

## Policy #22

### **CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY**

For Presbytery wide events and programs

**COM approval:** March 15, 2018

**Council approval:** May 22, 2018

**PGA approval:** N/A

Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Mark 10:14b

#### Purpose

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.

For the few times that employees or volunteers might be involved with Presbytery of Greater Atlanta programs and activities with children, the Presbytery seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children during those times. These activities would include, but not limited to employees or volunteers who are:

- Involved in overnight activities with children
- Counseling children
- Involved in one-on-one mentoring of children
- Having occasional one-on-one contact with children

By establishing and implementing this Child Protection Policy, the Presbytery commits to the safety of all children while under its care and also protecting employees and volunteers from false accusations.

#### Two Adult Rule

It is our goal to have a minimum of two unrelated adult workers (18 years or older) in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our 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 and there should be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher. Children should not be alone with one adult on Church premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation.

#### Open Door Rule

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

### Medications Policy

Medications are not to be administered, either prescription or nonprescription, to children while under care of the Presbytery. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with the appropriate paid staff member to develop a plan of action.

### Restroom Guidelines

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.

### Accidental Injuries to Children

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

- For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (bandages, etc.) as appropriate, and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury.
- For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent or guardian will immediately be summoned, in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.

### Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

Definition: For purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action or lack of action which endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

Physical abuse – Any physical injury to a child which is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.

Emotional abuse – Emotional injury occurring when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling, persistent teasing, or bullying.

Sexual abuse – Sexual abuse is defined as, "Sexual abuse of another person is any offense involving sexual conduct in relation to (1) any person under the age of eighteen years or anyone over the age of eighteen years without the mental capacity to consent; or (2) any person when the

conduct includes force, threat, coercion, intimidation, or misuse of ordered ministry or position.”\*

**Neglect** – Depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care. Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children participating in programs and activities. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children becomes aware of or suspects abuse or neglect of a child under his or her care, or even outside of his or her care, this should be reported immediately to a full-time staff person for further action, and other authorities as mandated by Georgia state law.

**Inappropriate Touching** – When caring for children, the childcare worker needs to be sensitive to any touching of them that might be deemed as inappropriate. Special care should be given when touching a child while attending to the child that is injured or emotionally upset. Inappropriate touching may include but is not limited to the following:

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
- Kisses on the mouth
- Holding children over three on the lap
- Butt slaps
- Touching areas which would be covered by a modest bathing suit
- Full frontal hugs or hugs from behind, especially with adolescent girls
- Pats on the head, for some cultures
- Helping children remove clothing for the restroom if they are developmentally capable on their own.

**Reporting** – It is mandatory that child abuse be reported to civil, legal and ecclesiastical authorities. Report should be made to local police and also the Department of Family and Children’s Services (1-855-422-4453). A written report should be made to the Clerk of the Presbytery immediately (email: [dwells@atlpcusa.org](mailto:dwells@atlpcusa.org))

**Training** – Child protection training is mandatory for all volunteers working with children. For a Presbytery event where childcare is provided, workers shall have had a criminal background check and be trained in Stewards of Children or [ministriesafe.com](http://ministriesafe.com) or a comparable program. In the event that a hosting church cannot provide these trained volunteers, the Presbytery will provide child care personnel

\*Book of Order 2015-2017 D-10.0401c