

Good News Presbyterian Church

Childcare Policies and Procedures

Revised 10/9/24

The following policies and procedures are designed to maintain the physical, emotional, and spiritual safety of the children at Good News Presbyterian Church (GNPC), to provide standards for working with children that are above reproach, to protect our staff and volunteers from false accusations, and to protect the reputation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our leaders are committed to providing a prompt and compassionate response to any allegation of abuse. The abuse of children will not be tolerated in any form from any individual.

Criteria for Service

- All persons—paid and volunteer—seeking to serve are required to complete and sign the Volunteer Application/Background Check Authorization, undergo a criminal background check, and complete the Child Protection Policy Training, either online or in person.
- Background checks should be re-assessed at least every three years or when the session (board of elders) deems it necessary.
- Volunteers who regularly transport youth in relation to church activities must submit to a background check of their driving record in addition to criminal background check. Excessive moving violations could preclude them from serving as drivers.
- The Session must approve any paid childcare worker. The names of these workers will typically be submitted to the church administrator by the Sunday school director, the Christian Education Committee, or the nursery coordinator.
- The church administrator should give all employees and all volunteers who work with children a copy of this Child Protection Policy.
- Applicants must be a member in good standing of GNPC for at least 6 months. Exceptions to this rule will require a vote of the session.
- No person who has been convicted of sexual misconduct or child abuse will be allowed to serve in any capacity in the Youth Ministry or to have unsupervised contact with minors in any activity of GNPC. While recognizing the healing and redeeming work of our Lord Jesus in the lives of all sinners, this restriction will not be lifted or set aside.
- Only the background check coordinator, the pastor, and a designated session member will have access to the criminal background reports and drivers' records of prospective volunteers and childcare workers. Before gaining access to this information, these persons must sign a non-disclosure agreement, which the clerk of session will maintain. The session will make recommendations to the head of the children's or youth ministry as to the suitability of applicants.
- GNPC will keep the reports in a permanent, secure, and confidential manner.
- GNPC may destroy any report of a person who does not subsequently work for the church in a position requiring the report three years or more after receiving the report. If it does so, it will destroy the report in a secure and confidential manner.
- The session will make appropriate efforts to respond to any internal grievance asserted by an applicant to youth ministry.
- GNPC reserves the right to reject any applicant for volunteer service or dismiss an existing volunteer for any reason, including but not limited to: refusing or failing to complete screening; failing to

provide requested information; providing information that is determined to be false or misleading; issues that compromise a youth worker's ability to care for children; any criminal charge or report of criminal activity; information obtained from references or criminal record checks that suggest the volunteer is not suitable to serve in children's ministry.

- Anyone who learns of misconduct by any current or prospective youth worker must report this information to the pastor or session. He or she may also have a moral obligation to report this information to the civil authorities.
- Anyone who witnesses child abuse must take immediate action by, in this order: (1) making every effort to protect the child through intervention, (2) contacting civil authorities, and (3) informing the session.

Guidelines

Guidelines for church sponsored events on the church premises:

- To preclude sinful complicity as well as to protect the reputation of volunteers, there must be two non-related adults (18-years-old or older, with a strong preference one of whom is a female) present in any children's activity and meeting place.
- Children and youth classrooms, or any area used for meeting with minors in the church facilities shall have sufficient visibility for observation, and such visibility shall always remain unobstructed.
- At times when an unaccompanied adult is with a group or minors or with an individual minor (e.g., Sunday school or counseling), the doors to the room must be open and the windows uncovered, or the activity must be conducted in a public space in view of others.
- The individual assigned to security should periodically monitor the hallways and check on the classrooms and nurseries during all Sunday activities.
- Youth helping adults in children's ministries must be at least 12 years old and approved by the activity leader.
- Parents or guardians leaving children in care of the church must provide an emergency contact number or inform the caregiver where they may be located.

Nursery restroom care:

- A childcare worker must supervise all bathroom trips, even if the worker merely accompanies the child to the bathroom and waits outside the door while the child uses the facilities.
- Should a child require assistance when using the toilet, the stall door should remain open. If there is no stall, then the door should be cracked open.

Other guidelines:

- Overnight events require gender-separated sleeping arrangements.
- There should be an adult male chaperone for male minors and a female chaperone for female minors.
- Chaperones may not share beds, sleeping bags, 2-man tents, etc. with minors. As an exception, a chaperone may share a tent with his or her own child or his or her younger sibling.
- Leaders are not to meet or counsel with students of the opposite sex one-on-one without explicit knowledge and permission of the parent or guardian and then only in supervised, observable surroundings.
- A volunteer and paid childcare worker should not transport an individual child or youth by himself/herself while fulfilling duties associated with GNPC without written permission from the parent or guardian.
- Regular, private correspondence with individual children in any form is strongly discouraged and

- should only occur with the written consent of parent or guardian.
- Any outside group using facilities under the control of GNPC will receive a copy of this document and must sign an agreement to follow it. The group is responsible for screening the persons caring for the children and youth as well as enforcing the guidelines set forth in this document. The session must approve such use by any group (e.g. a mission group touring from a foreign country does not have background checks) excepting to any portion of this document.

Responding and Reporting Requirements

If a suspected incident of child abuse or neglect as defined by the Maryland Code of Law occurs at or is revealed to any volunteer at church sponsored activities, that person shall:

- Seek to ensure the immediate safety of the child.
- Contact the civil authorities and inform the pastor and another church officer as circumstances permit.
- The following information will be documented and reported:
 - The name, age, gender, and address of the victim(s).
 - The name, age, gender, and address of the alleged offender(s).
 - The nature, frequency, time(s), date(s), and location(s) of the alleged abuse.
 - The relationship between the victim and the alleged offender.
 - Other evidence that supports the allegations (eyewitnesses, medical exams, confessions, etc.).
- The church’s insurance company should be notified.

All church volunteers must know these policies and will be held accountable.

I, _____, have read the GNPC Childcare Policies and Procedures and agree to abide by them.

Worker: _____
Signature
Date

Church Officer Witness: _____
Signature
Date