

Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse
CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY
May 24, 2005

I. Generally.

It is the policy of _____ (*insert name of congregation*) (the “Church”) to provide a safe and secure environment to protect against the abuse of children entrusted to its care, and to set forth in this policy the practices and procedures by which all staff and volunteers shall be bound to in the recognition and prevention of child abuse. Child abuse, in any form, will not be tolerated by the Church and the practices and procedures, as set forth herein, shall be strictly enforced.

II. Child Abuse and Investigations Defined.

Generally, the term “abuse” encompasses the most serious harms committed against children. It includes any mistreatment or neglect of a child (under the age of 18) that results in non-accidental harm or injury and which cannot reasonably be explained. Child abuse can include: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. Indicators of child abuse include, but are not limited to: bodily injury or mental or emotional injury to a child, witnessing inappropriate touching, sexual advances or other sexual activity in the presence of or in association with a child, and the neglect of a child, including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to the activities of the Church.

An “investigation” is primarily to confirm that information has come forward that affirms a suspicion of child abuse. An investigation consists only of verifying that the person “who suspects that a child is being (or has been) abused” has heard or seen what he or she has stated as grounds for suspicion, and it is sufficient for a report to authorities.

III. Reporting Abuse.

Any staff member or volunteer who suspects that a child is being abused has a responsibility to promptly report his or her suspicion to the Church’s leadership immediately.

In the event that any allegation of child abuse is made, the following procedures shall be followed:

1. The person suspecting child abuse shall file a report with the Church’s leadership describing his or her basis for the alleged abuse, including dates and times during which the alleged abuse took place. Such report shall at all times remain confidential to all others except said church officials and law enforcement authorities to the maximum extent possible.
2. The Church’s leadership shall promptly investigate the matter and take appropriate action, including, contacting legal authorities. Pending the conclusion of such investigation, which shall at all times be conducted in a confidential manner to the maximum extent possible in order to preserve the identity of the parties involved. The leadership will take immediate steps to make sure the accused will be separated from children in the church. The

Church's leadership shall contact the accused regarding the allegation and shall immediately suspend the accused from all Church responsibilities. The suspension from responsibilities shall not be viewed as determination of guilt, but only as an indication of the Church's priority to protect against the abuse of children entrusted to its care.

3. If the investigation proceeds to legal action, the Church shall notify its insurance company and its attorneys.

IV. Preventative Measures.

As a condition of employment or serving as a volunteer with the Church, all staff and volunteers of the Church shall be subject to the following requirements:

- All staff applicants and any volunteers that are likely to have interaction with children in the performance of their services to the Church (collectively "Applicants") shall submit a formal application to the Church, which includes, among other things, a list of the Applicant's personal references that the Church may contact, an acknowledgment of any prior accusations or convictions of a crime and express authorization to permit the Church to conduct a criminal background check on said Applicant.
- Upon receipt of such application, the Church shall review the contents of the application and speak to or receive written correspondence from at least two of the Applicant's personal references before extending any job offer or volunteer position to said Applicant. In the event either the application or a criminal background check suggests that an Applicant has had a prior record of child abuse, such individual shall, in all cases, be disqualified from working with children in the Church.
- As part of an initial orientation, each new staff member or volunteer shall be advised of the Church's "zero tolerance" stand on any form of child abuse, the restriction from the use of corporal punishment, receive a copy of this Child Abuse Prevention Policy and shall view any child abuse prevention video(s) and read any written materials relating to the prevention of child abuse as required by the Church. At the Church's discretion, each new staff member and volunteer may be required to sign a form indicating that he or she has been notified of the Church's policy against child abuse, and has received and read a copy of this Child Abuse Prevention Policy and that he or she has attended a meeting in which this subject matter was discussed.
- At least once a year, the Church will review the contents of its Child Abuse Prevention Policy with all staff members and volunteers and remind such of their requirement to strictly adhere to this policy.
- A copy of this policy shall at all times be posted in the Church and be made available to anyone upon request.

In addition to the foregoing preventative measures, the Church shall impose the following operating procedures on staff and volunteers, which may be supplemented from time to time at the discretion of the Church. Violation of any of the following procedures by an individual staff member or volunteer will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

- A “two-adult” rule shall be in effect meaning that no staff member or volunteer is to be left alone with any child at any time without a justifiable reason pertaining to the child’s well-being. If alone, every effort shall be made to meet in an open room with a window and another person in close proximity to the meeting room.
- Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from disciplining children through use of physical punishment or verbal abuse.
- Staff members and volunteers shall respect the rights of the children not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable.
- Staff members and volunteers shall not transport children in private vehicles without clearance from a senior staff member and written authorization from parents. At no time shall any child be transported by one adult alone.
- Staff members and volunteers will respond to children with respect and consideration and will treat all children equally.

V. Further Information.

Requests for further information or questions concerning this policy should be directed to _____.

Approved by the Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse
24 May 2005