



Child and Youth Protection Policy

Myers Park
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

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Child and Youth Protection Policy Overview

This policy applies to:

- All employees and volunteers working with children and youth ages 18 and under.

This policy is intended:

- To be faithful to our baptismal vows as we seek to welcome children and youth.
- To provide a safe and secure environment for children and youth at MPPC.
- To protect children and youth from sexual, physical, emotional, and spiritual abuse while participating in MPPC activities.
- To provide a mechanism to deal with reported concerns and subsequent actions.
- To guide MPPC as an institution in the conduct of its employees and volunteers and prevent incidents and all allegations of child abuse.
- To protect adult volunteers and employees from unwarranted allegations of child abuse.

Components:

1. Screening
2. Supervising
3. Reporting
4. Responding

Screening employees and volunteers:

1. Civil and criminal background checks are performed for MPPC employees and volunteers every 3 years.
2. MPPC employees and volunteers are required to sign a release form giving permission to the church to perform a civil and criminal background check.
3. No one with a past conviction or pending proceeding addressing an allegation of child abuse or neglect can work with children and youth at MPPC.

Supervising

Two-Adult Policy:

At least two adults must be present with children at all times and remain in sight of one another except in emergency situations.

Open Door Policy:

Doors to rooms in which children are present are to remain open.

Six Month Policy:

Any person in a leadership position with children or youth must have been a member of MPPC for at least six months. A waiver procedure exists for limited circumstances.

Training:

Any person working with children or youth must complete training every three years. This training includes foundational information about why child and youth protection policies are needed, the components of MPPC's policy, how to recognize signs of abuse, how to report, how the church will respond and appropriate skills for supervising and chaperoning children and youth.

Code of Conduct:

Employees and volunteers are expected to follow the Employee and Volunteer Code of Conduct (see attached).

Reporting:

1. Each employee and volunteer is required to report any situation which presents suspicion that child abuse may have occurred or concerns related to child and youth protection and safety.
2. Allegations and concerns shall be made to either the Associate Pastor for Children and their Families or the Associate Pastor for Youth and their Families.

Responding:

1. Every allegation is taken seriously.
2. Adequate care, respect, and confidentiality must be offered to both alleged victims and perpetrators until the allegation is substantiated or cleared.
3. MPPC employees and volunteers will cooperate fully with authorities and will avoid denial, minimization, or blame in dealing with the allegation.

Implications of the CYP Policy For MPPC Sponsored Events and Programs



Implications of the CYP Policy For MPPC Sponsored Events and Programs

In an effort to be faithful to our policy, and to satisfy legal obligations, the following criteria need to be met for any MPPC sponsored event, program ministry or trips involving children and/or youth.

Implications on Day Events

- The required adult child/youth ratio for chaperones for day events is one adult for every six children or youth.
- A minimum of two adults is required for any event.
- All leaders and adult helpers must have CYP training.
- All leaders must have been members of the church for at least six months.
- All leaders must receive clearance from the background check.
- All leaders must abide by MPPC Code of Conduct during the event.
- While on trips, children and youth must check in with assigned leadership at designated times throughout the day. In cases where children and youth go off in small groups, it is recommended that there be a span of no more than three hours between check in times. Adult chaperones must know where the children and youth are between check in times.
- It is strongly recommended that children and youth maintain a “buddy-system” so that no child or youth goes off by him or herself for extended periods of time. Best practices would suggest a minimum of three children or youth in a “buddy-group.”
- All parents of preschool and elementary age children must sign their children in and out of events. They must also leave a contact number, or location in the church, where they can be reached during that time in case of emergencies.

Implications on Transportation

Vehicles owned and operated by Myers Park Presbyterian Church are for the purpose and support of ministry. They are made available to ministry groups and organizations of MPPC to provide safe and dependable group transportation for church-related activities and ministry functions. When possible, every effort should be made to use church vehicles for all group outings rather than personal vehicles. Use of church vehicles shall be in compliance with the guidelines below, the requirements of our insurance carrier, and applicable state and federal laws.

1. All drivers of church vehicles will be licensed drivers and will be approved as a safe driver by the church insurance agency and meet age (25-65 years of age) and driving record requirements (three year clean driving record). Drivers will be asked to submit a copy of his/her driver license.
2. On out of town trips, two adults must be in the church vehicle when children or youth are present.
3. Passengers must wear seat belts at all times that the vehicles are in operation.
4. Smoking is prohibited on church vehicles.
5. Cell phone use is not permitted while driving a church vehicle.
6. The vehicles are intended for people and their luggage – no pets. Seats may not be removed at any time.

Drivers are expected to abide by all traffic regulations. MPPC will not be responsible for traffic tickets of the driver.

If it is necessary for a group to use personal vehicles for transporting participants to an MPPC sponsored event or activity the following criteria must be met:

1. All drivers on trips must be at least twenty-one years old and have a valid driver's license. Once children or youth have arrived at MPPC sponsored events, he or she may only ride with adult drivers.
2. Vehicles should travel in a convoy and make every effort to stay within sight of the other vehicles in the convoy.
3. On out of town trips, two adults must be in the vehicle when children or youth are present.
4. Occupancy of the vehicle cannot exceed the number of seatbelts.
5. Passengers must wear seat belts at all times that the vehicles are in operation.
6. Smoking is prohibited in vehicles.
7. Cell phone use is not permitted while driving a vehicle.
8. In the event of an accident, the liability insurance of the vehicle owner is primary. MPPC carries full insurance on all church owned vehicles. However, MPPC's liability insurance would be secondary in the event of an accident involving a personal vehicle being used to transport participants to an MPPC sponsored event.
9. Drivers must present proof of insurance along with a copy of their driver's license at least one week prior to the event for which they will be driving.

Implications on Overnight Trips

- Notify the CYP Steering Committee of the event or trip **one month** prior to dates.
- Turn in completed Adult Leadership Form (form attached) **two weeks** prior to event.
- The adult child/youth ratio for chaperones on overnight trips is as follows: recommended one adult for four children or youth or required one adult for every six children or youth
- The male / female chaperone ratio should mirror that of the children or youth participating in the event. If male and females children/youth are participating in overnight trips, then there must be two adult male and two adult female adult chaperones.
- A minimum of two adults is required for any event.
- All leaders must have CYP training.
- All leaders must have been members of the church for at least six months.
- All leaders must receive clearance from the background check.
- All leaders must have a current Recommitment Form on file.
- All leaders must abide by MPPC Code of Conduct during the entire trip.
- Adults and children may not sleep in the same room, unless there are two or more adults of the same gender in the room with two or more children or youth of the same gender.
- Only adults, members or staff, who have been approved through MPPC Child and Youth Protection Policy procedures and standards may stay in housing with MPPC youth and children.
- Depending on room configurations, adults should be placed to maximize the safety of children and youth and to prevent access by outsiders.
- The age span for children and youth rooming together must be less than four years.
- While on trips, there must be designated adult chaperones and check in times during the day. In cases where children and youth go off in small groups, it is recommended that there be a span of no more than three hours between check in times. Adult chaperones must know where the children and youth are between check in times.
- It is strongly recommended that children and youth maintain a “buddy-system” so that no child or youth goes off by him or herself for extended periods of time. Best practices would suggest a minimum of three children or youth in a “buddy-group.”
- For trips longer than one overnight, it is recommended that primary supervision be rotated so that all adults share in the responsibility and have opportunity for respite.
- Children/youth must sign a covenant agreement with clear expectations, responsibilities and consequences.
- Leaders must sign a covenant agreement with clear expectations and responsibilities.
- All participating children and youth must have a current medical release form and copy of insurance card on file at MPPC. Copies must also be with the adult leadership on the trip. It is recommend that one adult hold responsibility for being aware of medical issues related to children/youth on the trip including but not limited to distributing medication and adequate knowledge of health needs.

Employee and Volunteer Code of Conduct



Employee and Volunteer Code of Conduct

MPPC employees and volunteers:

1. Will not verbally, emotionally, physically, or sexually abuse children.

- Will not discipline children by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide care.
- Will use physical restraint only to protect the child or others from harm.
- Will respect the rights of anyone not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable, and their right to say no

2. Will provide proper supervision and exercise sound judgment in providing a safe environment.

- Will avoid situations during MPPC programs where they would be alone with a single child and cannot be observed or monitored by others. As adults supervise children, they should space themselves in a way that other adults can see them.
- Will observe the Two-Adult Policy and Open Door Policy in their interaction with children and youth at all times except in emergency situations.
- Will release children only to the authorized parent, guardian, or other individual authorized in writing by the parent or guardian, when applicable.
- Will not use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, or be impaired by legally prescribed drugs during church working hours or church sponsored programs.
- Will not smoke or use tobacco during church programs.
- Will not use profanity, inappropriate language or jokes, or participate in any kind of harassment in the presence of children.

3. Will use proper restroom supervision when children are using public bathrooms.

- Call on leaders who may be “floating” from room to room to assist with restroom supervision in order to maintain the two-adult rule.
- Make sure suspicious or unknown individuals are not occupying the restroom before allowing children to use the facilities.
- Send children in pairs, and whenever possible, with MPPC employees and CYP certified volunteers.
- Stand in the doorway while children are using the restroom in visual sight of another adult. When assisting younger children, doors to the facility must remain open.

4. Will maintain appropriate boundaries in their relationships with children and youth.

- Will not share inappropriate details of their personal life or ask children to share inappropriate details through any form of communication: written, verbal or electronic.
- Will not date program participants under 18 years of age.
- Will not give gifts to individual children or youth without the knowledge and permission of parents and MPPC minister/ department head.

5. Will abide by the following additional expectations of volunteers:

- Will be alert to the physical and emotional state of children entering the program. Any signs of injury or possible child abuse must be reported to the Associate Pastor for Children and their Families or the Associate Pastor for Youth and their Families who will report to the Pastor or the Administrator of MPPC.
- Will read, sign and adhere to all policies related to identifying, documenting, and reporting child abuse and attend required CYP training sessions on the subject.
- Will report to the Pastor or Administrator any circumstances that, under this policy, negatively affect their ability to work with children and youth.

Social Media Policy



Child And Youth Protection Policy

Social Media Policy | Communicating with Children and Youth

Privacy Settings- Set stringent privacy settings on any social networking profile if you are an adult ministering to children and youth.

Youth Leaders- Grant the Associate Pastor for Youth and their Families full access to your profile and correspondence if you accept friend requests from minors or youth associated with our community of faith.

Abuse and Neglect- Remember material on any site (church-affiliated or not) that raises suspicion that a child has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited should be immediately reported to the clergy and/or the Department of Social Services (DSS).

Two-Person Rule- Note that any and all private communication between a child/youth and adult must include two adults, preferably one being the Associate Pastor for Youth and their Families or the Associate Pastor for Children and their Families.

Group Page- Keep in mind that the best way to communicate is through a group page set up by the church. Tie events to the group page.

Limit Commentary on Pictures- Remember, if you are an adult, limit comments to just one or two photographs on a child/youth's page. Otherwise it can be perceived as intrusive and make the child/youth feel uncomfortable.

Groups on Social Networking Sites – Youth

It Takes Two- Be sure each group has at least two unrelated adult administrators as well as at least two youth participants.

Closed Versus Hidden- Choose closed, not “hidden” groups, for youth.

Inviting Youth- Let youth take the lead when it comes to group invitations. Youth administrators should invite their peers, unless a youth specifically asks you to invite him/her.

Appropriate Content- Create behavioral covenants to govern appropriate content for an online youth group.

Consequences- Report any material on any site (whether affiliated with the church or not) that raises suspicion that a child has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited to the clergy and/or the North Carolina Division of Social Services (DSS). If the material is on a church affiliated site, that material should be documented for church records and then removed from the site after consultation with DSS and/or police.

Inappropriate Behavior- Address any content that depicts inappropriate behavior during a church-sponsored event or activity with fellow youth leaders and parents.

Open to parents- Open social networking groups for youth to current members' parents.

Former Youth Workers- Remove former adult leaders and youth members from digital communication via the church's social networking sites after youth “age-out” of a program or leaders depart from their current positions.

Child Abuse and Neglect



Child Abuse and Neglect

What is Child Abuse?

Federal Law defines child abuse and neglect as, at a minimum,

- **Any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation**

OR

- **An act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm**

North Carolina Statutes define an abused child, in part, as:

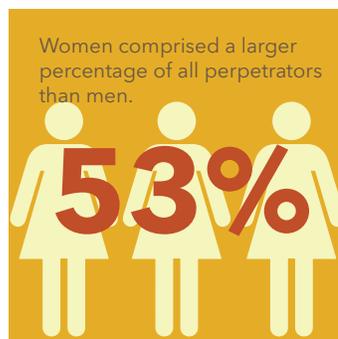
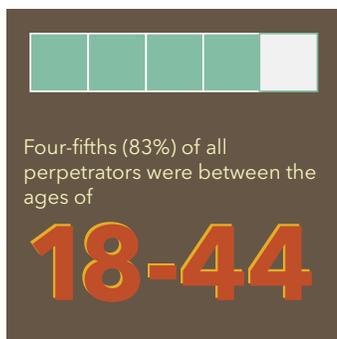
- **Any juvenile less than 18 years of age whose parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker inflicts or allows to be inflicted serious physical injury by other than accidental means, or creates or allows to be created serious risk of injury, inappropriate behavior modifications, or sexual abuse.**

2013 National Data:

- **Approximately 679,000 confirmed victims of child abuse and neglect**
- 79.5% suffered neglect
- 18% suffered physical abuse
- 9% suffered sexual abuse
- **An estimated 1,520 child fatalities** resulted from abuse or neglect

Who Abused and Neglected Children?

- Women comprised a larger percentage of all perpetrators than men: 53% compared to 45%.
- Four-fifths (83%) of all perpetrators were between the ages of 18 and 44 years.
- The great majority of perpetrators were parents: One or both parents maltreated 91.4 percent of victims. Of the percentage of perpetrators who were parents, 88.6 percent were biological parents.
- A perpetrator who was not the child's parent maltreated 12.9% of victims, sometimes alone and sometimes with other perpetrators. The largest categories in the nonparent group were male relatives, male partner of parent, and "other," but the category also included child daycare provider, foster parent, and unknown.



Child Physical Abuse

Child physical abuse is the non-accidental injury (ranging from minor bruises to severe fractures or death) to a child under the age of 18 by a parent or caregiver. Injuries may be the result of punching, beating, kicking, biting, shaking, throwing, stabbing, choking, hitting (with a hand, stick, strap or other object), burning or other harmful acts.

Signs of Physical Abuse:

- Unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
- Bruises or welts may be found in face, torso, buttocks, back or thighs; may reflect the shape of an object (electric cord, belt buckle)
- Unexplained burns often on palms, soles, buttocks, back; may reflect cigarette, cigar, electrical appliance or rope burn patterns
- Fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school

Behaviors:

- Seems frightened of the parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home
- Shrinks at the approach of adults
- Requests or feels deserving of punishment
- Overly shy, tends to avoid physical contact with adults, especially parents
- Displays behavioral extremes (withdrawn or aggressive)
- Child gives unbelievable explanations for injuries

Scope of the Problem

The National Center of Child Abuse and Neglect estimates that as many as 100,000 to 200,000 children are physically abused each year. It is generally accepted that these figures under-represent the actual incidence of abuse.

Myths:	Facts:
The majority of parents who abuse their children are mentally ill.	Fewer than 10% of abusive parents have a mental disorder.
Physical abuse only occurs in lower socio-economic families.	Reports of physical abuse have been confirmed in all socio-economic levels.
Young children have frequent accidents that result in broken bones.	Many broken bones in children under age two are the result of intentional injury.
A physician's opinion is needed before a report of physical abuse can be made	Proof of injury is not necessary to make a report
Children who are abused by their parents will ask someone for help.	Children are usually afraid to talk about their injuries or are too young to ask for help.

Child Neglect

Neglect is the chronic failure of a parent or caretaker to provide a child 18 years of age or younger with basic physical, medical, educational or emotional needs (such as food, shelter, medical care, educational opportunity, protection and supervision)

Signs of Neglect:

- Height and weights significantly below age level
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
- Is consistently dirty with poor hygiene, including lice, body odor; scaly skin
- Untreated for illness or injury
- Lack of necessary medical or dental care
- Is frequently absent from school

Behaviors:

- Begging for food or stealing food; chronic hunger
- Falling asleep in school, lethargic
- Running away from home or reports that there is no caregiver in the home
- Assumes adult responsibilities

Scope of the Problem:

- **Over 60% of child maltreatment victims suffer from neglect**
- **More than 15% of these victims also suffer from physical abuse**

Myths	Facts:
Most poor families neglect their children.	Poverty is not neglect. Families with limited resources can provide basic care for their children by using free clinics or social services.
Children will outgrow the effect of neglect.	There are well documented cognitive and neurological deficits in children resulting from neglect.
Neglect is not as serious of a problem as abuse.	Both physical abuse and neglect pose a serious health problem for children.
If a family is reported for neglect, the children are automatically removed from the home	Children are removed only if there are conditions that threaten the life, safety, or health of the child.

Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is:

- Any sexual act between an adult and a minor or between two minors when one exerts power over the other
- Forcing, coercing or persuading a child to engage in any type of sexual act including sexual contact and/or non-contact acts such as exhibitionism, exposure to pornography, voyeurism and communicating in a sexual manner by phone or internet

Signs of sexual abuse:

- Physical signs of sexual abuse are not common, although redness, rashes or swelling in the genital area, urinary tract infections, or other such symptoms may be present
- Physical complaints with no apparent somatic base (e.g. stomach aches)
- Physical problems associated with anxiety, such as chronic stomach pain or headaches
- Emotional or behavioral signs are more common
- Range from “too perfect” behavior to withdrawal and depression, to unexplained anger and rebellion
- Sexual behavior such as excessive masturbation
- Sexual language that is not age-appropriate
- Replay of the sexual abuse with classmates and teachers
- Regression to developmental milestones (soiling, bed wetting, thumb-sucking, baby talk)
- Be aware that in some children there are no signs

Scope of the Problem:

- **Experts estimate that 1 in 10 children are sexually abused before they turn 18 years old.**
- **1 in 5 children are sexually solicited while on the internet**
- **Approximately 20% of victims of sexual abuse are under 8 years old**
- **More than 80% of sexual abuse cases occur in one-adult/one-child situations**

More Important facts...

- **Most child victims *never* report abuse.**
- **In *more than 90%* of sexual abuse cases, the child and the child’s family *know and trust the abuser.***
- ***People who abuse children look and act just like everyone else.* In fact, they often go out of their way to appear trustworthy to gain access to children.**
- **Although child sexual abuse may be a one-time occurrence, it is more typically an abusive relationship that last 1-4 years.**

Emotional Child Abuse

Emotional Abuse is a pattern of behavior that impairs a child's development or sense of self-worth. This may include constant criticism, humiliation, threats, or rejection, as well as withholding love, support, or guidance. Emotional abuse is almost always present when other forms are identified.

Emotional Neglect is the consistent failure of a parent or caregiver to provide a child with appropriate support, attention, and affection

Signs of emotional abuse:

A child who persistently shows several of the following characteristics may be experiencing emotional abuse:

Physical Indicators

- Eating disorder
- Sleep disturbances, nightmares wetting or soiling by school-age child
- Speech disorder, stuttering
- Failure to thrive
- Developmental lags
- Asthma, severe allergies, or ulcers

Behaviors:

- Habit disorder, such as biting rocking, head banging
- Thumb sucking in an older child
- Poor peer relationships
- Behavioral extremes, overly compliant- demanding; withdraws-aggressive
- Self-destructive behavior, obvious to hazards and risks
- Chronic academic underachievement
- Irrational and persistent fears, dreads, or hatred

Examples of emotional abuse:

A parent or caregiver chronically:

- Criticizes the child for behavior that is developmentally normal
- Belittles and shames the child
- Blames the child for things over which the child has little or no control
- Uses the child as a scapegoat when things go wrong
- Takes little or no interest in the child and the child's activities
- Treats the child differently from other children in the household
- Withholds love and affection
- Restricts the child's activities and peer relationships
- Engages in bizarre acts of torture or torment, such as locking the child in the closet
- Imposes extreme forms of punishment

What is Resilience?

- Resilience is the ability to cope and even thrive, following a negative experience.
- Some children emerge from abuse and neglect with relatively few long-term consequences

Factors that Contribute to an abused or neglected child's resilience

Individual Characteristics:

Optimism, Self-esteem, Intelligence, Creativity, Humor, Independence

Other Factors:

Acceptance of peers

Positive Influences:

Parents, Teachers, Mentors

Social Environment and access to social support

More information about child abuse and neglect...

Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina | [1\(800\) 354-KIDS](tel:1800354KIDS), [\(919\)829-8009](tel:9198298009)

Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect | www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/

Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect | www.childwelfare.gov/responding/reporting

Child Sexual Abuse | www.darkness2light.org

Child Abuse and Neglect | www.childwelfare.gov/can/index.cfm

Defining Child Abuse and Neglect | www.childwelfare.gov/can/defining

Laws and Policies | www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies

References

- Administration for Children and Families, National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System
- Child Welfare Information Gateway www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheet/whatiscan.cfm.
- Darkness to Light: Stewards to Children, A prevention and response program for adults. www.darkness2light.org
- National Center for Child Abuse and Neglect.
- North Carolina Division of Social Services and Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina.
- United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau, www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm07/chapter3htm.

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