

**Pleasant Hill Presbyterian Church
Child / Volunteer Protection Policy
2006-2007**

CHILD / VOLUNTEER PROTECTION POLICY

POLICY RATIONALE

Jesus showed a deep compassion for children and a strong value of children. Children are more than future adults they are even now an example of faith for the rest of us. Thus, Jesus welcomed and blessed them.

As followers of Jesus, we also should love, value, and welcome children. Like Jesus, we must cherish not only the faith and openness of children, but also their vulnerability. This vulnerability puts children at risk, but it also places them close to God. Thus, the protection and support of children in the community of faith is very important.

To abuse a child is to take part in the evil in the world. We must prevent and bring to an end those things that harm children.

To receive a child in Christ's name is to receive Christ. We must also strive to enhance opportunities for loving trust that enable adults and children to be joyfully linked together as the family of God.

Our task as a community of faith is to demonstrate that we can be trustworthy; we can be a place where children are not betrayed; and where the value of children and adults sharing life and faith together is treasured.





INTRODUCTION

In order to protect our children, teachers, staff and church family, and in order to facilitate the prevention of child abuse, Pleasant Hill Presbyterian Church (PHPC) has instituted the following policies and procedures regarding child sexual abuse. It is the responsibility of the DCE, pastoral staff, and personnel committee to insure the implementation of this program.

DEFINITION

Child sexual abuse includes any form of sexual contact or exploitation in which a minor is being used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator.

NEED FOR GUIDELINES

- I.** Protection of our children, volunteers, staff and church family. This protection enhances the joy of children in our community of faith.
- II.** The state of Georgia requires that reasonable suspicions of abuse and known abuse be reported to the Department of Family and Children Services as soon as possible.
- III.** To offer a model to the community of both trust and protection.

PREVENTION

I. Application

- A.** All employees who are in a position of trust with children or youth will fill out the attached Level I Screen forms. These forms will be administered by the Personnel Committee. A Criminal Records Check will be performed when the answer to question number 1 on the application is No or the answer to question 2 is Yes or if the DCE, pastoral staff, or Personnel Committee is informed of a criminal background.
- B.** Any person with any criminal conviction involving a sexual offense with a minor, no matter how long ago the conviction took place, will be disqualified from service.

II. Orientation and training

- A.** All employees and full-time volunteers (3 times a year or more), i.e. Church School Teachers, Youth Group Advisors, Nursery Caregivers, who are in positions of trust with children and youth will go through training and orientation at the beginning of each new school year in the fall.
- B.** Training will include a review of PHPC's policies and procedures, as well as signs of sexual abuse and child abuse.



CHILD / VOLUNTEER PROTECTION PROCEDURES

I. Adult Supervision of Children and Youth

- A. All adult volunteers, working with youth or children shall have worshipped at PHPC for a minimum of six months.
- B. Two or more adults will be present at any church function that involves the supervision of children or youth.
- C. Caregivers must obtain written permission from a parent/guardian before going out alone with a child or spending time with a child in an unsupervised situation.
- D. All windows to children or youth rooms must have a glass panel which shall remain unobstructed at all times.
- E. All adult supervisors on overnight trips involving youth must be cleared in advance with the proper church authorities.
- F. No infant through toddler-age child will be released to any adult without proper identification. (See *Nursery Security Policy*.)

II. Reporting Procedures

- A. (1) Anyone who has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused will communicate their belief and the facts substantiating that belief to the DCE. If both the reporting party and the DCE agree there is reasonable cause, together they will report the facts to Gwinnett County Department of Family and Children Services (995-2118) for their determination of the facts in the case as soon as possible.

(2) If no agreement of reasonable cause is reached between the DCE and the reporting person, the reporting person should report to the authorities unilaterally if they still feel reasonable cause exists. Georgia law provides that any person, who in good faith reports child abuse or neglect as recognized by the law, shall be immune from any liability. Georgia law provides that failure to report reasonable suspicions is a misdemeanor.
- B. The DCE will advise the Head of Staff of the report as soon as possible. If the Head of Staff is not available, report will be made to someone else on the pastoral staff.
- C. As soon as possible either the DCE, Head of Staff or member of the pastoral staff will advise the parents of the child that a report of abuse has been made and DFCS has been contacted (if the abuser is not the parent.)
- D. The incident will be reported to the church insurance companies, attorney and denominational officials.
- E. The accused will be informed only after the safety of the victim is secured (in coordination with DFCS.)
- F. The accused will be treated with dignity and support.
- G. If an inquiry is made by the press or congregation a statement that : “A report of abuse has been made and reported to the proper authorities” will be made. DFCS will be the source of any further information. The privacy and confidentiality of all involved will be safeguarded.



NURSERY SECURITY POLICY AND PROCEDURE

INTRODUCTION

This policy is in addition to the Child Protection Policy. Its purpose is to define the security procedures in place in the PHPC nurseries.

PROCEDURES

- A. Adult Supervision of children in all Nurseries
 - 1. Two caregivers must be present at all times.
 - 2. At least one caregiver must be an adult.
 - 3. All caregivers must wear a name tag.
 - 4. All children must be signed in and signed out by the same adult.

- B. Baby and Toddler Nurseries
 - 1. All parents must use the pager system.
 - 2. Directions for the pager system should be clearly displayed outside the nursery doors.