

Cornerstone Presbyterian Church

Child Care Safety and Security Policy

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Cornerstone Presbyterian Church Child Care Safety and Security Policy

1. Background

Because Cornerstone Presbyterian Church (CPC) is committed to our children and because we strive to provide fun, safe programs from Nursery through Youth that encourage our children to grow in Christ, CPC has enacted a Child Safety and Security Policy for newborns through 17 years. We believe that the church must maintain the highest standards for both its programs and for the people who staff those programs. To the degree possible, nothing should be allowed to shame the gospel we hold so dear. Accordingly, our goal is to protect the children and youth of our church from incidents of abuse, misconduct or inappropriate behavior. Just as we believe we should pursue protection for the unborn, so we think we should do what we can to protect those among us who cannot protect themselves. In addition, we also seek to protect our staff and volunteers from false accusations. Therefore, to demonstrate this commitment to the reputation of the gospel, to our children, to the parents of the children who participate in our programs, to our staff and volunteers and to the community, Cornerstone has adopted this Child Safety Policy.

“Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” - Mark 10:13-16

2. Philosophy of Children’s and Youth Ministry

Our philosophy of ministry is to see children and youth transformed by relationship-based ministry dependent on the grace of God. We expect that our childcare workers will walk along side young people entrusted to our care and model a life that reflects the love of Jesus. Childcare workers will meet our children and youth where they are, in their joy or pain, and show them the gospel of Jesus Christ.

3. Definitions

Abuse: Child abuse involves four basic types of mistreatment: physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse.

- **Physical abuse** is non-accidental physical injury inflicted by a person who has responsibility for a child.
- **Neglect** is the failure of a caregiver to provide for a child’s basic needs. Neglect may be physical, medical, educational or emotional.
- **Sexual abuse** is defined by Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 2008 (CAPTA) at the “employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing a visual depiction of such conduct, or the rape, molestation, prostitution or other form of sexual exploitation of children”. Sexual abuse may involve touching or non-touching aspects of sexual exploitation.
- **Emotional abuse** is a pattern of behavior that impairs a child’s emotional development or sense of self-worth. Emotional abuse is almost always present when other forms of abuse are identified.

Child or Children: As per CAPTA a child includes all persons younger than age eighteen (18).

Child & Youth Care Workers:

- **Paid Staff:** Any person who is employed either part time or full time by Cornerstone Presbyterian Church
- **Ministry Leader:** Any individual who holds a volunteer leadership responsibility with oversight of other volunteers in a ministry area involving children and/or youth.
- **Teacher:** Any individual who has responsibility for the care of children and/or youth within a classroom environment.
- **Volunteer:** Any individual who interacts with children as a regular participant in children and/or youth ministry. Anyone involved in an overnight event with children and/or youth holds volunteer status.
- **Occasional Volunteer:** Volunteer who occasionally interacts with children and/or youth such as car driver, or a helper at a special event.

Church Sponsored Activity: Includes any and all gatherings that arise from any worship, educational, childcare, fellowship, administrative, pastoral, mission or recreational event generated or organized by Cornerstone Presbyterian Church, whether on-campus or off-campus.

One-on-One Formal Counseling: Counseling conducted in a professional setting.

4. Scope and Applicability

This policy applies to all children's and youth ministries of CPC and all activities sponsored by CPC.

Sponsors of Non-CPC events using CPC facilities are responsible for their own oversight of children's protection and will acknowledge such on their facilities use request form.

5. Oversight and Governance

The Session of Cornerstone Presbyterian maintains this policy. The Session must review this policy annually. Any changes to this policy must be approved by the Session.

Any exceptions to this policy must be approved by the CPC Session and will be noted in the Session minutes.

The church will designate a program administrator who will be responsible for all screening processes and escalations of background check results that require further review.

6. Standards

6.1. Screening Process

All Child and Youth Care Workers must complete the following screening process as applicable:

6.1.1. Minimum Age

All Child and Youth Care Workers must meet the following minimum age requirements:

- Paid Staff, Ministry Leaders and Teachers: Eighteen (18) years of age
- Volunteers and Occasional Volunteers: Twelve (12) years of age

6.1.2. Written Application

All Paid Staff, Ministry Leaders, Volunteers and Teachers must complete and sign a written or online application in a form to be supplied by Cornerstone Presbyterian Church. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous church affiliation, and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. Only Cornerstone Paid Staff or an authorized designee will be authorized to review the written applications.

Note: This requirement does not apply to any Child and Youth Care Workers that have been a regular attendee at Cornerstone for more than three (3) years at the Effective Date of this policy.

6.1.3. References

All Paid Staff, Ministry Leaders and Teachers must provide 2 references. Family references are not permitted. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence with the church.

Note: Persons with three (3) or more years of membership at CPC may be exempted from the reference check requirement at the discretion of the Paid Staff Member overseeing the ministry area.

6.1.4. Interview

Upon completion of the application, Cornerstone Paid Staff or an authorized designee will perform a face-to-face interview with the applicant for Paid Staff, Ministry Leaders and Teacher positions to discuss his or her suitability for the position.

Note: This requirement does not apply to any Child and Youth Care Workers that have been a regular attendee at Cornerstone for more than three (3) years at the Effective Date of this policy.

6.1.5. Signed Attestation

All Child and Youth Care Workers will be asked to read this policy on an annual basis and attest to following the guidelines and procedures.

Note: this requirement does not apply to Occasional Volunteers.

6.1.6. Regular Attendees

All Child and Youth Care Workers are required to be members or regular attendees of Cornerstone for a minimum of six months before they begin their ministry service. **Exception:** Nursery volunteers are required to be regular attendees for a minimum of 3 months.

Note: this requirement does not apply to Occasional Volunteers.

6.1.7. Background Check

All Child and Youth Care Workers must be subject to a criminal background check as mandated by the state of Pennsylvania **before** they begin to serve in a children's and/or youth ministry capacity.

- **Paid Staff:** Must complete a Verified Background Check and an FBI fingerprint check. This requirement applies to all Paid Staff 18 years of age or older.

- **Ministry Leaders, Teachers:** Must complete a Verified Background Check. This requirement applies to all volunteers 18 years of age or older.
- **Volunteers:** Must complete a Verified Background Check. This requirement applies to all Volunteers 18 years of age or older.
- **Occasional Volunteers:** Must complete a Verified Background Check. This requirement applies to all Occasional Volunteers 18 years of age or older.

6.1.8. Character of Child and Youth Care Workers

No abusive behavior will be tolerated. Child and Youth Care Workers should ensure that situations do not arise that can lead to abusive behavior.

Any individual applying to be a Child & Youth Care Worker who has a past conviction of or pending proceeding related criminal offense may have a disqualifying offense that may keep that individual from working with children. Additionally, any individual applying to be a Child & Youth Care Worker who has a history of inappropriate conduct with children may have a disqualifying event.

In the event that an individual has a potentially disqualifying event, the applicant will be reviewed by the CPC Session on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions of an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, and indecency will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

6.2. Procedural Requirements

6.2.1. Training

Each new Child and Youth Care Worker will be provided orientation and training on child abuse, including its recognition and prevention, as well as on the terms and conditions of this policy. This includes, but is not limited to, watching the child abuse prevention training video by David Halley.

6.2.2. Standards for Relationships

1. Child and Youth Care Workers will normally seek to establish personal relationships with those whom they teach and lead. Physical contact is one part of normal communication in such relationships. Thus, for instance, a hug or the placing of a hand on one's arm or shoulder is normally acceptable. However, any touching in intimate areas is never acceptable, nor is any un-welcomed touching which makes the young person uncomfortable. The care of infants obviously requires diapering, which means touching in private areas. This is acceptable so long as it is done with the intention to clean and not to abuse.
2. It is recognized that holding/carrying is basic to the care of small children. Also, small children must sometimes be physically restrained from hurting themselves or others. However, when more than brief restraint is needed, the parent or guardian should be brought into the situation.
3. Children of any age will not be spanked, shaken or struck in any way by a non-parental Child and Youth Care Worker.
4. Child and Youth Care Workers are to readily share discipline problems of children with their parents.
5. Volunteer Leaders will implement approved disciplinary procedures as directed by Paid Staff.

6.2.3. Two (2) Person Rule

Child and Youth Care Workers shall observe the “two-person rule” at all times except as indicated in the one-on-one interactions indicated in section 6.2.4. The “two-person rule” requires that Child and Youth Care Workers shall make every reasonable effort to avoid situations where a Child and Youth Care Worker is alone with children without a partner. Additionally, one of the two Child and Youth Care Workers must be at least 18 years old. Wherever possible the two Child and Youth Care Workers should not be related.

Formal classroom circumstances are permitted to only have one adult in attendance as the teacher.

Note: This policy does not apply to Life Groups where all parental participants in the group approve the policy exception.

6.2.4. One on One Interactions

One-on-One interactions must only occur within a public visible setting occupied by other adults. Meeting in parks, movie theaters and parked cars are examples of unacceptable settings. Parent’s consent in writing or by email must be obtained and filed prior to each event. Transportation of children in grade 8 and below will be the responsibility of the parent or guardian.

Transportation of children in grades 9 and above will ordinarily be the responsibility of the parent, but may when necessary, be provided by the Child and Youth Worker under the following conditions:

- Parent or guardian is given time of pick up, location of meeting, and time of return and parent or guardian specifies permission for this in their consent.
- Transportation shall be directly to and from the meeting place.
- Time will not be spent in the parked car.
- The student must be the same sex as the youth worker.

Any non-emergency deviation from these one-on-one requirements must be only by prior specific written consent of the child’s legal custodian. This consent must be on file with the Director of Family Ministries.

6.2.5. One-on-One Formal Counseling

One-on-One formal counseling may occur with parental written approval. In such cases, a parent or an authorized custodian must drop off and pick up the child. Additionally, visibility and transparency requirements must be followed. Doors may never be locked while a Child and Youth Care Worker is alone in a room with a child. At no time should a Child and Youth Care Worker be alone with a child of the opposite sex except in a formally approved counseling session. The session should be conducted at a time when others are nearby, even if they are not within listening distance.

6.2.6. Visibility and Transparency

Child and Youth Care Workers who work with children and youth shall observe the “open door policy” at ALL times. The “open door policy” requires that rooms where children are located have the door open at all times or that transparent glass be in the door. In the event that the Child and Youth Care Worker is alone with children in a room, the Child and Youth Care Worker should not position himself or herself in the room such that other adults passing in the hallway cannot see him or her.

6.2.7. Restroom Use

Children who can, should utilize a classroom bathroom if available. The nursery bathroom door should be left open. Child and Youth Care Workers must ensure that the restroom is not occupied by unknown individuals before allowing children to use the facilities. A Child and Youth Care Worker will accompany two or more children and will stay by the main restroom door to allow privacy for the children using the restroom. If a child requires assistance, the Child and Youth Care Worker should prop open the bathroom door and leave the stall door open as he or she assists the child. 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. Volunteers will make every reasonable attempt to have another adult in the bathroom with them, if a child needs assistance in a stall. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class, event or worship service.

6.2.8. Transportation

Transportation of children to and from church events that are arranged by their parents are not subject to the control of the church and thus not covered in this policy. Transportation of children arranged by the church will have at least two unrelated adults or at least two children unrelated to the driver. Every effort should be made to pair occupants and drivers of the same sex in the vehicle.

The following procedures should be followed for all transportation arranged by CPC:

1. As recommended by CPC's insurance company, it is suggested that all drivers of children and youth be over 21. In situations where this is not possible, parent permission shall be obtained before the trip and vehicles shall travel together.
2. Travel arrangements for off-campus events will be coordinated through the church.
3. All vehicles should remain parked throughout the duration of the activity except for transporting children and obtaining supplies.
4. Seat belts will be provided for and used by all passengers.
5. All drivers must provide proof of licensure and insurance coverage.

6.2.9. Off-Site Trips and Events

Parent/Guardian Permission Forms and Medical Consent Forms must be completed prior to all trips. The two person rule must be followed throughout the trip with any foreseeable exceptions clearly stated and approved in advance by the parent or guardian. The total number of adults on each trip will be adjusted according to the requirements of the planned activities. Under no circumstances may one adult alone take or accompany minors on an overnight outing.

The following procedures should be followed at all CPC arranged off-site trips and events:

1. At no time shall males and females share rooms.
2. When possible, adults' rooms shall be next to youth rooms and youth may be checked on during the night.

6.2.10. Leaving Children Alone

Children under grade 5 must always be under supervision. Children grade 5 and above may be briefly free of direct supervision as they move from one area of supervision to another.

6.2.11. Releasing Children to Adults

No child in kindergarten or younger will be released to any person other than the parent, family member (12 yrs. or older), or adult who brought the child to CPC, unless prior written arrangement has been made with the leadership of that particular ministry. Children placed in the nursery will require sign-in and sign-out along with adult identification.

6.2.12. Identification Security System

The church will have in place an identification system so that the adults who drop off a small child are the same or authorized adults who pick the child up. The Volunteer Leader in charge shall maintain the system to identify persons authorized to pick up and take responsibility for kindergarten and younger children leaving a church activity. The identification system will not be necessary for children above the grade of kindergarten unless a parent specifically requests it in writing.

6.2.13. Custody Disputes

Should anyone on behalf of the church become aware that there is a dispute between parents or other relatives concerning custody or visitation with respect to a child or children, it shall be the practice of the church for that person to request a written copy of any court order in effect at the time to ensure compliance with it by church teachers, pastors, and other agents. That written copy shall be kept in the church office for reference. However, should either parent request to take a child in the custody of a church custodian, then the custodian shall be free to release the child to either parent except as a court order may otherwise provide, but not to a grandparent or other person without written authorization by a parent.

6.3. Incident Management

6.3.1. Reporting Suspected Incidents

The focus of Cornerstone Presbyterian Church is on the prevention of any type of child abuse. However, in the event of any questionable or inappropriate activity involving a child, it is our policy to deal with that situation immediately and forthrightly following these guidelines:

1. Any violation of these policies, questionable behavior toward a child, or observed indicators of abuse should be immediately reported to the Director of Youth and Family Ministries.
2. The Director of Youth and Family Ministries will immediately notify the Senior Pastor.
3. The Senior Pastor will engage the session as appropriate.
4. The Pastors will evaluate the situation, with every consideration for privacy and confidentiality.

All childcare staff, ministry leaders, teachers, volunteers and occasional volunteers are required to make a report of suspected child abuse if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse. You are not required to identify the person responsible for the child abuse to make a report of suspected child abuse.

1. The incident will be immediately reported to the civil authorities. You may file electronically at www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis or by calling 1-800-932-0313.
2. The incident should then be reported to the Director of Youth and Family Ministries, or if he is unavailable to the Senior Pastor or one of the Session Members.
3. The church insurance company and the church attorney will then be notified by either the Director of Family Ministries, the Senior Pastor or one of the Session members.
4. The report should be documented in writing and should contain the following:

- a. The name and address of the child.
 - b. The name and address of the person responsible for the care, custody, or welfare of the child.
 - c. Any other pertinent information concerning the alleged or suspected abuse or neglect.
5. The Senior Pastor will notify the parents of the child.
 6. The safety of the child will be secured before the accused is confronted.
 7. Every effort will be made to minister to and relieve the pain of the victim and the victim's family.
 8. The accused will be treated with dignity and support. If the accused is a volunteer at Cornerstone Presbyterian Church, that person will be temporarily relieved of his or her duties until the investigation is finished. If the accused is Paid Staff, that person will also be relieved of his or her duties until the allegations are cleared or substantiated. The Session will decide whether to maintain or suspend pay for the duration of the investigation.
 9. The Senior Pastor or his authorized designee will represent Cornerstone Presbyterian Church to the congregation, the media and the public at large. All other persons involved should refer questions to this spokesperson.

6.3.2. Confidentiality and Privacy

All reports of child abuse or neglect shall be held in absolute confidence. No person shall communicate any information concerning the alleged event to any person except as necessary to cooperate with any official investigation. Any breach of this confidentiality by an employee of the church shall be cause for immediate dismissal.

The Senior Pastor, in consultation with the official conducting the investigation may authorize limited additional disclosure if necessary to protect other children from harm in the near future, particularly where the person responsible for the abuse cannot be identified, but in no case shall the identity of the victim or the accused person be disclosed except as required by law.

6.3.3. Investigation

No unauthorized person shall attempt to conduct a detailed investigation either through examination or interrogation of the child, the accused person or a witness. It is acceptable to obtain a reasonable amount of information to have cause to believe a child has been abused or neglected.

Interviews shall be conducted only by authorized officials of the agency to whom the suspected crime has been reported or, when appropriate, by legal counsel or persons representing the church in an official capacity. All employees and volunteers of the church shall cooperate with the official investigation as requested.

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Appendix A – Youth Ministry Adult Leader Application – click [HERE](#)

Appendix B – Children’s Ministry Volunteer Application – click [HERE](#)

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