

Child Protection Policy: Guidelines for Children & Youth

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, WICHITA KS (FPCW)

Dear Children's/Youth Ministry Volunteer or Staff Member,

Welcome to FPCW!

At FPCW, we take our responsibility to care for our children & youth very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which our children/youth can grow in relationship with Jesus Christ.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for staff members and volunteers serving in Children's/Youth Ministry. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for children/youth, protecting children/youth, you, and the mission of FPCW.

Sincerely,

FPCW Congregational Life & Learning Committee

FPCW

Safety Policies & Procedures for Children's & Youth Ministry (Infant-Age 18)

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Overview of FPCW Safety System

Because we care for and desire to protect our children and youth, FPCW requires all staff members and volunteers working with the children or youth group to complete **TWO SAFETY STEPS** before ministry work or volunteer placement begins.

STEP ONE: Screening Process

Staff members and volunteers are required to complete FPCW's Screening Process, which includes:

- Completing a Volunteer Application
- *A volunteer must have been a member of FPCW for six months before being eligible to serve in positions interacting with children or youth.

STEP TWO: Criminal Background Check

FPCW requires that all staff members and those volunteers working or volunteering in children's or youth activities or programming undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon position, differing levels or intensity of background check may be required.

Policies & Procedures

This document, The First Presbyterian Church Wichita (FPCW) *Child Protection Policy: Guidelines for Children & Youth*, is available to review at any time. Contact a member of the Ministry Staff for a copy.

*Those individuals with legitimate credentials to work with youth and/or children or those who are familiar through other church relationships such as WRCC or Young Adults but are not members may have the membership requirement waived subject to approval by the Congregational Life & Learning Committee of FPCW.

Child & Youth Safety Policy

ABUSE TOLERANCE

FPCW has a **zero tolerance for abuse** in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer at FPCW to act in the best interest of children/youth in every program.

In the event that any staff member or volunteer observes any inappropriate behavior (i.e., policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse or neglect (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is that individual's responsibility to immediately report these observations to his or her immediate supervisor, the Director of Church Ministries (or Head of Staff's designee) and Pastor/Head of Staff.

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REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

FPCW is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children/youth and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to The Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) Child Protective Services, or your local law enforcement agency or 911.

Because sexual abusers ‘groom’ children/youth for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to ‘groom’ a child/youth for sexual abuse. Staff members and volunteers are asked to report ‘grooming’ behavior, any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to an immediate supervisor, the Director of Church Ministries (or Head of Staff’s designee) or the Pastor/Head of Staff.

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

FPCW staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all FPCW policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from Children’s or Youth Ministry positions for both volunteers and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Pastor/Head of Staff and the Personnel Committee/Session.

Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY

All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to an immediate supervisor in the ministry area, the Director of Church Ministries (or the Head of Staff’s designee), CLL Committee Moderator, or the Pastor/Head of Staff.

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a child/youth will be immediately suspended from participation in Children’s/Youth Ministry. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or Child Protective agencies.

Any person found to have committed a prohibited act may be prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming that involves children, youth, or vulnerable populations at FPCW. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from FPCW; if the person is a member, their standing within the congregation will be evaluated by Session.

Failure to report a policy violation is grounds for termination of an employee. Volunteers who fail to report a policy violation may be restricted from participation in any activities involving children or youth at FPCW, and their standing within the congregation will be evaluated by Session.

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REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES
OUR CHURCH POLICY IS TO REPORT ALL SUSPICIONS OR ALLEGATIONS OF
ABUSE, WHEN IN DOUBT, *REPORT!*

RESPONSE TO REPORT OF ABUSE

FPCW Leadership will take appropriate action on behalf of the church when a report of abuse occurs.

FPCW Safety Committee

SAFETY COMMITTEE

Recognizing the importance of providing and maintaining a safe environment for children and youth, FPCW will appoint and maintain a Safety Committee, which will meet once each academic year.

MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the Safety Committee is to enable FPCW's Children's and Youth Ministries to carry out appropriate ministry activities while safeguarding program participants against emotional, physical, or sexual abuse.

COMPOSITION

The Safety Committee will be comprised of the following members:

1. Pastor/Head of Staff
2. Director of Church Ministries (or Head of Staff's designee)
3. CLL Committee Moderator.

MEETINGS

The Pastor/Head of Staff will chair a meeting of the Safety Committee at the beginning of the academic year to discuss risk management practices and updates. The Safety Committee will also meet on an emergency basis upon the recommendation of a member, request of Session, or following the report of any incident or allegation.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Safety Committee will be charged with the following duties:

1. Applying existing FPCW policies and procedures related to safety and risk management issues for children and youth.
2. Monitoring all Children's/Youth Ministry programs for ongoing compliance with safety policies.
3. Making recommendations regarding safety issues to FPCW Congregational Life & Learning Committee/Session.

Children/Youth Ministry Staff Monitoring Plan

Monitoring of staff and volunteers will include regular (announced and unannounced) visits in each program to provide supervisors the opportunity to observe staff member and volunteer interactions with children/youth.

Pastor/Head of Staff conducts an unscheduled observation of Children's/Youth Ministry program at least once each academic year.

The CLL Committee meets with the Director of Church Ministries (or Head of Staff's designee) once each year to discuss Children's/Youth Ministry, including safety training and procedures.

BUILDING SAFETY

The Director of Church Ministries (or Head of Staff's designee) will be responsible for ensuring that the Youth Ministry area is monitored during Sunday classes or programming. This will include unobserved monitoring of volunteers and youth in classrooms or meetings.

Youth Ministry volunteers as well as FPCW staff members are prohibited from being alone with an individual youth in any room or building. In the event a staff member or volunteer finds himself/herself alone with a single youth, that staff member or volunteer will take the youth to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others. (Example: If a youth desires additional conversation or counsel with a staff member or volunteer after regular programming has concluded, move to an adjoining room where other staff members or volunteers are present, or into a public space.)

Any two youth together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open) area.

The Director of Church Ministries (or Head of Staff's designee) will be responsible for ensuring that the Children's area is monitored during Sunday classes or programming. This will include unobserved monitoring of staff members, volunteers, and children in children's classrooms & Nursery.

No child will ever be left unattended in the Church Building or on the children's playground during children's ministry programming or classes. Children's Ministry volunteers and FPCW staff members are prohibited from being alone with an individual child in any room or building. In the event a staff member or volunteer finds himself/herself alone with a single child, that individual will take the child to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others. (Example: if a child is the last in a class to be picked up by a parent, move to an adjoining room where other staff members or volunteers are present.)

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On the children's playground, FPCW staff members and volunteers are to be watching children during play periods, giving particular attention to the areas not easily seen from all viewpoints. (Example: under slides, in corners, behind structures). Children must stay in designated play areas.

Any two children together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open) area of the playground.

ADULT to CHILD/YOUTH RATIOS

FPCW is committed to providing adequate supervision in both Children's Ministry and Youth Ministry programs. In addition to following the two-adult rule, FPCW requires the following child/teacher ratios for children and youth in care or participating in FPCW programs. If a worker is 'out of ratio' it is his/her responsibility to immediately notify the Director or supervisory staff person for the program or event. The Director or supervisory staff member will make diligent effort to immediately bring staff member/volunteer to youth ratios into compliance with this policy.

Nursery Room or children separated into age specific rooms

*In situations where the number of children and multi-age groups vary within the group in the Nursery room, ***Three-Deep adult leadership*** allows more hands and eyes to assist youngsters. This requires at least three adult individuals be present.

Children: For Every	Adult Designees	Three-Deep Individual
3 Infants [age 0-1]	2	1
7 Walkers [age 2-3]	2	
8 Pre-School [age 4]	2	
Single Charge (1)	Adult Designee	Two-Deep Individual
Infant Walker Pre-School/ Kdgt. School Age Middle School Senior High	1	1

Elementary

*In situations where the number of elementary children and the age groups vary and/or programming events are combined, ***Three-Deep adult leadership*** allows more hands and eyes to assist children. This requires at least three adult individuals be present.

Children: For Every	Adult Designees	Three-Deep Individual
11 Kindergarten [age 5-6]	2	1
15 School Age [age 7-11]	2	

Secondary

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*In situations where the number of secondary youth vary and/or programming events are combined, ***Three-Deep adult leadership*** provides a better chaperoning coverage of the youth. This requires at least three adult individuals be present.

Youth: For Every	Adult Designees	Three-Deep Individual
15 Middle School [age 12-13]	2	1
15 High School [age 14-18]	2	1

DISCIPLINE

It is the policy of FPCW that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any way for behavior management of children or youth. **No form of physical discipline is acceptable.** This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction or inappropriate behaviors by a child/youth. If a child/youth is unruly or fails to comply with verbal warnings or instructions from staff/volunteers, the parents of the child/youth will be contacted immediately to pick them up. In the event of a fight or physical altercation, staff members will verbally redirect the child/youth involved and will try to avoid physical intervention. Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to parents and the Director of Church Ministries (or Head of Staff's designee, the Head of Staff, and the Moderator of CLL Committee.

INTOXICANTS

Staff and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while in any church facility, while traveling with children/youth, or while working with or supervising children/youth. Staff and volunteers are prohibited from purchasing or acquiring any alcohol or any illegal drugs for children/youth. Were a violation to occur, please see page 4 for ***Enforcement of Policies*** and disciplinary action.

MEDICATION

When possible, medication should be supervised and administered by a guardian/parent of a child or youth. Without written parental consent, a staff member or volunteer may not administer medication to any child or youth while serving in Children's or Youth Ministry.

NUDITY

Staff and volunteers in FPCW's children's/youth ministry should never be nude in the presence of students in their care. In the event there is a situation that may call for or contemplate the possibility of nudity (i.e. changing clothes during a pool party, weekend or overnight retreat, etc.), the staff member or volunteer leading the event will communicate a plan to the Pastor/Head of Staff concerning arrangements for showering or changing clothes.

BATHROOM SUPERVISION AND ASSISTANCE GUIDELINE

Because nursery children may require complete assistance with their bathroom activities, all staff members and volunteers will observe the following policies:

Diapering

1. Only nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will undertake the diapering of children of either sex.
2. Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers.

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3. Children will never be left unattended on changing tables.
4. Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in nursery will be recorded on the registration log at counter.
5. Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.
6. Children should be changed on changing stations only.

ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN OR YOUTH

FPCW recognizes that meeting the emotional needs of children or youth may occasionally require staff member and volunteers to minister to them on an individual basis. Staff Members and volunteers should observe the following guidelines when interacting with children/youth.

Individual Meetings

Staff members and volunteers should conduct one-to-one meetings with an individual child/youth at a time when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed.

TRANSPORTATION

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for children/youth. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transportation of children/youth:

1. When children or youth are transported in a church or private vehicle, there should be two unrelated adults who have been successfully approved through the FPCW's screening process.
2. Children/Youth should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided.
3. Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children/youth while in vehicles.
4. No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving FPCW vans, or vehicles owned or rented by FPCW, unless in an emergency.
5. No drivers under age 25 may drive Church-owned or rented vehicles.

PARENTAL CONTACT

Parents whose child/youth is participating in FPCW's Children/Youth Ministry activities and programs will be contacted if their child/youth becomes severely ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in Children/Youth Ministry programs.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their child/youth is involved. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with or participation in Children's/Youth Ministry programs will be required to complete the church's volunteer application and screening process.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

FPCW is committed to protecting children/youth in its care. To this end, FPCW has implemented a 'physical contact policy' that promotes a positive, nurturing environment for our Children's/Youth Ministry programs. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working in Children's/Youth Ministry programs:

1. Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children/youth are important for a child's or youth's development and are generally suitable in the church setting.
2. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to an immediate supervisor, the Director of Church Ministries (or Head of Staff's designee), or the Pastor/Head of Staff.
3. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child/youth and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
4. Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or in the presence of other staff members and volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted as such when physical contact is open to observation.
5. Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff or volunteers in the Children's/Youth Ministry programs must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
6. Do not force any physical contact, touch, or affection upon a reluctant child/youth. A child's/youth's preference not to be touched must be respected.
7. Staff and volunteers are responsible for protecting children and youth under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.
8. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse must be reported immediately to an immediate supervisor, the Director of Church Ministries (or Head of Staff's designee), and the Pastor/Head of Staff.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with children/youth and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with any child/youth in the program. However, it is anticipated that from time-to-time, **youth ministry** discussions and lessons may address issues related to interpersonal relationships and human sexuality. These discussions will occur in group settings and will be brought to the attention of the CLL Committee.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from possessing (or transmitting to any child/youth) any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, pictures, films, etc.) on church property, during an off-site activity, or in the presence of children/youth, including those in electronic form.

SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

It is anticipated that certain Children's/Youth Ministry activities may occasionally require that overnight sleeping arrangements be made for children/youth and staff members and volunteers (i.e., lock-ins, mission trips, ski trips, etc.). In the event an activity requires sleeping arrangements, staff members and volunteers will strictly observe the following rules:

1. The 3-adult rule must be followed; a single child/youth should not be alone with a staff member or volunteer.
2. All adult leaders must have previously completed the church's screening and training process.
3. Overnight sleeping arrangements must be submitted in writing and approved by the CLL Moderator and Head of Staff prior to the activity.
4. Leaders should check with parents and use good judgment regarding PG or PG-13 movies. No R-rated movies are permitted.
5. Appropriately modest sleeping attire must be worn, both tops and bottoms.
6. In the event of a sleepover on campus that involves both boys and girls, boys and girls must sleep in separate areas, properly supervised by at least two adult leaders of the same gender.
7. If overnight arrangements do not include standard beds, each staff member, volunteer, and child/youth will use single sleeping bags or blankets. In these instances, a "one-person-to-one bag or blanket" rule will be observed.

TOBACCO

FPCW requires staff members and volunteers to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products, including electronic cigarette devices, in church facilities, while in the presence of children/youth or their parents, and during church activities or programs.

CELL PHONES

Any staff member or volunteer should refrain from using their cell phone during any time they are supervising children/youth. Checking the time, using Google for a reference, using the stopwatch, etc. are acceptable uses of the cell phone, but not watching a game, social media, etc. because it takes your attention away from the children /youth.

ELECTRONIC & SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS

The following requirements apply to all communications via emails, text messages, social media, etc. among FPCW pastors, staff, volunteers, youth and children when those communications relate to FPCW programs, services, and activities:

- No person shall post or permit to be posted any confidential information about FPCW, its programs, services and activities, members or those who participate in its programs, services or activities.
- All communications related to FPCW activities/events must maintain a professional and appropriate style and adhere to this FPCW Communications Policy.
- No person shall engage in electronic communications that violate any FPCW policy or any local, state or federal law.
- In all communications related to FPCW programs, services and activities, or made during FPCW activities/events, employees and volunteers should avoid the use of statements that reasonably could be viewed as:
 - Derogatory.
 - Sexual, lewd, pornographic, or obscene.
 - Offensive due to the use of profanity.
 - Threatening, harassing, or bullying.
 - Discriminatory.
 - Facilitating illegal activities.
 - Having the purpose to assist personal, commercial, or for-profit ends.
 - Expressing support for a political candidate or campaign.
 - Unauthorized or illegal distribution, reproduction, or use of copyrighted materials.
 - Fraternization or otherwise crossing the line between professional and personal boundaries.
 - Suggestive in nature.
- Use/posting by FPCW of photographic images of children and youth and of their FPCW-sponsored activities will conform with the following guidelines:
 - FPCW will honor the request of any parent or legal guardian who asks that their child not appear in any church publications or website.
 - FPCW will never include a child or youth's name, handle or other identifying information (i.e., address) with any photo.
 - FPCW will not "tag" children and youth in images used on social media.

- No adult volunteer or FPCW employee may initiate a connection with a child or youth who such volunteer or employee met through a FPCW program or activity on a social media site except a child or youth to which they are related. Adult volunteers and employees may accept a connection with a child or youth initiated by a child or youth. However, in such circumstances, the employee or volunteer must be cognizant that the child or youth may view content posted by the employee or volunteer that would be inappropriate for consumption by the child or youth. In addition, the employee or volunteer may be held responsible for any content seen by a child or youth and may be disciplined up to and including termination for such conduct.
- Recognizing the importance of electronic communication, employees and volunteers may utilize text messaging or social media in direct communication. All such communication will be appropriate and strictly related to their role at FPCW or in reference to programs, services, and activities of FPCW. Such messages must maintain an appropriate and professional style and otherwise be in compliance with the requirements of this Policy. Adult volunteers and employees shall maintain a record of any electronic communication. No employee or volunteer shall use a platform utilizing disappearing content for direct communication with children or youth (i.e., snapchat).
- No individual shall identify or represent themselves as speaking on behalf of FPCW without prior approval from the Pastor/Head of Staff.

VERBAL INTERACTIONS

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and children/youth should be positive and uplifting. FPCW staff members and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of children/youth.

To this end, staff members and volunteers should not talk to children/youth in a way that is or could be construed by any reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, staff and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children/youth.