member of Session; 3) copies of the policy available in the CHPC office. The names of the current DRMs will be listed on all printed and web-posted copies of the Policy.

2. Confidentiality. All information about persons that is generated in the application of the procedures described below will be retained only as provided in section *B.5* below. Only DRMs, the Moderator of the Personnel Committee and persons with a lawful right to child protection information will have access to this material. Subpoenas or requests from government agencies for Child Protection information shall be brought to the Session at the next stated Session meeting or at a special meeting called for the purpose of responding to the subpoena or request. Only the Session may authorize release of Child Protection information and then only in executive Session.

B. Selection of Persons for Activities With Children

1. Copy of Policy and Procedures. Current Employees and Volunteers, and prospective Volunteers or applicants to become Employees, shall be given a copy of this Policy to Safeguard Children and shall acknowledge receipt of it in writing.

2. Appointment of Volunteers - All volunteers for roles in which they interact regularly with children or play other roles included in the definition of "Volunteer" above shall be approved for their roles by Session. To be approved, a Volunteer must have been affiliated with CHPC (either a member or in regular attendance) for at least six months; complete a simple Background Statement, Attachment 1; and have an Electronic Background Check. The moderator of the committee responsible for the children's activity, the moderator of the Personnel and Administration Committee, or the Pastor will ask a DRM to arrange for the Electronic Background Check to be done. The two DRMs will review the Background Statement (Attachment 1) and the Electronic Background Check report and certify on Attachment 1 that they have "no reason to believe that placing children in her/his care would put them at risk of 'child abuse' as defined by this Policy." Should the information yield a reason for concern, the DRM will follow procedures described below in 6. If the applicant is found acceptable, a copy of the certified Attachment 1 shall be given to the member of Session who initiated the request, who may then request Session approval for the Volunteer as a Screened Adult. The moderator of the P&A Committee shall keep a list of Screened Adults. The committee moderator or the team leader responsible for the children's activity shall ensure that Volunteers (as defined above) are Screened Adults.

3. Appointment of Young Volunteers - Young CHPC members or regular attendees between the ages of 16 and 18 may be approved for interaction with children only on a defined time basis, such as for the summer months, during Christmas Holidays, etc, and will work with an adult. They will not be asked to drive motor vehicles except in case of emergency. The young Volunteer does not receive an Electronic Background check, but his or her Background Statement must be signed by a parent or guardian affirming that the young person has not been involved in a juvenile offense involving force, threat of force, or sexual abuse, and has permission to work with children at CHPC.

4. Screening of Employees - An applicant for employment at CHPC must complete an Employment Questionnaire, Attachment 2. The search team of the Personnel and Administration (P&A) Committee that recommends an employee will ensure that references shown on the application are checked and an Electronic Background Check is obtained. Regardless of whether an employee's position involves regular interaction with children, the procedures in this policy statement must be followed.

Within ninety days of the adoption of this policy by the Session, current employees will sign the certification and the release on the Employment Questionnaire, after which an Electronic Background Check on each current employee will be completed.

5. Management of Screening Records - Once the report of the Electronic Background Check has been reviewed by the DRMs or (in the case of an employee, by the moderator of the P&A Committee), a DRM will destroy the sheet in Attachments 1 and 2 that contains both the person's date of birth and social security number. The remaining sheet(s) of the volunteer's Background Statement or Employee Questionnaire and the report of the Electronic Background Check will be stored in the church office.

The filed documents for Employee applicants who are hired and for Volunteers shall be retained permanently in the locked file. Once the Volunteer is no longer a Volunteer or the Volunteer or Employee leaves CHPC, these documents and any other material generated in the screening shall be placed in a sealed envelope in the locked file.

6. *Adverse findings* - If the results of screening a proposed volunteer are judged by the DRMs inconsistent with certifying that they have "no reason to believe that placing children in her/his care would put them at risk of 'child abuse' as defined by this Policy," the DRMs shall jointly with the Pastor pursue a "pastoral" approach that ensures: 1) the proposed volunteer is not named to a CHPC volunteer role with children; 2) he or she is informed of the decision and treated with love and concern; 3) the information is treated confidentially except insofar as the DRMs and pastor may consider it necessary to share to prevent victimization of children.

If the results of screening a job applicant are judged by the moderator of the P&A Committee to be adverse, the applicant shall not be selected for employment at CHPC. The P&A moderator or the leader of the search team shall jointly with the pastor determine how to treat this information with the applicant and/or other parties.

C. Circumstances for Children's Activities

1. *Two Adult Rule* - At least two approved Volunteers and/or Employees will be present at activities involving children. Two adults who are married to each other or who live together as partners do not satisfy the Two Adult Rule. There are three exceptions to this rule: (1) when the child's parent or guardian has signed a Waiver of Two-Adult Rule, Attachment 3; (2) where the relevant activity is conducted wholly in a place where other adults are present or pass through, which is visible to other adults through an open or transparent door, or in an open space; and (3) a *bona fide* emergency.

2. *Exception to Open or Transparent Doors* - This rule will not apply to bathrooms or to sleeping areas in the Seminar Center as long as supervising adults are in the adjoining common areas in the Seminar Center.

3. *Parental Presence* - All parents or guardians of children involved in activities at CHPC have a right to participate in those activities and to enter the premises in which the activities are conducted at any time. Parents will not qualify as one of the adults for purposes of the Two Adult Rule unless the parent is a Volunteer appointed by Session (B-2, above) and the other adult is not his or her spouse or partner.

D. Responding and Reporting

1. The Session will appoint two Designated Reporting Members (DRM) - at least one of whom is a member of the Session - to receive all complaints of alleged child abuse and follow the procedures described in this section.

2. Any person dealing with children at CHPC (Volunteer, Employee, parent, or other member of the CHPC community) shall report any and all incidents of child abuse to a DRM regardless of whether the incident is obvious, alleged, or merely suspected. The DRM will complete a Child Abuse Report Form, Attachment 4, for every incident reported. Unless the DRM decides that the reported incident is plainly frivolous or clearly without merit, the DRM will furnish the incident report along with percipient witnesses' names, addresses and telephone numbers to the appropriate government agency. Regardless of whether the incident is reported to authorities, the documentation will be filed in the Child Protection files. If an ordained minister is the subject of a complaint or report, the Presbytery Stated Clerk shall be notified.

The Pastor, if he/she is not the subject of the incident, will offer pastoral counseling for all persons involved. Otherwise, the DRM will arrange for pastoral counseling to be provided to the alleged victim and the child's parents or guardian.

In addition, the Pastor, if not the subject of the incident, will contact the subject and advise him or her that the complaint has been made, that a report has been made to the

appropriate government agency. The Pastor will make clear to the subject that statements made in the course of counseling may not be privileged under civil evidentiary rules.

A DRM shall report the incident to the Session at its next stated meeting or at a special meeting called for that purpose. If the subject of the complaint or report is the Pastor, the Clerk of Session will promptly contact the Presbytery Stated Clerk and request the appointment of a moderator for the meeting. The report and all discussion of it will be in executive session. At that meeting, the Session will decide who will, and how to, respond to inquiries from press and public. The Session may designate a Public Relations Advisor to respond to inquiries from press and public or to advise the Pastor and Clerk of Session in making or coordinating public announcements related to the alleged abuse.

Any employee who is the subject of an allegation shall be segregated from any contact with children. If segregation is not feasible, the employee will be suspended, with or without pay as determined by the Session. The separation from children or the suspension will continue until the complaint or allegation is resolved. If the allegation is sustained, the employee will be dismissed.

A Volunteer who is the subject of an allegation shall be suspended from activities that involve interaction with children. The Session will determine what further action, if any, shall be taken in addition to any action taken by civil authorities.

E. Application of Policy to Washington Seminar Center Groups

The Child Protection Policy will be posted on the Washington Seminar Center web site page and appropriate provisions written into the standard contract indicating that signing the contract constitutes a representation that an organization sponsoring groups visiting the Seminar Center will comply with the Two Adult Rule. If the parental consent exception is invoked, the parental forms must be in CHPC files prior to arrival of the group. Signing the contract also shall constitute a representation that any adult who accompanies the group can be trusted with children and is aware of the responsibility that goes with supervision and care of children. Sponsoring organizations will be told the names, addresses and telephone numbers of CHPC DRMs.

F. Application of Policy to Other Building Users.

For all groups who use the CHPC building on a regular or *ad hoc* basis and whose activities involve children, the contract for use of building space will contain a representation by the organization using the space that children will be kept safe and secure at all times while using CHPC space, and will also contain an indemnity provision to protect CHPC.

G. Annual Review

The Personnel and Administration committee will review the Child Protection policies and procedures at least annually and will report to the Session on any amendment(s) that may be appropriate.

CONCLUSION

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in

the kingdom of heaven?” And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them, and said; “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea”

-- Matthew 18: 1-6 (RSV)

Children in CHPC trust us to nurture them and keep them safe. Not only must we live up to that trust, but we must be seen by the children and by the world to deserve that trust.

For both job applicants and current employees, the moderator of the P&A Committee will review the Employment Questionnaire and the Background Check report and sign the certification on Attachment 2. Should the Background Check or other information yield a reason for concern, the DRM will follow procedures described below in 6.

Capitol Hill Presbyterian Church (CHPC)
Volunteer Background Statement
Required for Session Approval for Activities with Children

Name _____ Social Security No. _____

Address _____

Phone No. (h) _____ (w) _____

Member of Capitol Hill Presbyterian Church since (date) _____

(or, if not a member) regular participant in CHPC worship and activities since _____

Churches (and their locations) with which I have been affiliated in the last five (5) years:

TO BE SIGNED BY ALL ADULTS WORKING WITH CHPC CHILDREN:

I have carefully read, I understand, and I agree to follow the CHPC Policy to Safeguard Children.

There is nothing in my background that would cause a reasonable person to believe that placing children in my care puts them at risk of "child abuse" as defined by that Policy. I authorize any listed churches to give CHPC information regarding my fitness to work with children and youth. I waive any right I may have to inspect the information.

I understand that if any facts in my background might reasonably raise concerns, I should describe them to one of the Church's two Designated Reporting Members (DRM). I understand that all information will be kept confidential, and that if/or the DRM decides that the better course of action is for me not to be involved with children, no record will be kept of the information I furnish.

I also give permission to CHPC to conduct an electronic background check, which consists of a review of, and report on, public criminal records to reveal any adult felony convictions of me.

(signed) _____ .Date _____

I have not been convicted of operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol or drugs during the past ten years. *I understand that such a conviction does not disqualify me from working with children, but does disqualify me from transporting participants in CHPC activities.*

(signed) _____ Date _____

Attachment 1, p.2 of 3

(This sheet will be destroyed after completion of the screening.)

Name _____ -

All other names or aliases by which known: _____ -

Social Security No. _____ -

Date of *birth*. _____ *City/state/country* of birth _____ -

TO BE SIGNED BY YOUNG VOLUNTEERS AND THEIR PARENTS:

I am between the ages of 16 and 18. I agree to abide by all the provisions of the CHPC Policy to Safeguard Children, including those that apply to young volunteers.

(signed) _____ Date _____

As the parent or guardian of _____, I affirm that my child (1) has never been found involved in a juvenile offense involving force, threat of force, or sexual abuse; (2) has never shown tendencies toward cruelty; and (3) has my permission to supervise or care for children in activities under the auspices of Capitol Hill Presbyterian Church, for the period _____ through _____

Signature of parent or guardian _____ Date _____

TO BE SIGNED BY DESIGNATED REPORTING MEMBERS:

As a Designated Reporting Member named by Session, I affirm that (name of volunteer) _____ has been affiliated with CHPC for six months or more; and I certify that I have reviewed the information provided by the volunteer and have confirmed her/his suitability to work with children through my personal knowledge or that of other members of CHPC and/or of her/his previous churches. I have also reviewed the results of her/his electronic background check (for adult volunteers). I certify that I have no reason to believe that placing children in her/his care would put them at risk of "child abuse" as defined by this Policy.

Signature: _____ Date _____
(Designated Reporting Member)

Signature: _____ Date _____
(Designated Reporting Member)

Capitol Hill Presbyterian Church (CHPC)
Employment Questionnaire

For all applicants for positions at CHPC.

Current employees shall complete starred items, for CHPC Policy to Safeguard Children.

* Name, _____ Date _____
Address _____
Phone No. (h) _____ (w) _____
Social Security number _____

Current and previous employers for the last five years

1. Employed by: _____
Position _____
Employer's address: _____, ____
City, State, Zip _____
Supervisor _____
Supervisor's Title _____
Employed from (month/year) _____ to (month/year) _____
Reason for leaving. _____

2. Employed by: _____
Position _____
Employer's address: _____
City, State, Zip, _____
Supervisor _____
Supervisor's Title _____
Employed from (month/year) _____ to (month/year) _____
Reason for leaving _____ ~ _____

3. Employed by: _____
Position _____
Employer's address: _____
City, State, Zip, _____
Supervisor _____
Supervisor's Title _____
Employed from (month/year) _____ to (month/year) _____
Reason for leaving, _____

(Attach other sheets, if necessary)

I have carefully read, I understand, and I agree to follow the CHPC Policy to Safeguard Children.

* (signed) _____ Date. _____

There is nothing in my background that would cause a reasonable person to believe that placing children in my care puts them at risk of "child abuse" as defined by that Policy. I give permission to CHPC to conduct an electronic background check, which consists of a review of, and report on, public criminal records to reveal any felony convictions of me for crimes involving children. Furthermore, I authorize the organizations listed above to give CHPC information regarding my fitness to work with children and youth. I waive any right I may have to inspect the information.

* (signed), _____ Date _____

I have not been convicted of operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol or drugs during the past 10 years. *I understand that such a conviction does not disqualify me from employment with CHPC, but does disqualify me from transporting participants in CHPC activities.*

* (signed) _____ Date _____

TO BE SIGNED BY DESIGNATED REPORTING MEMBER:

I certify that I have reviewed the information provided by the employee/applicant and have reviewed the results of her/his electronic background check. I certify that I have no reason to believe that placing children in her/his care would put them at risk of "child abuse" as defined by this Policy.

Signature:

DESIGNATED REPORTING MEMBER

Date, _____

Attachment 2, p.3 of 3

(This sheet will be destroyed after completion of the screening.)

Name _____

All other names or aliases by which known: _____

Social Security number _____

Date of birth _____ City/state/country of birth _____

Capitol Hill Presbyterian Church (CHPC)
Child Abuse Report Form

This form must be kept in the Child Protection files and is confidential, except that it may be shared with the D. C. Division of Child and Family Services and/or the Metropolitan Police Department, or other appropriate state agency.

DRM Receiving Report _____

1. Person Furnishing Report:

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone No. _____

2. Description of Incident (include location, time, action, circumstances, persons present):

3. Name of Child: _____ Age of Child _____

4. Parents of Child:

Names. _____

Address(es) _____

Telephone No(s) _____

If child does not live with both parents, with whom does he/she live? _____

5. Names, Addresses and Telephone Numbers of Witnesses:

Signatures of DRM(s) _____ (Date) _____

Signature of reporting person. _____ (Date) _____

Follow up to Report:

Has a report been made to D.C. Division of Child and Family Services? _____

To the Metropolitan Police Department? _____

If to neither, why not?

Date of Report to Session: _____

