

Northminster Presbyterian Church

Child/Youth Protection Policy

Approved by Session October 19, 2009

Northminster Presbyterian Church

Child/Youth Protection Policy

A Statement of Policy

Northminster Presbyterian Church (NPC or the Church) is committed to providing a safe place for Children and Youth to learn about God and his ever-abounding love for them. NPC is also committed to giving these children role models to learn from. To this end, NPC has developed these guidelines and policies to assist in safeguarding children/youth from abuse. This document is known as the Northminster Presbyterian Church Child/Youth Protection Policy (CYPP).

These guidelines and policies are aimed first and foremost at protecting our children from potential abuse. While they may cause our adult volunteers to perform an “extra step” in their normal church routines, it is important to realize that these guidelines and policies will also protect our paid staff and volunteers in the event of allegations of abuse.

Northminster Presbyterian Church

Policy and Procedure

SUPERVISING CHURCH WORKERS/PROFESSIONALS

I. Policy

It is the policy of NPC to effectively supervise all church volunteers and paid staff who as a part of their volunteer activities or regular job duties come into contact with children and youth. This policy is designed to protect our children and provide them with adult role models who desire to help our children and youth grow in Christ. Although this policy is designed to cover most church situations and events, it recognizes that exceptions may occur.

II. Procedure

A. Sunday School Classes

NPC requires all classrooms to be staffed with no less than two adult leaders. This provision applies to the Nursery, Way Cool and Youth Sunday School, Worship and Wonder, or any other educational activity. The adults may be any combination of paid and volunteer workers.

Two adults must stay with the class from the time of the first student's arrival until the last student departs and is in the custody of their parents, legal guardian or designee.

It is the responsibility of the Sunday School Superintendent or other designated church officer to make random visits to all classrooms and frequently visit or inspect areas of the church building that are isolated from view. The Superintendent will assist the adult leaders in covering the classroom should the leaders need to leave the room or assist in any other manner to ensure that two adults are in each Sunday School classroom at all times.

B. Music Groups

All procedures as described for Sunday School classes are also in effect for Music Groups.

C. Youth Groups

All procedures as described for Sunday School classes also apply to Youth Group Activities and Events.

During scheduled Youth Group Events, NPC requires that a minimum of two adults be present. For all events with greater than 14 children, one adult must be present for every 7 youth.

All rules above apply for overnight events. In addition, the adult leaders must be of the same sex as the youth participating, e.g. if there is one girl and 12 boys on an outing, at least 2 male adults and one female adult must be in attendance.

D. Day School

Because Northminster Day School is a part of NPC and operates within the guidelines set by NPC, the policies governing the supervision of paid staff and volunteers will apply to the Day School, its employees, and its volunteers.

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Policy and Procedure

SCREENING AND SELECTION OF PAID AND VOLUNTEER STAFF

I. Policy

It is the policy of NPC to effectively screen and select all church volunteers and paid staff who as a part of their volunteer activities or regular job duties come into contact with children and youth. This policy is designed to protect our children and provide them with adult role models who desire to help our children and youth grow in Christ.

II. Procedure

A. Paid Staff

1. NPC will screen all paid staff who apply for positions within the NPC Day School, Nursery, Sunday School, Worship and Wonder or Youth events and activities. All applicants will be required to fill out a standard job application which will include specific questions concerning convictions on charges related to child abuse. Part of this form will be processed via a third party company who specializes in validation of candidates and their credentials. Candidates who indicated a prior conviction on such charges will not be considered for employment. The application will also contain prior work history and education.
2. During the interview process, all candidates may be asked to provide at least 3 personal and professional references. These references will be validated by the committee, group or officer in charge of the hiring process. All inquiries will be documented. Verification of previous work history and appropriate education will also be documented.

B. Volunteer Staff

1. NPC requires all volunteers working in any capacity with children or youth to be a member of the Church and to have been associated with NPC (associated defined as attending Worship/Sunday School regularly) for at least six months. Exceptions to the above may be approved by Session.
2. Before a volunteer as defined in paragraph one above begins volunteering in any activity involving children or youth at NPC, a copy of the CYPP will be provided to the volunteer by a member of the Spiritual Growth Committee or NPC Staff. The volunteer will be required to review the policy and sign/return the certification form that declares them not to have been convicted of any charges related to child abuse and acknowledges that they have reviewed and understand the CYPP.
3. All members of NPC who desire to volunteer to work with the Youth Group will be screened by the Youth Committee. Training from the Youth Committee and/or Youth Director about NPC's vision for youth ministry and the CYPP will also be provided.
4. Youth members of NPC who desire to assist in Children's Sunday School, Worship and Wonder, or the Nursery are required to work with Adult volunteers as defined in paragraph one above.

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REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE

i. POLICY

It is the policy of NPC to report all incidents of suspected child abuse in accordance with all state, federal, local, and church laws, as well as in conjunction with our current insurance policy. NPC desires to protect the youth and children of the Church by safeguarding them from incidents where abuse may occur.

II. PROCEDURE

A. Reporting of Incidents

1. Day School

In accordance with Georgia State Law, the Day School will report any suspected or confirmed incident of child abuse. A teacher who suspects or is aware of any type of abuse should report such information to the Day School Director who will report the incident to the appropriate child welfare agency. The Moderator of the Session should be informed of any such incident.

2. Church Programs

- a. If a volunteer worker suspects a case of child abuse involving a member of their program, they should report such suspicion to the Committee Chair of their program. The Chair of the Committee will then confer with the Moderator of the Session for further reporting requirements.

- b. When NPC has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused, the Moderator of the Session will make an oral report to the appropriate child welfare agency.

B. Investigation

1. Suspected Abuse by Church Volunteer /Paid Staff

When NPC has reasonable cause to believe or if an allegation has been made that a child has been abused by paid staff or a volunteer worker, the worker or volunteer will be immediately removed from any activities with children and not allowed to further participate until the situation has been fully resolved.

When an allegation or suspicion occurs, the Moderator of the Session will appoint a special group of members of the current Session to investigate the allegation(s). After the investigation, if there is reasonable cause to believe the abuse occurred and the volunteer denies these allegations, the Moderator may institute the disciplinary process contained in the Rules of Discipline in the Book of Order.

If a volunteer admits to the abuse, the Moderator may recommend therapeutic resolution and counseling for the volunteer. Once a volunteer admits to abusing a child, they will no longer be allowed to volunteer in any capacity with children.

If a paid staff member admits to the abuse, their employment with NPC will be terminated.

2. Suspected Abuse

If a volunteer worker or paid staff suspects child abuse, he or she shall report such suspicion to the Moderator.

C. Investigation

1. Reporting to Insurance Carrier

As required by current coverage, NPC will promptly notify the insurance carrier if the Church becomes aware of anything that may indicate a claim under the policy.

2. Book of Order

Nothing in this policy shall supersede the Book of Order.

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Discipline Guidelines for Sunday School

I. POLICY

It is the mission of NPC Youth Sunday School to provide interesting and informative Bible study activities, in a pleasant atmosphere, for member and visiting children. It is the policy of NPC to maintain an environment conducive to learning within our Sunday School classrooms. Students acting in a disruptive or inappropriate manner, as determined by the Sunday School teacher, will be subject to disciplinary action as detailed in the General Guidelines.

II. GENERAL GUIDELINES

The first time a student has to be spoken to for inappropriate behavior, the teacher should call the student's attention to his or her inappropriate behavior and explain why the behavior is unacceptable in Sunday School. Inappropriate behavior includes, but is not limited to, fighting, lack of self-control, disrespectful conduct toward the teacher or peers, and instigation of negativism. The teacher should then explain what the next step of disciplinary action would entail.

The second time a student has to be spoken to for inappropriate behavior, he or she should be removed from the group and moved to an isolated part of the classroom. Upon arrival of the student's parents, they should be notified that the student had to be disciplined and why. If parental pick-up is not part of the class routine, the parents should be contacted by telephone or spoken to in person.

The third time a student has to be spoken to for inappropriate behavior, he or she is to be taken to the office of the Youth Sunday School Coordinator. The Youth Sunday School Coordinator should be apprised of the student's behavior, as well as what disciplinary steps were taken. The Youth Sunday School Coordinator will then seek out the student's parents and turn the student over to them. The parents will receive an explanation of the student's behavior, and a conference will be arranged with the parents to decide the best course of action with regard to attendance in Sunday School.