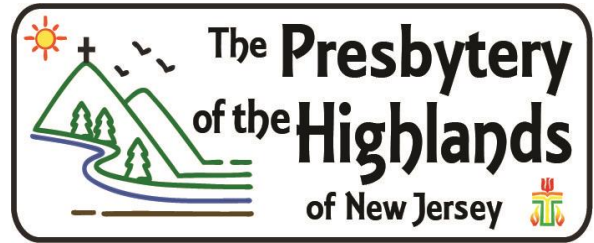


The Presbytery of the Highlands

CHILDREN AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY



*“Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God.
Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.”*
~ Mark 10:13-16

Contents

Purpose
Terms & Definitions
Screening Volunteers and Employees
Code of Conduct
General Procedures
Reporting
Off-Site Trips and Events
Outside Groups

Appendix

Appendix A – Reporting
Appendix B – Indications of Abuse
Appendix C - Employee and Volunteer Ministry Application Form

Policy Purpose

The Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey is committed to providing an environment that is a safe place for children and youth and that will protect them from any abuse when they are involved in Presbytery-related activities. Highlands Presbytery adopts these policies and procedures not only to maximize safety and prevent child abuse from occurring within its Presbytery community, but also to guide and protect volunteers and employees from unwarranted allegations of child abuse.

Terms and Definitions

Child abuse - An act committed by a parent, caregiver, or person in a position of trust (even though he or she may not care for the child on a daily basis) which is not accidental and which harms or threatens harm to a child's physical or mental health or welfare. Types of abuse may include physical abuse, including physical injury or threat of injury; physical neglect, such as failure to provide necessary care to a child; sexual abuse; mental abuse or neglect; emotional abuse; and spiritual abuse. Child abuse includes, but is not limited to:

Neglect of Basic Needs - A form of abuse. Denial of food, water, cleanliness, clothing, and sleep are not appropriate means of discipline.

Physical Abuse - Any physical force applied by an adult or older youth in a position of care or authority to a child, youth, or vulnerable adult. Physical force (hitting, spanking, shaking, shoving, etc.) is not to be used by leaders in our programs.

Sexual Abuse - Any sexual contact or sexual interaction between a child (under the age of eighteen years or a person over the age of 18 who is without the mental capacity to consent) and an adult; any use of a child for the sexual simulation of an adult, a third person, or the child; any risqué jokes, innuendo, unacceptable visual contact, unwelcome casual touch, unwelcome and inappropriate hugs and kisses, and sexually suggestive pictures between an adult and a child, as deemed inappropriate by any reasonable adult. Even if a child, youth, or vulnerable adult, out of ignorance, innocence, or fear does not resist, it is still abuse.

Emotional Abuse - Inappropriately belittling, hateful, or angry words and/or actions directed toward a child, youth, or vulnerable adult. Discipline by humiliation is also emotional abuse.

Spiritual Abuse- Using religious references to shame or by guilt to motivate a child into a particular action or behavior.

Employee - Any person who works for salary or wages at Highlands Presbytery.

Volunteer - Any person not employed by Highlands Presbytery who, at any time during the year, teaches, supervises, or helps with children and youth activities, or is in the presence of children or youth.

Leader - An adult designated by Highlands Presbytery or by a sponsoring organization to have responsibility for children and/or youth. The adult must be a minimum of 18 years of age. Leaders of overnight trips must be at least 21 years of age. It is suggested that leaders be a minimum of four years older than the children or youth they are supervising.

Presbytery Activity or Sponsored Activity - Includes any and all gatherings that arise from any worship, educational, childcare, fellowship, administrative, pastoral, mission or recreational event generated or organized by Highlands Presbytery. Whether within the bounds or outside the bounds of Highlands Presbytery.

Volunteer Ministry - Includes any Presbytery sponsored activity engaged in by a volunteer.

Child or Youth – Persons under 18 years old and considered a minor under the law. This term shall also include persons over the age of 18 who are without the mental capacity to consent.

Screening

Staff: Background Requirements

Applicants for full-time or part-time paid employment at Highlands Presbytery will be required to provide, complete or undergo the following:

- An Employment Application which will include information regarding past employment and prior convictions for crimes;
- A specific statement that the individual has no prior conviction for child abuse or sexual misconduct; and
- A reference check covering, where possible, the two immediate past employers, or personal references unrelated to the applicant if no information can be obtained from past employers.
- Prior to hiring an applicant, Highlands Presbytery will obtain a criminal record report for that individual. Every five years, Highlands Presbytery will perform national criminal database searches and national sex offender registry searches on existing employees, and each employee shall be required to execute any documents that Highlands Presbytery might request for such purpose. Any individual who has lived outside New Jersey in the last five years may be subject to additional county or state court search.
- Upon being hired, each new employee will be required to sign an acknowledgement that he or she has received a copy of the Highlands Presbytery Child & Youth Protection Policy, understands it and will comply with its terms.
- Each new employee will be provided orientation and training on child abuse, including its recognition and prevention, as well as on the terms and conditions of this policy.

Any candidate for employment who has a past conviction of or pending proceeding addressing an allegation of child abuse or neglect cannot be employed by Highlands Presbytery. Conviction for any of the following will automatically disqualify an individual from employment: drug-related, pedophilic behavior, incest, rape, assaults, indecent exposure, pornography, sodomy or abuse of a minor.

Volunteers: Background Requirements

Volunteers working with youth or children for a Presbytery Activity will be required to provide, complete or undergo the following:

- An Volunteer Ministry Application which will include information regarding past employment and prior convictions for crimes;
- A specific statement that the individual has no prior conviction for child abuse or sexual misconduct; and

- Prior to becoming a volunteer working with children or youth, Highlands Presbytery will obtain a background check for that individual. Every three years, Highlands Presbytery will perform national criminal database searches and national sex offender registry searches on existing volunteers and each volunteer shall be required to execute any documents that Highlands Presbytery might request for such purpose. Any individual who has lived outside New Jersey in the last five years may be subject to additional county or state court search
- Each new volunteer, prior to beginning any volunteer role, will be required to sign an acknowledgement that he or she has received a copy of the Highlands Presbytery Child & Youth Protection Policy, understands it, and will comply with its terms.
- Each new volunteer will be provided orientation and training on child abuse, including its recognition and prevention, as well as on the terms and conditions of this policy.

Any candidate for volunteer service who has a past conviction of or pending proceeding related to an allegation of child abuse or neglect **MAY NOT** work with children and youth at Highlands Presbytery. Refusal to complete the Volunteer Application process or a conviction for any of the following will automatically disqualify an individual from volunteer service with children and youth: drug-related activity, pedophilic behavior, incest, rape, assaults, indecent exposure, pornography, sodomy, or abuse of a minor.

Leaders of other groups of children or youth who use Highlands Presbytery's facilities **or hold events on Presbytery property** will also be required to read the Policy and sign the Volunteer Acknowledgement Statement.

Code of Conduct

1. Staff and volunteers are required to adhere to the Highlands Presbytery Child Protection Policy guidelines in all their interactions with children and youth.
2. Staff and volunteers will respect children's rights not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable or that disregard their right to say no.
3. Staff and volunteers may not discipline children by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care.
4. Physical restraint is used only in situations necessary to protect the child, other children, or staff from harm.
5. While supervising children and youth participating in Highlands Presbytery programs, staff and volunteers should know where participants are at all times.
6. Restroom supervision: Whenever possible, volunteers will make sure any restroom used is not occupied by any suspicious or unknown individual before allowing children and youth to use the facilities. Always send children in pairs with a volunteer. The staff or volunteer, will stand in the doorway while children are using the restroom. This policy allows privacy for the children and protection for the staff or volunteer (not being alone with a child). Staff and volunteers shall strongly encourage parents to take children to the restroom whenever possible.
7. Diapering and potty training should be done primarily by paid caregivers. Volunteers may be asked to help in certain situations and should follow posted nursery guidelines when performing diapering.

8. Staff and volunteers should be alert to the physical and emotional state of children. Any signs of injury or possible child abuse must be reported according to the Highlands Presbytery Child Protection Policy.
9. Staff and volunteers are discouraged from being alone with children or youth without parental permission.
10. Under no circumstances should staff or volunteers release children to anyone other than the authorized parent, guardian, or other individual authorized by the parent or guardian.
11. Consuming, using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while working or volunteering with children or youth is prohibited.
12. Being impaired by legally prescribed drugs while working or volunteering with children or youth is prohibited.
13. Possessing or using any weapons or firearms while working or volunteering with children or youth is prohibited.
14. Smoking or use of tobacco *in the presence of* children, youth, or parents while working or volunteering is prohibited.
15. Profanity, inappropriate jokes and media, sharing intimate details of one's personal life, and any kind of harassment in the presence of children, youth, or parents are prohibited.
16. Staff and volunteers will be mindful of the content on any portable electronic device, social networking pages, or other electronic media that might be accessible to any children and youth.
17. Staff and volunteer adult and youth leaders shall wear appropriate dress when volunteering with children and/or youth.
18. Movies used in all Presbytery settings shall meet the voluntary movie rating system guidelines established by the Motion Picture Association of America for age-appropriate content.
19. Staff and volunteers may not date or be romantically involved with program participants or church members who are younger than 18 years of age.
20. Staff and volunteers are required to read, sign, and adhere to all policies related to identifying, documenting, and reporting child abuse and will attend training sessions on the subject.
21. Staff and volunteers are required to report any concerns or suspicions regarding their observations of any individual's interaction with a child. Except for concerns related to alleged or potential abuse, which require mandated specific immediate reports (see REPORTING, Appendix A), these concerns may be reported to the individual. If the concerns are not alleviated by a change in the individual's behavior, a second report must be made to (name, phone number
22. Leaders will always give parents advance notice and full information regarding the event in which their child or youth will be participating.
23.). If it is necessary for an adult to take a child or youth home after an event, all staff and volunteers shall abide by safe driving laws when transporting children or youth. Driving record history shall be obtained on all youth leaders and volunteers. An effort should be made to contact the family and inform them of the situation before transporting the child or youth.

General Procedures

Supervision: *Two-Leader/Open-Door Policy*

Whenever possible, any adult who is present in a Presbytery sponsored activity for children or youth should be accompanied by another adult. Highlands Presbytery employees and volunteers should not, during a Highlands Presbytery program, be alone with a single child where they cannot be observed by others.

In order to avoid situations where an individual is alone in a room with children, all children's and youth activities should be supervised by at least two adult leaders. Whenever possible, these adults should be unrelated. The presence of two leaders is to protect children and youth against situations in which abuse might occur, and to protect leaders against false allegations of abuse or neglect.

Classrooms, childcare rooms, and any area in which programs for children or youth are taking place may be visited without prior notice by Presbytery staff, parents, or other volunteer church workers. No windows may ever be totally blocked so as to prevent visual observation into the classroom.

In the event that two leaders cannot be present in the room, such that one leader is alone in a room with one or more children or youth, a door or half-door from the room must be left open. The leader should not position himself or herself in the room such that other adults passing in the hallway cannot see him or her.

Ratios

The recommended adult/volunteer-to-child/youth ratio, is 1:6 for elementary age, 1:8 for Middle School and 1:10 for Senior High ages, gender balance is recommended.

Parental/Guardian Consent

Children and youth must obtain parental or guardian permission for involvement in Presbytery sponsored activities or programs that involve travel away from the any Presbytery physical facilities.

“Six Month” Rule for Volunteers

A volunteer must be a member of a congregation of Highlands Presbytery, or have regularly attended that congregation, for six months before working with youth or children. This requirement does not apply to paid staff or volunteers involved in activities in which their own children are present. The Administrative and Coordinating Team (ACT) shall have the authority to waive this six-month rule upon request if deemed appropriate.

Policy Review

The provisions of this Policy shall be reviewed annually by the ACT. Any proposed changes to the Policy will be brought to the attention of the ACT for its input, if any, prior to such changes being recommended to the Presbytery.

Off-Site Trips & Events

Permission Forms

Parent/Guardian Permission Forms and Medical Consent Forms must be completed prior to all trips. The two-adult rule must be followed throughout the trip with any foreseeable exceptions clearly stated and approved in advance by the parent or guardian. The total number of adults on each trip will be adjusted according to the requirements of the planned activities. Under no circumstances may one adult alone take or accompany minors on an overnight outing.

Ratios

The required adult to child/youth ratio for chaperones for any ministry with children or youth shall be 1:6 for elementary age, 1:8 for Middle School and 1:10 for Senior High. Gender balance is required.

Rooming Arrangements

- Rooming arrangements should provide for children and youth of the same sex to room together and adults of the same sex to room together.
- When possible, adults' rooms shall be next to youth rooms and youth may be checked on during the night.
- Ordinarily, adults should not share rooms with children. An individual minor may share a room with an individual adult if the two are related (parent/child), or if written permission has been granted prior to the event by a parent or guardian.
- In situations where one large sleeping area is provided, at least one adult of the same sex shall sleep in proximity of children or youth of the same sex.

Medical

- Each child, youth, adult volunteer, and staff must submit a completed medical/insurance form. Each minor's forms must have a parent or guardian's signature.
- Whenever possible, all activities with children and youth shall have a staff or volunteer adult leader with current-certification first aid/CPR training.
- Group leaders should have a copy of all medical forms for overnight or off-site events. These forms will be kept on the event site for the duration of the event.
- First Aid supplies will be available on the event site. All workers will be informed of the location of First Aid supplies/equipment and shall have access to information concerning specific medical conditions and concerns of participants.
- A written report will be completed in the case of any accident, medical emergency or injury.

Driving Rules/Travel

- All drivers of children and youth be over 24. In situations where this is not possible, parent permission shall be obtained before the trip and vehicles shall travel together.
- When one vehicle is used for an event, the two-leader rule still applies unless parental permission is obtained prior to the trip. When several vehicles are taken for an event and two leaders are not

available for every vehicle, keeping the other vehicle in sight at regular intervals is an acceptable substitution for the two-leader rule.

- Travel arrangements for off-campus events will be coordinated through the Presbytery.
- All adult drivers of children and youth will be screened through a driving history search. A valid driver's license will be required.
- All vehicles should remain parked throughout the duration of the activity except for transporting children/youth and obtaining supplies.
- Seat belts will be provided for all passengers.

Outside Groups

All leaders of non-Highlands Presbytery sponsored groups and events that use Highlands Presbytery facilities and supervise children and youth are expected to adhere to these policies. Upon receipt of the policy from Highlands Presbytery, the leaders must review the Child and Youth Protection Policy and sign the Outside Group Leaders Release Form to acknowledge their review of it and to confirm their agreement to follow the policy and are expected to conduct their own due diligence in this regard.

Appendix A – Reporting

Reporting: here is information from www.preventchildabuse.nj.org

Report Abuse

Who is responsible for reporting suspected child abuse in New Jersey?

In New Jersey, ANY person having reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused or neglected has a legal responsibility to report it to the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS). A concerned caller does not need proof to report an allegation of child abuse and can make the report anonymously. Any person who knowingly fails to report suspected abuse or neglect according to the law or to comply with the provisions of the law is a disorderly person and subject to a fine of up to \$1,000 or up to six months imprisonment, or both.

How do I report child abuse in New Jersey?

Call New Jersey's Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline at **1-877-NJ ABUSE (652-2873) (TTY/TDD use 1-800-835-5510)**

They are available and will respond 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If a child is in immediate danger, you should call 911.

Do callers have immunity from civil or criminal liability?

Any person who, in good faith, makes a report of child abuse or neglect or testifies in a child abuse hearing resulting from such a report is immune from any criminal or civil liability as a result of such action. Calls can be placed to the hotline anonymously.

What happens when I call the Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline?

The hotline is answered by trained caseworkers who know how to respond to reports of child abuse/neglect. This caseworker may ask you about:

- **Who:** The child and parent/caregiver's name, age and address and the name of the alleged perpetrator and that person's relationship to the child.
- **What:** Type and frequency of alleged abuse/neglect, current or previous injuries to the child and what caused you to become concerned.
- **When:** When the alleged abuse/neglect occurred and when you learned of it.
- **Where:** Where the incident occurred, where the child is now and whether the alleged perpetrator has access to the child.
- **How:** How urgent the need is for intervention and whether there is a likelihood of imminent danger for the child.

What happens after I make the call?

When a report indicates that a child may be at risk, the Division of Youth and Family Services will promptly investigate the allegations of child abuse and neglect within 24 hours of receipt of the report.

What if I tell Prevent Child Abuse-New Jersey about my concerns?

While Prevent Child Abuse-New Jersey values the health and safety of children — we, like all NJ citizens, are legally required to forward concerns about suspected abuse to the Division of Youth and Family Services. They are the only investigative and protective bodies of the State of NJ responsible for handling them.

We all care about children. We urge you to report any concern about the welfare of a child to DYFS, the legal authorities responsible for investigating suspected situations of abuse. You should call **1-877-NJ-ABUSE** and let them know the details of your concern. They will take the matter seriously and gather information that is in the best interest of the child.

Confidentiality

All communications shall be conducted in as confidential a manner as is compatible with the reporting of an allegation.

Parental Notification

If an incident has occurred on church property during a presbytery-sponsored event, the parents of any minor involved in any allegation of abuse shall be immediately notified.

Potential Responses

Upon any report of potential or alleged child abuse by an employee or volunteer of WJP, any individual accused of such conduct may be temporarily relieved of any duties involving youth or children pending an appropriate investigation.

Appendix B - Indications of Abuse

CHILD and YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY **INDICATIONS OF SEXUAL ABUSE**

What is an “abused, neglected, or dependent child”?

The definition of an abused, neglected, or dependent child is very broad. It includes any child under eighteen or person over the age of 18 who is without the mental capacity to consent whose parents or other person is responsible for his/her care:

- Inflicts or allows to be inflicted, or creates a substantial risk of serious physical injury not by accident;
- Creates or allows to be created serious emotional damage;
- Uses or allows to be used cruel or grossly inappropriate procedures or devices to modify behavior;
- Neglects or refuses to provide care, supervision, or discipline necessary for her/his health;
- Abandons such child or allows such child to live in an environment injurious to the child’s welfare;

- Is unable to provide for care or supervision and lacks an appropriate child care alternative; or
- Commits or allows to be committed any act of sexual exploitation or any sexual act upon a child in violation of the law.

How can children be at risk in a “safe” place like church?

There may be several reasons children can be at risk even in “safe” places like a church. The following factors may contribute to the risk in a church setting:

- Ready access to children
- Institutional surprise: “We’re good people”
- Many churches have historically failed to prosecute
- Fewer external barriers than other youth-serving organizations
- Challenges coordinating child protection strategies

Potential indicators of sexual abuse

A **combination** or **pattern** of indicators may indicate the possibility of sexual abuse. Potential indicators include:

- Child does not want to go to a certain place or be around a particular person
- Child shows sexual knowledge or behavior beyond that expected for his or her age
- Child is overly affectionate and seems seductive with peers and adults
- Child has recurring genital infections or pain in the genital area
- Child has difficulty in walking or sitting
- Child has torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
- Child shows reluctance to change clothes
- Child is withdrawn, chronically depressed, or displays infantile behavior
- Child has exceptionally poor peer relationships
- Child is threatened by physical contact
- Child has unexplained money or “gifts”

Appendix C - Employee and Volunteer Ministry Application Form

The Presbytery of The Highlands of New Jersey

Volunteer Ministry Application Form

This application form is to be completed by all Highlands Presbytery any volunteers desiring a ministry position involving the supervision or custody of children and/or youth. This form will be completed on-line or by paper copy at the onset of ministry and resubmitted every three years. It is being used to help the Presbytery provide a safe and secure environment for those children and youth who participate in our programs and use our facilities. This confidential information will be viewed only by those persons designated by the Presbytery as having access to this private information.

Name _____ Date _____
Last First Middle

Address _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

Email _____

Occupation _____

Places of Employment _____

How long at this address? _____ If less than five years, give previous addresses/years:

Years _____ Address _____

Years _____ Address _____

VOLUNTEERS

(Name of church) member since _____

List (names and addresses) other churches you attended regularly during the last five years:

What leadership/volunteer experience have you had with children/youth during the last five years? Be specific. Where possible, include dates and places if not at your current church.

Please list other church ministries in which you were or are involved in the last five years.

Confidential Information - to be used only by those authorized by the Presbytery

Auto Insurance Carrier _____

Do you have any medical training? _____

Are you currently CPR certified? _____

Is there any health-related reason that would keep you from effectively working with or cause any potential harm to children? _____ If yes, please explain. _____

Personal References (Two are required. Must be over 18 years of age and not related to you.)

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Relationship _____

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Relationship _____

The questions listed below are necessary in order to help ensure a safe and secure environment for our children and for the protection of our volunteer and/or paid staff. All information is held strictly confidential. Please answer these questions. If you have any concerns regarding the questions, please consult with the Stated Clerk or with the Presbytery Leader. If any one or more of the questions is marked yes, the application will be reviewed by those persons so designated by the Presbytery.

	Yes	No
Have you ever been convicted of or pled guilty or nolo contendere (no contest) to traffic violation(s) in the last five years?	_____	_____
If yes, please describe all convictions for the past five years and any conviction resulting in the suspension of your license, whether or not within the past five years.		

	Yes	No
Have you ever been convicted for the possession, use or sale of drugs?	_____	_____
Have you ever been hospitalized or treated for alcohol, substance abuse or mental illness?	_____	_____
Have you been arrested for a criminal offense excluding minor traffic violations?	_____	_____
Have you been arrested or convicted for any sexually related crimes?	_____	_____
Have you ever been denied participation in supervising youth activities? in any organization?	_____	_____

Please explain any yes answers. Add more pages as needed: _____

APPLICANT'S STATEMENT

The information contained in this application is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references, churches, or other organizations listed in this application to give you any information they may have (including employer's opinions) regarding my character and fitness for working with children or youth and I hereby release all such references, churches, or other organizations from liability for damages of whatever kind or nature that may result from furnishing such evaluations to you. I waive any right I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any person or organization identified by me in this application.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to follow the Highlands Presbytery Child and Youth Protection Policy and to refrain from inappropriate conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of the

Presbytery. I understand that any violation of this Policy or misrepresentation of information that I have provided may result in termination of employment or volunteer service with children/youth.

I have no past conviction of or pending proceeding addressing an allegation of child abuse or neglect. I authorize that a Criminal and Civil Records Check may be conducted on me and that any information which pertains to any record of convictions contained in police files or any criminal or civil file maintained on me, whether national, state, or local, be released to Highlands Presbytery. In so authorizing, I release any law enforcement agencies, Highlands Presbytery or those individuals receiving the results of the check from any and all liability resulting from such disclosure.

I acknowledge that I have read the Highlands Presbytery Child and Youth Protection Policy and have received a copy for my personal use.

I further state that I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THE FOREGOING RELEASE AND KNOW THE CONTENTS THEREOF AND I SIGN THIS RELEASE AS MY OWN FREE ACT IN EXCHANGE FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE AS A HIGHLANDS PRESBYTERY EMPLOYEE OR VOLUNTEER. This is a legally binding agreement, which I have read and understand. I understand that the personal information will be held confidential by the Presbytery.

Applicant's Signature _____ Date _____

Social Security Number (for Background Check use ONLY) _____