

Children, Youth and Vulnerable
Adult Policy
Summerville Presbyterian
Church

Adopted by Session
August 2022

Policy Application Statement

It is the policy of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) (PCUSA) and all entities of the General Assembly (“Entities”) that all church members, church officers, nonmember employees and/or contractors, and volunteers of congregations, councils, and Entities of the church are to maintain the strongest sense of integrity, safety, nurturing and care involving all interactions with children, youth and vulnerable adults. This Policy applies to all General Assembly Entity sponsored activities that involve children, youth and vulnerable adults.

Policy Rationale

The implementation and documentation of a Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy strives to reduce the risk of abuse and neglect for the following reasons:

- Children, youth and vulnerable adults are a gift from God and the Church has a divine mandate to provide for their safety and nurturing. The Church is called to be a place that reflects the open arms of Jesus.
- Any type of abuse involving children, youth or vulnerable adults has a lasting and devastating effect on the life of the victim/survivor. It is the call of the Church to be a life- giving entity of Christ’s healing and hope, not an entity that brings healing and harm.
- The Book of Order states, “The congregation as a whole, on behalf of the church universal assumes responsibility for nurturing the baptized person in the Christian life”, and Presbyterians believe this baptismal commitment to be a serious one, understanding it to apply to all in the church’s care, including children, youth and vulnerable adults (Book of Order W-2.3013)

Policy Statement and Rationale adapted from the Presbyterian Church USA Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and Procedures

Definitions

The following is a list of definitions of terms and their intended use in this particular policy. For the purpose of this policy:

Child: A child is defined as a person between the ages of 0-11.

Youth: A youth is defined as a person between the ages of 12-17.

Minor: A minor is defined as any child or youth ages 0-17.

Designee: A person who is designated

Vulnerable Adult: a person eighteen years of age or older who has a physical or mental condition which substantially impairs the person from adequately providing for his or her own care or protection. This includes a person who is impaired in the ability to adequately provide for the person's own care or protection because of the infirmities of aging including, but not limited to, organic brain damage, advanced age, and physical, mental, or emotional dysfunction. A resident of a facility is a vulnerable adult.

Volunteer/Staff Selection Policies

All volunteer and paid staff who work with children, youth and vulnerable adults at Summerville Presbyterian Church will be:

- *18 years old. Exceptions apply for approved youth workers.
- *At least 5 years older than the oldest child/youth they will be supervising.
- *A regular attendee at Summerville Presbyterian Church for at least 6 months.
Exceptions may be made in consultation with the pastor in charge of special situations or the staff member in charge.

All volunteer and paid staff (including clergy) who work with children, youth and vulnerable adults at Summerville Presbyterian Church will meet the following requirements prior to working with children, youth or vulnerable adults:

- *Complete and sign an application and the related waivers giving permission to check references and background information.
- *Provide the names and contact information for 3 personal references.
- *Undergo a criminal background check if they will be volunteering with children/youth/vulnerable adults. Individuals who have been convicted of physical or sexual abuse or neglect may not work in any church-sponsored activity or program for preschoolers, children, youth or vulnerable adults. All background checks will be handled by the Director of Spiritual Growth and Outreach or the Pastor or designee, as appropriate. All reports will be kept in a secured location and will be kept confidential.
- *All applicants must attend a volunteer informational meeting about the work they desire to do. Meetings will be conducted by the leader of the program in which applicants will work. Church policy and guidelines should be discussed during the meeting.

Training

Prior to working in ministry areas with children, youth or vulnerable adults, workers must undergo child protection safety training. Comprehensive training issues of child sexual abuse in church settings shall be required for all clergy, paid staff, and volunteers who regularly supervise activities for children, youth and/or vulnerable adults. This training should be offered at least annually. Training may also be offered online.

Ministry Supervision Guidelines

Whenever supervising activities involving children, youth and/or vulnerable adults at Summerville Presbyterian Church,

- *At least 2 non-related adults (including one screened adult) will always be present when possible.
- *Children will be checked into and out of church-sponsored activities by their parent/guardian or people authorized by the parent/guardian.
- *Participants will have access to a telephone or cell phone when groups are away from the church facility.
- *One-on-one interactions with children, youth or vulnerable adults will be with door open and will be visible to all. The pastor, parent or guardian, or another screened adult should be aware of such interactions.
- *Activities with children, youth and vulnerable adults should be publicly accessible. Anyone has the right to visit and observe these activities at any time, unannounced. Exceptions to this right may be issued at the discretion of church leadership.
- *All classroom and office doors will have a window, or the door should remain open while the room is occupied.
- *Windows will be kept free from adornment that obstructs the view into the room.
- *If the two adult rule cannot be observed, a screened, designated roamer will regularly check on groups with only one adult.
- *For overnight events at the church and church-sponsored off-premises activities, two or more screened adults must be present. This arrangement should include, when possible, one male and one female if the group is mixed gender.

Whenever Summerville Presbyterian Church transports children, youth or vulnerable adults away from the church campus,

- *No youth will drive to/from events.

- *An adult should not transport a child, youth or vulnerable adult alone, when possible. If circumstances require an adult to transport a child, youth, or vulnerable adult alone, a parent/guardian or church staff member should be notified prior to or during transport.

- *Parents are responsible for coordinating transportation to and from church sponsored events.

- *Drivers of church vehicles should be approved and covered by the church's insurance company.

- *Drivers should go through the same screening process as all other paid/volunteer staff.

The use of electronics or media communications may be useful tools in supporting ministries with children, youth and other vulnerable adults. However, in such circumstances, the following requirements shall be met:

- *The volunteer or staff person shall never initiate a connection (friending, following, etc.) on social media with a child, youth or vulnerable adult.

- *If a student initiates a connection, the child, youth or vulnerable adult's parent/guardian shall be notified.

- *If an adult leader receives a private text from a child, youth or vulnerable adult that seems to be questionable, the adult leader should immediately end the conversation in the virtual space and offer opportunities to have the conversation in person and in compliance with the earlier guidelines for one-on-one conversations. The ministry supervisor and/or parent/guardian should be made aware of the incident immediately.

Note: If an in-person meeting is not possible, those involved will determine the most reasonable alternative in compliance with the earlier guidelines.

- *Adult leaders should post photos on social media only with prior written consent granted by a parent/guardian. When posted, photos must not be tagged with names or location indicators. All photos must be appropriate and in keeping with the spirit of the ministry event.

- *All in-person protection policies apply to online platform meetings like Zoom, Skype, Messenger, etc. (For example, 2 non-related adults should be present in the virtual room when possible).

*An official church account should be established and used for online activities, not a personal account.

*Communication about online meetings should be shared with parents/guardians as well as with children, youth and/or vulnerable adults.

*If text messages/online apps are used by staff to communicate with youth and/or vulnerable adults, a parent/guardian should receive all messages via text and/or the app.

*Adult leaders and participants should use their real names as their usernames.

*Attendance at online meetings should be documented.

Whenever Summerville Presbyterian Church hosts an activity involving children, youth or vulnerable adults from another church or community organization,

*Groups using the church facility will follow Summerville Presbyterian Church's protection policies and procedures.

*Summerville Presbyterian Church volunteers and paid staff, including clergy, will be given the opportunity for training on all protection policies and procedures and child abuse issues on a regular basis. They will be rescreened every 3 years.

If a suspected incident of child abuse or neglect occurs or is revealed to a volunteer/paid staff person at a Summerville Presbyterian Church activity, the adult in charge of the activity will:

*Take steps necessary to protect the child, youth or vulnerable adult person.

*Call the pastor in charge or designee. Further instructions will be given by the pastor or designee.

* Report all suspected cases of abuse or neglect as required by SC state law.

Summerville Presbyterian Church Volunteer Application (18 and older)

Name: _____

Driver's License Number (if driving bus): _____

Email Address: _____

****Please note, you will receive an email from a company called Shepherd's Watch where you will fill out your own information for a background check.**

Home Address: _____

Primary Phone Number: _____ Email address: _____

Best Method to Contact You: Call Text Email

Profession: _____

How long have you attended Summerville Presbyterian Church? _____

Are you currently serving at SPC? If so, in what capacity? _____

Please list any special skills, interests or experience: _____

What is your religious background? _____

Have you made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ? Yes No

Have you ever been charged with or convicted of the following:

Child abuse	Yes	No
Actual or attempted molestation of a minor	Yes	No
Any other crime	Yes	No

All the information I have provided in the process of applying to be a volunteer at Summerville Presbyterian Church is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I voluntarily and knowingly agree for any person named herein as a contact to give to the staff of SPC any information they may have regarding my character and fitness for volunteering at SPC, specifically with children, youth or vulnerable adults. I voluntarily and knowingly fully release and discharge all such contacts from liability for any evaluation provided of me. I also grant Summerville Presbyterian Church permission to perform a personal background check.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Reviewing Staff Member: _____

Date: _____

Internal Use Only

Background Check Run on: _____

Background Check Clear: Yes No

Training Completed on: _____

Notes: _____

Accident/Incident Report- Summerville Presbyterian Church

Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Name: _____

Ministry Event/Area: _____

Today's Date: _____ Time of Accident/Incident: _____

Location of Accident/Incident: _____

Describe the accident/incident (use back of paper if needed): _____

Care Given/Action Taken: _____

Name of Person Completing Form: _____

Name of Caregiver that Responded: _____

Parent/Guardian Contacted: Yes No Child Returned to Program: Yes No

How was Parent/Guardian contacted? _____

Name of Parent/Guardian contacted: _____

Name of Person Who Contacted Parent/Guardian: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

