

## **Appendix O: Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and Its Procedures**

The Presbytery of Mackinac is committed to the safety, welfare and protection of all children and youth participating in the activities and programs of the Church. Central to the Reformed faith is the concept of “covenant.” God entered into covenant with the people of God to assure survival and liberation. God’s people made promises to God in order to live out the covenant in their lives. As the body of Christ, we covenant with one another to create a community where all the people experience the security, love, and acceptance of the Christian community. The promises we make to each other are sacred.

Sexual, physical, and emotional misconduct is an abuse of authority and power, breaching Christian ethical principles by misusing a trust relationship to gain advantage over another for personal gratification. Because of the nature of the relationships between church attendees, staff, and clergy, and with the vulnerability that arises from sharing our faith and life together, the church can potentially be a place where individuals could engage in abusive, inappropriate, and illegal behaviors and actions with other community members.

Child sexual, physical, and emotional abuse or misconduct includes touching or non-touching interaction for the purpose of sexual stimulation between a child and an adult. This behavior is always considered forced when the interaction involves a child and an adult, whether or not the victim has consented. This is also true in the case of any non-minor who is incapable of appraising the nature of the conduct or communicating unwillingness to be subject to unwelcome sexual interaction.

The purpose of this child protection covenant is to address clearly and proactively the presence of sexual, physical, and emotional exploitation, abuse, and harassment in our social and ecclesiastical culture. Survivors and victims experience a rupture in their sense of belonging and identity within a community of faith. To that end, it will be the policy of the Presbytery of Mackinac to protect children and adults from sexual, physical, and emotional misconduct including being both potential victim and potential accused person.

Therefore, the Presbytery of Mackinac hereby adopts reasonable policies and procedures in order to minimize the possibility that any child or youth will be subjected to sexual, physical, or emotional abuse or neglect by Church staff, paid childcare workers, teachers, or volunteers while engaged in church programs or activities. Such behavior is not limited to physical contact, but may also include gestures, spoken words, or written or electronic contact.

For the purposes of this document “child” means all those 17 years of age and younger and any non-minor who is incapable of appraising the nature of the conduct or communicating unwillingness to be subject to unwelcome sexual, physical, or emotional interaction.

The policies and procedures adopted seek to balance the security and welfare of the children and the legitimate expectations of privacy of staff and volunteers.

## Standards of Conduct

- Paid or volunteer adults shall not touch or interact with children or youth in any way that is sexually stimulating, emotionally demeaning, or exploitative. Common expressions of affection and affirmation (hugs and pats on the back) or physical care (diaper changes or first aid) are appropriate in this or any community of caring Christians. Staff and volunteers must be careful that physical expressions of affection are not excessive or imposed upon another individual.
- Paid and volunteer adults and youth working with children and youth are also tasked with guarding the physical and emotional safety of those in their care and being aware of signs indicating neglect of the child's well-being.
- Whenever possible, two adults should be present with the children at all activities. The Presbytery of Mackinac recommends that staff and volunteers transport children and youth in groups rather than alone. In ordinary circumstances, an unaccompanied adult should not drive a single child in a church sponsored activity without the permission of the child's parent or guardian.
- All overnight activities must have a minimum of two adults present; for mixed youth overnights there must be both a male and female present. Parental permission in writing is required for all overnights. On those occasions when one-on-one counseling is appropriate, the adult should notify another adult where he/she and the youth will be.
- Christian education teachers, youth advisors, nursery supervisors and helpers shall discipline with kindness **and** with the goal of helping children develop a sense of responsibility and self-control. Appropriate discipline establishes clear expectations and provides rewards and incentives for acceptable behavior; it uses verbal disapproval, loss of privileges, and redirection to teach children acceptable behavior. Derogatory remarks or comments that humiliate or frighten the child shall not be used. Corporal punishment of any kind within the church is unacceptable. Corporal punishment includes but is not limited to slapping, spanking, pinching and/or shaking. Punitive techniques that cause physical pain such as assuming an uncomfortable position are not appropriate. Physical restraint of children should be used only when someone's safety is at risk.
- All volunteers for ongoing assignments shall have completed and had approved a Volunteer Application form included as part of this policy.

## Implementation

To implement this Child Protection Policy (CPP)

- A CPP statement must be provided to and signed by all employees and volunteers participating in any Presbytery of Mackinac program or activity involving children and/or youth.
- In general, volunteer applications will be accepted only after six months of active involvement in a congregation that is a member of the Presbytery of Mackinac. Exceptions to this volunteer application policy may be made at the discretion of the Coordinating Council or a body authorized by the Coordinating Council (a local congregation's Session for example) to cover short-term involvement in children's activities of the Presbytery such as service projects, Presbytery Point Camp, VBS, Sunday morning childcare, etc. In these cases, a newer attendee will be paired with a vetted member or staff person.

- Applications will be submitted through the chair of the group responsible for the particular program in which the volunteer wishes to participate.
- All staff and congregations of the Presbytery of Mackinac will be made aware of the Child Protection Policy (CPP).

### **Administration**

The CPP Review Team consisting of the General Presbyter, the chair of the Personnel Committee, and a member of the Judicial Commission of the Presbytery of Mackinac is responsible for the oversight and security of the program. All documentation associated with the CPP (**including** volunteer applications and all documentation concerning potential allegations of physical or emotional abuse or neglect) will be held in confidence by the CPP Review Team, and whichever staff person is responsible for the program area involved. All documentation will be kept in locked storage in the Presbytery office, and applications will be kept on file for a 5-year period past the active service of the volunteer.

### **Member Awareness**

- A copy of the CPP and the volunteer application will be made available on the Presbytery of Mackinac web site.
- The Presbytery will be informed of this policy and reminded if it annually.
- All volunteers (as defined in the implementation section) will be required to complete the application form as well as providing a signed Child Protection statement for the Presbytery files.

### **Procedures for Handling Misconduct Allegations**

The first person to learn of an incident of abuse or misconduct (either a person witnessing the incident or the victim) will immediately report this verbally to the staff person supervising the activity. The issues of sexual, physical, and/or emotional abuse or neglect involving a minor, whether perceived or actual, need to be dealt with immediately, effectively, and with great discretion. Michigan law requires that allegations of abuse or neglect of children be reported immediately to proper authorities. It is the responsibility of the person in charge of the activity to see that such report has been made. It is suggested that in every case of alleged abuse or neglect of a child the Personnel Committee chair contact and involve the Presbytery's liability carrier, verify that Child Protective Services has been notified, and that the proper written documentation of the allegations and proceedings is maintained.

The intended procedure is to report any allegation of abuse or neglect to the General Presbyter. If the alleged offender is a professional staff member, the report should be made to the Stated Clerk.

The General Presbyter or Stated Clerk and/or Personnel Committee will be responsible for maintaining contact with the police and the victim's family and for determining further actions.

Adopted by the Presbytery of Mackinac on September 16, 2017.

(PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL)

**Children and Youth Work Application  
Volunteers and Employees  
Presbytery of Mackinac**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Street city zip code

In which Children/Youth Program (s) are you seeking to become involved?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What skills or interests would you bring to the Children/Youth program?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What experience with children/youth have you had the in last 5 years?

Organization Program Dates contact (include phone number)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you at any time ever:

Been arrested for any reason? \_\_\_yes \_\_\_no

Been convicted of, or pleaded no contest to, any crime involving children? \_\_\_yes \_\_\_no

Been convicted of, or pleaded no contest to, a moving violation in the last 3 years? \_\_\_yes \_\_\_no

Engaged in, or been accused of, any act of child molestation and/or exploitation, abuse or neglect? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_no

Are you aware of:

Having any traits or tendencies that could pose a threat to children, youth or others? \_\_\_yes \_\_\_no

Any reason why you should not work with children, youth or others? \_\_\_yes \_\_\_no

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, please explain in detail on an attached sheet.

Form date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Church Activity**

What church or churches have you regularly attended in the past 5 years?

Church name \_\_\_\_\_

Pastor's name/ phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Years attended \_\_\_\_\_

**References (other than family members)**

Name/ Relationship Address Phone

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

**Applicant verification and release:**

I recognize that the Presbytery of Mackinac is relying upon the accuracy of the information contained herein. Accordingly, I attest and affirm that all the information that I have provided is completely true and correct.

I authorize the Presbytery of Mackinac to contact any person or entity listed in this application and I further authorize any such person or entity to provide the Presbytery of Mackinac with information, opinions, and impressions relating to my background or qualifications. I further authorize the Presbytery of Mackinac to conduct a criminal background investigation and child abuse investigation if ones already on file are more than five (5) years old.

I voluntarily release the Presbytery of Mackinac and any such organization or entity listed herein by me from liability involving the communication of information relating to my background or qualifications.

I have carefully read the Presbytery of Mackinac Child Protection Policy.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Witness

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I am the \_\_\_\_\_ (role: pastor, DCE, etc.) of

\_\_\_\_\_ (name of church), and I approve this application.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_