

Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy
Presbytery of Geneva
Approved January 26, 2019

I. Statement of Purpose

The Presbytery of Geneva seeks to provide a safe and secure environment in which children, youth, and vulnerable adults can spiritually develop and are protected from inappropriate treatment of any kind. Our intent is: to protect children, youth, and vulnerable adults during all Presbytery events or activities; to educate staff and volunteers concerning pertinent issues; and to provide accountability to protect staff, volunteers and the Presbytery.

II. DEFINITIONS

The following is a comprehensive list of definitions of terms and their intended use in this policy:

Child, children, youth: Any person under the age of 18.

Child/ Youth Worker: Any person, volunteer or paid staff or contractor, who participates at any level at Presbytery entity sponsored events or activities involving children and/ or youth.

Child /Youth Abuse: Any act or failure to act that results in the physical, sexual, psychological, or emotional mistreatment, neglect, or exploitation of children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

Physical abuse – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental. This can include hitting, beating, shaking, burns, or biting.

Emotional abuse – emotional injury takes place when a child is not nurtured or provided with love and security. This can include threatening, yelling, constant criticism, belittling, bullying or constant teasing.

Sexual abuse – any sexual activity between an adult and child or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim. This can include fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, or pornography.

Neglect – depriving a child of his/her essential needs. This can include lack of provision of food, water, shelter or medical care.

Misuse of technology: The use of technology that results in the abusing of a child or youth.

Vulnerable Adult: Any person eighteen-years-old or older who may be receiving community care services because of learning, physical or mental disability, age, or illness, or who may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation; who is without the developmental or cognitive capacity to consent.

III. Mandatory Event Rules For Working With Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

The following rules apply to all individuals who work with children or youth at any Presbytery event or activity.

A. Two Adult Rule

At any Presbytery event or activity with children, youth, or vulnerable adults there will be no less than two un-related approved adults present. For overnight activities, there should be at least one approved adult of each gender where appropriate.

B. Ratios:

The adult to child ratio for all child-related events/activities is 2:10. The adult to youth ratio for all youth-related events/activities is 2:17.

C. Designated Person

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The Presbytery will ensure that there is an approved Designated Person responsible for safeguarding vulnerable adults ensuring their safety and well-being. This person must understand his/her responsibility to refer incidents of abuse to the relevant authorities.

D. Open Door Policy

All rooms set aside for children and youth must have a door with a clear window in it through which the room is visible. Otherwise, the door to the room shall remain open. Adults assisting small children or infants in bathrooms shall prop open the door.

E. Age of Volunteers

All child and youth workers must be at least 18 years of age and must be a minimum of four years older than the age group they lead or supervise. There may be times when it is permissible to use the services of youth, who are themselves under the age of 18, to assist in caring for younger children during Presbytery events or activities. In this case, the person must be at least 13 years old, must be under the supervision of an adult, and must never be left alone with children.

F. Discipline Policy

Under no circumstances is corporal punishment justified. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Volunteers should consult with the designated event leader if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

G. Transportation:

All adult drivers at child/youth events must have proper licensure and insurance on file with the organizing council. All vehicles used must have seat belts for the driver and each passenger. All drivers transporting children and/or youth must be over the age of twenty-five and must be informed that if their vehicle is used, their insurance would be primary if an accident occurs.

H. Code of Conduct

- a. All volunteers and employees at any Presbytery child or youth events and activities must also abide by a code of conduct that emphasizes the following prohibited behaviors, including but not restricted to:
- b. Display of sexual affection toward a child.
- c. Use of profanity or off-color jokes.
- d. Discussion of sexual encounters
- e. Dating or becoming “romantically” involved with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
- f. Using or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs in the presence of children.
- g. Possessing sexually oriented materials—including printed or online pornography—on church property or property being utilized for a church event.
- h. Having secrets with youth/children.
- i. Staring at or commenting on children’s bodies.

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- j. Engaging in inappropriate or unapproved electronic communication with children.
- k. Working one-on-one with children in a private setting.

IV. Screening of Child/Youth Workers

All persons desiring to work with children or youth at Presbytery events or activities will be screened and must be approved for service. The screening includes the following:

A. Reference Checks

Before working with children or youth, at least three of the applicant's references will be checked. Acceptable references may be received from the pastor or clerk of session from the person's church affiliation, employment references, or references from other volunteer agencies.

B. Criminal Background Checks

All applicant child/ youth workers must complete and sign a background check consent and authorization form or give evidence of a background check within the three years. A criminal background check will be conducted for any and all volunteers seeking to work with children or youth at Presbytery events or activities. Any convictions for an offense involving children or youth will disqualify an individual for working with children and youth. Conviction for other offenses may also disqualify an applicant following consultation with the Presbytery's insurance company. Failure to disclose a felony conviction on the application will also disqualify the applicant.

V. Responding to Allegations of Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult Abuse

- A. Allegations of any kind of abuse will be responded to using the same processes as outlined in the Presbytery's sexual misconduct policy, whether or not those allegations are of a sexual nature.
- B. Any child/youth worker who becomes aware of or suspects any incidents of abuse or neglect of children or youth under care at a Presbytery event or activity, should report it immediately to the Event Coordinator, Presbytery Leader or Stated Clerk for further action, including reporting to authorities following applicable state laws.
- C. If an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at a Presbytery event or activity, the parent or guardian of the child, youth, or vulnerable adult will be notified as soon as possible.
- D. The Presbytery's insurance company will be notified, and an incident report will be filed. Any documents received related to the incident or allegations will be forwarded immediately to the insurance company.

Training

The Presbytery will provide periodic Boundary Awareness Training that will include the Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy to ensure that all members of the Presbytery staff and all volunteers serving youth and children are fully informed concerning the Policy guidelines.