

**Forest Presbyterian Church**

**YOUTH SAFETY POLICY**

**Policy and Guidelines for the Safety and Supervision of Children and Youth**

**Objectives:**

These guidelines and the policy they support exist to:

- Safeguard the children, youth, and adults of our church from harm.
- Protect the church staff and leaders from false allegations of inappropriate behavior.
- Address our church's legal risk and liability due to improper interaction among children, youth, and adults.

**Policy:**

It is the policy of Forest Presbyterian Church to take every measure deemed prudent to protect and promote the safety and well being of all children, youth, and adults who participate in our programs and activities.

In order to implement this policy, our church has established guidelines to direct and support all adults who supervise or otherwise work with the children and youth entrusted to our care.

It is expected that everyone who works with the children or youth in our programs knows, supports and follows the Youth Safety Policy and signs the Screening Form for Children and Youth Work (Appendix A).

If an adult does not abide by the Youth Safety Policy, that adult will not be permitted to work with or supervise any church related child or youth activity.

For purposes of this policy, a leader is an adult over the age of 21 who is supervising youth (e.g., chaperone, driver, or youth advisor). Volunteers may be younger than 21, but they may not substitute for an adult.

**Guidelines for Employee and Volunteer Selection:**

All volunteers working with children and youth must have been a member or closely associated with Forest Presbyterian Church for a minimum of six months or have a driving record and/or criminal record/background check and an interview with Pastor, Youth Leader or Christian Education Elder.

In order to meet our objectives, it is necessary to gather certain information from individuals desiring employment or offering volunteer service to children and youth.

Church staff and adults who volunteer their services to work with and/or supervise children and youth will be asked to complete a Screening Form for Children and Youth Work (Appendix A) when they begin and then every 5 years. In the interim years the volunteer will review, correct form if necessary and sign it. References may be checked (Appendix B). All paid employees will receive a criminal record/background check by the Personnel Ministry team. Any unresolved irregularities will disqualify persons for work with children and youth unless resolved to the satisfaction of the Pastor and the Personnel Ministry Team/Christian Education Ministry Team.

This information will be kept confidential and will be used for the sole purpose of helping the church provide a safe and secure environment for children who participate in our programs. A confidential file, maintained by the Christian Education Ministry Team, will hold Screening Forms for Children and Youth Work (Appendix A), Reference Check forms and if applicable, background checks. The locked files will be accessible only to the Pastor, Personnel Ministry Team, Youth Leader, Church School Coordinator and Christian Education Elder(s).

Adults who have been convicted of or have pled guilty to child sexual abuse or physical abuse will not be accepted for work with children or youth.

Adult survivors of sexual or physical abuse should discuss their desire to work with children or youth with the Pastor prior to engaging in this ministry (See Appendix C).

All workers, paid or volunteer, will receive a copy of the Youth Safety Policy.

### **Expectations:**

#### Expectations of Children and Youth:

- Arrive on time
- Remain with the group until dismissed
- Sign and follow the Youth Group Code of Conduct (Appendix D) if applicable
- Support safe, cooperative procedures of the group

#### Expectations of Parents:

- Timely arrival of child at designated area
- Timely pick-up from designated area
- Notify supervisor of adult(s) to whom child may be released
- Provide supervisor with information about child which is pertinent to care
- For all children and youth participating in church related activities, Medical/Emergency Information forms (Appendix E) will be completed by the parent(s) or guardian at enrollment time and updated annually.
- Sign and follow the Youth Group Code of Conduct (Appendix D) if applicable
- Support safe, cooperative procedures of the group

#### Expectations of Teachers/Supervisors:

- Arrive early to greet children/participants
- Remain until all children/participants have been met by a parent or other designated person
- Follow the Policy and Guidelines for the Safety and Supervision of Children and Youth
- Participate in training/information meetings as offered
- Teachers will know where the Medical/Emergency Information Forms (Appendix E) are kept
- Medical/Emergency Information forms (Appendix E) will be in possession of teacher/supervisor during special events away from church.
- Teachers will know the Fire Evacuation Plan as posted in the building

#### Expectations of Church Leaders/Session:

- Implement, maintain, and supervise the Youth Safety Policy and arrange for its regular review and revision
- Make the Youth Safety Policy available to all church staff and volunteers who work with children/youth and to outside groups who use the church
- Provide training/information opportunities for church staff and volunteers regarding such topics as: indicators of abuse, confidentiality, emergency procedures
- Respond to any report of misconduct according to the guidelines in the Book of Order, D-10.000.

### **Essential Procedures for All Groups**

#### Fire:

1. Exit the building from the nearest available exit.
2. The teacher/supervisor leads the class/group at a fast walk to a safe distance from the building.
3. The teacher/supervisor will check attendance and remain with the group until each child has been met by a parent/guardian.

#### First Aid/Precautions:

1. First aid supplies, including gloves are located in the kitchen, resource room, and the nursery.

#### Sick or Injured Child:

1. Family member(s) will be located during the worship service or telephoned at home. 911 will be called if urgent medical attention seems necessary.

2. Adult help will be readily available for the remainder of the activity. The phone on the wall near the Nursery can be used to call the sanctuary if needed. Anyone should feel comfortable going into the sanctuary during worship if a child is sick or injured and a parent or extra help is needed.
3. The adult in charge of the group will notify the Pastor of the incident and document the child's name, date, description of the incident/accident, including any treatment provided on the Confidential Incident Report Form (Appendix E). A copy of the completed form will be given to the Parent/Guardian when the child is released.

Supervision of Children and Youth:

1. Two Adult Rule – All groups of youth (grades 6<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>) must be supervised by at least two adults (21 years or older). It is strongly recommended that all children (nursery – 5<sup>th</sup> grade) be supervised by two adults (21 years or older).

On those Sundays when only one teacher is present with a church school class, the location and openness of the classrooms will assure safety of the child, according to the Youth Safety Policy.

No meeting of children or youth with supervisors should take place in any setting that could put the motivation of either party in question.

2. Bathroom Assistance - Three and four year old children (and others as appropriate) who must leave the classroom area to use the bathroom are accompanied by an adult. Older children will not be accompanied by an adult, but teachers will be conscious of time and will seek help if a child does not return within a reasonable period of time. Bathroom assistance will be provided in an emergency or as directed by the child's parent or guardian on the Medical/Emergency Information form (Appendix E).

Transportation:

1. It is strongly recommended that there be two adults in every car when transporting children and/or youth to off-site events. However, there must be at least three individuals in each vehicle. All drivers must be age 21 or older, have a current, valid driver's license, and drive a legally registered vehicle. Seat belts are required for each participant, speed limits will be followed, and there will be no consumption of alcohol or other drugs that impair their ability to drive safely.
2. It is expected that each child or youth and their parent will mutually agree to arrangements for returning home safely from a group meeting or event. This includes a youth going home with someone other than a parent. This information is listed on the Child and Youth Medical/Emergency Information form (Appendix E).
3. Following an event or meeting, at least two adults will remain at the church/event until all youth have left. If the youth is not picked up within 15 minutes after the appointed time and the youth advisor cannot reach the parent/guardian, they may call the emergency contact. The Youth Advisor should use their best judgment and wait outside or near windows for example when waiting with a youth after a youth event.

Permission:

1. Parents or guardians will be asked to complete a signed permission form that includes a phone number with which they may be reached in case of an emergency. Medical/Emergency Information forms (Appendix E) will be in the possession of the driver or chaperone. For events away from church, parents or guardians will be informed of the location and phone numbers at which their youth may be reached in an emergency.

Child Abuse:

1. Pastor – According to the Book of Order (G-6.0204 a & b):
 

“a. In the exercise of pastoral care, ministers of the Word and Sacrament shall maintain a relationship of trust and confidentiality, and shall hold in confidence all information revealed to them in the course of providing such care and all information relating to the exercised of such care. When the person whose confidences are at issue gives express consent to reveal confidential information, then a minister of the Word and Sacrament may, but cannot be compelled to, reveal confidential information. A minister of the Word and Sacrament may reveal confidential

information when she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of imminent bodily harm to any person.

b. A minister of the Word and Sacrament shall report to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities knowledge of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity when (1) such information is gained outside of a confidential communications as defined in G-6.0204a; or (2) she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of future physical harm or abuse.”

2. Elders – According to the Book of Order (G.0304 b):

“b. An elder shall report to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities knowledge, gained in the course of service to the church, of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity when (1) such information is gained outside of a confidential communications; or (2) she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of future physical harm or abuse.”

3. Deacons – According to the Book of Order (G-6.0400 b):

“b. A deacon shall report to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities knowledge, gained in the course of service to the church, of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity when (1) such information is gained outside of a confidential communications; or (2) she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of future physical harm or abuse.”