

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

First Cumberland Presbyterian Church
Cleveland, Tennessee

Adopted by the Session 8/25/2008

Revised and Adopted by the Session 7/11/2021

TO WHOM DOES THIS POLICY APPLY?

- **Volunteers** are defined as teachers, assistant teachers, substitute teachers, nursery workers, chaperones, or other adults who work directly with our children or youth in any supervisory capacity.
- **Employees** (also referred to as “staff members”) are defined as all paid members of the church staff. Employees will be required to complete an application for employment and to undergo a criminal background check.

TRAINING: We will conduct formal training sessions on our Child Protection Policy and Covenant as needed to allow all those who volunteer with children and youth and all employees to begin service. A list of all those who have attended this training will be kept on file. Periodic updates and refresher courses may be required from time to time to keep our training up to date.

APPLICATION: All potential volunteers must fill out an application to evaluate personal character and compatibility.

VOLUNTEER SCREENING: All potential volunteers will be interviewed, upon receiving an application, by a staff member and member of the session, to evaluate their compatibility with the volunteer position. This interview seeks to assess spiritual awareness, humble servitude, and strong character that will ensure the safe keeping of all students. After a background check, training, and commitment to adhere to the Covenant, the staff and session member will present names to the session to finalize the decision and accept a potential volunteer.

SIX MONTH RULE: All potential volunteers must have attended the church for at least 6 months prior. This allows church members and staff to build a relationship and trust with the potential volunteer.

BACKGROUND CHECKS: All volunteers and employees will be asked to undergo a background check before being allowed to supervise or teach children and youth. Background checks will be kept up to date and a list of those who have completed them will be on file in the church office. This background check will check criminal history, the sex offender registry search, known aliases, social security number verification, and a 10-15 year address history.

COVENANT: Volunteers and employees will be asked to sign a covenant (see attached) regarding our child protection and discipline policies. Volunteers and employees will have an opportunity to discuss these policies with the Pastor, Youth Director, or other designated elders prior to signing the covenant. Signing this covenant will assert the volunteer/employee will follow the Duty of Care appropriate for

this position and will abstain from all Negligence. Failure to follow these guidelines will result in disciplinary action leading to but not excluding: A verbal warning/counseling, expulsion from the volunteer/staff position, and legal action. These will be kept on file in the church office.

SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH: Every reasonable attempt will be made to provide two adults for each room or group within our children's and youth ministries. However, in cases where two adults cannot be assigned to each room or group, a volunteer or staff member will float between areas to offer additional assistance and supervision.

Staff, other designated elders, or other volunteers will conduct periodic, unannounced spot checks whenever an adult is alone with a child or group of children. Parents are encouraged to visit the premises unannounced and observe children's activities.

Staff and volunteers- in so much as it is feasible - should not be alone with a single child where they cannot be observed by others.

REPORTING: It is mandatory that volunteers/staff report concerns regarding child safety or welfare; improper conduct by a volunteer, staff member, or church member; or a serious or ongoing misbehavior on the part of a child or youth to the Pastor, Youth Director, or member of the safety team.

In accordance with Tennessee state law a person who observes abusive behavior or has information which leads them to suspect that abuse may have occurred (including a disclosure statement from the child) should immediately report to the Tennessee Department of Children's Services or to local law enforcement. We request that you notify the Pastor as well with a written statement of your observation.

Covenant for Working with Children and Youth

Any person (staff member or volunteer) working with the children or youth of this congregation is acting as a role model. First Cumberland Presbyterian Church asks all volunteers and staff members to be mindful of this as they interact in any capacity with children or youth. We also recognize that technology is a big part of our world today and ask that volunteers and staff recognize that their influence extends to their online presence. To that end, we have adopted the following standards for our volunteers and staff members:

1. We treat all persons as Children of God, regardless of race, religion, culture, age, disability, or biological sex. As such, we seek to be inclusive and to treat every person with dignity and respect.
2. Volunteers and staff members are expected to be positive role models by maintaining an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience, courteousness, maturity, tact, and humility
3. Volunteers and staff are expected to remain engaged with the students and event/activity, and as such should refrain from disengaging with the use of a personal cell phone, other forms of technology, and social media.
4. Volunteers and staff are expected to model a responsible lifestyle by refraining from the following behaviors while in the presence of children or youth and through interactions with children and youth on social media, text, or other forms of mobile communication:
 - a. Smoking or using tobacco products.
 - b. Using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or other controlled substances.

- c. Using abusive, degrading, or offensive language—including profanity or sexually-suggestive jokes or observations, like obscene language, obscene phone calls, exposure and/or pornographic use of children.
 - d. Contacting students through use of social media or any other communicative device including texting and phones calls unless verbal consent has been given by the parents of the child. There should be no outside communication with the student without the parent’s knowledge and consent.
5. Volunteers and staff must not mistreat children or youth in person or with any interaction through technological means. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. Physical abuse: spanking, pushing, shoving, shaking, striking, or slapping.
 - b. Verbal or mental abuse: humiliation, degrading speech, or threats.
 - c. Sexual abuse: inappropriate or sexual touching, exposure, pictures, comments/discussions, or messages.
 - d. Mental abuse: shaming, withholding love, cruelty, and dismissal of responsibility to hear a student.
 - e. Neglect: withholding food, water, basic care, etc.
 - f. Spiritual abuse: a systemic pattern of coercive and controlling behavior in a religious context to manipulate and exploit others on the basis of spiritual authority.
 6. Volunteers and staff members will not tolerate any of the behaviors outlined in #3 and #4 above from children or youth. Volunteers and staff will be mindful of how children and youth are using technology while at church events and ensure that they are not engaging in these behaviors online.
 7. Volunteers and staff members will use our LOGOS Discipline Policy as they deal with disciplinary issues:
 - a) First instance of disruptive or disrespectful behavior: The child will be counseled and removed if necessary. The issue should be discussed with a parent depending on the significance of the situation.
 - b) Second instance: Teacher or program leader will notify the parent and inform them of the issue and work together to form possible solutions.
 - a. It is the policy of this church to not administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Volunteers should consult with a staff member if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.
 8. Volunteers, staff members, and other designated elders will adhere to our Child Protection Policy.

I understand that any violation of this Child Protection Policy may result in termination as a staff member or volunteer. I have also read and agree to abide by the Child Protection Policy and the Covenant for Working with Children and Youth presented to me.

Employee/Volunteer Signature

Staff Signature

Date