

TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
CHILD PROTECTION POLICY



*He tends his flock like a shepherd;
He gathers the lambs in his arms
and carries them close to his heart;
he gently leads those that have young,
Isaiah 40:11*

TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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Developed by the Trinity Presbyterian Church Child Protection Task Force

Approved: **June 10, 2010**

Revised: June 2015

**He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the
lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart;
he gently leads those who have young.
(Isaiah 40:11)**

1. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose of Policy

Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord. (Psalm 127:3)

There are many occasions in the ministry of Trinity Presbyterian Church (“Trinity”) when children are under the care and supervision of church employees or volunteers. The purpose of this Policy is to establish an environment that maximizes the safety and protection of these children. Trinity recognizes that God has entrusted these children to our care and gives its highest priority to minimizing potential abuse, either on church property or at church-sponsored events. Trinity also recognizes the tremendous dedication of the many people who work tirelessly for the kingdom of Jesus Christ by serving these lambs God has placed in our care. Trinity seeks to protect these valuable workers against false accusations.

Although many of the motives for developing and implementing a child protection policy could be identified as pragmatic, it must be noted that the theological and primary motivation is love. The Scriptures emphasize God's love for children, for the church of Jesus Christ, and for the testimony of Jesus' name. In Mark 10:14, Jesus rebukes his disciples indignantly, “Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.” Christian love is modeled on Christ's sacrificial love as seen in John 13:34, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.” Also, “love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law” (Romans 13:10).

Paul speaks plainly to the elders of the church at Ephesus, “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). This New Testament exhortation illustrates the shepherding paradigm of care, protection and guidance that Jesus himself portrayed for the church. Demonstrating protection for his followers, Jesus unequivocally warns, “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:5).

The Westminster Shorter Catechism instructs that the sixth commandment “requires all lawful endeavors to preserve our own life, and the life of others.” *The Westminster Larger Catechism* further states that the sins forbidden in the sixth commandment include sinful anger, all excessive passions, distracting cares, provoking words, oppression, and striking. The duties required in the sixth commandment are to preserve the life of ourselves and others by resisting all thoughts and purposes, subduing all passions, and avoiding all occasions, temptations, and practices, which tend to the unjust taking away of the life of any; ... and requiting good for evil; comforting and succoring the distressed, and protecting and defending the innocent (*The Westminster Larger Catechism*, Questions and Answers 135 & 136).

Trinity is subject to Rhode Island laws regarding the protection of children. Trinity recognizes that the welfare of children in its care is paramount and will make every effort to hinder the abuse of children by utilizing preventative measures including the screening, training, and supervision of staff and all volunteers. This Policy does not constitute a contract between the

church and any party. It is a statement of guidelines and commitment which Trinity will seek to follow.

B. Responsibilities

The Session of Trinity is responsible for approving, administering, and altering this Policy. This approved Policy can be amended by majority vote of the Session.

2. DEFINITIONS

Child - A person under the age of eighteen (18). When appropriate, teenagers 14-17 years old will be designated as “youths”.

Staff - All paid employees of Trinity.

Volunteers -Adult members of Trinity who serve in a ministry involving children, including non-paid interns. Youths may be permitted to serve in various ministries, but may not be designated as an adult volunteer.

Student Volunteers - College-age students who participate in Reformed University Fellowship-sponsored activities with children on Trinity property.

Child Protection Administrator – A volunteer designated by the Session to oversee the organization and maintenance of all paperwork associated with this Policy, assist the Session in the screening and selection of volunteers, and provide other assistance as required by the Session.

Child Abuse - An act, or failure to act, on the part of a parent or caretaker that results in the death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation of a child, or which places the child in an imminent risk of serious harm. (*See Appendix A*)

Sexual Abuse – Any contact or interaction (physical, visual, verbal, or psychological) between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator. Sexual abuse may be committed by a person under the age of eighteen when that person is in a position of power or control over the victimized child. (*See Appendix A*)

3. SCREENING AND TRAINING

- Prior to applying for any staff or volunteer position involving children, the applicant must be a member in good standing of Trinity for a period of at least 6 months. Any exception to this rule must be made by a majority vote of the Session.
- A copy of the Child Protection Policy will be shared with all prospective staff and volunteers.
- All current and prospective staff, volunteers, and student volunteers shall complete the Staff and Volunteer Application. (*See Appendix B*)
- The application will be evaluated and references checked by the Child Protection Administrator.

- Prior to working with children, student volunteers who are not members of Trinity shall be endorsed by the RUF Campus Minister once their application has been approved by the Child Protection Administrator. The endorsement is for the purpose of attesting to the applicant's character and fitness for working with children. Additionally, during any program in which student volunteers are working with children, at least two regular volunteers must be present in supervisory roles to ensure that supervision guidelines are being observed.
- The Staff and Volunteer Code of Conduct Agreement will be read, signed, and dated annually by all staff and volunteers. (*See Appendix F*)
- The Child Protection Administrator will maintain a confidential file of applications and oversee related administrative activities to ensure that screening and training compliance is achieved. All administrative paperwork will be kept in locked storage.

4. TRAINING AND EDUCATION

- All current and prospective staff and volunteers will be required to attend annual child abuse awareness training, and other training as deemed necessary by the Session. Training will serve to educate participants about the nature, impact, and prevention of child abuse.
- The Child Protection Administrator will ensure that a brief presentation is made during each New Member Orientation in order to make prospective members aware of Trinity's Child Protection Policy.
- Presentations of the Child Protection Policy will be made each September to all Christian Education teachers and aides. At this time, teachers, staff, and other volunteers will be asked to complete initial applications or renew their Staff and Volunteer Code of Conduct Agreement.
- The Child Protection Administrator will ensure that a report on the Child Protection Policy is made once a year at a congregational meeting.

5. SUPERVISORY GUIDELINES

When children are placed in the care of Trinity by a parent or guardian for a church-sponsored program, Trinity assumes responsibility for those children during that program and the protocols established in this Policy apply.

All children's programs and ministries will have a designated program director appointed by the Session. All program directors will assume a supervisory role over their program and ensure that this Policy's guidelines are being observed. Program directors shall be responsible for notifying the Session when provisions of this Policy are not being observed; furthermore, any volunteer who notices instances of noncompliance may notify a member of the Session of such instances.

In addition to the annual training required by the Session, program directors may develop additional child protection guidelines and/or specific training unique to that program's needs.

A. Practical Guidelines

- Always put the welfare of the child first.
- Two Adult Rule: The two-adult rule requires there always be two non-related adults present when supervising one or more children. This rule is designed for the safety of volunteers as well as children, and is required across all ministry areas. The two adults should be in sight of each other at all times.

The purpose of the two-adult rule is to ensure the actions of any one volunteer are known to at least one other volunteer, and to support volunteers in ministry. If a volunteer needs to speak with a child privately, he/she must do so in a visible and public location.

- Because the state of Rhode Island contains mandatory reporting laws, staff and volunteers should never promise confidentiality to a child.
- All classroom windows will be unobstructed at all times, and parents/guardians are welcome to observe any activity with their children.
- All speech should be appropriate for ministry, and should not contain personal intimacies or crude language.
- Staff and volunteers are not permitted to use corporal punishment with any child. If a child continues to misbehave despite repeated verbal warnings, contact the program director regarding the inappropriate behavior. Additionally, if a misbehaving child threatens the safety of other children, every effort should be made to remove the other children from harm.
- Appropriate boundaries are the guiding principles for physical contact between children and volunteers. Some positive and appropriate forms of affection are: brief hugs or side hugs; pats on the shoulder; handshakes, high-fives; and, fist bumps. Inappropriate forms of affection can be misconstrued and should be avoided. They include: lengthy embraces; kisses; sitting on laps (except for nursery-aged children); wrestling or tickling; piggyback rides; any type of massage; giving wedgies or similar touch of underwear; comments or compliments that relate to physique or body development; as well as any form of unwanted affection.
- Children must ask permission to use the restroom. It is desirable for a teacher or aide to accompany all children ages 7 and under to the restroom in a group. Check to see to make sure the restroom is empty before allowing the children to enter. Prop the door slightly ajar and wait outside within earshot of the children. The nursery director will have particular restroom procedures available for nursery-aged children.
- Children in Preschool, Kindergarten and Grade 1 Christian Education classes should be dropped off and picked up by a parent or designated adult. Children in these classes should not be permitted to leave the classroom alone.
- Parents or guardians must complete a written permission form before volunteer drivers transport children for a church-sponsored event. (*See Appendix D*)

- Program directors will be responsible for ensuring volunteer drivers are familiar with this Policy's transportation guidelines.
- All children must have a current and signed Program Attendance Consent Form prior to attending any church-sponsored event. (*See Appendix D*)
- All programs must keep an Program Attendance Registry. Program directors shall be responsible for ensuring that a Program Attendance Registry is completed on a regular basis and shall keep each registry on file with the Child Protection Administrator.
- All completed forms and registries should be returned to the Child Protection Administrator. A copy of this Policy and associated forms (*Appendices A-G*) can be found at www.trinitypresri.org under Trinity policies.

B. Prohibited Conduct

The following list describes prohibited conduct by staff, volunteers, student volunteers or any church member providing care for children, whether consensual or non-consensual:

- abuse of any kind, including sexual abuse,
- sexual exploitation or molestation,
- disseminating, exhibiting, or displaying pornographic material,
- hitting, kicking, slapping, or shoving,
- selling, giving, or furnishing any child with any tobacco substance, alcohol or controlled drug,
- swearing or using obscene, foul, or sexually explicit language,
- demonstrating any romantic or sexual interest in a child,
- removing any clothing from a child (except as appropriately required for seasonal outerwear), and
- sleeping in the same bed or bedding with any child at an overnight event.

C. Transportation Guidelines

All church-sponsored transportation should be provided by authorized volunteer drivers. The Child Protection Administrator shall be responsible for approving volunteer drivers and maintaining an authorized-driver list. An authorized-driver list will be available for program directors to view at www.trinitypresri.org. Before authorizing any volunteer for driving, the Child Protection Administrator must verify that the volunteer has provided proof of the following three items:

1. A valid driver's license,
2. Current proof of minimum liability insurance coverage (as required by the state of Rhode Island), and
3. Current vehicle registration.

All drivers must adhere to the following:

- There will be two adult volunteers in each vehicle at all times. The non-driver must be a member of Trinity and will ride in the front passenger's seat.
- Drivers will not pick up more children than the vehicle is designed to carry.
- All passengers must wear a properly fitting seatbelt.
- Drivers may not transport any children who do not have a current, signed Program Attendance Consent Form. Program directors are responsible for assigning and communicating with drivers the specific children to be transported. (For example, a child may tell you that his/her friend would like to attend the program; do not pick up any extra children without confirming with your program director that the friend has a current, signed Program Attendance Consent Form on file.)
- If there is any inappropriate behavior or disturbance the driver will pull over, if possible, until the problem is resolved.
- Children will be walked to and from their homes by the non-driving volunteer.
- Children should never be left alone in a vehicle.
- Drivers will not use a cell phone while the vehicle is in motion.
- The non-driving volunteer will operate any audio media or GPS system in the vehicle.
- While safety is important under any circumstances, the transportation guidelines apply only to events and activities for which Trinity provides transportation. The session shall from time to time specify the events and activities for which Trinity provides transportation and those for which it does not.

6. REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

Everyone has a legal (as well as moral) responsibility to contact law enforcement or The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (“DCYF”) if they have reason to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse. The law requires all persons to report suspected child abuse within 24 hours. If you are unsure whether the suspected abuse has occurred, call and discuss the case anonymously with a representative of DCYF at the Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-742-4453). Any person participating in good faith in making a report of abuse or neglect shall have immunity from civil liability or criminal penalty under Rhode Island law.

If you suspect abuse has occurred on church property or during a church-sponsored event, it is strongly recommended that you also contact Trinity's Senior Pastor or other member of the Session in addition to notifying the proper authorities.

The Session of Trinity recognizes that all allegations of child abuse must be taken seriously and is committed to acting forthrightly with due respect for the privacy and confidentiality of involved parties.

7. BUILDING SAFETY

During the worship service and other times when children are not under the supervision of Trinity staff or volunteers, parents or adult guardians shall be responsible for their own children. All emergency and escape procedures will be supervised by members of the diaconate.

- Children ages 12 years and below are not permitted in the kitchen areas, unless they are under the direct supervision of an adult.
- Children are not permitted in the church's administrative area without supervision; additionally, children should not use church equipment - including copiers, printers, computers, administrative cabinets, etc. - unless under the direct supervision of an adult.
- The rear stairwell poses several hazards, including the chance of being accidentally locked and trapped inside. Except in the case of an emergency, it is desirable for children to use the street-side stairwell.
- Be aware of non-volunteer adults accessing the second floor during the worship service. Alert a member of the diaconate to a stranger's presence.

8. IMPLEMENTATION

The Session is responsible for implementing and administering this Policy in accordance with the constitution of the church. The Session will review this Policy annually to ensure continued effectiveness and appropriateness.

9. CLOSING

May our Lord and Savior grant us, the congregation of Trinity Presbyterian Church, the strength and wisdom to protect those who cannot protect themselves. For the Lord loves the righteous. He upholds the cause of the oppressed. He watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but He frustrates the ways of the wicked. The Lord reigns forever. Praise the Lord. (from Psalm 146)

APPENDIX A

RHODE ISLAND GENERAL LAWS

§§40-11-2, 40-11-3(a), 40-11-4

RHODE ISLAND CHAPTER 40-11

Abused and Neglected Children

§ 40-11-1 Policy. The public policy of this state is: to protect children whose health and welfare may be adversely affected through injury and neglect; to strengthen the family and to make the home safe for children by enhancing the parental capacity for good child care; to provide a temporary or permanent nurturing and safe environment for children when necessary; and, for these purposes, to require the mandatory reporting of known or suspected child abuse and neglect, investigation of those reports by a social agency, and provision of services, where needed to the child and family.

§ 40-11-3(a) Duty to Report. Any person who has reasonable cause to know or suspect that any child has been abused or neglected [as defined in §40-11-2] or has been a victim of sexual abuse by another child shall, within twenty-four (24) hours, transfer that information to the department of children, youth and families or its agent who shall cause the report to be investigated immediately. As a result of those reports and referrals, protective social services shall be made available to those children in an effort to safeguard and enhance the welfare of those children and to provide a means to prevent further abuse or neglect.

§40-11-4 Immunity from liability. Any person participating in good faith in making a report pursuant to this chapter shall have immunity from any liability, civil or criminal, that might otherwise be incurred or imposed. Any participant shall have the same immunity with respect to participation in any judicial proceeding resulting from the report.

APPENDIX B

STAFF AND VOLUNTEER APPLICATION



Trinity
Presbyterian
Church

Staff and Volunteer Application

Name: _____ **Email:** _____

Address: _____ **Date of Birth:** _____

_____ **Telephone (home):** _____

_____ **Telephone (cell):** _____

Position Sought: _____

Occupation: _____

Place of Employment: _____

Location of Employment: _____

Member of Trinity Presbyterian Church since: _____

Previous Church Membership: *(Please indicate every church that you have either regularly attended or been a member of for the past five years.)*

(name of church)

(location)

(name of church)

(location)

Previous Volunteer Experience: *(Please list relevant experience working with children and youth.)*

(name of position and organization)

(location)

(description of duties or activities)

(name of position and organization)

(location)

(description of duties or activities)



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References: *(Please list three persons who have known you for at least one year, not including relatives.)*

(name of person providing reference) (address, including city and state)

(telephone number) (relation with applicant)

(name of person providing reference) (address, including city and state)

(telephone number) (relation with applicant)

(name of person providing reference) (address, including city and state)

(telephone number) (relation with applicant)

Please answer the following questions:

1. Are you presently the subject of any investigation involving an allegation of physical or sexual abuse of a child? _____No _____Yes

2. Have you ever been convicted of physical or sexual abuse of a child? _____No _____Yes

If your response to either of the above questions is “Yes”, please provide an explanation:



Trinity
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Applicant Release and Authorization to Obtain Information:

I, the undersigned, hereby affirm that the above statements are truthful and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

I authorize Trinity Presbyterian Church to contact any person or entity listed on this application form, and I further authorize any such person or entity to provide Trinity Presbyterian Church with information, opinions, and impressions relating to my background or qualifications.

I voluntarily release Trinity Presbyterian Church and any such person or entity listed on this application form from liability involving the communication of information relating to my background or qualifications.

In the interest of safety and security, I authorize Trinity Presbyterian Church through its independent contractor, LexisNexis, to procure background information (also known as an investigative consumer report) about me, prior to, and at anytime during my service to Trinity. This report may include my driving history, including any traffic citations; a social security number verification; present and former addresses; criminal and civil history/records; and the state sex offender records. (A photo static/fax/electronic copy of this document can be substituted for the original).

I am apprised that this application and any information obtained from a criminal background investigation or my references will be held in strictest confidence by the Child Protection Administrator. All administrative paperwork will be kept in locked storage.

I am aware that upon the discovery of any misrepresentation or failure to disclose information in this application, my involvement in church ministries may be terminated.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to comply with the guidelines established in Trinity's Child Protection Policy. Should I violate any of these guidelines, my involvement working in children's ministries may be terminated.

I have read carefully the foregoing release and understand the contents thereof.

Applicant's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

APPENDIX C
DRIVER AUTHORIZATION FORM

APPENDIX D

PROGRAM ATTENDANCE CONSENT FORM



Trinity
Presbyterian
Church

Program Attendance Consent Form (one per child)

Event Information:

Name of program or event: _____

Date(s) and location of program or event: _____

Name of program director(s): _____

Participant Information:

Full name of participant: _____

Date of birth of participant: _____ Grade of participant: _____

Full name of parents/guardians: _____

Address: _____ Telephone: _____

List allergies or medical conditions: _____

Name of emergency contact: _____

Emergency contact telephone: _____

Participation Agreement:

I give permission for my child to attend the program or event identified on this form. I also give permission for my child to be transported, if necessary, by a Trinity approved driver.

Parent/guardian signature: _____

Date: _____

This form is valid through _____.

** Please return the completed form to Trinity's Child Protection Administrator.*

APPENDIX E
PROGRAM ATTENDANCE REGISTRY

APPENDIX F

STAFF AND VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT AGREEMENT



Trinity
Presbyterian
Church

Staff and Volunteer Code of Conduct Agreement

I have read and understand Trinity Presbyterian Church's Child Protection Policy and support the efforts of the Session to make Trinity a safe place for children. To this end, I agree and promise to abide by the following statements:

1. I understand that Trinity will not tolerate abuse of children and I acknowledge my obligation and responsibility to protect children.
2. I will keep cognizant of the activities of children and adults in the church and comply with the guidelines provided in this Policy.
3. If I have been involved in an allegation of child abuse within the past year, I will refrain from volunteering to work with children until the allegation is resolved.
4. If I have been convicted of either sexual or physical abuse I will not volunteer my services in any church sponsored activity or program involving children.

My signature on this form indicates my agreement with the Child Protection Policy and the above statements, and my pledge to abide by them.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Print Name: _____

**Please return the completed form to Trinity's Child Protection Administrator.*

APPENDIX G

DIRECTORY OF MINISTRY DIRECTORS



Trinity
Presbyterian
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Directory of Ministry Directors (as of September 2010)

Nursery: _____

Christian Education: _____

Senior Crew: _____

Junior Crew: _____

Liberian Outreach/ Love in Action Mentoring: _____

Backyard Bible Club: _____

Trinity Presbyterian Church

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