

Child and Youth Protection Policy
Liverpool First Presbyterian Church
603 Tulip Street, Liverpool, NY 13088

November 12, 2018

I. General Purpose Statement

It is the policy of the Liverpool First Presbyterian Church (LFPC) to provide a safe and secure environment to protect against the abuse of children and youth entrusted to its care, and to set forth in this policy the practices and procedures by which all church and pre-school staff, volunteers, and elected officers shall be bound in the recognition and prevention of child abuse. Child abuse, in any form, will not be tolerated by the Church and the practices and procedures, as set forth herein, shall be strictly enforced. The session of LFPC is required to adopt and implement a child and youth protection policy:

"All councils shall adopt and implement a sexual misconduct policy and a child protection policy." (G.30106)

II. Mandated Reporters

The PC(USA) Book of Order identifies ordained officers as mandated reporters in G-4.0302: *"Any member of this church engaged in ordered ministry and any certified Christian educator employed by this church or its congregations, shall report to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities knowledge of harm or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity when (1) such information is gained outside of a confidential communication as defined in G-4.0301, (2) she or he is not bound by an obligation of privileged communication under law, or (3) she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of future physical harm or abuse."*

Any staff member or volunteer, whether ordained or not, who suspects that a child is being abused shall immediately report his or her suspicion, as outlined in section V below.

III. Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms "child" and "children" and "youth" include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. "Children" are generally birth through grade 6, and "youth" are generally grades 7 through 12. The term "worker" includes both paid staff and unpaid volunteers who work with children or youth. "Ordained officers" includes ministers of Word and Sacrament, elders, and deacons, whether currently serving or not. "Church sponsored programs" are activities run directly by the Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse.

For purposes of this policy, "**child abuse**" is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. It includes any mistreatment or neglect of a child (under the age of 18) that results in non-accidental harm or injury and which cannot reasonably be explained. Child abuse can include:

Physical abuse: any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.

Emotional abuse: emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.

Sexual abuse: any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.

Neglect: depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

IV. Preventive Measures

As a condition of employment or serving as a volunteer working with children or youth with LFPC, all individuals shall be subject to the following requirements:

1. Ordinarily applicants, except those to the pre-school, will be members of LFPC and thus under the authority of the church leadership.
2. All staff applicants and any volunteers who are likely to have interaction with children and youth in the performance of their services to LFPC shall submit a **formal application** which includes, among other things, a list of the applicant's personal references, an acknowledgment of any prior convictions of a crime, and authorization to permit the church to conduct a criminal background check on said Applicant. This search is done via the channel of the Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse.
3. A criminal **background check** and state sexual offender check shall be conducted on each applicant.
4. Upon receipt of such application, the session of LFPC (or their designee) shall review the contents of the application and contact at least two of the applicant's **personal references** before extending any job offer or volunteer position to said applicant. In the event that either the applicant or a criminal background check suggests that an applicant has had a prior record of child abuse, such individual shall, in all cases, be disqualified from working with children and youth in the church.
5. As part of an initial **orientation**, each new staff member or volunteer shall be advised of the church's "zero tolerance" stand on any form of child abuse and the restriction from the use of corporal punishment, shall receive a copy of this Child and Youth Protection Policy, and shall view any child abuse prevention video(s) and read any written materials relating to the prevention of child abuse required. Each new staff member and volunteer shall be required to sign a form indicating

- that he or she has been notified of the Presbytery's policy against child abuse, has received and read a copy of this Child and Youth Protection Policy, and that he or she has attended a meeting in which this subject matter was discussed.
6. At least once a year, the church **will review** the contents of their Child and Youth Protection Policy with all staff members and volunteers and remind such of their requirement to strictly adhere to this policy.
 7. A copy of this Child and Youth Protection Policy shall at all times be **posted in the church** and be made available to anyone upon request.

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

1. A **"two-adult" rule** shall be in effect meaning that no staff member or volunteer is to be left alone with any child at any time without a justifiable reason pertaining to the child's well-being. If alone, every effort shall be made to meet in an open room with a window and another person in close proximity to the meeting room.
2. Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from disciplining children through use of physical punishment or verbal abuse.
3. Staff members and volunteers shall respect the rights of the children not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable.
4. Staff members and volunteers will respond to children with respect and consideration and will treat all children equally.
5. Each room set aside for children and youth should have a door with a window in it or a half door. Any classroom doors without windows should remain open at all times.
6. At any counseling sessions with children or youth, the doors on the room used should remain open for the entire session, ideally when others are nearby even though not in listening distance. **Open door counseling** protects both the child from abuse, and the counselor from false allegations of abuse. In cases of need for confidentiality, the door can be closed as long as it has a window.
7. **Participation and Emergency Care Permission** forms must be completed and signed by a parent or legal guardian for each child or youth participating in overnight events sponsored by church. Emergency contact information will be collected for children and youth engaging in non-overnight events.
8. Staff members and volunteers shall not **transport children** in private vehicles without written authorization from a parent or guardian. No (unrelated) child shall be transported in a vehicle by only one adult.
9. **Social media** can be an effective way for adults to communicate with children and youth. However, social media is considered contact with children and so falls under all the rules of this policy. Any contact between adult staff or volunteers and children or youth through social media (texts, direct messages, chat rooms, apps, and online platforms, etc.) must have explicit approval from parents or guardians. Parents or guardians shall be offered the option of receiving copies of

all such contact. *The church strongly encourages parents and guardians to be knowledgeable of and actively engaged in their children's social media use.*

V. Reporting Procedures

In the event that any allegation is made of child abuse during a church sponsored program or activity, the following procedures shall be followed:

1. The incident will be reported immediately to the state authorities: the **police at 911** and the New York State **Office of Children and Family Services at 1-800-342-3720**. The church will fully cooperate with any investigation by civil or criminal authorities.
2. The child will be immediately removed from the situation and the parents notified. The accused will not be confronted by the observer of the action or by others until the safety of the child has been secured.
3. When the child is safe, the person alleged to be the perpetrator of the child abuse will be removed from working with or near children pending an investigation. The individual will be treated with dignity and respect. He/she will be instructed to have no contact with the victim or with witnesses.
4. The incident will be reported to a staff member or officer of the church. However, if a minister member of the Presbytery is the alleged perpetrator, the matter will immediately be referred to the Presbytery Stated Clerk, who will then follow procedures outlined in the "Rules of Discipline" of the *Book of Order*.
5. The church will seek the advice and counsel of the Presbytery regarding contact with the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. The advice of legal counsel will be sought before responding to media inquiries or releasing information about the situation to the congregation. All other representatives of the organization should refrain from speaking to the media.

In the event that an individual involved in the care of children or youth becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child which may have occurred off-site by others, this should be reported to the New York State **Office of Children and Family Services at 1-800-342-3720**. The suspected abuse should also be reported immediately to the Presbytery following the procedure outlined in #4 above.

In all of the above situations, maintaining **confidentiality**, both of the potential victim(s) and the alleged perpetrator, is essential.

VI. Teenage Helpers

When acting in a volunteer capacity with children in the nursery during any church sponsored event teenagers under the age of 18 will be expected to follow the same procedures as adults. At the same time, it is recognized that all youth under the age of 18 are also afforded the protection of the Child and Youth Protection Policy and Procedures of the Presbytery. Teenage helpers under the age of 18 must be under the supervision of an adult.

VII. Medications Policy

Verbal permission, at minimum, from parents or guardians will be obtained before a staff member or volunteer administers any medication to children or youth. During overnight events written authorization will be obtained for the administration of medication.

VIII. Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under the care of the church, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, ice pack, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical

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