



SIXTH *presbyterian* CHURCH

SAFE CHILD POLICY

Adopted by the Session of
Sixth Presbyterian Church on March 20, 2013
Updated March 18, 2015

RATIONALE

When we baptize a child we promise “to guide and nurture this child, by word and deed with love and prayer, encouraging him or her to know and follow Christ and to become a faithful member of Christ’s church.” In keeping with this often-repeated promise, we seek adult leadership that is able to provide healthy, safe and nurturing relationships, and to create an environment in which those relationships can flourish.

Sixth Presbyterian Church will make responsible efforts to assure that persons placed in positions of responsibility for children (infants – grade 5) and youth (grades 6-12) of the church will be trained to carry out their duties in accordance with our Christian commitment and with the law.

Our Safe Child Policy codifies our commitment to providing a safe, nurturing, Christian environment by making every responsible effort to protect children and youth from physical, sexual, or emotional abuse

SIX-MONTH RULE

All volunteers working with children and youth must have been members of Sixth Presbyterian Church for at least six months OR have been regular participants in church activities for one year. Persons not meeting this requirement may serve as a volunteer when paired with those who do.

TWO LEADER RULE

Every class and activity for children and youth must be supervised by two leaders. One leader *may* work alone with a group if there is visual access to the room and other adults are in the vicinity.

At least one leader must be over 18 years of age and a staff person or member of the congregation who has completed safe child training and the screening process described below. The second leader may be between the ages of 14-18, and must also have completed safe child training. It is preferable that a caregiver be at least 5 years older than the young people being supervised.

BACKGROUND CHECKS – STAFF

Background checks are required for all full-time and part-time paid employees of the church over the age of 14. A copy of their *Pennsylvania Criminal Record* and *Pennsylvania Child Abuse History*, and *FBI fingerprint federal criminal history* clearances will be kept confidentially in the church office. Sixth Presbyterian Church will reimburse employees for clearance expenses.

BACKGROUND CHECKS – VOLUNTEERS

Background checks are required for all adult volunteers who work with children and youth on a regular basis. A copy of their *Pennsylvania Criminal Record*, *Pennsylvania Child Abuse History*, and *FBI fingerprint federal criminal history* clearances will be kept confidentially in the church office. Sixth Presbyterian Church will reimburse volunteers for clearance expenses.

Volunteers are not required to obtain the FBI fingerprint federal criminal history clearance if their position is unpaid and have been a Pennsylvania resident continuously for the past 10 years. Volunteers must submit in writing a statement affirming residency and that they have not been convicted of an offense under §6344.

Source: <http://www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov/>

All clearances for employees and volunteers are required to be updated every 36 months in accordance with current Pennsylvania child abuse laws.

BATHROOM BREAKS

When leaders are working with young children (up to age 6) in classrooms without integral bathrooms, they shall accompany a child to the bathroom down the hall. Unless the child requires assistance in an open stall, the leader should wait for the child outside the bathroom.

TOUCH AND TALK

Common expressions of affection (e.g. hugs, pats on the back) or physical caretaking (e.g. diaper changing, helping small children in the restroom) are appropriate within a caring community. Our words are important, too, and should demonstrate caring, acceptance, and respect of each child.

REPORTING PROCEDURES

All adult volunteers and staff who work with children and youth are mandatory reporters. If one suspects or witnesses an abusive incident, mandated reporters must first make an immediate and direct report of suspected child abuse to ChildLine either electronically at www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis or by calling 1-800-932-0313. A report must also be made to the Pastor or Clerk of Session. For more information or questions concerning mandated reporting please visit <http://www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov/>.

MEDICAL INFORMATION

The Christian Education committee will keep a confidential list of medical conditions (allergies, asthma, etc.) of which leaders should be aware. Parents or legal guardians will be asked for this information during Sunday school registration and on permission forms for off campus or overnight activities.

OFF CAMPUS AND OVERNIGHT ACTIVITIES

Off campus and overnight activities require written permission in advance from a parent or legal guardian.

For overnight activities, a minimum of one adult with clearances of each gender is required, regardless of the number of youth participating, and there will be one adult for every eight youth.

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed by the Christian Education Committee on an annual basis. Any changes to the policy will be approved by the session.

HOW TO OBTAIN CLEARANCES

To complete the *Pennsylvania Criminal Record* check go to:

<https://epatch.state.pa.us/Home.jsp> and click on “new history check”.

The report is immediately available on-line and can be printed directly from the site. A credit card or debit card is required.

To complete the Pennsylvania Child Abuse History clearance go to:

The Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance can be submitted and paid for online through the Child Welfare Information Solution (CWIS) self-service portal, www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis.

To complete the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Criminal Background Check go to:

The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services is utilizing Cogent Systems to process fingerprint-based FBI criminal background checks. The fingerprint based background check is a multiple step process. For more information and to begin the registration process, go to www.pa.cogentid.com//index_dpw.htm. For question about your FBI Clearance, please contact the FBI/Adam Walsh Unit at 717-783-6211 or 1-877-371-5422.

AWARENESS

This policy will be available to members of the congregation and posted on the Sixth Presbyterian Church website.

TRAINING

All volunteers and staff who work with children or youth are required to attend an initial training session to orient them to this policy and its reporting requirements. Annual training will be offered to keep volunteers up-to-date on any changes to the policy.

SIGNATURE FORM

All who work with children and youth on a regular basis will sign a form indicating their commitment to supporting this policy. A record of all who have signed the form will be kept in the church office.



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