

First United Presbyterian Church
Loveland CO
Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy
Policy for Ensuring a Climate of Safety
September 20, 2018

We believe and proclaim that God creates all people. God values all human life and intends that everyone – men, women and children – have worth and dignity in all relationships.

We further believe in justice for all persons. Misconduct toward all persons, and in particular children, youth, and vulnerable adults, is an abuse of power and trust, therefore, unjust. First United Presbyterian Church recognizes that formal, written policies and procedures are adopted for the protection of our children and youth, our vulnerable adults, our employees, our adult volunteers, and our church family as a whole.

First United Presbyterian Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children, youth, and vulnerable adults who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect all persons of First United Presbyterian Church from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

In addition to this policy, all persons employed or volunteering with First United Presbyterian Church are also subject to Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedures.

Additionally, organizations using the facilities of First United Presbyterian Church shall provide a safe and nurturing environment to children, youth and vulnerable adults and those who work with them. They must sign and abide by this policy or provide proof that their organization has a similar policy in place and provide a signed copy.

Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” or “youth” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term “vulnerable adult” includes a person who, because of his/her age, disability, or to him/her circumstances, whether temporary or permanent, is in a position of dependence on others or is otherwise at a greater risk of being harmed by persons in positions of authority or trust relative to him/her. The term “worker” includes both employee and volunteer persons who work with children, youth or vulnerable adults.

Abuse of the elderly or elder abuse is a misuse of power and a violation of trust that may be psychological abuse, attempting to dehumanize or intimidate older adults; financial abuse, using their money or property in a dishonest manner; or physical abuse, which includes any acts of violence inflicting pain, injury or mental distress.

Harassment may be verbal, visual, or physical, including suggestive remarks and gestures, or other unwanted attention that is emotionally demeaning or exploitive.

Mutual consent is never possible when one party is in a leadership position and the other party is a participant, an employee, a member, a child, a youth, or a vulnerable adult.

Mandatory reporters are a legal category that includes clergy and clerks of session according to Colorado state law. However, the PCUSA Book of Order adds Elders and Deacons as Mandated Reporters who are legally required to report incidents of abuse.

Selection of Workers

All persons who desire to work with the children, youth and vulnerable adults participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This includes both employee and volunteer workers, regardless of position. This includes individuals directly participating and others with incidental contact. This screening includes the following:

1. Six Month Rule

No person will be considered for any position involving contact with minors until she/he has been involved with First United Presbyterian Church for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children. For temporary residents, parents of minors, or other individuals recommended as a volunteer the six-month rule may be waived after a personal interview and recommendation from their home church or previous organization.

2. Written Application

All persons must complete and sign a written application. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, youth, or vulnerable adults, previous church/organization affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at the First United Presbyterian Church.

3. Personal Interview

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

4. Reference Checks

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, youth, or vulnerable adult, at least two of the applicants' references will be checked. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children, youth or vulnerable adults in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at First United Presbyterian Church.

5. Criminal Background Check

A national criminal background check is required for all employees and volunteers (regardless of position). A background check will be performed for applicants who will be involved in any activities with children, youth, and vulnerable adults including but not limited to Sunday school, nursery, youth group, camp, Vacation Bible School, mission work, overnight activities, occasional one-on-one or group contact or incidental contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

Before a background check is run, applicants will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing First United Presbyterian Church to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will be unable to work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults. The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at the First United Presbyterian

Church. The clearance process shall allow applicants the opportunity to correct or respond to information obtained from the background check. After the initial background check, updated background checks will be required at 3 year intervals. Any expense incurred in obtaining the criminal background check will be borne by First United Presbyterian Church.

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults will be determined by the minister in charge on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Any persons who may pose a threat to children, youth or vulnerable adults will be prohibited from working in any ministry involving children, youth or vulnerable adults. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children, youth or vulnerable adults and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event. In the event the applicant believes the decision of the minister in charge is not supported by the evidence, he or she may request a hearing by the full session, at which hearing the applicant may present testimony/evidence on his or her own behalf.

Youth as Workers

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for youth (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- Must be at least age 12.

- Must be screened as specified above.

- Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children except in an emergency.

- Must have information requested in selection of workers and documentation required by this policy co-signed by a parent or guardian.

First United Presbyterian Church recognizes the importance of children below age 12 being allowed to participate in service to the Church. When a child below age 12 wishes to serve as a volunteer in any given classroom they will be allowed pending approval of the Pastor or Elder of Christian Education. This child will be under the direct supervision of an adult and the youth worker's presence will not fulfill the two-adult requirement.

Standards of Conduct

Workers (always referring to both employee and volunteer) are tasked with guarding the physical and emotional safety of those in their care and with being alert for signs of all individual's well being.

No worker shall engage in any act of abuse or harassment with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult.

No worker shall touch, interact with, or otherwise communicate with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult in any way that is intended to be physically harmful, sexually stimulating, emotionally demeaning, or exploitative.

Common expressions of affection and affirmation (including hugs and pats on the back) or physical care (including diaper changes and first aid) are appropriate in this and in any other community of caring Christians. Care must be taken, however, that physical expressions of affection are not excessive or imposed on another individual.

If an unaccompanied worker meets with a single person to conduct a private discussion, that meeting shall be held at First United Presbyterian Church when the church is open for scheduled group activities or shall be held in a public place. In no case shall an unaccompanied worker meet with a single child, youth, or vulnerable adult at First United Presbyterian Church unless there is at least one other employee or volunteer in the building. This employee or volunteer must be aware of the time and location of the private meeting, although the identity of the vulnerable person may remain confidential.

On any church-sponsored activity for which First United Presbyterian Church arranges transportation, one worker may transport individual children, youth or vulnerable adults as long as there are two or more individuals in the vehicle. Individuals will be picked up and dropped off as a group at church or at other designated locations. Exceptions to this clause may be made in the case of emergencies or with written permission of a parent or guardian.

Implementation

First United Presbyterian Church will provide policy information to all workers (employee or volunteer) approved through the Selection of Workers process. Each worker shall submit a signed confirmation of receiving, understanding, and agreeing to follow the policy.

Organizations using First United Presbyterian Church's facilities shall either show proof of comparable policy or agree to abide by this policy.

Training

First United Presbyterian Church will provide training on this child, youth and vulnerable adult protection policy to all new workers (employee or volunteer) and will provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All workers are strongly encouraged to attend these training events annually. The training will help raise awareness, identify appropriate and inappropriate behavior associated between children, youth and vulnerable adults, show procedures for reporting any inappropriate behavior, and provide information in complying with state and federal laws dealing with abuse of children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

Open Door Policy

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

Two Adult Rule

A minimum of two unrelated adults, who have been approved to work with children, youth and vulnerable adults will be in attendance at all times during programs and activities. Some classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open, there should be no fewer than two students with the adult teacher, and a second approved worker will be in the building actively roaming class sessions. Minors are not allowed to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation. Counseling sessions are limited to 30 minutes in duration and 3-4 sessions unless conducted by a licensed professional after 3-4 sessions. Counseling sessions occur only with prior written approval of the parent/guardian and consent of the worker's supervisor. Counseling sessions take place in a location visible by others.

Vacation Bible School/Camp Check-in/Check-out Procedure

For children below 1st grade, a security check-in/check-out procedure will be followed. A parent or guardian will sign in/out the child. The parent or guardian must present identification or be known as the child's parent or guardian. In the event that a parent or guardian is unable to pick up the child additional responsible parties will be named by the parent or guardian and will need to show identification before dropping off or picking up the child. The pastor or Elder for Christian Education will be contacted if none of the above is available. They will be responsible for releasing the child to the care of a parent or guardian or responsible party after discussing the surrounding circumstances with the parent or guardian.

Restroom Guidelines

Children five years of age and younger should use a single-stall bathroom if one is available. If a single-stall bathroom is not available, workers should escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom. They should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child.

For children over the age of five, at least one adult male should take boys to the restroom and at least one adult female should take girls. The worker should check the bathroom first to make sure that the bathroom is empty, and then allow the children inside. The worker should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom.

For the protection of all, workers should *never* be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at First United Presbyterian Church. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours
- Green or yellow runny nose
- Eye or skin infections
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease

Children who are observed by our workers (employee or volunteer) to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

Medications Policy

It is the policy of First United Presbyterian Church not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the persons under our care. A parent or guardian at home should administer medications. Parents and guardians are reminded of our sick child policy.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children, youth or vulnerable adults with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such persons should address their situation with the Pastor or Elder for Christian Education to develop a plan of action.

Discipline Policy

It is the policy of First United Presbyterian Church not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents or guardians have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children, youth or vulnerable adults. Workers should consult with the pastor or Elder for Christian Education if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

Accidental Injuries to Children, Youth or Vulnerable Adults

In the event that a child, youth, or vulnerable adult is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers (employee or volunteer) will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the person has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed.

Responding to Allegations of Abuse to a Child, Youth or Vulnerable Adult

For purposes of this policy, "abuse" is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a person's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

Physical abuse – any physical injury to a person that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.

Emotional abuse – any emotional injury when the person is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as in an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.

Sexual abuse – any sexual activity between an adult and a child, youth, or vulnerable adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.

Neglect – depriving a person of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Workers (employee and volunteer) may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the persons under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children, youth, or vulnerable adults at First United Presbyterian Church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the pastor or a ruling elder for further action including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at First United Presbyterian Church or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The person will be removed from the situation and the parent or guardian of the child, youth, or vulnerable adult will be notified.
2. The worker (employee or volunteer) alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation. The individuals and situation will be handled with dignity and respect.
3. The appropriate law enforcement agency and child protection agency will be notified, and the First United Presbyterian Church will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. The First United Presbyterian Church will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by the appropriate law enforcement agency and child protection agency.
4. First United Presbyterian Church's insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
5. First United Presbyterian Church's session will be notified. Someone designated by the session will serve as our spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. The designee will seek the advice of counsel before responding to media inquiries or releasing information to the congregation. All other representatives of the church should refrain from speaking to the media.
6. An incident report will be filled out. All efforts will be documented on a daily basis.
7. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it immediately.
8. Any person who is not found not guilty or otherwise exonerated of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working (employee or volunteer) with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

Administration

The Personnel Team shall administer this policy under the authority of Session. Appropriate Personnel Team or other Session Team member(s) or Session authorized person(s) shall conduct background checks, application reviews, interviews, reference checks, trainings and incident report reviews. All documentation associated with this policy (including applications, background checks, incident reports, or others) shall be strictly confidential and be kept secure in the First United Presbyterian Church office. The Personnel Team shall review the policy along with the associated processes and procedures annually and prior to the annual congregational awareness announcement and publication.

Congregational Awareness

The congregation shall be informed of this policy and shall be reminded of this policy annually with an announcement during worship and an article in the First United Presbyterian Church newsletter. This policy shall be reviewed during new church membership class and in, at minimum annual, trainings for elders, deacons, and volunteers, and in employee performance reviews.