

**First Presbyterian Church Child Protection
Policy**

Approved By Session March 18, 2013 Revised by Session
8/16/2021

“Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”

Mark 10:14

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

First Presbyterian Church wants parents/caregivers to feel confident that the staff, leaders and volunteers have the safety of your child/youth as our number one priority. The goal of our policies, standards, and procedures is to promote a safe and secure environment for all children/youth when they are participating in church sponsored activities or programs.

The Child Protection Policy provides a broad range of standards and procedures, which promote a safe environment for our children/youth. Please feel free to contact your child/youth's leader with questions or concerns you may have or contact a staff member directly at 704-636-1321. Parents are welcome and encouraged to attend a Child Protection Training class, which is required for all staff, leaders and volunteers.

The key to any relationship is communication. We encourage you to get to know your child/youth's leaders and volunteers. Communicating openly with the persons who are working with your son or daughter at church is vitally important as we work together to support your child/youth's faith journey.

Any member of the congregation, volunteer, leader or staff who has been accused of a crime against a child or a violent crime against another adult will be suspended from participating in any children/youth's church sponsored activity or program until the accusation has been cleared. If a member of the congregation, volunteer, leader or staff has been convicted of a crime against a child or a violent crime against another adult, he/she will not be permitted to participate in any children/youth's church sponsored activity or program.

If you believe your child/youth is experiencing any form of mistreatment (injury, bullying, gossip) while participating in any church activity or program, please contact your child/youth's leader directly. The leader may not be aware of the situation with your child. If you have concerns about your child/youth's leader or advisor, please trust your instincts and contact a minister immediately. Sharing your concerns and questions is an important step toward creating a safe environment for all children/youth.

Policy Statement

In keeping with the covenant of baptism, the congregation of First Presbyterian Church (FPC) has committed themselves and their resources to nurture our children/youth emotionally, physically and spiritually. We promise to provide structure, procedures and policies, which will keep children/youth who attend our activities/programs safe from harm and abuse.

First Presbyterian Church, therefore, has established The Child Protection Policy and The Child Protection Training Program. Each volunteer and staff must be screened and trained on the policies and procedures before he/she will be approved to work with any children/youth activity/program. All volunteers and staff must abide by the policies of First Presbyterian Church and the Child Protection Policy. New Discipline Classes will briefly address the intent of the Child Protection Policy and Training.

Policy and Program Definitions

The State of North Carolina defines a child as anyone from birth to age eighteen. FPC designates a difference between children and youth in programming. For the purposes of this policy, all persons below the age of 12 years will be referred to as children and those 12-18 years old will be referred to as youth.

Child Abuse refers to an action or inaction by a parent, leader, advisor, teacher, etc. that harms or threatens to harm a child/youth's physical or mental health and overall well-being. This may include physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional or verbal abuse and neglect.

Components of the Program

Each volunteer or staff member must complete the Child Protection Training before being approved to work with children/youth at First Presbyterian Church. Our program has four components:

1. SCREENING
2. TRAINING
3. SUPERVISION/COMMUNICATION
4. REPORTING

SCREENING

Child Protection screening includes one or more of the following:

1. **Application:** designed to get to know you better
2. **Reference Checks:** may be conducted so we can hear from people you said know you best
3. **Personal Interview:** may be held to ensure your experiences, gifts and passions meet the position where you may serve
4. **Background Checks:** will be conducted every 3 years in conjunction with the training
Your staff contact person will know which steps need to be taken to protect you and the children/youth with whom you will be working.

TRAINING

The Child Protection Training is required for all persons who serve children/youth or work around children/youth on a regular basis. The purpose of this class is to raise awareness of child abuse/child neglect issues as well as present FPC's Child Protection Policy and the "dos and don'ts" when working with children/youth.

The **initial training or updates in policy** must be completed in a face-2-face class. Each person must participate in the **training every 3 years**. The review training (if no change in policy in the last 3 years) will be available through the online class (which must be completed within the designated time frame) or through attendance in the face-2-face class.

Child Protection Training will

- Be updated every 3 years
 - Face-2-face or
 - Online
- Include information
 - Child abuse, neglect and exploitation definitions and other information
 - FPC's Supervision/Interaction Guidelines
 - Reporting requirements and procedures, if abuse or neglect is suspected
 - Tips for interacting with someone who reports abuse or neglect
- Require participants to complete the following
 - Volunteer Information Form
 - Leader Covenant Form
 - Provide information needed for FPC to conduct a background check
 - Submission of quiz, if completing the online training
- Offered
 - 4 times a year as a face-2-face class
 - Additionally, at the request of staff

Interaction and Supervision with Children/Youth

The selection and supervision of leaders, volunteers, advisors and teachers is primarily the responsibility of the staff who supervises that area, but we all have a role in keeping one another accountable. It is the responsibility of FPC to provide proper supervision during all children/youth activities/programs. We must work together to ensure the interactions between staff, leaders, advisors, teachers, volunteers and children/youth are appropriate and above reproach. Our interaction and supervision guidelines are for the protection of the children/youth, as well as for the leaders.

1. Persons who have been an active participant in the life of FPC for at least six (6) months are eligible to work with the children/youth. *In rare situations, exceptions may be permitted if permission is granted by the Session.*
2. All persons working with children/youth must be at least five (5) years older than the oldest child/youth in the group. *In rare situations, exceptions may be permitted if permission is granted by the Session.*
3. At least two (2) adults or one (1) adult and one (1) youth will be present to supervise all activities involving children/youth.
 - a) All must be trained and familiar with the Child Protection Policy.
 - b) When possible, supervisors should avoid being alone with a child/youth.
 - c) FPC rooms used for children/youth will have doors equipped with windows or the door must remain open.
4. Adequate personnel must be provided and maintained before and after an event until all children/youth are in the custody of their parents or guardians. (Exception is youth who are driving. Please see transportation section.)
5. All children at the church are the responsibility of their parent(s) and will not be left unattended. Parents must provide written permission to allow older children to come to their parents' classes or leave a class with an older sibling or a non-parent.
6. Children are not allowed to go to another location, including restrooms, unless they are accompanied by or are under the watchful eye of an adult.
7. Child/youth personal information will be kept in confidence by staff and leaders. This information will only be released to authorized individuals on a need-to-know basis.
8. Off-site activities
 - a) Parent Permission/Release Form will be required for each off premises activity involving children/youth. (**Form: PP1**)
 - i. Forms must be signed by a parent/guardian and submitted prior to the trip.
 - ii. Forms must include the destination, mode of transportation, driver(s) and staff or volunteer leading the activity.
 - iii. The activity leader must have the permission slips in their possession during the trip.
 - b) Chaperones must be the same gender as the children/youth in the group.
 - c) Adult to child/youth ratio
 - i. One (1) adult to five (5) children is recommended.
 - ii. One (1) adult to ten (10) youth is recommended.
 - d) In rare cases, youth may be permitted to drive to and from off-site events. This is done under the direction of the parent(s)/guardian(s) with written justification to the activity leader. (Text messages will be acceptable.) FPC assumes no responsibility for students who drive themselves or others.

9. Overnight activities

- a) Parent Permission/Release Form will be required for each overnight activity involving children/youth.
 - i. Forms must be signed by a parent/guardian and submitted prior to the trip. (**Form: PP2**)
 - ii. Forms must include the destination, length of the trip, mode of transportation, driver(s) and staff or volunteer leading the activity.
 - iii. The activity leader must have the permission slips in their possession on the activity.
- b) Chaperones must be the same gender as the children/youth in the group. A minimum of 2 chaperones per gender are required.
- c) Adult to child/youth ratio
 - i. One (1) adult to five (5) children is recommended.
 - ii. One (1) adult to ten (10) youth is recommended.
- d) Youth are NOT permitted to drive to overnight events.

10. Transportation

- a) Parents will be informed of the transportation plans, including the driver(s), church van or personal vehicles.
 - i. When using the church van, 1 adult (the driver) and multiple children/youth will be acceptable.
 - ii. If personal vehicles are used, 1 adult (the driver) and multiple children/youth will be acceptable.
- b) If mentors and confirmands are attending activities together, the parent and the mentor may make arrangements for transportation. In this event, the arrangement does not involve FPC, therefore, FPC's Child Protection Policies do not apply, nor does FPC assume any responsibility.
- c) Children/youth riding with non-parent, including leaders and volunteers, or non-sibling must have prior written parental permission. Text messages will be acceptable.
- d) Children/youth may not ride with high school drivers during church sponsored activities.

11. Social Media

- a) FPC operates and maintains several social media sites (FPC website, Facebook, Instagram, etc.) for sharing church information and activities.
 - i. Only designated persons may post information/pictures to FPC's social media sites.
 - ii. Parents/guardians may choose to allow or not allow pictures of their child/youth to be posted on FPC's social media sites. (**Form: PP3**)
- b) Participation in live streaming events will be considered as consent.
- c) Staff, leaders and volunteers may NOT post information/pictures from church events of children/youth on their personal websites.
 - i. They may "share" the postings from FPC's sites.

12. Communications with children/youth

- a) Many times, communication via email/text is more efficient and effective, especially with youth. FPC will provide parents with a form to indicate their preferences when staff/leaders/volunteers need to communicate with their child/youth.
- b) Parents must give written permission for their child/youth to receive emails/texts from staff/leaders/volunteers. (**Form: PP4**)

- i. Parents may choose to be “cc’d” on communications between staff/leaders/volunteers.
- c) Best practice is to email/text groups with needed information.
- d) Individual email/text to a child/youth by staff/leader/volunteer is not appropriate in most circumstances.
 - i. In the event, a staff member/leader/volunteer is providing support or counsel in confidential matters or spiritual care and determine the time is not right to involve the parents, the staff/leader/volunteer will share the contents with a pastor. If the staff member is a pastor, he/she will share this information with other designated leaders. Best practice is to print with date and time stamp to be kept on file.

REPORTING

Our governing principle is that we know it is in God’s heart and will for us to care for and protect children/youth. (Matthew 18:1-10) Therefore, all persons, in the course of his/her employment or volunteer efforts with First Presbyterian Church, have a ***responsibility to report*** any suspected or actual abuse or neglect, past or present, regardless of where the suspected abuse occurred. In addition, NC law (G.S. 7B-301(a) requires “any person (18 years of age or older) or institution who has cause to suspect that any juvenile is abused, neglected or dependent...or has died as a result of maltreatment” to make a report to the county department of social services where the child resides or is found.

If you suspect a child/youth is being abused or neglect, do not be afraid to report it.

Reporting Procedure

When staff/leader/volunteer suspects abuse/neglect, he/she must report the abuse/neglect immediately, but no later than twenty-four (24) hours after his/her first suspicion. ALL reports will be taken SERIOUSLY. If abuse/neglect is suspected, under no circumstances should the person with the suspicion or who received a report of abuse/neglect conduct any investigation or ask specific questions about the allegation. This may negatively impact the official investigation

- The report may be made
 - Directly to the NC Department of Social Services of Rowan County (704-216-8498) or appropriate law enforcement agency
 - To a pastor, who will assist with reporting to Social Services
- Regardless of how the initial report was made, the staff/leader/volunteer must notify a pastor immediately or no later than twenty-four (24) hours of the suspected abuse/neglect or after making the report, whichever comes first. **The pastor will**
 - Take all reports seriously and will not judge them as premature.
 - Will be supportive of the individuals who, in good faith, reports actual or reasonably suspected cases of abuse/neglect.
 - Will complete and file the Form for Reporting Suspected Abuse. (**Form: R1**)
 - Will notify FPC’s liability insurer.
 - Will immediately notify the parents/guardians of the suspected victim.
 - Will be responsible for making public statements to the media regarding the alleged offense.
- Persons who are accused
 - Will be immediately relieved of further responsibilities until the investigation is completed and the allegations are cleared or substantiated.

- Must be treated with dignity and support.
- May be reinstated by the pastor, if and when he/she has been cleared of the alleged abuse.

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY FORMS AND INFORMATION

- FPC Child Protection Policy Packet
 - Volunteer Information Form (T1)
 - Leader Covenant (T2)
- Child Abuse/Neglect Reporting Form (R1)
- Permission Forms
 - Off-site Permission/Release Form (PP1)
 - Overnight Permission/Release Form (PP2)
 - Social Media Permission Form (PP3)
 - Child/Youth Communication Form (PP4)

**VOLUNTEER INFORMATION FORM
FOR PERSONS WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, SALISBURY, NC**

The congregation of First Presbyterian Church is committed to providing a nurturing, safe, and secure environment for all children, youth and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by our church. Thank you for helping us fulfill this commitment by providing us with the information requested in this form.

VOLUNTEER INFORMATION

Volunteer Position _____

Name _____
(First) (Middle) (Last)

Street Address _____

City, Zip Code _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

Date of Birth _____ Social Security # _____

(We only need your driver's license number if you will be driving children/youth for church sponsored events/trips.)

Driver's License # _____ State Issued _____

How long have you been an active participant in the life of First Presbyterian Church?

_____ Are you a member? Yes or No How long? _____

List all previous church work involving children and youth (church name, address, contact person, type of work, dates, etc.)

List all previous non-church work involving children/youth. Be specific.

What training have you received in the care and nurture of children and youth? (CPR, First Aid, Life Guard, include certification if any)

(OVER)

PERSONAL REFERENCES

(People who are not related to you by blood or marriage. If your reference is a member of FPC, you can just provide their name and phone number.)

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

The information contained in this form is correct. I authorize any references, background checks or churches listed in this form to give any information they may have regarding my character and fitness for working with children and youth. I hereby release any individual, church, or organization from any and all liability for damages which may result to me, my heirs, or family for compliance with this authorization.

Your signature on this form confirms your understanding and agreement that:

In the event allegations of criminal or sexual misconduct arise regarding your conduct while you serve in the above described capacity(ies), the church will fully cooperate with any investigation.

Signature _____

Date _____

LEADER COVENANT
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, SALISBURY, NC

I have read and understand the Child Protection Policy, and I have attended the Child Protection Training Program. I agree to follow and abide by the policies and procedures of First Presbyterian Church, Salisbury, NC and in particular the Child Protection Policy. I agree to refrain from inappropriate conduct in the performance of my volunteer services on behalf of First Presbyterian Church, Salisbury, NC. I agree to share God's love with the children/youth I am serving.

Please include the date for the appropriate training for this cycle.

- Initial Face-2-Face Training, Date: _____
- Online Training, Date: _____
 - Please submit the online quiz with this form.

Applicant's Name (Please Print)

Applicant's Signature

Signature of CPT Leader

**REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, SALISBURY, NC**

After report has been made to the Rowan County Department of Social Services, Local law enforcement or a minister of First Presbyterian Church, please complete this form. It is to be submitted to a pastor of First Presbyterian Church as soon as possible but within 24 hours of making the report. The pastor will be responsible for following up with the authorities and making a report to the insurance company.

Remember: *Under no circumstances should the person making the report attempt to conduct any further investigation on their own initiative.*

Name of the Person Observing the Suspected Abuse or Child/Youth who Reported the Suspected Abuse: _____

Date the Suspected Abuse was witnessed or was reported to You: _____

DESCRIPTION OF SUSPECTED ABUSE (include as many details as possible):

Other Possible Witnesses to the Suspected Abuse: _____

Date, Time and Agency to which the Report Was Made:

● Date and Time: _____

● Agency: _____

Signature of Person Completing Form: _____

(R1: Approved by Session 8/17/21)

**OFF-SITE ACTIVITIES PERMISSION-
RELEASE FORM
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, SALISBURY, NC**

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

If Visitor, A Guest of _____

ACTIVITY LEADER/MOBILE NUMBER _____

DATE OF ACTIVITY _____ TIMES OF ACTIVITY _____

ACTIVITY DESTINATION _____

TRANSPORTATION: CHURCH VAN OR PRIVATE CARS OR WALKING

DRIVERS: _____

I give my permission for my above named child/youth to join the above-mentioned activity with First Presbyterian Church away from the church grounds. Emergency contact number for the Activity Leader will be provided to parents/guardians. Every effort for safety will be taken.

I hereby release First Presbyterian Church, its staff, volunteers and activity leaders from responsibility and liability for any injury or illness that my child may sustain during this activity. In the event of an emergency, I hereby authorize an adult leader, as agent for me, to consent to any X-ray, examination, medical, dental or surgical diagnosis; treatment and hospital care advised and supervised by a physician, surgeon, or dentist (as appropriate) licensed to practice under the laws of the state where the services are rendered. I expect to be contacted as soon as possible.

PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____ CELL NUMBER(S) _____

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (drug/food allergies, medical conditions to be monitored, etc.)

(PP1: Approved by Session 8/17/21)

**OVERNIGHT ACTIVITIES PERMISSION-
RELEASE FORM
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, SALISBURY, NC**

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

If Visitor, A Guest of _____

ACTIVITY LEADER/MOBILE NUMBER _____

DATES OF ACTIVITY _____ TIMES OF ACTIVITY _____

ACTIVITY DESTINATION _____

TRANSPORTATION: CHURCH VAN OR PRIVATE CARS OR WALKING

DRIVERS: _____

I give my permission for my above named child/youth to join the above mentioned activity with First Presbyterian Church away from the church grounds. Emergency contact number for the Activity Leader will be provided to parents/guardians. Every effort for safety will be taken.

I hereby release First Presbyterian Church, its staff, volunteers and activity leaders from responsibility and liability for any injury or illness that my child may sustain during this activity. In the event of an emergency, I hereby authorize an adult leader, as agent for me, to consent to any X-ray, examination, medical, dental or surgical diagnosis; treatment and hospital care advised and supervised by a physician, surgeon, or dentist (as appropriate) licensed to practice under the laws of the state where the services are rendered. I expect to be contacted as soon as possible.

PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____ CELL NUMBER(S) _____

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (drug/food allergies, medical conditions to be monitored, etc.)

**COMMUNICATION WITH
CHILDREN/YOUTH PERMISSION FORM
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, SALISBURY, NC**

Many times, communication via email/text is more efficient and effective, especially with youth. This form provides parents an opportunity to indicate their preferences when staff/leaders/volunteers need to communicate with their child/youth. Most communications will be to groups of no less than two (2).

NAME _____

FPC staff/leaders/volunteers may communicate with my child through the following modes (check each that applies and provide the specific contact information to be used):

_____ Text: cell number _____

_____ Email: email address _____

Parents may choose to be “copied” on communications with their child. Please check each that applies and provide the specific contact information to be used):

_____ Text: Parent/Guardian(s) cell number(s)

Mom: _____

Dad: _____

_____ Email: Parent/Guardian(s) email(s)

Mom: _____

Dad: _____

In the event, a staff member/leader/volunteer is providing support or counsel in confidential matters or spiritual care and determine the time is not right to involve the parents, the staff/leader/volunteer will share the contents with a pastor. Pastors will share this information with other designated leaders.

PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

(PP4: Approved by Session 8/17/21)

PHOTO/VIDEO RELEASE FORM
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, SALISBURY, NC

Year: 20__-20__

First Presbyterian Church uses several internet and Social Media platforms to share photographs/video clips of activities and events in the life of our church and programs. Photographs/videos may be posted to FPC online platforms such as, FPC's Website, Facebook, YouTube and other Social Media pages. Photographs may also be submitted to the Salisbury Post and other local print media. Names will NOT be included in these postings.

Please list the names of all persons this release covers and indicate if permission to post photographs/videos is or is not given. Please mark the appropriate choice beside each name.

YES...I give permission for the posting of photographs/videos to the above mention media sites for the person listed.

NO...I DO NOT give permission for the posting of photographs/videos to the above mention media sites for the person listed.

Yes	No	Name (print)

Special Notes:

PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE: _____

Date: _____

(PP3: Approved by Session 8/17/21)