

Providence Forge Presbyterian Church

Children And Youth Protection Policy

Policy Purpose

Providence Forge Presbyterian Church (“PFPC”) is committed to providing a church environment that is a safe place for children and youth. PFPC adopts these policies and procedures not only to maximize safety and prevent child abuse from occurring within its church community but also to guide and protect paid and unpaid staff from unwarranted allegations of child abuse.

Screening

Paid Staff: Background Requirements

Applicants for full-time or part-time paid employment at PFPC will be required to:

- Complete an Employment Application
- Undergo a reference check covering, where possible, the two immediate past employers or personal references unrelated to the applicant if no information can be obtained from past employers.

Prior to hiring an applicant, PFPC will obtain a criminal background check through Church Mutual Insurance (Trusted Employees) and a driving report from DMV at: https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/dmvnet/pin_maint/pin_logon.aspx?SESS=NEW for individuals who will be transporting children and youth.

Upon being hired, each new staff member will be required to sign an acknowledgement that he or she has received a copy of the PFPC Children and Youth Protection Policy, understands it and will comply with its terms.

Any candidate for employment who has a past felony conviction or pending procedures in the last five years or convictions related to child abuse or neglect will not be employed by PFPC.

Unpaid Staff: Background Requirements

Unpaid Staff teaching or supervising youth or children of the church in any volunteer ministry, will be required to:

- Undergo a background check for that individual through Church Mutual Insurance (Trusted Employees);
- Sign an acknowledgement that he or she has received a copy of the PFPC Children and Youth Protection Policy, understands it, and will comply with its terms.

Any candidate for unpaid staff service who has a past conviction of or pending procedures related to an allegation of child abuse or neglect MAY NOT work with children and youth at Providence Forge

Presbyterian Church. Refusal to complete the Unpaid Staff process or a conviction for any felony in the last five years will automatically disqualify an individual from volunteer service with children and youth.

A folder will be kept by the Chair of the Policy and Personnel Committee, noting all persons who have completed the background check and date, and reports will be destroyed containing sensitive information. The Director of each group, e.g., VBS, Service Camp, Sunday School and youth activities will oversee adherence to this requirement.

The above portion of the “Unpaid Staff: Background Requirements” refers to those directly supervising children and youth. This individual, who has gone through the process noted above, will be in charge of any other helper working with him/her.

The procedure for conducting the background check is included in the Addendum to this policy. A background check will be conducted on unpaid staff every five years.

General Procedures

Supervision: *Two-Leader/Open-Door Policy*

Whenever possible, any adult who is present in a church-sponsored activity for children or youth should be accompanied by another adult. PFPC paid and unpaid staff should not, during a PFPC program, be alone with a single child where they cannot be observed by others.

In order to avoid situations where an individual is alone in a room with children, all children’s and youth activities should be supervised by at least two adult leaders as applicable. Whenever possible, these adults should be unrelated.

Classrooms, childcare rooms, and any area in which programs for children or youth are taking place may be visited without prior notice by church staff, parents, or other volunteer church workers.

In the event that two leaders cannot be present in the room, such that one leader is alone in a room with one or more children or youth, a windowless door from the room must be left open.

Furthermore, at any counseling session with children or youth, the door or half-door of the room used must remain open for the entire session. The session should be conducted at a time when others are nearby, even if they are not within listening distance.

Ratios

Adequate supervision is necessary at all times. The leader / supervisor of the activity will ensure that the ratio and gender of adults to children / youth is appropriate for the activity and age of the participants.

Parental/Guardian Consent

Children and youth must obtain parental or guardian permission for involvement in church or programs that involve travel away from the church’s physical facilities.

Policy Review

The provisions of this Policy shall be reviewed annually by the Christian Education Committee. Any

proposed changes to the Policy will be brought to the attention of the Policy and Personnel Committee for its input, prior to any such changes becoming final by session vote. The Christian Education Committee shall report every three years or as needed to the Policy and Personnel Committee and recommend any changes deemed appropriate. A record of the review and date will be kept by the Chair of the Christian Education Committee and the Chair of the Policy and Personnel Committee.

Code of Conduct

While supervising children and youth participating in PFPC programs, paid and unpaid staff will adhere to the following:

1. Will follow the PFPC Children and Youth Protection Policy guidelines in all interactions with children and youth
2. Will know where participants are at all times
3. Will not consume-alcohol or illegal drugs or discharge a firearm while working or volunteering with children or youth
4. Will not smoke or use tobacco *in the presence of* children, youth, or parents
5. Will not release children to any adult or family member, including older siblings, other than the child's parent/guardian unless prior written permission has been obtained from the parent/guardian.
6. Will read, sign, and adhere to all policies related to identifying, documenting, and reporting child abuse.
7. Will report any concerns or suspicions regarding their observations of any individual's interaction with a child to that individual- If the concerns are not alleviated by a change in the individual's behavior, a second report must be made to the Clerk of Session.
8. Will abide by safe driving laws when transporting children or youth.

Off-Site Trips and Events

Medical

- Each participant must submit a completed medical/insurance form. Each minor's forms must have a parent or guardian's signature.
- Whenever possible, all activities with children and youth shall have a staff or adult leader with current-certification First Aid/CPR training.
- Group leaders should have a copy of all medical forms for overnight or off-site events. These forms will be kept at all event / work sites, as well as the home site, for the duration of the event.
- First Aid supplies will be available on the event site. All workers will be informed of the location of First Aid supplies/equipment and shall have access to information concerning specific medical conditions and concerns of participants.
- A written report will be completed in the case of any accident, medical emergency or injury and given to the Clerk of Session.

Driving Rules/Travel

- As recommended by our church insurance company, it is suggested that all drivers of children and youth be over 25 and under 65, where possible. In situations where this is not possible, parental permission shall be obtained before the trip and vehicles shall travel together.

APPROVED BY SESSION: 9/6/2017 Revised 11/01/17; 5.2.18; 12.3.23

- Travel arrangements for off-campus events must be approved by the Session.

Reporting of Child Abuse

Paid and unpaid staff are required to read, sign, and adhere to all policies related to identifying, documenting, and reporting child abuse.

Reporting Incidents

Any individual who observes or becomes aware of any alleged or potential incident of child abuse must, as soon as possible, report the matter to the staff member in charge of the program, who should report it to the Clerk of Session.

Follow-Up

Upon receipt of a report or allegation of child abuse at PFPC, the Clerk of Session shall ensure that an appropriate follow-up is begun and appropriate steps are followed as required by law. The process will include documenting all steps undertaken in handling the follow-up, and a Report of Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect or Sexual Misconduct shall be completed.

Confidentiality

All follow-ups shall be conducted in a confidential manner.

Parental Notification

If an incident has occurred on church property or during a church-sponsored event, the parents of any minor involved in any allegation of abuse shall be immediately notified by the staff member in charge of the program.

Potential Responses

Upon any report of potential or alleged child abuse by staff, paid or unpaid of PFPC, any individual accused of such conduct may be temporarily relieved of any duties involving youth or children pending a follow-up.

Outside Groups

Leaders of other groups of children or youth (such as, but not limited to Girl Scout and Boy Scout leaders) who use PFPC's facilities will also be required to read the Children and Youth Protection Policy and sign the Acknowledgement of Receipt and Adherence to the Children and Youth Protection Statement. All outside groups that wish to use PFPC facilities must be approved by the Session and are expected to have their own code of conduct.

(Note: The addendum contains terms and definitions, Procedure for Screening Unpaid Staff, resources, and forms referenced in this policy.)

ADDENDUM TO THE CHILDREN AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

Terms and Definitions

Child abuse - An act committed by a parent, caregiver, or person in a position of trust (even though he or she may not care for the child on a daily basis) which is not accidental and which harms or threatens harm to a child's physical or mental health or welfare. Types of abuse may include physical abuse, including physical injury or threat of injury; physical neglect, such as failure to provide necessary care to a child; sexual abuse; mental abuse or neglect; emotional abuse; and spiritual abuse. Child abuse includes, but is not limited to:

- ***Neglect of Basic Needs*** - A form of abuse. Denial of food, water, cleanliness, clothing, and sleep are not appropriate means of discipline.
- ***Physical Abuse*** - Any physical force applied by an adult or older youth in a position of care or authority to a child, youth, or vulnerable adult. Physical force (hitting, spanking, shaking, shoving, etc.) is not to be used by leaders in our programs.
- ***Sexual Abuse*** - Any sexual contact or sexual interaction between a child (under the age of eighteen years) and an adult (over the age of 18); any use of a child for the sexual simulation of an adult, a third person, or the child; any risqué jokes, innuendo, unacceptable visual contact, unwelcome casual touch, unwelcome and inappropriate hugs and kisses, and sexually suggestive pictures between an adult and a child, as deemed inappropriate by any reasonable adult. Even if a child, youth, or vulnerable adult, out of ignorance, innocence, or fear does not resist, it is still abuse.
- ***Emotional Abuse*** - Inappropriately belittling, hateful, or angry words and/or actions directed toward a child, youth, or vulnerable adult. Discipline by humiliation is also emotional abuse.
- ***Spiritual Abuse*** - Using religious references to shame or by guilt to motivate a child into a particular action or behavior.

Paid staff – Any person who works for salary or wages at Providence Forge Presbyterian Church (PFPC), including PFPC weekday pre-school Sunshine Nursery School.

Unpaid staff – Any person not employed by PFPC who teaches or supervises children and youth activities. These activities include, but are not limited to, Sunday School and Worship Enrichment, Nursery, VBS, Childcare, Children and Youth Choirs, Summer Camps/Conferences, Children and Youth mission trips, Scouting, and Confirmation Mentors.

Leader – An adult designated by PFPC to have responsibility for children and/or youth. The adult must be a minimum of 18 years of age. Leaders of overnight trips must be at least 25 years of age. It is suggested that leaders be a minimum of four years older than the children or youth they are supervising.

Church-Sponsored Activity - Includes any and all gatherings that arise from any worship, educational, childcare, fellowship, administrative, pastoral, mission or recreational event generated or organized by PFPC, whether on-campus or off-campus.

Volunteer Ministry – Includes any church-sponsored activity engaged in by unpaid staff.

Child or Youth – Persons under 18 years old and considered a minor under the law. This term shall also include legally incompetent persons.

Procedure for Screening Unpaid Staff at Providence Forge Presbyterian Church

1. The chair of the committee or leader of a PFPC activity asks the potential unpaid staff member to contact the Chair of the Policy and Personnel Committee to initiate the screening process.
2. The chair of the Policy and Personnel Committee provides the Trusted Employees' background check link to the applicant.
3. The applicant reviews the Children and Youth Policy and signs the Acknowledgement of Receipt of and Adherence to the Children and Youth Protection form.
4. The applicant being screened receives the full results of the background check, and the Chair of the Policy and Personnel Committee receives notification that the screening has been completed with no findings or data surrounding a conviction of a felony is provided.
5. If there are no issues noted, the Chair of the Policy and Personnel Committee notifies the corresponding committee chair or leader of the activity that the applicant is approved to begin working with children.
6. If the screening reveals a conviction of a felony, the Chair of the Policy and Personnel Committee will notify the applicant that he / she may not work with children.
7. If the applicant feels the results of the screening are inaccurate, he /she may file a letter of dispute with Church Mutual within five days.
8. If the applicant does not agree with the decision, he / she may appeal the decision to a three-member panel, which includes the Clerk of Session, the Chair of the Christian Education Committee, and the Chair of the Policy and Personnel Committee. The decision of this panel is final.
9. In order to protect confidentiality, the applicant and the Chair of the Policy and Personnel Committee are the only ones aware of the results of the screening, unless the applicant appeals the decision to the three-member panel. At that point, those additional people are presented with the screening information.
10. The chair of the Policy and Personnel Committee notifies the chair / leader of the activity only of the decision, without any additional details.
11. The chair of the Policy and Personnel Committee charges the cost of the background check to the appropriate committee.

**Acknowledgement of Receipt of and Adherence to the
Children and Youth Protection Policy**

I have been given a copy of Providence Forge Presbyterian Church's Children and Youth Protection Policy.

I have no prior convictions for child abuse or sexual misconduct.

I have read and understand the document. I understand that my services as an employee of Providence Forge Presbyterian Church or as a volunteer who works with children at Providence Forge Presbyterian Church is dependent on my adherence to these policies.

NAME: _____
(print)

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

PFPC Report of Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect or Sexual Misconduct

Reported by:

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, and Zip Code _____

Telephone _____

Date of Report: _____

Person suspected of child abuse or neglect or sexual misconduct:

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, and Zip Code _____

Telephone _____

Other person(s) involved (witness or victims):

Name _____

Age ____

Address _____

City, State, and Zip Code _____

Telephone _____

Report of Suspected Child Abuse:

Describe incident(s) of suspected child abuse or neglect or sexual misconduct, including date(s), time(s), and location(s):

Identify eyewitnesses to the incident, including names, addresses, and telephone numbers, where available:

Consent and Release from Liability

I, _____, hereby acknowledge that it is my desire for _____ to participate in church-sponsored activities at Providence Forge Presbyterian Church, including activities on and/or away from the church premises as well as transportation to and from such activities.

My child is voluntarily participating in these activities, including transportation to and from such activities, with knowledge of the dangers involved and I hereby agree to accept any and all risks of injury as a result of such participation and transportation. I give permission for my child to be driven by a supervising adult.

As lawful consideration for permitting my child to participate in such activities, including the transportation to and from such activities, I hereby release and discharge Providence Forge Presbyterian Church, its officers, employees and agents from all actions, claims or demands I and my heirs, distributees, guardians, legal representatives or assigns now have or may hereafter have for any injury or damages resulting from the negligence or other acts, howsoever caused, by such church, officers, employees and agents before or during my participation in such church sponsored activities on and/or away from the church premises, including transportation to and from such activities.

I have carefully read this agreement and fully understand its contents. I am aware that this is a release of liability and an assumption of risks and sign it of my own free will.

This Consent and Release from Liability shall remain effective until revoked in writing and delivered to any officer, employee or agent of Providence Forge Presbyterian Church.

Signature

Date

Registration and Medical Consent Form

Name _____ Phone _____

Address: _____

City and State: _____ Zip: _____

Birthdate: _____ T-shirt size YM YL AS AM AL ALX AXXL

(please circle, Y=Youth, A=Adult)

Emergency Notification

Name _____ Relationship _____

Home phone: _____

Cell phone: _____

Work phone: _____

Alternate Contact

Name _____ Relationship _____

Home phone: _____

Cell phone: _____

Work phone: _____

Insurance

Carrier _____

Policy # _____ Group # _____

Known allergies, medical conditions, medications and/or physical limitations:

This health history is correct, so far as I know. I hereby give my permission to the physician, nurse, or dentist selected by Providence Forge Presbyterian Church to secure medical and dental aid as required for illness or injury under a physician's orders, including transportation to and from the necessary facilities.

Parent's Signature

Date

Service Camp Consent and Release from Liability

I, _____, hereby acknowledge that it is my desire to participate in church-sponsored activities at Providence Forge Presbyterian Church, including activities on and/or away from the church premises.

I am voluntarily participating in these activities, with knowledge of the dangers involved and I hereby agree to accept any and all risks of injury as a result of such participation.

I give permission for my child to be driven by a supervising adult.

As lawful consideration for permitting me to participate in such activities, I hereby release and discharge Providence Forge Presbyterian Church, its officers, employees and agents from all actions, claims or demands I and my heirs, distributees, guardians, legal representatives or assigns now have or may hereafter have for any injury or damages resulting from the negligence or other acts, howsoever caused, by such church, officers, employees and agents before or during my participation in such church sponsored activities on and/or away from the church premises.

I have carefully read this agreement and fully understand its contents. I am aware that this is a release of liability and an assumption of risks and sign it of my own free will.

This Consent and Release from Liability shall remain effective until revoked in writing and delivered to any officer, employee or agent of Providence Forge Presbyterian Church.

Youth's legal name printed

Date

Parent's Signature

Printed legal name Date

Service Camp Registration and Medical Consent Form

Name _____ Phone _____

Address: _____

City and State: _____ Zip: _____

Birthdate: _____

Emergency Notification

Name _____ Relationship _____

Home phone: _____

Cell phone: _____

Work phone: _____

Alternate Contact

Name _____ Relationship _____

Home phone: _____

Cell phone: _____

Work phone: _____

Insurance

Carrier _____

Policy # _____ Group # _____

Known allergies, medical conditions, medications and/or physical limitations:

This health history is correct, so far as I know. I hereby give my permission to the physician, nurse, or dentist selected by Providence Forge Presbyterian Church to secure medical and dental aid as required for illness or injury under a physician's orders, including transportation to and from the necessary facilities.

Signature

Date

ATTACH COPY OF INSURANCE CARD

RESOURCES

For more information, please visit:

Church Mutual Insurance Company at <https://www.churchmutual.com>

Prevent Child Abuse America at <http://www.preventchildabuse.org>

Preventing Youth & Child Sex Abuse -

https://www.churchmutual.com/dsp/dsp_srVideo.cfm?id=4177

Safety Tips on a Sensitive Subject Child Sexual Abuse -

<https://www.churchmutual.com/media/safetyResources/files/SafetyTipsSenSubject.pdf>

**ADDENDUM RELATED TO SUNSHINE
NURSERY SCHOOL**



CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

New staff must be trained in identifying and reporting **suspicion** of child abuse or neglect. A center which has a child or children who have been the victims of abuse has the opportunity to provide a therapeutic atmosphere for those children. Certain behavior problems may be the result of abuse. These are all elements that would be appropriate for staff training. The orientation for the new staff member is:

1. To know his/her responsibility as a professional dealing with children.
2. To know what the procedure is in his/her center.
3. To know what the legal requirements are.
4. To know *something* about the identification of children who may be victims of child abuse or neglect.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS THAT MUST BE FOLLOWED?

Legal Responsibilities:

Child day program workers are required by law to immediately report **suspicion of** child abuse or neglect to the Protective Services Unit of the Department of Social Services. Each center should have set up a system to deal with this issue:

Some center directors want all such suspicions to come to them and to handle all relations with Protective Services.

Some centers may decide that teachers or aides should report their suspicions anonymously to the Child Abuse Hotline, 1-800-552-7096.

Determine what kind of records should be kept at the center as a protection for the caregivers and the center.

Know whether the system that is used affects the insurance rates that are available to the center.

Know what resources are available in the community for in-service training and assistance.

The **Licensing Standards** require that new staff members be informed of the procedure to follow in reporting suspicion of child abuse and neglect. To fulfill this requirement, new employees need to know:

- ♥ how the law defines child abuse and neglect
- ♥ the center's policy
- ♥ the procedures to be followed
- ♥ the symptoms that may indicate abuse or neglect

The abused or neglected child is any child under 18 years of age whose guardian (parent or others):

- ♥ causes or threatens to cause a physical or mental injury
- ♥ neglects or refuses to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, emotional nurturing, or health care
- ♥ abandons the child
- ♥ fails to provide adequate supervision in relation to the child's age and developmental level
- ♥ commits or allows to be committed any illegal sexual act upon a child including incest, rape, fondling, indecent exposure and prostitution, or allows a child to be used in any sexually explicit visual material

Reporting

Anyone may report suspected abuse or neglect; however Section 63.2-1509 of the *Code of Virginia* requires that designated professionals who have contact with children immediately report their suspicions. It is not necessary to prove that abuse or neglect has occurred.

Reports can be made by calling your local social services department or the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at:

1-800-552-7096 in State
1-804-786-8536 out of State
1-800-828-1120 hearing impaired

Reports can be made anonymously. If you choose to provide your name, it will not be released to the family who was reported, unless required by court order.

Persons reporting in good faith are immune from civil and criminal liability pursuant to Section 63.2-1512 of the Code.

Recognizing Child Abuse and Neglect

	Physical Indicators	Behavioral Indicators
Physical Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Unexplained bruises on face, torso, back, buttocks, thighs ♥ Multiple injuries in various stages of healing ♥ Bruises/welts resembling instrument used e.g belt, cord ♥ Human bite marks ♥ Injuries regularly appearing after absence, weekend, etc. ♥ Unexplained fractures, lacerations, abrasions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Reports injury by caretaker ♥ Uncomfortable with physical contact ♥ Complains of soreness or moves uncomfortably ♥ Wears clothing inappropriate to weather (to cover body) ♥ Afraid to go home ♥ Chronic runaway (adolescents) ♥ Behavior extremes (withdrawn, aggressive) ♥ Apprehensive when other children cry
Physical Neglect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Consistent hunger, poor hygiene ♥ Unattended physical problems or medical needs ♥ Consistent lack of supervision ♥ Abandonment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Reports no caretaker at home ♥ Begs, steals food ♥ Frequently absent or tardy ♥ Constant fatigue, listlessness, or falling asleep in class ♥ Extended stays at school (early arrival and late departure) ♥ Shunned by peers
Sexual Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Sexually transmitted disease (pre-teens) ♥ Pregnancy ♥ Difficulty walking or sitting ♥ Pain or itching in genital area ♥ Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing ♥ Bruises/bleeding in external genitalia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Reports sexual abuse ♥ Highly sexualized play ♥ Detailed, age inappropriate understanding of sexual behavior ♥ Role reversal, overly concerned for siblings ♥ Chronic runaway ♥ Excessive seductiveness ♥ Suicide attempts (adolescents) ♥ Deterioration in academic performance ♥ Sudden, noticeable behavior changes
Emotional Maltreatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Speech disorders ♥ Delayed physical development ♥ Learning problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Habit disorders (sucking, biting, rocking in older child) ♥ Antisocial, destructive ♥ Passive and aggressive behavior extremes ♥ Appears to derive pleasure from hurting others or animals

A combination or pattern of indicators should alert you to the possibility of maltreatment. Indicators should be considered together with the explanation provided, the child's developmental and physical capabilities, and behavior changes.

Material taken from:
Recognizing, Reporting and Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect in Virginia, VA Dept. of Social Services . (10/02)

Background Checks

The background clearance regulation requires that certain licensees, employees, contract employees, volunteers, officers and board members obtain background clearances. The background clearances that must be obtained are a **Sworn Disclosure Statement**, a **Central Registry Report on Child Abuse and Neglect**, and a **Criminal Record Report**. The purpose of these clearances is to assist in determining if an individual has been (i) convicted of certain crimes specified in the *Code of Virginia* § 63.1-198.1, (ii) convicted of any other felony in the five years prior to the application date for licensure, employment or volunteering or (iii) the subject of a founded complaint of child abuse or neglect within or outside the Commonwealth. If the individual is found to have one of the conditions listed, then the person can not assume or maintain his duties.

The basic intent of the statute is to protect children in care. Persons with convictions involving crimes against minors, violence or sex offenses, or with a founded complaint of child abuse or neglect may endanger and harm children.

The regulation on background clearances should be referenced for specific details to assure compliance.

Note: See information on background forms and procedures at the end of Chapter 4.

CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORD/SEX OFFENDER AND CRIMES AGAINST MINORS REGISTRY SEARCH FORM (SP-230)

Effective December 1, 2005, the Virginia State Police will no longer supply the carbonized SP-230 forms. The State Police has a new innovative and effective way for the completion and processing of these requests in a more expeditious manner. The method to complete the new form is identical to the current procedures; however, you may complete the form on line by entering the State Police website www.vsp.state.va.us/ or www.virginiatrooper.org Once the home page appears, click on forms and click on the applicable form that your agency is entitled to complete and process pursuant to 19.2-389 of the Code of Virginia. Complete the data fields and print the form. A duplicate name search form is no longer required; please only submit one name search inquiry per request. Prior to mailing the form for processing, the SP-230 form requires the signature of the person making the request. Please indicate on the outside of the envelope, "New Form". This will expedite the request within five (5) business days of receipt.

Upon receipt, if the form is completed in its entirety and all authorized signatures are noted on the form with proper payment, the form will be scanned and processed in a timelier manner. The Virginia State Police are anticipating this new method of processing the name search inquiry forms will be beneficial to your agency for the results that you are seeking.

Please visit any Public Library if you do not have access to a computer and/or the internet.